

Fostering Autistic Wellbeing for Families Course

If you are a parent, carer, grandparent, sibling, or other family member of an Autistic individual committed to improving their wellbeing and fostering their happiness, this course is a perfect choice for you.

Our Fostering Autistic Wellbeing course is a practical and rewarding one, consisting of 6 Modules, covering various aspects of Autistic lived experience which impact on Autistic thriving and wellbeing. It will increase your understanding of your Autistic loved one as well as giving you the skills to increase their – and your own – flourishing across the lifespan.

Unlike other courses offered on Autism, Reframing Autism's Fostering Autistic Wellbeing course is designed and run by Autistic individuals. 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 every Autistic individual.

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



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: \$660 per family





In a Nutshell

Build your knowledge of how to support your Autistic loved one and do your part to build a good life for them in this course for families on Fostering Autistic Wellbeing from Reframing Autism.

This course is suited for any person over 18 years of age who loves an Autistic individual and is looking for the foundational skills and knowledge to understand, accept and respect Autistic identity. The course will build your capacity to apply your knowledge to foster the authentic happiness of your Autistic family member.

In this 6-module course, you will build the theoretical and scientific knowledge, as well as the practical experience, required to fulfil the necessary conditions for Autistic wellbeing, and for you as an autism ally. This course will not only foster your own skills to advocate for your Autistic loved one in the community but will also empower you to use your skills to build acceptance, authenticity, autonomy and inclusion in the home.

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 24 hours of learning. You’ll complete this course ready to embrace Autistic identity, nurture Autistic culture, empathise with Autistic lived experience, and 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 is 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 with “homework”, and optional reflections to solidify your application of learned knowledge to your own life.



In this course, you will study the following subjects:

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 – 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 pathologising 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 lives and the lives of their Autistic loved ones,
- 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 *Fostering Autistic Wellbeing* course is specifically designed for families (and carers) of Autistic individuals. If you love an Autistic individual (child or adult) and are yourself over 18 years of age, you are welcome to register for the course.

Before registering, please read the following of Reframing Autism's blogs:


- 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.
- Manifesto for Allies, found [here](#).

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.
- 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 to 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 course 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 in which we will have lay summaries for each relevant academic paper.

Accessibility

We want the course to be as accessible as possible. We have catered to the following accessibility requirements:

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- 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.
 - There is flexibility in providing responses for most of the discussion questions. 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 with any in person supports you need, 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.

About 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 course has been created and endorsed by the Autistic community with input from Autistic individuals from across a diversity of communication and support needs. Reframing Autism gives you the opportunity to learn from the real experts: Autistic people themselves.


Other benefits

This course is a practical way to build your skills to support your Autistic loved one. It will foster your communication skills, people-related skills, conceptual and thinking skills, personal skills and attributes, and community-mindedness.

Let's talk money

This course will cost \$660 per enrolment. You can enrol as an individual or as a pair of carers who together support an Autistic child (e.g., two parents in the same household). You will only be offered one login so we recommend that you live in the same household or can otherwise work cooperatively.

Payment is due at the time of enrolment in the course. A limited number of discounted or full scholarships will be available for anyone experiencing financial hardship. Only Australian residents are eligible for scholarships.



A version of this course is available for Autistic adults, which is subsidised by Reframing Autism and offered free to Autists. There is also a fee-paying course for professionals working with Autistic individuals.

Registration

You can register to study the *Fostering Autistic Wellbeing for Families* [here](#). If you are an Australian resident and would like to apply for a scholarship placement, please apply [here](#).

We can only accept adults (over the age of 18 years old) who are caregivers to an Autistic individual (either child or adult). This course is designed for all carers, including those who identify as Autistic themselves.

Places are limited for each intake, and registrations will be accepted on a “first come, first served” basis. We will, however, be offering multiple intakes into the course over the year and will put you on a waitlist for a future intake if you would like us to.

Further information

If you require any further information, please contact learning@reframingautism.org.au and we will get back to you as soon as possible.