Title: Welcome (Autism MOOC)
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Mick Grimley:
Hello. My name is Mick Grimley.

I’d like to say a warm welcome to everyone who is about to take part in our Autism MOOC.

The idea behind this MOOC originally came about when I met with our education staff here at Swinburne to encourage them to think outside of the square and to think about what we should and could be doing in the education space. I believe that universities should have mechanisms for supporting our communities. It’s just not enough to use our expertise on academic pursuits alone.

We knew that our expertise lay in online education and that we had experience in inclusive education and a couple of us had an interest in autism. So it wasn’t very long before we came up with the idea of this MOOC. Beyond that, as I started to unpack the idea some more, I realised that the autism community was crying out for practical advice and support and that much of the academic research around autism concentrated on theoretical perspectives rather than practical issues much needed by families and carers of individuals with autism.

So this Autism MOOC takes a very practical approach. It approaches autism through the lens of inclusivity, fostering understanding and equipping participants with the skills and knowledge to solve practical issues in the lives of individuals with autism for better social, emotional and educational outcomes.

The MOOC is aimed at family members and practitioners involved in the day to day issues of managing the environment surrounding an individual with autism. It takes a scenario-based learning approach, emphasising that there is not one correct way to approach different situations. We also have to recognise that family members and support workers who support individuals with autism every day are experts in themselves. And if we can get all of that knowledge together in one place
such as in this MOOC, we have a tremendous resource for all of those people who are struggling with issues that others have also struggled with along their journey.

So again, welcome to our Autism MOOC. Make the most of the tremendous resources of others who are in a similar situation and who are here to help. And along the way, we hope that you are able to pick up some valuable skills for solving real-life problems. I now want to hand you over to Emma Donaldson who is going to take you through a few of the operational aspects of the MOOC.

Emma L. Donaldson:

Hi, everyone. My name is Emma Donaldson and I’ll be new through the operational components of the Autism MOOC.

As a participant, you will be guided through content specific to the weekly topic and engage in activities that build on knowledge and understanding of autism spectrum disorders. We understand that many carers are very knowledgeable about the theories and research associated with autism but it is rare to find practical advice and support whilst developing the capacity to critically assess information on autism.

We are really hoping to foster connectedness by sharing experiences. There will be content available by viewing videos, listening to podcasts, assessing scenarios and sharing contributions based on your experiences. By engaging in authentic scenarios, we hope you will gain skills to analyse different situations.

As a participant, you are expected to discuss, share stories, support each other, analyse situations and learn strategies for coping and changing the environment to improve the lives of individuals with autism. However, because we have large enrolment numbers, we have to be realistic with what we can do in terms of individual feedback.

We think we have devised some clever ways to do this through built-in feedback mechanisms and the use of experts from around the world. The MOOC is designed for you to choose your own pathway and curate your content depending on the area of interest and the range of scenarios that are available to you each week.

The MOOC will require approximately two hours per week and the materials can be accessed at whatever time suits you. There are no set times as it is a worldwide MOOC and we aim to accommodate for all time zones. As you know, we have launched the MOOC on World Autism Awareness Day and it is an absolute honour.

This week is an orientation week which covers netiquette, e-safety, ethics and online navigation and they will commence the content of the MOOC on 13 April for a six-week duration. Our time zones run on Australian Eastern Standard Time.

Again, it is an absolute pleasure to bring this free course to the world and we look forward to working together with you in the Autism MOOC.

See you soon.