

# Certificate in Autistic Wellbeing for Autistics

If you are an Australian Autistic adult who is passionate about becoming a change agent for yourself and the Autistic community, this course is a perfect choice for you.

With a focus on organic, authentic Autistic wellbeing, the Certificate in Autistic Wellbeing for Autistics is a practical and rewarding course consisting of 6 core modules, covering various aspects of Autistic lived experience which impact on Autistic flourishing. It is aimed at Autistic adults who want to work for and with their Autistic community to create lasting positive change, whilst enhancing their own personal wellbeing.

Unlike other courses offered on Autism, Reframing Autism's Certificate in Autistic Wellbeing is run by Autistics for Autistics. It is not only information-rich, but actively centres Autistic experience as meaningful, and approaches Autism from a perspective of building broad and genuine wellbeing for the whole Autistic community.

During the Certificate, then, you will have access both to academic research, as well as to other Autistic lived expertise, which is considered as equally – if not more – valuable than peer-reviewed academic literature. You will have access to Autistic facilitators and their experiential knowledge, and you will have many opportunities to interact with your Autistic peers.



**Awarded by:** Reframing Autism

**Delivery:** Online

**Structure:** 6 modules, each with 1-2 weeks of facilitation

**Duration:** Flexible schedule of modules means the course can be completed in as little as 2 months, or as long as 12 months.

**Workload:** minimum 4 hours per module

**Qualification:** Certificate

**Price:** FREE

## In a Nutshell

Build your own self-knowledge and become an agent for positive change, through this online Certificate in Autistic Wellbeing for Autistics from Reframing Autism.

This Certificate is suited for emerging advocates and Autistic adults who are looking for the foundational skills and knowledge to understand their own Autistic identity, and to apply that knowledge to improving the lives of Autistic individuals of all ages and their families.

In this 6-module course, you will build the theoretical and scientific knowledge, as well as the practical application, to support your Autistic neurokindred to fulfil the conditions necessary for wellbeing in ways that are Autistically organic, respectful, and culturally sensitive. This Certificate will thus foster your own advocacy skills and empower you to use those skills to help the Autistic community to experience acceptance, authenticity, autonomy, and inclusion.

Through this online course – developed, designed, convened, presented and facilitated by an all-Autistic team – you’ll learn how to help Autistic individuals across support and communication needs in respectful and uplifting ways that actively build their – and your – wellbeing, using best practices endorsed by the Autistic community as well as innovative Autism research. Your learning will be grounded in neuroscience and positive psychology, within the overarching frame of the neurodiversity paradigm.

Delivered online for flexible learning, this course will include a minimum of 24 hours of learning. You’ll complete this course ready to embrace your own Autistic identity and to make a genuine difference to Autistic lives.

## Module schedule

This 6-module online course is offered with flexibility of learning at its core. We will offer every module multiple times per year so that learners can create a learning schedule that suits their lives and commitments.

Module 1 must be completed first, but thereafter modules 2-5 can be taken in any order you choose. All of modules 1-5 should be completed before taking module 6. The exact schedule of the modules is still in development, but each module will be offered once every 2-3 months.

Each learning topic begins with a video (with transcript) to anchor the subject. Then a selection of carefully curated resources are available, with which a learner can engage to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. These resources are a mix of writings from Autistic advocates, videos, podcasts, peer reviewed academic papers, and other journal articles. Each module will have several discussion questions to help stimulate your learning, to which learners can respond flexibly, either in writing or by recording a video or audio file. There are quizzes to check your learning, an optional private learning journal to further explore topics offline, and optional reflection activities to solidify your application of learned knowledge to your life.

In this course, you will study the following subjects alongside your Autistic peers:

1. Autism fundamentals

This module will establish a shared understanding with which to progress through the remainder of the course. We will start with our philosophical underpinnings of the triple-A framework:



acceptance, authenticity and autonomy. We will go on to cover the topics of person-first and identity-first language, functioning labels, a sociology of diagnosis and its application to the DSM 5, an Autistic experiential definition of Autism, neurodiversity and other models of disability. We will conclude with an overview of the Autistic brain differences and the implications of those differences.

Module 1 must be completed before moving on to any other modules.

## 2. Emotions and behaviour

This module explores the relationship between Autistic emotions, emotional regulation, and behaviours. To that end, we explore deeper into the Autistic brain by examining differences in wiring. We then look at some of the ways Autistics show their overwhelm – from meltdowns (compared and contrasted to tantrums), shutdowns, burnout, and sensory overload. We then consider behaviours within the frame of “can’t” or “won’t”, and discuss the issues with pathologizing Autistic behaviours as challenging or problematic. This module also addresses PDA, Autistic-specific anxieties, and inertia.

## 3. Autistic communication

In this module, we rethink the basics of communication and introduce the concept of non-traditional communication and non-traditional approaches to communication. By examining the double empathy problem, social pragmatics, complex communication needs, facilitated communication, Autistic body language, stimming, prosody, and echolalia, we will reframe what communication is and what marks its success.

## 4. Childhood

This module recognises that wellbeing begins at home, with educational inclusion another significant factor in Autistic flourishing (or lack thereof). Thus, this module has a focus on making meaningful connections through unconditional love, establishing attachment relationships, and inclusion. We then look at respectful interactions through examining Autistic social skills, friendships, Autistic play, motivations, and finally goal setting.

## 5. Radical intersectionality

In this module we consider the theory of intersectionality, and its relevance to disability studies and the Autistic community. Through engaging with the lived experience knowledge of Autistic adults who live as multiply marginalised, we will discuss how intersectionality impacts Autistic lives and how an understanding of intersectionality can lead to radical emancipation and disability justice.

## 6. Fostering wellbeing

All other modules should be completed before accessing this final module where we will bring all our learning together to a practical conclusion. In this module on fostering wellbeing, we begin by exploring the application of positive psychology to the Autistic community through the theory of PERMA and character strengths. By reframing what have often been considered Autistic deficits into Autistic strengths, we will discuss the ways in which having a positive self-regard protects and fosters wellbeing. And we explore the very tangible benefits of coregulation and interoception, for ourselves and others, in living our lives with authenticity, autonomy and acceptance.



For learners who have completed the course, additional extension modules on topics such as advocacy and mental health, will be offered over time.

## Learning Goals

The course objectives include to:

- Create a shared understanding of the Autistic experience and its neurological underpinnings,
- Build participants' capacity to understand and apply academic research meaningfully to their advocacy,
- Understand the key necessary conditions to foster Autistic wellbeing and thriving, and
- Explore the frameworks of neuroscience and positive-psychology from a strengths-based, pro-neurodiversity paradigm to counter pathologised, stigmatising narratives.

## Prerequisites for entry

The *Certificate in Autistic Wellbeing* is specifically for Autistic individuals, whether formally or self-identified. If you are an Autistic adult over 18 years of age living in Australia, you are welcome to apply to the Certificate.

Before applying, please read Reframing Autism's Introduction to Autism 5-part blog series. Part 1 can be found [here](#) and there are links to the subsequent parts of the series at the bottom of the page. These blogs establish our ideological frame and help you to understand if we are a good fit for your learning.

## Self-selection criteria

This course presents information and perspectives that Reframing Autism believes are in the best interest of the Autistic community and its ongoing collective and individual wellbeing. Of course, we understand that not everyone shares our values and perspectives. The following information summarises the ideological underpinnings for our course.

If you feel that there exists a significant “values mismatch” between your perspectives and ours, we encourage you to consider your openness to learning – and to having your thinking challenged – before applying. Please note, we actively encourage healthy and respectful debate, so we provide this information simply to help you to assess your own capacity to engage meaningfully with the course content.

There are some key ideologies upon which all of Reframing Autism's work is based, and which will run throughout the course. These include:

- Always presume competence.
- All human beings, regardless of intersectionality, or support or communication needs, deserve acceptance, authenticity, and autonomy.
- Just as Dr Ross Greene says, “kids do well when they can”, so too all Autistic individuals do well when they can.

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- Inclusion is a human right and comes when you belong and are welcomed as your authentic, intact Autistic self.
  - All Autistic individuals, regardless of intersectionality, or support or communication needs, are full and whole humans as they are, with the right to demand equity and to have their dignity respected.
  - Autism is not a disorder and Autistic people are not “less than”.

Reframing Autism’s core values include respect, accept, embrace and empower through gentle influence. Reframing Autism has a commitment to respecting diversity across intersectional and marginalised minorities and to providing a safe space for everyone.

All participants in the Certificate will be expected to interact respectfully and courteously with their peers, regardless of sexuality, gender, race, religion, communication and support needs, culture, disability, or any other intersectionality.

For this course to be effective, each participant should be ready to be challenged. To get the most out of your learning requires a commitment to curiosity and a willingness to be open to new information or different perspectives.

We may present information that is different to the way you have always thought about or done things.

There may be some moments of uncomfortable self-reflection based on new information or new perspectives.

You may disagree with some of these perspectives.

We just ask that you express your disagreement respectfully, and we undertake that same commitment to you. Your commitment to respectful dialogue ensures a safe learning space for all.

This course currently includes academic reading. We always include alternative resources for reading, watching, or listening so there is no requirement to read the academic papers. However, there are certain topics where the academic papers provide information that is not available in other formats. We are working on creating more accessible research summaries for these papers, but this process will take us some time. If you feel that you would be best served by accessing summaries of research rather than the academic research directly, it may be best to wait for a future iteration for which we will have lay summaries for each relevant academic paper.

## Accessibility

We want the course to be as accessible as possible as we know that Autistics have varied learning requirements. We have catered to the following accessibility requirements:

- The platform has been designed using AASPIRE visual guidelines.
- The course is designed to follow a predictable format to simplify the executive functioning required to learn a new system.
- All videos have transcripts, and videos produced by Reframing Autism also have captions. There are some links to YouTube videos that do not have captions, but transcripts have been provided.
- The platform and all written resources are compatible with text to speech applications.

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- There is flexibility in providing responses for most of the discussion questions and optional reflections. These responses can be done in writing or by recording a video or audio file.
  - As an online course, the work can be done at your preferred timing within the timeframes that each module is open. You are welcome to learn alongside a body double, or to utilise a support worker while you learn, but these arrangements are your responsibility to organise.

If you have accessibility requirements that are not listed above, please kindly get in touch and alert us to them. We are hoping to improve the accessibility of each iteration of the course, eventually having information in different languages and in Easy Read/Easy English, but due to funding and time limitations, we are not able to offer these accommodations in this iteration.

## Why Reframing Autism?

Reframing Autism is an Australian Autistic-led and staffed not-for-profit charity organisation, which aims to disrupt the status quo for the Autistic community by providing Autistic-led research, therapies, and education. Thus, this Certificate has been created and endorsed by the Autistic community with input from Autistic individuals from across a diversity of communication and support needs.

## Where will this course take you? (Career outcomes)

This Certificate will foster your transferable employability skills, building generic skills with applicability across a multiple of jobs and contexts, including communication skills, people-related skills, conceptual and thinking skills, personal skills and attributes, and community-mindedness.

Reframing Autism is committed to supporting individuals to understand how they might best become a change agent in a way that is suited to their interest and skills, and we hope all successful graduates leave the Certificate with a strong sense of their purpose to serve their community. Additionally, Reframing Autism is constantly searching for new Autistic contractors (bloggers, presenters, podcast guests) and employees to deliver our programs and support us in our mission. Please note that undertaking this Certificate is not a guarantee or prerequisite of employment with Reframing Autism.

## Let's talk money

This course is offered **free** to Autistic adults (whether formally identified or self-identifying) over 18 years of age, residing in Australia.

Reframing Autism is a registered charity, with funding administered by the Department of Social Services to subsidise our costs so that we can offer this Certificate to the Autistic community free of charge.

The only payment we ask, is for you to “pay it forward” by creating or reviewing learning materials that will support the next cohort (equivalent to two hours of your time). This “in kind” payment



can be done in any way you choose, and you will be supported by Reframing Autism throughout the process.

Versions of this course will be available for families of Autistic individuals and for professionals working with Autistic individuals, both of which are fee-paying.

## Applications and Success Criteria

Apply [here](#).

We can only accept Australian adults (over the age of 18 years old) that identify as Autistic (formally or self-diagnosed) at this time.

If there are more applications than there are spots available, then we will use selection criteria to select participants. These selection criteria include

- potential gain & benefit to self,
- potential gain & benefit to the Autistic community,
- openness to learn & readiness to participate,
- demonstrated need, and
- commitment to serving the Autistic community.

We will also prioritize multiply marginalised applicants or applicants from underserved communities.

Spots are limited to please provide all relevant information to help us assess your application.

## Further information

If you require any further information, please contact [info@reframingautism.org.au](mailto:info@reframingautism.org.au) and we will get back to you as soon as possible.