

Start Here:



Hard truths for those who care.

INTRODUCTION

Who is Russell?



International Disability Rights Advocate UCLA

Co-Facilitator: "Perspectives on Autism & Neurodiversity"

- 2025 EDDIE Award recipient, Social Impact
- 2024 Els for Autism Advocate of the Year
- 2022 Advocate of the Year - *Autism Society of America*
- Consultant, US Department of Justice
 - Contributor, Psychology Today

Boards/Councils

- The Arc of the United States
 - Next for Autism
- Autism Society of America
 - NextGen Synergy

Passion & Purpose
To Suffer and Endure

Then



Now



Spoken Word
Poem

Dear
Russell,



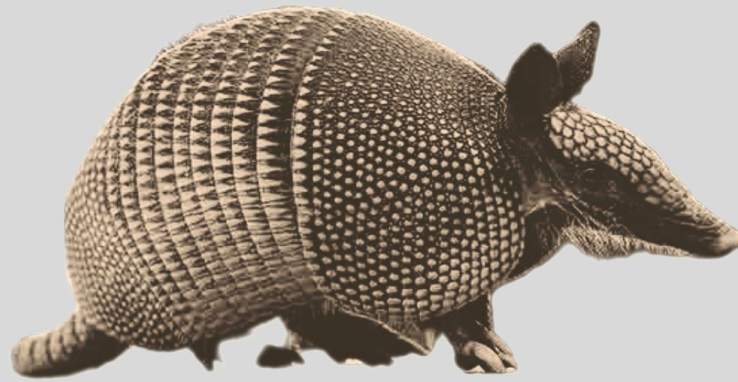
What Is Autism?

The word "autism" is composed of two parts, "aut" and "ism."

The prefix of the word is "aut," which comes from the Greek word "autós," meaning "self." The suffix "ism," also from Greek, implies a state of being or condition.

"State of self"

Autism Analogy



Ludwig Wittgenstein's "The Beetle In the Box"



Beetle = Autism

Box = The individual person

Remember

Autism gives us a shared word, but it doesn't open the box. To truly connect, you have to engage with the individual, not just the concept.

The Power of Human Connection: **Fostering Inclusive Environments**

True inclusion thrives when we recognize individuality & embrace connection.

Nurturing a Feeling of Trust

- Dialogue; talk about what trust means to those around you.
- Validate others' emotions and perspectives to foster connection.
- Respect boundaries to create a safe space for trust to grow.
- Be consistent; Follow through with what you say.
Words MATTER.
- Initiate trust.

Spoken Word
Poem



INCLUSION

DELUSION





The fish trap exists because of the fish. Once you've gotten the fish you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit. Once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning. Once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?



~ Zhuangzi
c. 200 B.C.

Human Connection = Optimized Outcomes

Empower Choice:

Personalize support; one size doesn't fit all.

Rethink Outcomes:

Prioritizing well-being over rigid metrics leads to holistic development.

Build Bridges:

Parent-mediated approaches enhance connection.

The Power of Human Connection

A policeman saved someone from jumping off a building. When asked why he did it, the policeman explained that if he hadn't intervened, he wouldn't have been able to live with himself. This illustrates the idea that true compassion and moral action often arise from a deep, personal sense of integrity rather than from adherence to an external rule or reward.

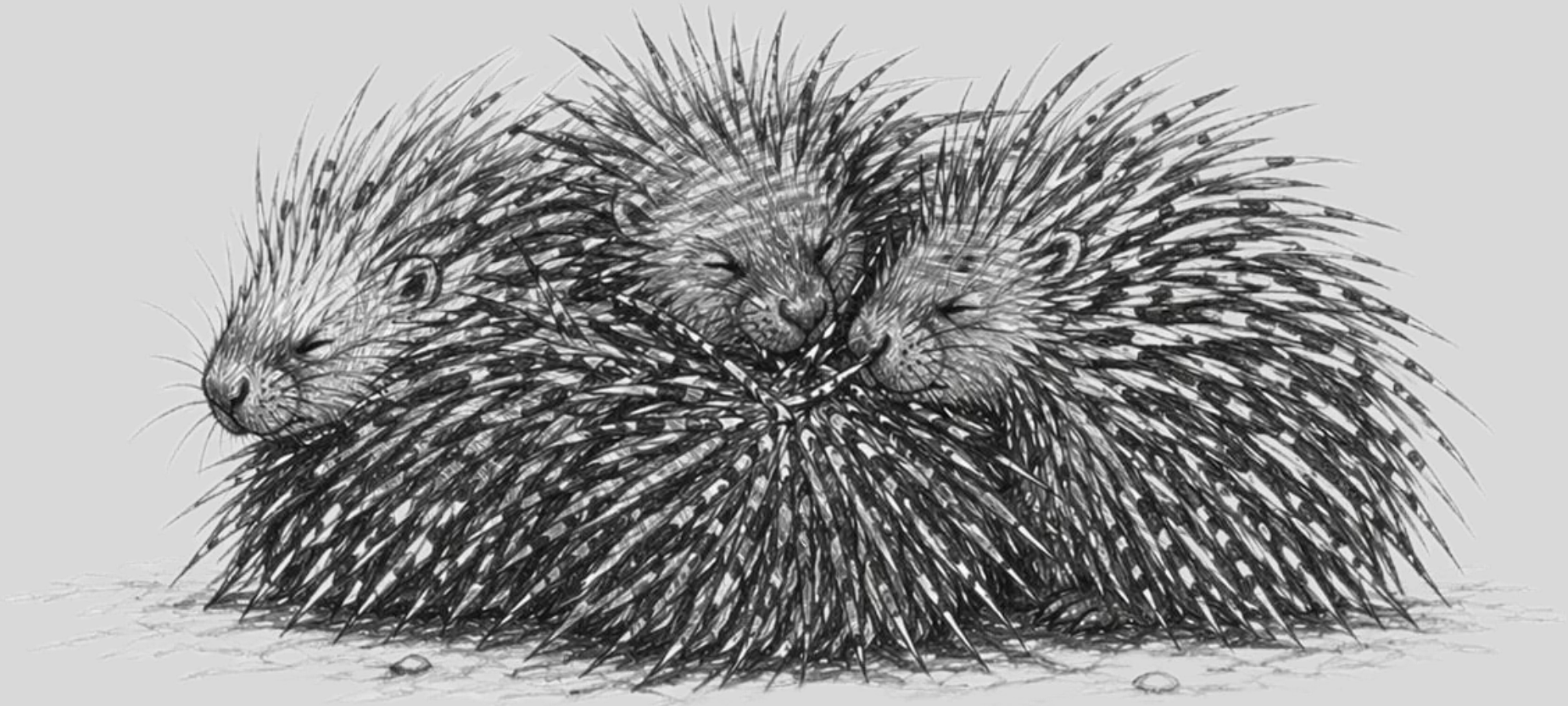
Within each of us lies a deep, unspoken sense of unity, binding us to one another in ways we may never fully see or understand.

**In Saving Another,
He Saved Himself**

The policeman's act was driven by an inner need to preserve his own integrity, showing that true compassion often heals both the giver and the receiver.

The Porcupine Paradox

Meaningful Connections That Hurt



The Helper's Paradox

"Helping" Reduces the Ability to Help And Increases the Chances of Hurting

- The "Helper's High" vs. Burnout: Helping others releases endorphins, excessive caregiving without self-care leads to burnout.
- Creating Dependence (Toxic Helping): Well-intentioned help can make the recipient reliant on the helper, stifling their own growth, autonomy, and confidence.
- The "Collaborative Bottleneck": In workplaces, the most helpful employee can become a bottleneck by having all tasks and knowledge funnel through them, crippling efficiency.
- Helpers often feel intense guilt when needing help themselves, making it "impossible" to ask for assistance.
- Over-functioning leads to under-functioning in others, creating an imbalanced, unsustainable relationship.

Overcoming the Paradox

- **Empowerment:** Focus on training and encouraging others to solve problems, rather than providing immediate solutions.

- **Set Boundaries:** Recognize that you cannot pour from an empty cup and establish healthy boundaries to maintain personal wellness.

The Porcupine Paradox

Meaningful Connections That Hurt

- **Humans need connection.**
- **Closeness inevitably comes with friction, misunderstanding, or hurt.**
- **Too far apart is isolation, too close can feel overwhelming or painful.**
- **Perfect closeness without cost doesn't exist.**





Help v. Support: What's the difference?

Help

- Being aware that we *can* help, then knowing *when* to help
 - Active
 - Consists of encouragement and compassionate guidance
- Includes actionable and pragmatic practices

Support

- Being aware that we don't know how to help
 - Passive
 - Consists of compassion, sincere listening, and validating
- Includes asking what may help with simple "yes" or "no" questions

Food for Thought

If your friend's appendix bursts, you'd call 911. You wouldn't grab a steak knife and start getting to work because you know you're not the best person for the job.

Yet, when it comes to invisible suffering, for some reason we tend to think that we *are* the person for the job.

Nietzsche: Isn't it a bit arrogant to assume that YOU are "the one" to help this person?

Just because someone is suffering and needs help, doesn't mean you're the best one for the job.

Why? Because that makes YOU feel better?

You rob the individual the opportunity to self-discover.

Remember!

The Four Magic Words

“How can I help?”

Metaphors of Care

Doing for



Doing with/Being with



Ally, not savior

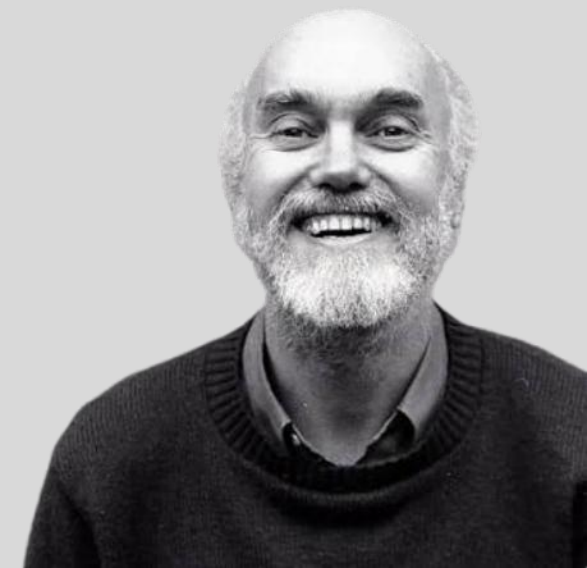
Service > Helping



We're all just walking each other home.

~

Ram Dass





PERSEVERANCE

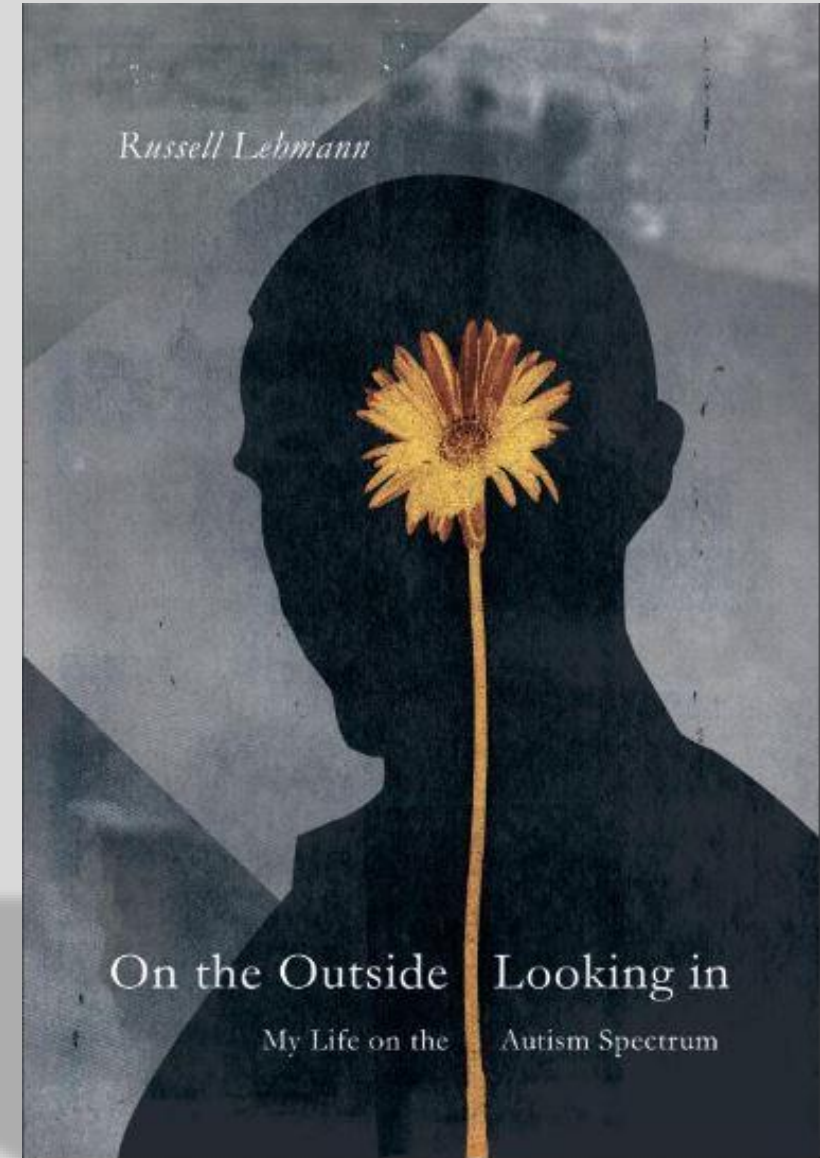
noun

1. steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose, a state, etc., especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement



The Myth of Sisyphus
By Albert Camus

*On the Outside
Looking in*
\$30





Keynotes, trainings, and consultations

Let's change the world... together!



Contact me at:
www.RussL.co