0:04 Hello, I'm Alison Stansfield. I'm the consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Lead of the Leeds

0:09 Autism Diagnostic Service. This is an adult diagnostic service for people of all abilities

0:15 who live in Leeds. The Autism Act 2009, stated that if adults

0:21 want to seek an assessment for diagnosis of autism, they should be able to do so.

0:27 Over the past 5 years, whilst working in the Leeds Autism Diagnostic Service, many professionals

0:33 and carers have come to us asking to have more information and to learn more about autism.

0:40 Unfortunately, they've all got busy jobs and busy lives and often don't have the capacity

0:46 to go for in-depth autism training. Because of this we decided to develop a suite

0:52 of 5 short films to give a brief insight into what it might be like to have autism.

0:59 For the purpose of these films we've interviewed James McGrath, who's a doctor and lecturer

1:04 at Leeds Beckett University and recently diagnosed by our service.

1:09 James is really articulate at expressing his own experience of autism and explaining in

1:15 great detail what it's like for him to have autism.

1:31 I'm 37 years old and one year ago I was diagnosed with autism. This wasn't unexpected...

1:47 although I felt like I was so certain of what the diagnosis would be that it wouldn't be a shock, it was.

1:56 The experience felt of the diagnosis and accepting it, felt a bit like grief actually, I've felt

2:03 at different points of my life.

2:08 I probably could have grown into an adult

2:10 who didn't communicate with people, spend time with people anywhere near as much as

2:14 I do, if it wasn't for a certain experience when I was 15 when I had to do a week's work

2:19 experience, a week out of school, and I asked to go and work in a book shop.

2:26 So at the age of 15 I was suddenly surrounded by these recent graduates who seemed to me

2:34 amazingly glamorous people and they were just so accepting of me.

2:46 Welcome to December's Leeds Cultural Conversation, today I'd like to introduce James McGrath.

2:52 The title of his talk is Autism, Adulthood and Fictions: Reading Autism Portrayals After

2:58 Diagnosis. So let's welcome James.

3:04 Social communication is something that I

3:06 suppose I probably lack the instinct for how to go about it or at least I have less of

3:14 that then most other people around me. So there's a real feeling of performance in quite

3:24 a draining way sometimes just with interaction and daily life.

3:27 This is one of my favourite novels, of any kind, but in particular how it deals with

3:35 autism. Can I just ask, has anyone read that novel? OK, I nearly missed it. But the thing

3:43 is, it just didn't get the kind of cultural attention given to these others things, I

3:48 can't help but think, well the things that do get the big commercial success tend to

3:54 rely and reinforce stereotypes. So this challenges them.

4:12 After teaching there's absolutely no way that I could concentrate on writing or even reading.

4:19 I can't even talk to people on the phone or answer emails, I can't even exchange text

4:24 messages, I can't look at my phone when I've been teaching all day.

4:31 One of the things that really relaxes me is what tends to be called in autistic communities

4:39 "Stimming" so repetitive physical actions. For me, the greatest reward is just pacing

4:49 up and down a room in quite an energetic way. So I go down to this room on the ground floor

4:56 of the house and listen to some, whatever music is most important to me that day, I

5:00 listen to that very loud on headphones and I just pace up and down and that combination

5:05 of physical activity helps me relax, because afterwards I'm a bit tired. That combination

5:13 of physical activity and just the enjoyment of the music, that is what really helps.

5:21 Another kind of stimming is I sort of do this sort of thing a lot. Another kind is I might

5:30 tense my arm muscles until, almost until it hurts, and clenching my jaw as well, those

5:40 are things that I do that are actually physically quite uncomfortable and when I've been doing

5:45 them a lot, my muscles are aware of that, but if there's some kind of sensory input

5:52 that I can't control, like a loud noise in a, it's usually a loud noise or certain kinds

6:01 of quiet noises, then that thing, am I able to think, OK I'm concentrating on my arm,

6:07 it's uncomfortable but I can control it. That is another thing in stimming, it's not always

6:12 comfortable, but it's something you can control. It's a sensory thing you can control.