

# The Under- and Misdiagnosis of Women with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mikayla VanNest

Psychology and Women & Gender Studies



## Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), according to the DSM-5 (2013), is a neurodevelopmental disorder typically characterized by deficits in social interactions and repetitive and restrictive patterns of behavior. Diagnostic criteria and diagnoses have changed and developed over time and more continues to be learned to this day. One area of interest in recent years is the differences in ASD compared to men and women. The approximate ratio of men to women with ASD is 4:1, but some research has suggested that this may not be as accurate as previously thought. There are many difficulties in recognizing and diagnosing women with ASD due to the female ASD phenotype and improper diagnostic tools. These issues also lead to the misdiagnosis of women with ASD.

## Misdiagnosis

- Affective (Mood) disorders
  - Ex. Depression or bipolar disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Bipolar Personality Disorder
  - Severe depression and suicidal ideation

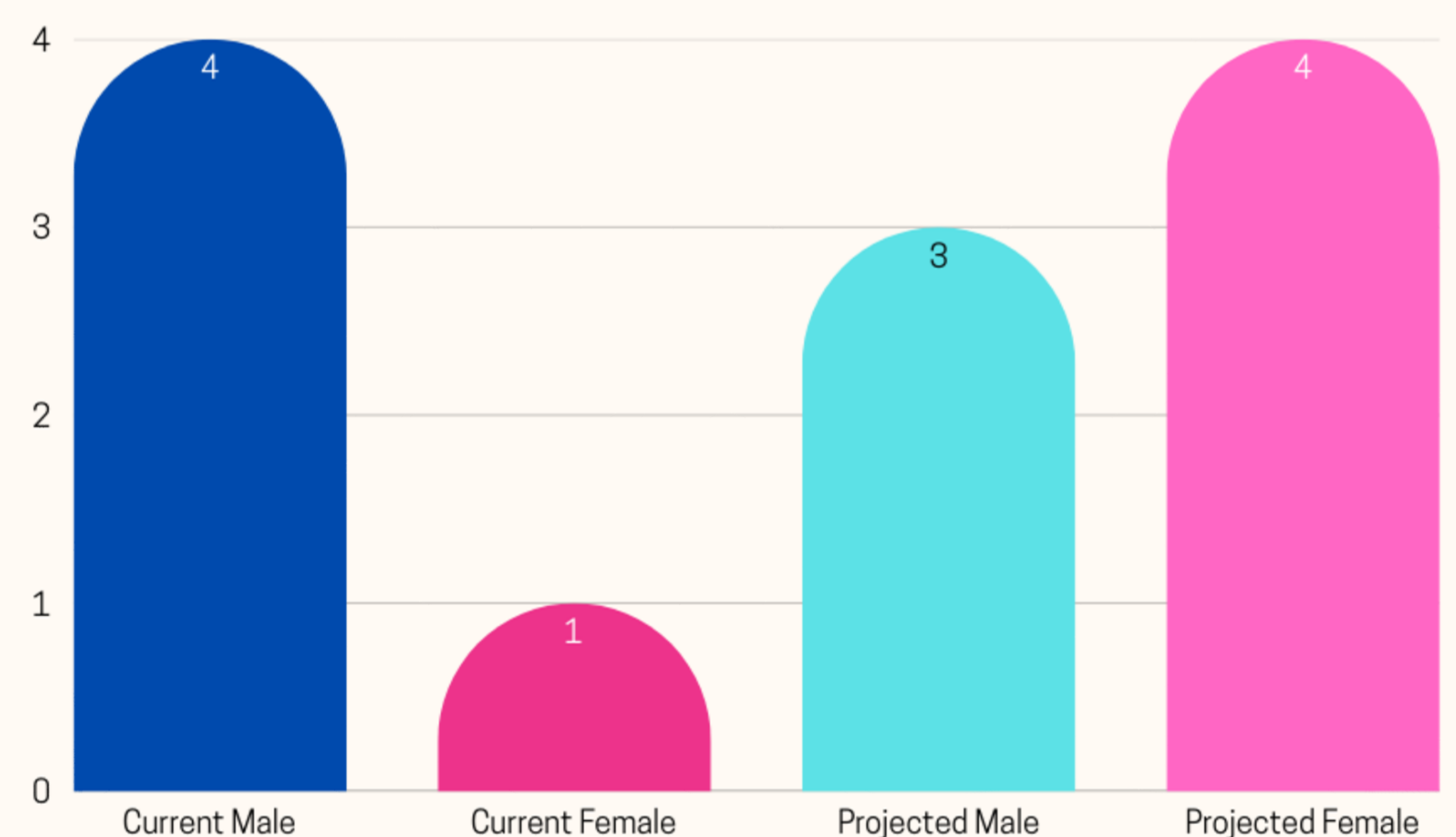
## Female Phenotype

- Female Phenotype Theory: Women get underdiagnosed with ASD due to higher levels of social functioning, reduced externalizing behaviors, and internalization of emotional difficulties
- Higher levels of social functioning and empathy
- Masking: copying the body language and speech patterns of those around them to fit in, make social connections, and hide their autistic traits.
- Gender roles and stereotypes

## Underdiagnosis

- Public awareness of male vs. female phenotype
- True ratio 3:4 vs. Current ratio 4:1
- Diagnostic tools and clinician bias

### What is the True Ratio of Male vs. Female with ASD



## Future Research

- What can be changed about current diagnostic tools for ASD to recognize the female phenotype?
- Do new diagnostic tools need to be made, or can revisions be made to current ones to target this issue?

## References

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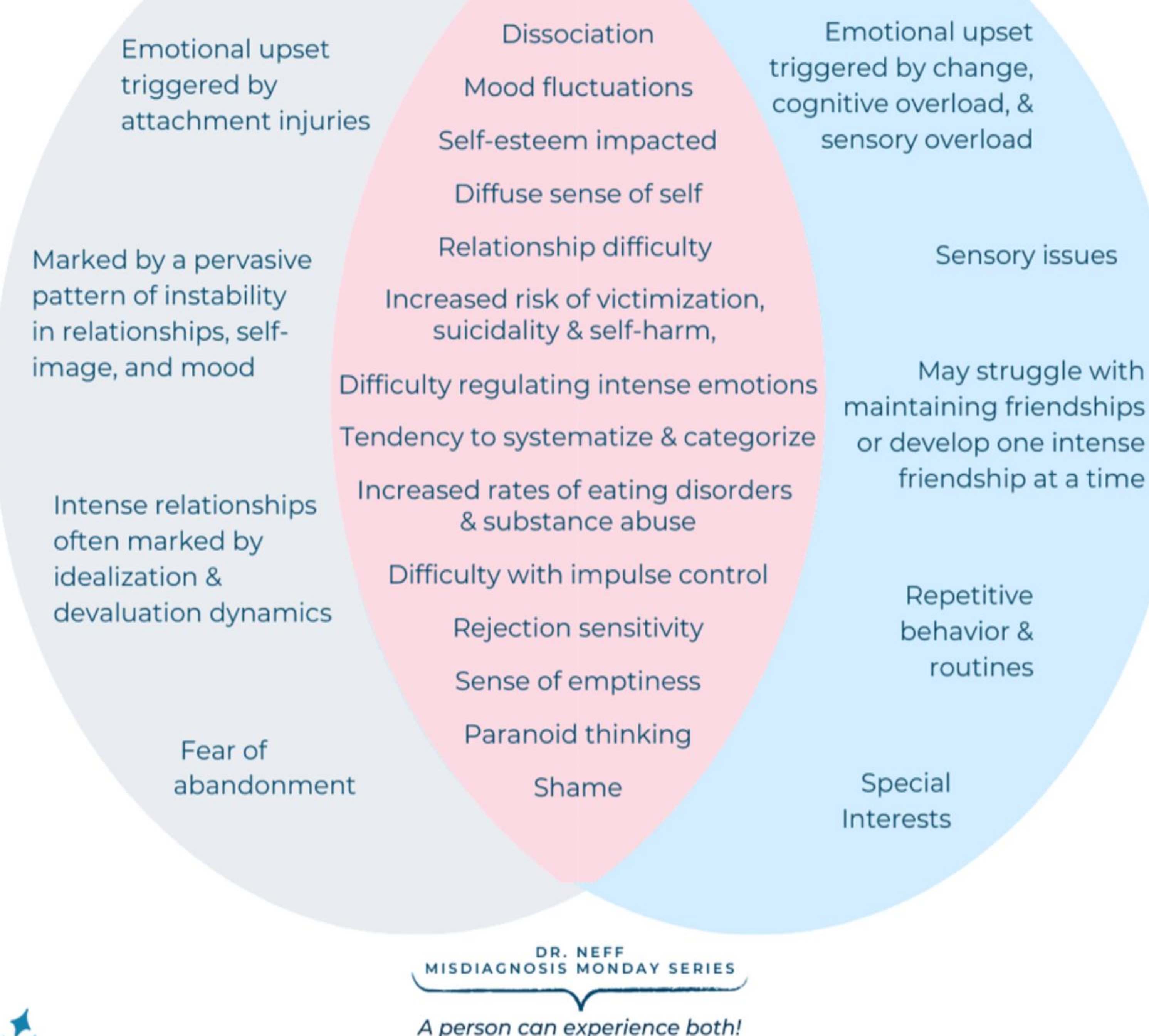
## Misdiagnosis Monday

BPD vs Autism

BPD

OVERLAP

Autism



While this visualization captures common experiences, individual experiences vary. Please note that it is not intended for diagnostic purposes. To learn more, visit <https://neurodivergentinsights.com/misdiagnosis-monday>.

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