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Welcome to the first of our June editions of the GRANN newsletter, where we hold space for all the beautiful ways Autistic and Neurodivergent people exist, feel, move, and thrive. This week, we're spotlighting Autistic joy and glimmers, stimming, and the power of sensory-affirming environments, because celebration doesn't have to be loud to be real, and joy doesn't have to be big to be revolutionary.

June is also *Pride Month*, and here at GRANN, we honour the deep intersections between Autism and LGBTQIA+ identities. So many in our community live at the heart of both - queer, trans, Autistic, ADHD, disabled -and bring rich, layered insight into what it means to live authentically in a world that often misunderstands us.

This edition is about reclaiming what feels good, safe, and true. Whether it's through your favourite stim, a ritual of comfort, a passionate interest, or simply time spent with people who affirm your whole self, we hope this issue helps you connect with glimmers of calm and joy.

™ In this issue:

What is *Autistic Joy*, and why does it matter?

Stimming is communication, not something to be suppressed

Tools to support sensory safety and restorative space at home

Spotlights on Neurodivergent creators and affirming books

This month, and always, we're reminding each other: *joy is resistance*, *rest is necessary*, *and stimming is beautiful*.

In solidarity,
The Collaborators @ <u>GRANN</u>

Celebrating Autistic Joy

Everyday magic in movement, comfort, and connection

So much of what is written about autism centres around struggle, deficit, or what needs to be "managed." But at GRANN, we know that *Autistic joy* is real, powerful, and worth celebrating, especially because it often shows up in the small, beautiful moments that others might overlook.

So this is a little nudge, a reminder to continue to flip the narrative.

If you hear people asking how they can make Autistic people more "tolerable" to the world, remind them to ask:

What makes Autistic people feel alive, safe, and expressive, instead.

For many Autistic and Neurodivergent people, joy is found in the quiet, sensoryrich, or deeply focused spaces where we are free to be fully ourselves. A well-loved stim toy or texture that grounds us.

The rhythm of flapping, rocking, or tapping to our own internal beat.

A perfectly aligned collection, a deep-interest we could talk about forever.

A shirt that *feels right*, a food that comforts without question.

Being in community with others who *get it* - no masking required.

Take the time to soak in the moments with your Autistic joy!

Take photos, share it with your community, create a new art project centered on it - build a visual love letter to the ways we thrive, *not just survive - and celebrate your Autistic joy, your way!*



Autistic people often experience the world differently, and sometimes joy can come in small, deeply meaningful moments. In the Neurodivergent community, these moments are called "glimmers", tiny sparks of happiness or safety that soothe our nervous system. Glimmers can be "tiny moments of awe... moments that spark joy & evoke the inner calm". Clinical social worker Deb Dana, who coined the term in therapy, describes glimmers as "small moments when our biology is in a place of connection or regulation, which cues our nervous system to feel safe or calm". Unlike big, grand experiences, glimmers are micromoments, brief, gentle events that steadily strengthen our sense of well-being.

Glimmers matter because they are *autistic affirming*: they come from within our own interests and sensory world, not from outside expectations. The wider Autistic Community has noted that glimmers often link to our passions or sense of justice, "I feel a sense of inner calm and balance when imbalances are addressed". In other words, feeling joyful or safe in a way that aligns with our authentic Autistic selves can rebuild hope and calm amid life's challenges. Glimmers are the flip side of triggers, instead of danger signals, they tell our brains "this is okay". Over time, noticing and stocking up these glimmers can become a powerful self-care practice, giving us tools to soothe and uplift ourselves when we need it most.

Glimmers in Autistic Life

Autistic joy shines through so many everyday experiences. Often it's *sensory*: the warmth of sunlight on your face, the smooth slide of silk, the first sip of a favourite drink, or the satisfying crunch of a snack. A community member at *Stimpunks Foundation* shares that "touching something that is very soft... can give me a spark of joy" and even lead to a happy dance while eating a good steak dinner. Glimmers also come from special interests, those passions that captivate us. Another community member explains that "My special interests are my lifeline... Special interests bring autistic joy. Autistic joy is a feeling like no other". When we dive into a beloved subject or hobby, time may disappear and our brain lights up with excitement and meaning. Autistic joy is often physical and expressive.

We might release intense happiness through stimming - rocking, flapping, humming, or dancing.

"...completely absorbs us... [we] often release this feeling through stimming." Autistic Community member, on stimming as Autistic joy.

In those moments, every neuron tingles with warmth and excitement. Rituals and routines can be glimmers too: repeated patterns that feel just right. "through devotion, ritual, dance, movement, sounding, and drumming." - Autistic Community member on finding joy through immersive activities that free the spirit and connect her body to the world.

Even small rituals like bedtime routines or arranging a favourite collection can provide a gentle, reliable glow of comfort.

Sensory Comforts: Autistic people often find joy in sensory details. A cozy blanket, favourite foods or textures, soothing music, nature sounds or sights these simple pleasures send messages of calm to our nervous system.

Special Interests: Passionate interests (from animals or art to science or gaming) are legendary sources of autistic joy. Immersing ourselves in something we love can feel euphoric. Special interests can "make Autism feel incredible" and bring "a feeling like no other".

Stimming and Movement: Joy often demands movement. Jumping, hand-flapping, or repetitive motion (aptly named "happy stims") help express and deepen the feeling. Autistic people notice that unlike neuronormative folks who might "let go" of happiness quickly, we get absorbed by it and may stim to release the energy.

Rituals & Routines: Predictable patterns can be profoundly comforting. Engaging in a beloved ritual - whether it's drumming, a morning routine of tea and music, or a creative flow activity - can spark glimmers of safety and joy. These moments reinforce autonomy by being entirely of our own choosing.

No two autistic people will have the exact same glimmers, just as no two people share the exact same fingerprint. In fact, sources of Autistic joy "may be as many and varied as Autistic people are themselves": they include special interests, stimming or sensory-seeking activities, deep connection with loved ones or pets, time in nature, finding "neurokin" (like-minded friends), and being our authentic selves. In short, anything that aligns with our true interests and comforts can kindle those tiny but powerful sparks of happiness.

Autonomy, Authenticity, and Joy

Glimmers shine a light on how Autism shapes joy in unique ways. Rather than seeking outside approval, glimmers often come from *within*: from doing what feels right for us. Autism advocates emphasise that Autistic joy is deeply linked to our authentic selves.

As Autistic Community members note, "Autistic joy is not just about happiness, it's about experiencing life in a way that is deeply authentic to one's Autistic identity".

In Autistic joy, there's often "unrestrained expression or intense hyperfocus", differences that distinguish our experience of joy from the general public's. Importantly, glimmers underscore autonomy: they're not happiness handed to us by society's standards, but celebrations we create for ourselves. Autistic joy isn't contingent on success, applause, or even other people. Instead, it arises from self-acceptance and inner flow.

"It's an embodied, heart-led... experience that transcends external validation and is accessed from within". It is a state of being - "a free-flowing life force... a well within my heart" - not something we switch on only when others approve.

This contrasts with more "traditional" ideas of happiness, which often focus on achievements or global satisfaction. Rather than waiting for big milestones (like a promotion or a party), Autistic glimmers remind us that real joy can come in tiny, everyday moments. We listen to our bodies and instincts to know what genuinely makes us happy. In glimmers, we find safe, affirming cues that it's okay to feel joy our way. We are not simply following someone else's script; we are tuning into our own frequency. As Autistic consultant Becca Lory Hector beautifully puts it, on the Autistic frequency "life's glimmers are just a little bit brighter"- showing that the world can sparkle differently for us, and that's something to cherish, not hide.

Celebrating Joy in All Its Forms

Learning to notice and celebrate glimmers is a joyful act of self-care and Neurodiversity affirmation. By sharing our glimmers - whether with friends, family, or the wider community - we also teach others that Autism can bring profound wonder and delight.

"My Autistic joy is one of my favourite things about being Autistic."-Autistic Community member.

When we clap for the small victories and comforts that light us up, we reinforce that our feelings are valid. We cultivate a more inclusive understanding of happiness, where jumping up and down with excitement or needing a quiet corner to stim are all recognised as beautiful expressions of joy.

In the GRANN community and beyond, every person's glimmers are worth honouring. Even on hard days, finding one tiny delight - the scent of a flower, a tune that makes you smile, a well-worn sweater - can send a calming message to your nervous system. These micro-moments build up, slowly strengthening our trust in ourselves to listen to our inner needs. These uplifting small sparks "can help increase our well-being" and "allow us to feel hope when lost".

Ultimately, celebrating glimmers is about celebrating *autonomy* and authenticity. It means giving ourselves permission to be unfiltered and to relish what naturally excites us. It means recognising that happiness doesn't have to look a certain way - sometimes it's a butterfly landing on your hand, a night of building Gundam, or simply the perfect warmth of a sunny spot. These moments might be quiet or quirky, but they are genuine. By embracing and sharing our glimmers, we honour the rich diversity of Autistic joy. After all, every small sparkle of happiness is a victory worth celebrating, and every Autistic person deserves to live in a world that appreciates *their* unique kind of joy.



Stimming Is Communication

Movement is not a disruption - it's expression.

Stimming (short for self-stimulatory behaviour) is a natural and meaningful part of how we exist in the world. It can look like repetitive movements or sounds like hand-flapping, rocking, bouncing, echolalia, pacing, or tapping, but it's not "random" or "bad behaviour". For many Autistic people, *stimming is a language of the body*, a way to regulate, communicate, find joy, and connect with the world.

Stimming can express:

Excitement or happiness
Stress or overwhelm
Concentration
A need for comfort or regulation

It's not something to be trained away, corrected, or punished. It's an essential part of Neurodivergent expression, and suppressing it can lead to distress, burnout, and disconnection. For some, stimming is how we connect with the world when words are hard. For others, it's how we express intense feelings, especially when we're taught to hide them.

© One community member shared:
"Stimming helps me feel like myself. It's not just something I do, it's something I need."

Stimming is not something that needs to be "fixed" or stopped. In fact, trying to suppress it can cause anxiety, burnout, and even physical pain. Instead, let's shift the focus from stopping stimming to understanding it.

What Helps:

Accept stimming in all forms (even if it looks unfamiliar).

Model curiosity over correction - ask "What helps you feel calm right now?"

Offer safe tools: chewies, fidgets, fabric squares, or movement-affirming spaces.

Challenge stigma in schools, therapy, and public places.

When we embrace stimming as communication, we honour Neurodivergent needs, and create more affirming, inclusive spaces.



My Sensory Profile

Understanding what helps me feel calm, safe, and regulated
This worksheet helps others understand what makes my brain and body feel
good, what might overwhelm me, and how to support me when I'm having a
hard time.

Everyone has sensory needs, it's okay to be different!

My Name (or Nickname):
Date:
Filled in by: (Me / Parent / Educator / Therapist / Other)
Sounds I like
Examples: soft music, fans, nature sounds, humming
•
•
•
Sounds I avoid
Examples: alarms, yelling, loud chewing, school bells
•
•
•
Things I like to see
Examples: fairy lights, patterns, favourite colours, nature
•
•
•
Things I don't like to see

Examples: flickering lights, busy posters, bright sunlight

Smells I like Examples: vanilla, eucalyptus, no smell at all Smells I dislike Examples: perfume, cleaning products, food smells • Foods I like (textures, tastes, temperatures) Examples: crunchy chips, cold yogurt, soft rice • Foods I dislike (or find hard to eat) Examples: spicy food, mixed textures, hot meals • **Movements I enjoy** Examples: rocking, fast spinning, swinging, dancing Movements I don't like Examples: soft hugs or touch, being picked up, sudden stops • Things that help me feel calm Examples: quiet space, headphones, deep-pressure, stimming • Things that make me feel overwhelmed or anxious

Things I like to touch

Examples: soft blankets, squishy toys, pets, warm water

Examples: scratchy clothes, seams, sticky things, mess

Things that feel uncomfortable to touch

Examples: being rushed, crowded spaces, too many demands

•

My Favourite Stims

(e.g., hand flapping, tapping, humming, rocking)

•

•

•

How others can support me

Things you can do to help me feel safe and regulated

•

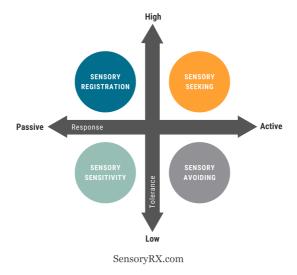
•

Something I want you to know about me:

(Optional - what I wish people understood about my sensory needs or how I experience the world)

•

This profile can change! Our needs change day to day - this is just a snapshot. Let's keep checking in.



Make a "Sensory-Affirming Space at Home" Guide

A calm, customisable space where you or your child can decompress, stim, and feel safe

Simple, budget-friendly ways to create a sensory-affirming corner at home, no renovation required. Whether it's a corner, a room, or a blanket fort, a sensory-affirming space is a dedicated area that honours your body, your rhythms, and your right to rest.

Ideas include:

Why It Matters

Neurodivergent people often live in high-demand, high-sensory environments. A safe space offers a chance to:

Recover from overstimulation

Regulate through preferred sensory input

Practice self-soothing, stimming, or stillness

Feel ownership and comfort without performance

Core Elements to Include: Sound

Noise-cancelling headphones
Soft background music or white noise
A "quiet" sign for family members
Earplugs or soundproof curtains

Lighting

Warm or dimmable lighting
Fairy lights or lava lamps
Avoid harsh overhead lights
Access to natural light (with curtain option)

Scent

Optional: essential oils (lavender, peppermint, eucalyptus)
Unscented if olfactory sensitivity is high
A "scent-free" zone is valid and important

Tactile Comfort

Weighted blanket or lap pad
Beanbags, squishmallow-style pillows, soft rugs
Textured fabrics or fidget-friendly objects
Soft pyjamas or comfort clothes nearby

Movement Options

Mini-trampoline, swing chair, or yoga ball
Rocking chair or foot swing
Space to pace or stim safely
Resistance bands or body socks

Stock the Space With Sensory Tools

Fidget toys (spinners, cubes, tangles)
Stimming tools (chewelry, slinkies, hand massagers)
Books, drawing tools, music playlists
Special interest or "deep focus" items (puzzles, figurines, fixations)

Make It Flexible and Consent-Led

Allow your child (or yourself) to adjust and personalise the space Include visual supports, timers, or "do not disturb" signs Ask: "What would make this feel safer/more calming today?"

Respect Sensory Autonomy

No forced sharing - this space is sacred Honour the need for silence, movement, or retreat Let stimming, fidgeting, and regulation happen freely Don't interrupt with tasks or questions unless invited

Optional Add-ons

Visual schedules or routine cards
A "feelings board" to communicate emotions
A mirror (if helpful for grounding)
A "first, then" board for transitions
A basket of snacks/water for sensory hunger or thirst

Tips:

This space doesn't need to be perfect. It just needs to feel *safe*.

Neurodivergent adults deserve sensory-affirming spaces too, this is not just for kids.

Consider having more than one space (e.g., quiet zone + movement corner).

Ask what feels good, not what looks tidy.

Everyone deserves a space where they can *decompress*, *stim freely*, *and just exist*.



GRANN Body Doubling & Parallel Play Sessions -Starting Monday, June 16! We're excited to share that GRANN's online Body Doubling and Parallel Play sessions will begin as a trial starting the week of Monday, June 16th!

These gentle, neuro-affirming spaces are designed to support motivation, connection, and co-regulation - whether you're tackling a task, creating something, or simply need company while doing your own thing.

- Body Doubling: Need help starting or staying on task? Come sit with us (virtually) while we each do our own thing.
- Parallel Play: Prefer quiet presence over conversation? Join a shared (virtual) space with no pressure to talk or perform just being together is enough.
 - Prefer to book a 1:1 session? No worries. We're trialling this too!
 - Trial Period: We're trialling different session times and formats based on community interest.

EOIs (Expressions of Interest) now open for: Individual sessions (1:1 co-regulation space) Small group sessions (2 - 8 people max)

Please contact GRANN to express your interest or request a time that works for you:

enquiries.grann@gmail.com

• Or message us directly on <u>Messenger</u>

Let us know what kind of support feels good for you. These sessions are community-led, flexible, and low-pressure. *Come as you are*.

More information will be provided via Facebook and in upcoming GRANN newsletters.



Books about Autism and Neurodivergence

Identity, Advocacy & Lived Experience

Sensory: Life on the Spectrum: An Autistic Comics Anthology by Bex Ollerton A vibrant and heartfelt collection of comics by Autistic creators, exploring the sensory experiences, insights, and everyday moments of life on the spectrum through powerful visuals and storytelling.

The Awesome Autistic Guide to Being Proud by Yenn Purkis & Tanya Masterman

A confidence-building guide that encourages Autistic young people to celebrate their identity, embrace self-worth, and stand tall in a world that often misunderstands them.

The Awesome Autistic Guide to Other Humans by Yenn Purkis & Tanya Masterman

A neuro-affirming guide to understanding social dynamics and relationships from an Autistic perspective, without the pressure to mask or conform.

Funny, You Don't Look Autistic by Michael McCreary

A witty and insightful memoir by Autistic stand-up comedian Michael McCreary,
exploring life, diagnosis, and the realities of navigating a world full of
stereotypes, with humour and heart.

Ten Steps to Nanette: A Memoir Situation by Hannah Gadsby
A raw, powerful, and darkly funny memoir tracing Hannah Gadsby's journey
through trauma, identity, Neurodivergence, and queer pride, culminating in the
groundbreaking comedy special Nanette.

The Autism Spectrum Guide to Sexuality and Relationships by Dr. Emma
Goodall

A practical, inclusive guide offering Autistic individuals tools to understand and navigate sexuality, consent, and relationships from a neurodivergent-affirming perspective.

Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's by John Elder Robison

A memoir detailing the author's life before and after his diagnosis of Asperger's

Syndrome.

NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity by Steve Silberman

An in-depth exploration of the history and science of Autism and neurodiversity.

Children's Picture Books

I Am Odd, I Am New by Benjamin GirouxA heartfelt poem by a young Autistic boy, beautifully illustrated to express feelings of uniqueness and self-acceptance.

Do You Want to Play? Making Friends with an Autistic Kid by Daniel Share-Strom

An engaging story that fosters understanding and friendship between Neurodivergent and neuronormative children.

Frankie's World by Aoife Dooley

A graphic novel exploring the journey of a girl who feels different and seeks to understand her identity.

Middle Grade & Tween Reads

A Kind of Spark by Elle McNicoll

An empowering tale of an Autistic girl campaigning for a memorial in her Scottish town, highlighting themes of advocacy and acceptance.

The Many Mysteries of the Finkel Family by Sarah Kapit
A story about two Autistic sisters who start a detective agency, navigating family
dynamics and personal growth.

Get a Grip, Vivy Cohen! by Sarah Kapit
A novel told through letters, following an Autistic girl who dreams of playing
baseball and finds an unexpected mentor.

The Awesome Autistic Guide to Feelings and Emotions by Yenn Purkis & Tanya Masterman

A supportive and accessible resource helping Autistic tweens and teens understand, name, and navigate emotions with compassion and clarity.

Young Adult & Teen Fiction

Tilly in Technicolor by Mazey Eddings
A romantic comedy featuring Neurodivergent protagonists, exploring love and self-discovery.

Planet Earth Is Blue by Nicole Panteleakos

A poignant story of a non-speaking Autistic girl who believes her missing sister will return for the Challenger launch.

On the Edge of Gone by Corinne Duyvis

A science fiction novel set during an impending apocalypse, featuring an Autistic teen protagonist, written by an Autistic author.

The State of Grace by Rachael Lucas
A young adult novel about a teenage girl with Asperger's navigating the complexities of adolescence.

The Awesome Autistic Go-To Guide A Practical Handbook for Autistic Teens and Tweens by Yenn Purkis & Tanya Masterman



Autistic & Neurodivergent Resources: Organisations & Community

Stimpunks Foundation

Website: https://stimpunks.org

A disability-led organisation blending mutual aid and advocacy, Stimpunks supports Neurodivergent and disabled people through community care, creativity, and radical accessibility.

Autistic Realms

Website: https://autisticrealms.com/

Autistic Realms shares neurodivergent perspectives, educational resources, and affirming tools rooted in lived experience and systemic critique.

Emergent Divergence Autism and Neurodivergence

Website: https://emergentdivergence.com/

This platform offers training, writing, and consultancy centred on Autistic identity, trauma-informed practice, and Neurodivergent-led change.

Jade Farrington – Neurodivergent Counsellor and Rewind Trauma Therapist Website: https://jadefarrington.com/

Jade Farrington provides affirming, Neurodivergent-led counselling and trauma recovery using gentle methods tailored to Autistic, ADHD, and otherwise ND individuals.

Neurodiversity Manitoba
Website: https://neurodiversitymb.ca/

A Canadian-based hub amplifying neurodivergent voices, offering education, peer support, and advocacy to build inclusive, community-rooted systems that honour diverse minds.

Becca Lory Hector Consultant
Website: https://beccalory.com/

Becca Lory Hector is an openly Autistic advocate, consultant, speaker, and author dedicated to promoting Neurodiversity and inclusivity.



Don't forget to share your thoughts on the GRANN Inc. Name Change

Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc. is evolving! We're exploring a name that better reflects our vision, values, and growing impact as an Autistic & Neurodivergent-led social enterprise.

We're committed to keeping the acronym "GRANN Inc." to honour our roots, but we'd love your views in helping shape what it stands for moving forward. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts by filling out the form via the link below or via the QR code.

https://forms.office.com/r/8f59ac9RE9

Thank you for contributing to the future of GRANN Inc.

Your views help ensure we stay community-led, inclusive, and affirming of

Autistic and Neurodivergent identity.



Rockabilby & Neurokin Events- Supporting RAD Artists

Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?

Did you know that RAD artists are the lowest paid people in the Australian creative industries?

Want to be part of a collective action to improve the payment and representation of and services for RAD artists?

Rockabilby & Neurokin Events are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf and Disabled artists from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.

We won't let RAD artists die from exposure!

Featured artists will be paid \$10 per tshirt sold with their design on it.

Express your interest & submit a design (they don't have to relate to disability)

https://forms.gle/Wcd4enEdL9sMQTsXA



Neurokin Arts Festival

Showcasing diverse Neurodivergent creativity whilst fostering community, culture and leadership

Full schedule of both weekends available now, one online and one in person in Castlemaine central Victoria, with two ways to pay, from your own pocket or NDIS budget.

Get an invoice for NDIS: https://forms.gle/27dDqctDeEjyHb2C8

Find out more about the festival & buy tickets: www.neurokin.org.au



<u>Rethinking Suspensions: Collaborative</u> <u>Approaches to Keep Kids in School</u>

Every suspended day is a lost opportunity to learn.

On Monday 2 June, the <u>A Right to Learn Campaign</u> is bringing together leading voices in inclusive education for an essential webinar.

This 60-minute session features experts from Community Resource Unit Queensland's Inclusive Education team, Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion's education advocacy specialists, and the lived experience of a parent advocate who has successfully navigated these challenges.

Why attend?

Understand your child's rights in the education system

Discover collaborative approaches that work for families and schools

Connect with advocates fighting for inclusive education

Be part of the movement creating systemic change

Details:

Date: Monday 2 June 2025

Time: 6 - 7pm
Platform: Zoom
Cost: Free

Click here to register now

Accessibility: There will be an Auslan interpreter and live captioning. If you have any other accessibility requirements, please email QAI at qai@qai.org.au.

Together, we're building an education system that truly works for every child.

A Right to Learn Campaign

P.S. Can't make it? **Register anyway** and you'll get sent the recording.





Autism Queensland (AQ): Autism, Stress and Anxiety Workshop

Date: Tuesday 3 June 2025 **Time:** 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Venue: Mindcare, 147 Goondoon St, Gladstone Q 4405

Cost: \$180.00 inc. GST

Forms provided for NDIS to cover the cost for both plan & self managed participants.

This workshop is designed to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the unique relationship between autism and anxiety, offering practical strategies to support young autistic people to manage stress and anxiety in daily life.

<u>Click here to register</u>

Check out AQ's upcoming webinars and local workshops via their website below: https://autismqld.com.au/services/workshops/







Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc.

enquiries.grann@gmail.com

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