

Self-Love Series

Session 3:

Embracing Neurodiversity – Getting to Know Your Brain

October 22nd, 2024
7:00pm-8:30pm

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Self-Love Series

- Part 1: Introduction to Loneliness and Isolation
- Part 2: So You Wanna Make (Online) Friends: How to Safely Navigate the (Online) World
- **Part 3: Embracing Neurodiversity: Getting to Know Your Brain**
- Part 4: It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: Building Your Supportive Community and Facilitating Integration

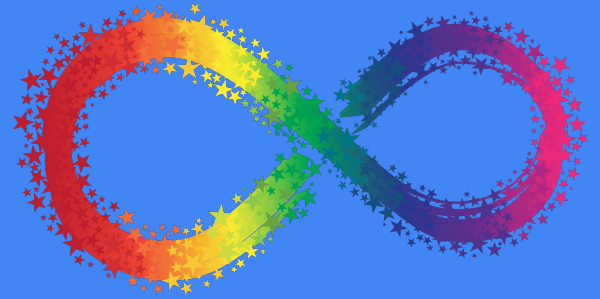
What does Neurodiversity mean to you?

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What is Neurodiversity?



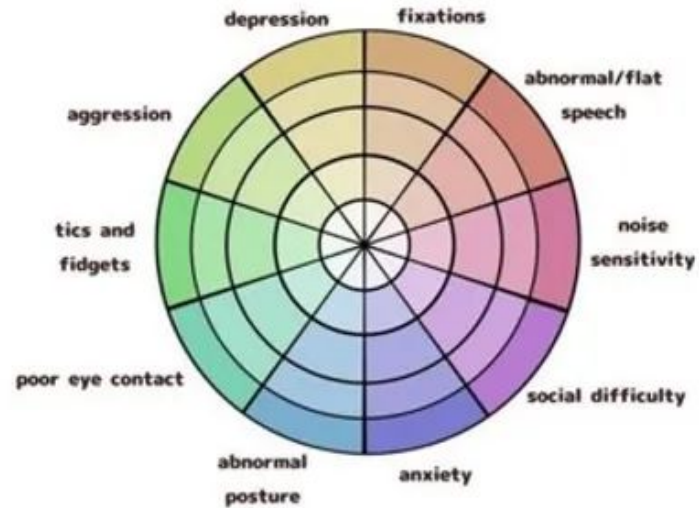
- It is the natural variation in how our brains work, how we process the world, and interact with others.
- Differences in the brain are what make us unique
- “Neurotypicals” make up the majority of people whose brains operate similar to typical development.

Autism and Neurodiversity

What people think the autism spectrum looks like:



What it can actually look like:



Neurodiversity includes learning disabilities

- Differences in processing and learning make it hard for some people to do well in academics.
 - This includes conditions such as Dyslexia.
- There are strengths that come with learning disabilities as well.
 - People skills, Creativity, and Problem Solving



Neurodiversity and its domains

- **Sensory**
- **Communication**
- **Learning**
- **Executive Functioning**

What's your sensory profile?

Collection of individual sensory needs.

- Sight
- Sound
- Touch
- Tastes
- Smells
- Proprioception - aware of body position/movement
- Interoception - aware of internal body cues

Sensory seeking vs. sensory avoidance



What senses are you most sensitive to?

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- If you have multiple, put the mix in the chat

What community is for you?

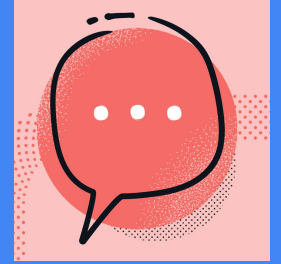
- What are the expectations and group norms?
 - It's important to know ahead of time and see if they match your goals.
- Do the people you're with like to sit and talk, or move around?
- How do you feel when you're around these people?
 - People make us feel differently depending on how easy it is to be around them.



Preparing your environment

- You have a right to be in the community.
- Is there a better time to visit? Different hours can be busier than others
 - Ex: restaurants have a lunch and dinner rush - consider visiting at off-hours
 - Ex: many gyms are busier around 5pm - consider going earlier or later
- What do you need to bring to be successful?
 - Steven brings a bag with a water bottle, a book, headphones
 - Be aware of the security requirements for bags sif you're going to an event

Communication



- We all have different communication styles and we develop them over time based on how we process the world around us.
- **Assertive: clear, direct, respectful, confident.**
- **Aggressive: hostile, confrontational, put themselves first**
- **Passive: avoidant, indirect, put others first**

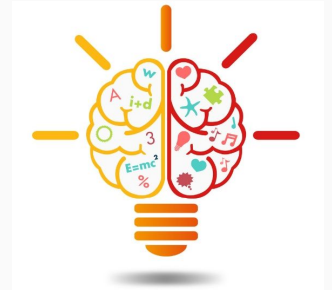
Communication



- **Analytical: communicate through data and facts, logical, accurate**
- **Expressive: emotional, story-telling**
- **Relational: building connections, empathy, and relationships**
- We can misjudge where someone is coming from based on our own style.

Learning Styles

- People also learn differently, so if you're being assessed through a learning style that doesn't match yours, your skills could be unfairly judged.
- **Visual: charts, pictures, videos, and visual aids**
- **Reading: books, articles, and notes**



Learning Styles

- **Auditory:** lectures, discussion, podcasts
- **Kinesthetic:** learn by doing, hands-on, experiments
- Knowing which style(s) you learn best with can improve your ability to process and remember information.



What's your learning style?

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Executive Functioning

- Many people on the spectrum have struggles with managing themselves to meet goals their. These challenges can be amplified by co-occurring conditions like ADHD.
- **Planning/Organizing: setting goals, prioritizing tasks**
- **Memory: following multi-step instructions**

Executive Functioning



- **Adapting to changes: unexpected break in routine, rigid thinking**
- **Starting tasks: attention issues; tasks can feel overwhelming**
- Challenges with executive functioning can hold back some people from work or social opportunities. But with proper supports, these can be managed.

Accommodations

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects your right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace and accessibility in other public areas.
- There are many free or low-cost aids and supports that can assist with completing tasks.
- It is critical to match the support with learning style
 - Calendars → Visual
 - Sticky notes → Reading
 - Beeper alarms → Auditory
 - Puzzle alarms → Kinesthetic

What is Masking?

- **Masking** is when autistic people make an effort to hide or “mask” what makes them autistic.
- This is done to fit in with societal expectations and avoid negative **stigma** of autism.
- Autistic people from historically marginalized groups can face extra pressure to mask due to the effects of **intersectionality**.



What is Masking?

Examples of masking include:

- Mimicking social cues
- Forced eye contact
- Suppressing behaviors such as rocking, hand flapping, or fidgeting
- Hiding sensory discomfort

Stimming helps the body's self-regulate. Masking can have long-term mental health impacts.

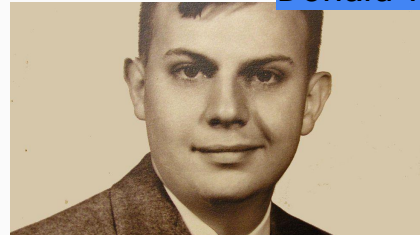
The Lost Generations

There are entire generations of autistic people who live among us and have never received a diagnosis.

For one reason or another, whether:

- they were institutionalized
- did well academically
- or received a misdiagnosis

This means there are **potentially millions** of people who have learned to mask their autism and survive in a world not built for them.



Donald T.



Universal Design

- When we make things **possible** for neurodivergent people, we make things **better** for everyone else.
- Includes terms like: **User-friendly, Intuitive, Inclusive, Flexible**
- Designing things so everyone can use them improves the overall culture.
- Neurodivergent people should be involved in designing and planning

Self-Advocacy is Self-Love

- It's important to advocate for what you need. But what is that?
- Set boundaries for yourself. What are you willing to do?
- When we feel connected to our community, we are happier.

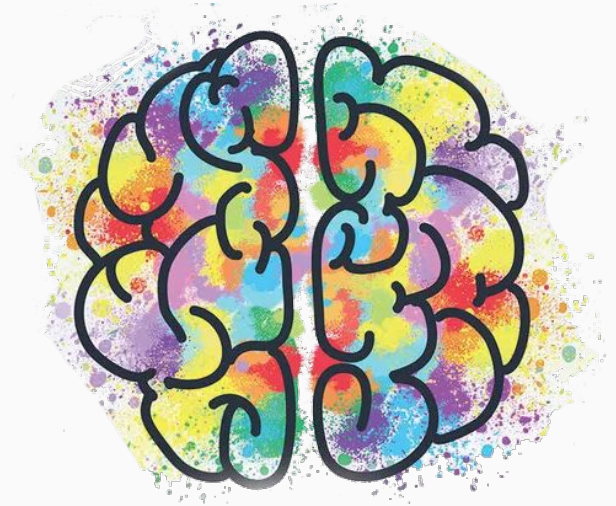


Wrap-Up: Neurodiversity

Everyone interacts with the world in a different way.

There are things we can do to put ourselves in situations that are good for our brain.

Knowing yourself well enough to advocate for your needs is self-love.



Q&A



Next Session

Part 4: It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: Building Your Supportive Community and Facilitating Integration