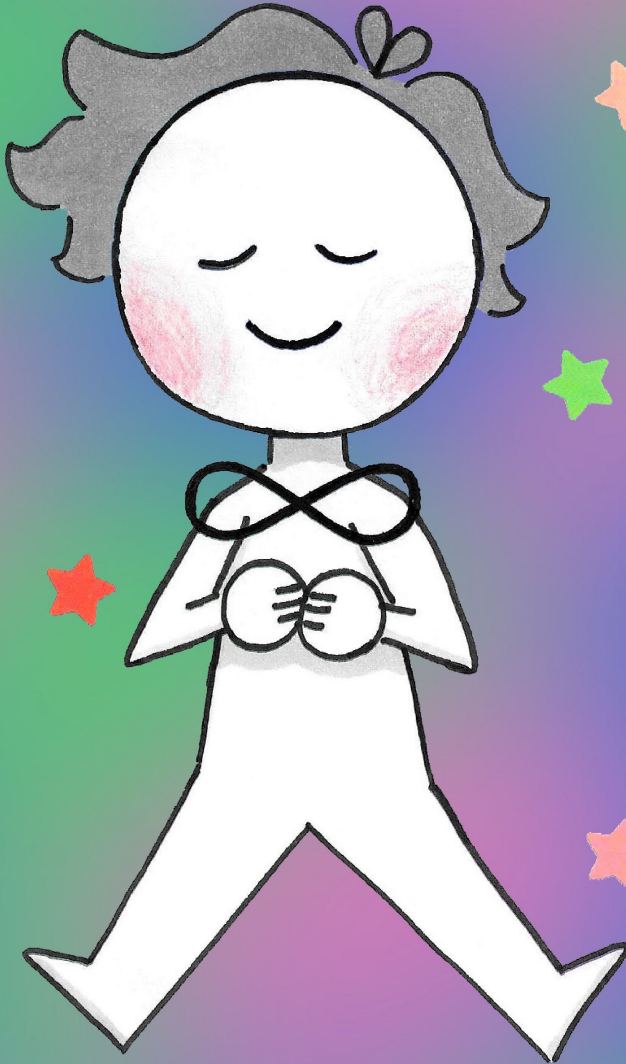


I AM BEING



A comic by ATLAS

In collaboration with YDAS

Hi there!!
Before I start the
comic I suppose
I should
introduce myself!

Yo!



My name is
AJ!

Im 17 & from
Naarm (Melb)!

Im Queer & Trans



And Im Autistic
& have ADHD

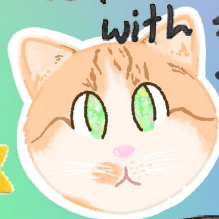
★ My pronouns are:
It - He - They

★ Im an artist

★ I have a cat!
(His name is Harry)

★ And Im pretty new
to drawing comics

★ You might be able to
tell I like decorating
with stars!



My
cat!!

This is Lil Dude!

Its just my persona but a tad simpler. I wouldn't want to be painting a Mona Lisa on every page...

Everything about it is the same as me, same pronouns, interests, cat, etc. Well except for the name. I call him lil dude cos look at him! He's a lil dude!



I will be taking over from here! My story depicts my experience as a queer neuro-divergent person. It tells my journey through intersectionality self acceptance & community! ♡

Often times when I was growing up I would find myself being "othered", I felt out of place or different. I was often called a "tomboy" when I was younger, it wasn't negative & I did feel like and call myself a tomboy. (I later realised that I'm trans) While it wasn't inherently a bad thing, none of my friends were really tomboys. And, well it felt lonely sometimes.

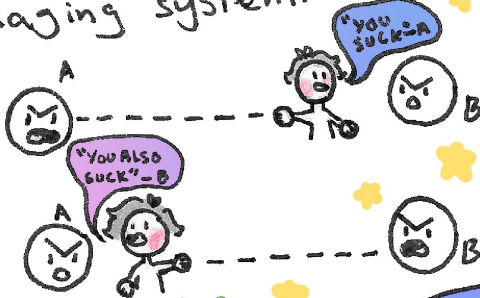


I wore the pants version of the uniform to school every year.

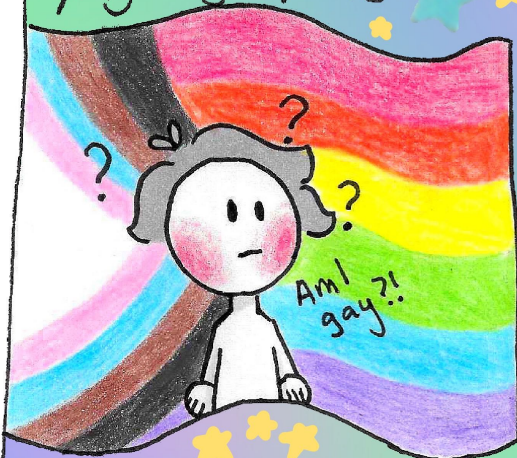
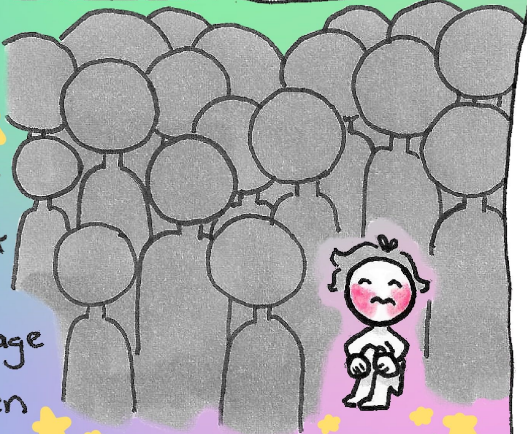


Other times I found myself feeling different was when I would get in trouble at school for not having the understanding of unspoken social rules. One specific occasion where I didn't understand why I got in trouble was when two of my friends were fighting & used me as a messaging system.

Friend "A" would tell me to go tell friend "B" that she was a meanie. Friend B would then tell me to go back & say that friend A had ugly hair. I didn't quite understand that it was bad & not helping the situation because I was never told why it was wrong. I just did what my friends asked.

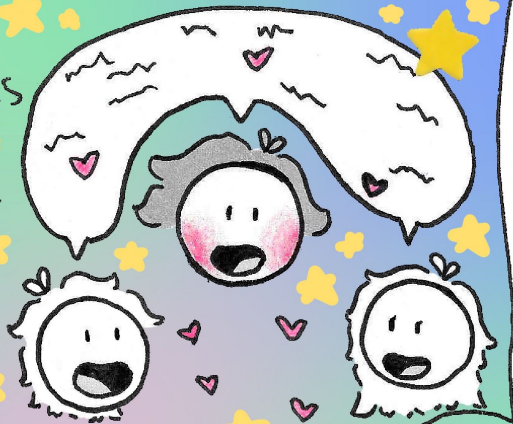


As I went into high-school, the otherness did not go away, it became much worse. All of a sudden I was one of the very few kids from the tiny school who never went on big camps or excursions, I was no longer above average at school. I didn't know many people at all or even play any sports.



For a long while highschool felt terrible. But over time I slowly started to learn about other people, I learnt about whole communities & eventually about myself. I started to realise that I was queer & that my interests weren't so odd. I made a lot of friends.

I found myself apart of a small community. Things started feeling not so lonely. I had found groups of people that I could relate to. I began forming a lot of really close & long lasting connections.



The more people I met & the more time I spent with all these new friends I learnt things, I learnt so many things about the world around me.

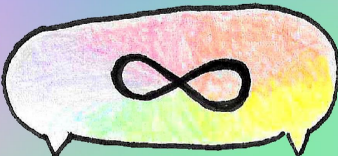
I was also spending much more time online, reading & browsing, & that's when I eventually started to figure out that I was neurodivergent. A lot of my feelings & experiences aligned with what I was reading & what my NO friends were also experiencing.

I questioned & researched for a while. I began feeling really comfortable with my neurodivergent identity, though at some point I hit a rock in the road that completely threw me off.

I overall just wasn't doing well and felt uncomfortable, I felt like my self diagnosis was invalid & I was feeling a lot of internalised ableism. Having worked through internalised homophobia I thought this would be easier.

It was not.

I spent a long time, over a year, rebuilding my relationship with myself & my confidence in who I am, I learnt much more & met new great people like me. Everyone was so supportive and kind. ♥



ATLAS Asides!

Here is a little break from the comic so I can highlight some of my past & present hyperfixations & special interests!



Games!

- Legend of Zelda BOTW & TOTK
- Splatoon
- Minecraft

Art!

- Lino/Printmaking
- Artbooks
- Music (MXMTOON & Mitski)
- Colours
- Zines



Shows & Movies!

- Spiderman Into The Spiderverse
- Fantastic Mr. Fox
- Turning Red
- Bluey
- The Owl House

Sometimes I go through periods where I don't feel so strongly about some of these things & it can be sad but they will always hold a special place in my heart! Your interests are special don't be ashamed!

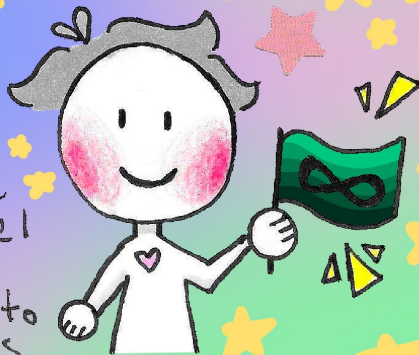


As I continued to feel more comfortable in myself, I worked up the courage to address it with my psychologist, and she agreed with my self diagnosis, it was a very comforting affirmation to have. After about 8 months of being on a waitlist I saw a psychiatrist who like my psychologist, also agreed with me.

I have never felt more confident & happy with where im at. I am still learning how to be kind to myself, but I feel like im getting better at it, & the people around me make sure I know Im deserving of love.

One thing I felt very close to when I learnt about it was the term "Autigender" the identity of those who feel that their gender & being autistic are intrinsically intertwined. It was so freeing to finally find something that described me so accurately. For me Autigender makes me feel seen. I love being who I am, and learning about myself & things in this world. And as much as I've learnt over the past couple years, I haven't worked out everything. And thats ok,

Im taking my time.



Thank You!





Thank you so much for reading my comic! This is the biggest project I've ever done & I'm so thankful to YDAS for giving me this opportunity! It was incredibly fun & I am so happy with how it turned out!



That's Me!

Commissioned portrait of me by @HushCamara (Twitter & Insta!)

My Cat!





This is my cat Harry!

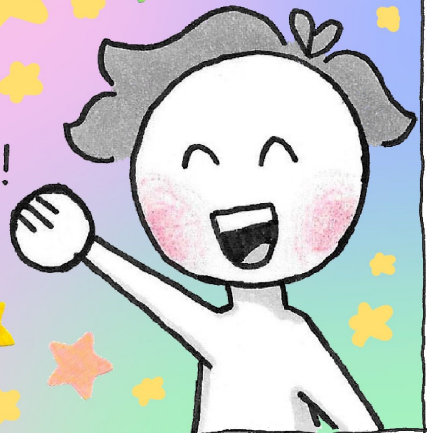
About the author!


Hi! My name is AJ, I'm a young queer & trans artist from Naarm (Melb). I'm neurodivergent so I normally draw stuff about my hyperfixations & special interests!

I've been making art my whole life & have fallen in love with mixed media! I love printmaking/Linocutting, sketching, painting & digital art! You can find me here:

 @cebderrfluidfool
 @Afooldoesart

YDAS: www.ydas.org.au



Good bye & thanks! 



KLAS