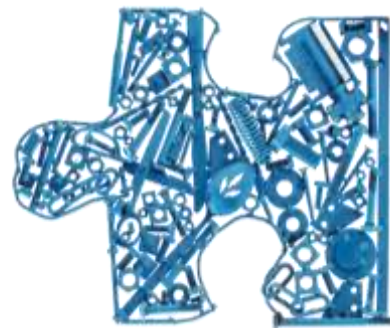


Seeing the Spectrum: Tips & Tools

Living, Loving,
Learning—**Uniquely!**

#theLivedExperience
#ActuallyAutistic
#AutismAcceptance



Presentation © Jared Stewart, M.Ed., BCBA
Warning: Super-speedy Speaking!
Warning: Extremely Dense Slides!
No claim is made to any images used





Autism Spectrum Disorder

Diagnostic Criteria



According to the DSM-5 criteria:

Currently, or by history, must meet criteria A, B, C, and D:

A. Persistent **deficits in social communication and social interaction** across contexts not accounted for by general developmental delays, and manifest by all 3 of the following:

1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors
3. Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships

B. **Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities** as manifested by at least two of the following:

1. Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects
2. Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change
3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus
Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment

C. Symptoms must be present in early childhood **but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities**

Individualized Spectrum-Graphs

GAO grouped the characteristics associated with autism into five broad categories, with some overlap between categories. Autism is highly individualized, so the type and severity of characteristics experienced varies from person to person.

Social impediments

Social impediments may range from difficulties discussing emotions, making friends, or sharing interests to a complete disinterest in other people.

Communication difficulties

Difficulties with verbal and/or nonverbal communication may limit the ability to speak, understand and use gestures, or carry on a conversation.

Intense Focus/Interests

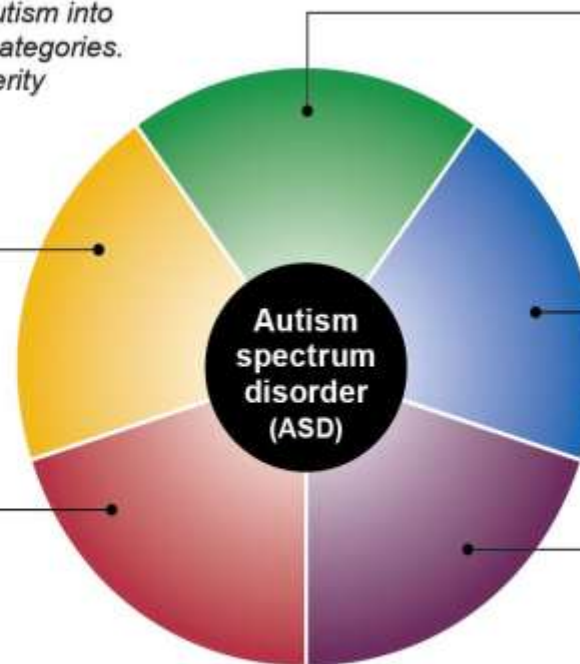
Individuals with ASD may have intense and specific interests, sometimes to the exclusion of other tasks or needs.

Sensitivities

Individuals with ASD may have unusually high or low sensitivities to environmental factors, such as certain sounds, lights, temperatures, or physical sensations.

Routine and repetition

Individuals with autism may prefer sameness and strictly follow routines or ritualized patterns. They may have difficulty coping with changes or transitions.



Source: GAO analysis of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)

What are the profiles of these Spectrum-Graphs?



If you've met one person with autism... you've met ONE PERSON WITH AUTISM. ☺

#Acceptance **Person-First Language vs Identity-First Language**

How do you prefer people refer to your disability?

› **“Person with Autism” vs “Autistic Person”**

Person
with
autism



Autism is a way of being.
It is pervasive; it colors
every experience, every
sensation, perception,
thought, emotion, and
encounter, every aspect
of existence.

Jim Sinclair

Autistic
person



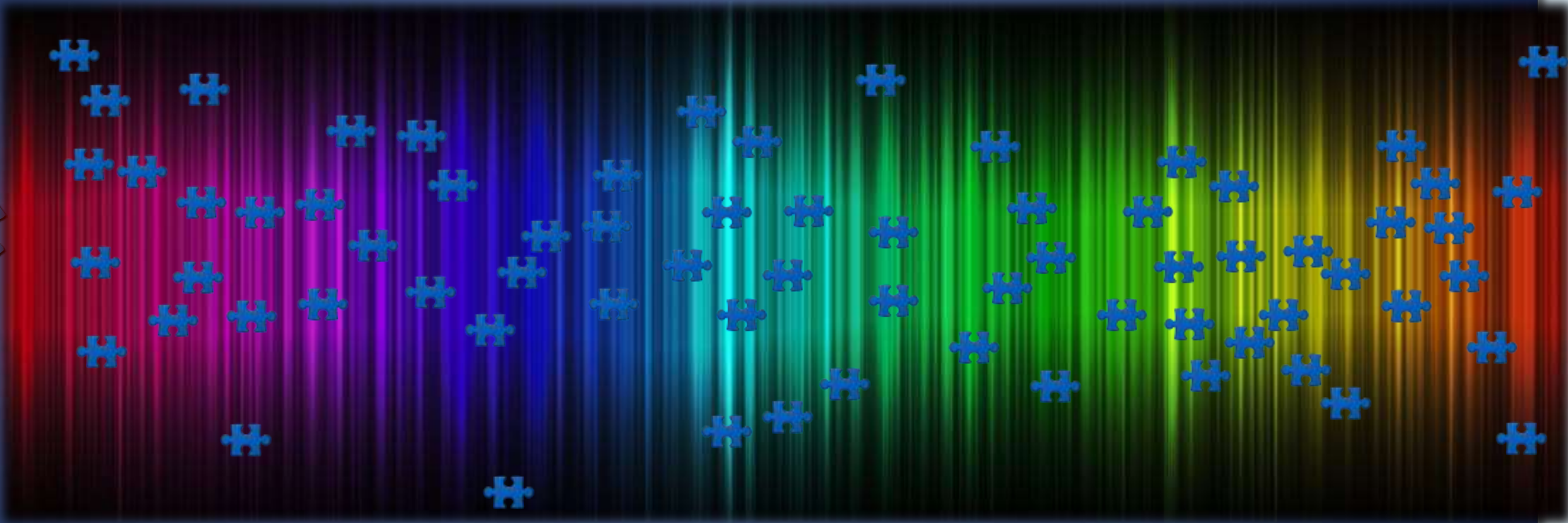
disability
is not a
bad word

A Word on the “Puzzle Piece” Symbol

- › Personally I don't mind the puzzle piece as a symbol of autism:
 - Each piece is a unique and important part of a beautiful whole
 - No puzzle is complete without every piece being included
 - No one quite knows how the finished picture will look, but we'll keep adjusting and trying to find our place!
- › **But it's overused... and some of us on the Spectrum find it offensive (I apologize if you're one of them)**
- › The puzzle piece was created by a British parent in 1963
- › Used as a logo for the National Autistic Society in London
- › Been in use for almost 60 years now
- › *Doesn't help that Autism Speaks popularized it in the US...*



Autism Spectrum Disorder



“Most people think ASD is a linear spectrum, with high functioning at one end and lower functioning at the other. **The reality is that viewing the autism spectrum as a colorwheel is far more accurate**, with autistic people able to identify with traits from different sections of said wheel.”

~Rebekah Gillian



Low Functioning” & “High Functioning”

“‘High-Functioning’ or ‘Low-Functioning’ compared to what? Who gets to decide what the proper ‘function’ of any individual human should be?”

~ASAN member Nick Walker

“I could be thought to be ‘high’ or ‘low’ functioning by the same person at different times, if only one aspect of my life was considered.”

~ASAN member Amy Sequenzia



Low Functioning” & “High Functioning”

“The worst thing about having ‘High-functioning’ Autism is that you’re too weird to be considered normal, but too normal for people to believe you’re autistic.”

~Reddit user u/Gunji161

So called "mild" autism doesn't mean one experiences autism mildly. It means *you* experience their autism mildly. You may not know how hard they've worked to get to the level they are.

ADAM WALTON



Low Functioning” & “High Functioning”

Better Examples:

- “Highly verbal”
- “Lower sensitivities”
- “Higher/lower support needs in this area”



Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Can't tell just by looking!
- **“You don't look Autistic...”**

*“And you don't look stupid...
and yet, here we are.”*

**“If you've seen one person with autism—
you've seen one person with autism.”**

The Spectrum: Donald Triplett



In A Different Key
Caren Zucker &
John Donovan

Pro Tip #1: You Can't Know How it Turns Out!

- ❖ Even in more severe cases, there is **ALWAYS HOPE!**
- ❖ Study of 241 adolescents and adults with ASD (69% with ID!) over a 5-year period found that,
“On average, people are getting better.” (Shattuck et al, 2007)
- ❖ *“Science is telling us autism is not a fixed life sentence because people improve – sometimes a little bit, and sometimes a lot, and sometimes they even stay improved.”*
~Dr. Martha Herbert, neurology professor at Harvard Medical School
- ❖ *“We were surprised... in the scientific literature [that] there are young people who have minimal verbal skills who do lead, at age 19 or 21 or even later, quite happy lives.”* ~Dr. Catherine Lord



Donald Triplett: The Autism Story Officially Begins

- › Diagnosed in 1938 at the age of 5 by Dr. Kanner
- › **The FIRST diagnosed case of autism**
- › **Fixated on spinning objects, spinning himself, and rolling nonsense words around in his mouth**
- › **Rarely listened to/obeyed his parents**
- › **Awkward movements/motor coordination**
- › **No apparent interest in other people or socializing**
- › **Poor eye contact**
- › **Assigned everyone numbers in place of names**
- › **Wrote letters in the air with his fingers**
- › **Institutionalized at age 3 as “hopelessly insane”**



Donald's Story... Got Better!

Now in his 80's...

- ▶ **High school graduate!**
- ▶ **College graduate! (and active frat member!)**
- ▶ **Worked as a bank teller!**
- ▶ **Lives on his own! (and loves to send texts!)**
- ▶ **Golfs, drives, and travels the world—all independently!**

(First developed these skills at the respective ages of 23, 27, and 36)

- ▶ **Still has a fairly rigid routine**
- ▶ **Still awkward golf stroke**
- ▶ **Still prefers to be by himself a lot**
- ▶ **Loved and accepted by his entire town!**
- ▶ **Watch the PBS Documentary!!!**



The Atlantic, In a Different Key



Donald's Story... Lessons

- ▶ **How did Donald do it????**
- ▶ Had early childhood “interventions” (farming, mainly)
- ▶ Set and achieved optimally challenging goals
- ▶ Had neighbors and friends who would “not only shrug off his oddities, but openly admire his strengths”
- ▶ Had Community Support (“Acceptance”)
- ▶ Learned to **SELF ADVOCATE!**
- ▶ *Didn't Have Guardianship!!!*
- ▶ (consider “Supported Decision Making”)
- ▶ **Donald's yearbook**
- ▶ Donald life is a prime example of the Pro Tips I'll be sharing
- ▶ ***I WISH ALL OF US LUCK...*** 😊



Pro Tip #1: You Can't Know How it Turns Out!

- Flat affect—face usually didn't match inner emotional state
- Physically awkward—very poor gross motor skills—terrible at PE/sports
- Either very quiet or overwhelmingly talkative (little professor)
- Little or no interest in socializing, making friends, or maintaining friendships
- Loved babysitting, animals, family, and the outdoors
- Was oblivious to the world when reading
- Often (unintentionally) inappropriate –and bothered by this
- Bullied and bored at school—labeled a “geek” and a “nerd”
- Often insisted on wearing the same clothes for days
- Would only go to sleep if he had his blanket to chew on
- Extremely sensitive to touch, sound, and temperature changes
- Hated the feel of water on his face—didn't shower daily until age 20
- Intense interests in toy collecting, movies, and role-playing games
- Intensely interested in dinosaurs, super-heroes, and fantasy
- Intensely interested in philosophy, learning, and self-actualization
- Highly intelligent, but hated school and dropped out in Junior High
- Recluse that wrote, read, watched TV and played video games
- Graduated Suma-Cum-Laude, was named Educator of the Year in 2011, Hero for Autism in 2020, and is now a Program Director and an adjunct professor... 😊



**Guess the
Success!**

Answer: Yours Truly 😊



I got diagnosed in 2008 and “outed” by the Deseret News:

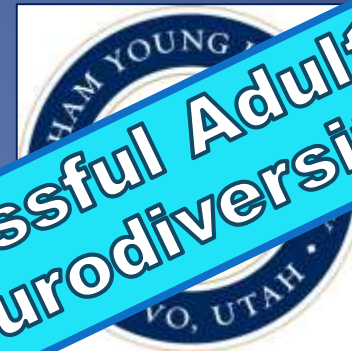
<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865582041/Diagnosis-changes-but-Asperger-identity-endures.html>

Who Am I?

- › Graduated Valedictorian from high school
- › Full scholarship to prestigious private university
- › Married 20+ years, 3 wonderful children
- › Earned 2 Masters Degrees, summa-cum-laude
- › Program Director a nationally-recognized school for neurodiverse adults
- › Presented in local, state, national, and international conferences on autism and neurodiversity
- › Adjunct professor at Utah Valley University
- › National Autism Hero 2018, Utah Valley Hero for Autism 2020
- › Published Behavior Analyst in 2021

**There is NO "Normal" Path to Successful Adulthood!
(Especially when you have a Neurodiversity!)**

**Line: Autism, Anxiety, and Depression
can't stop me, and it doesn't have to stop anyone
from leading a UNIQUELY successful life!**



Pro Tip #2: Stop Worrying About “Normal”!

- › There is no such thing as a normal brain!!!!
- › *“Wow, you are so Normal!”* isn’t a compliment

www.heartteachingideas.blogspot.com
SOMETIMES
I PRETEND
TO BE
NORMAL.

but it gets
boring.
so I GO BACK
TO being
me.

Autism Acceptance is
Realizing that I am the
Normal Version of Me,
Not some Broken
Version of “Normal”!

NORMAL
PEOPLE
WORRY ME

Pro Tip #2: Stop worrying about “Normal”!

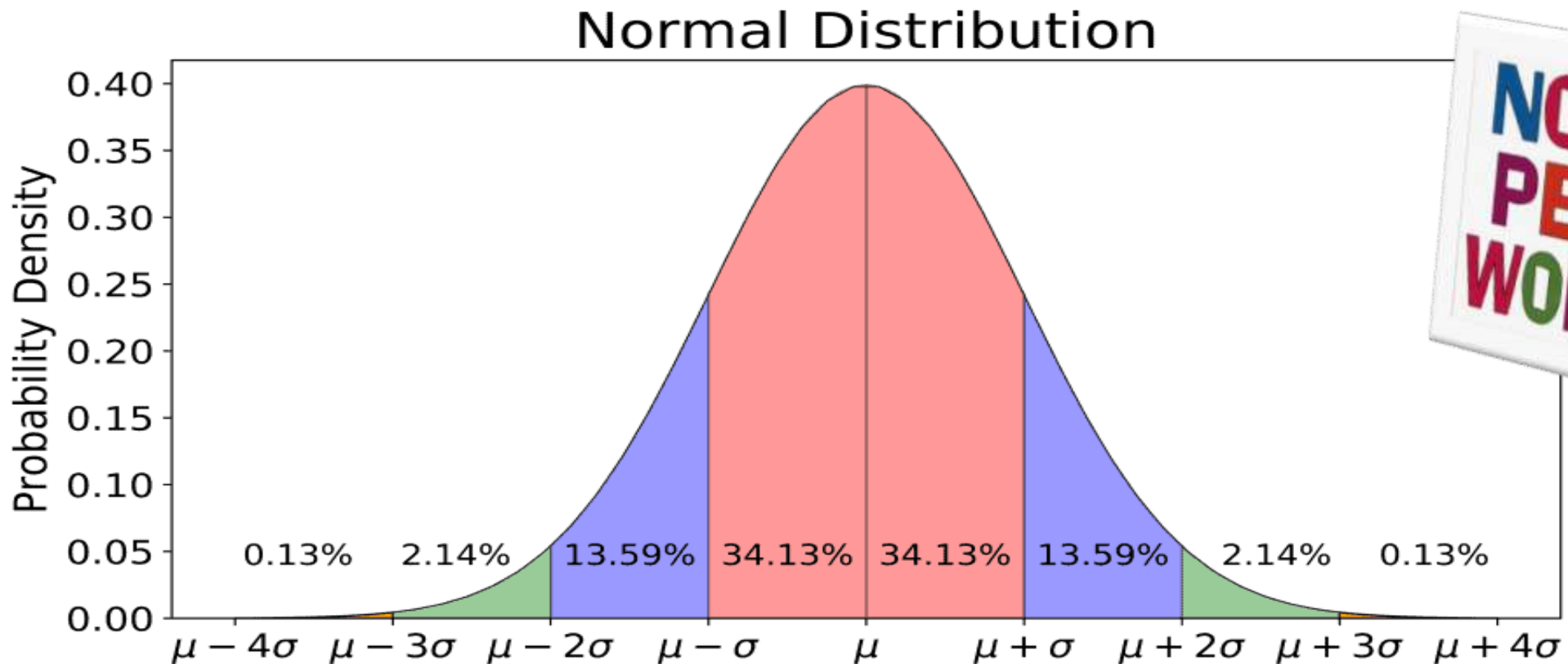
“Many Aspies feel the pressure to be ‘normal’. Society looks down on Aspies as bizarre, weird, and peculiar because they don’t run with the crowd. They want Aspies to conform to the norms of society. Aspies enjoy themselves because that is who they are. In fact, **most Aspies believe they are ‘normal’ and think society is bizarre, weird, and peculiar. So the question is, ‘What is normal?’**”

~ David Gratiot, ScenicView Academy graduate
(used with permission)

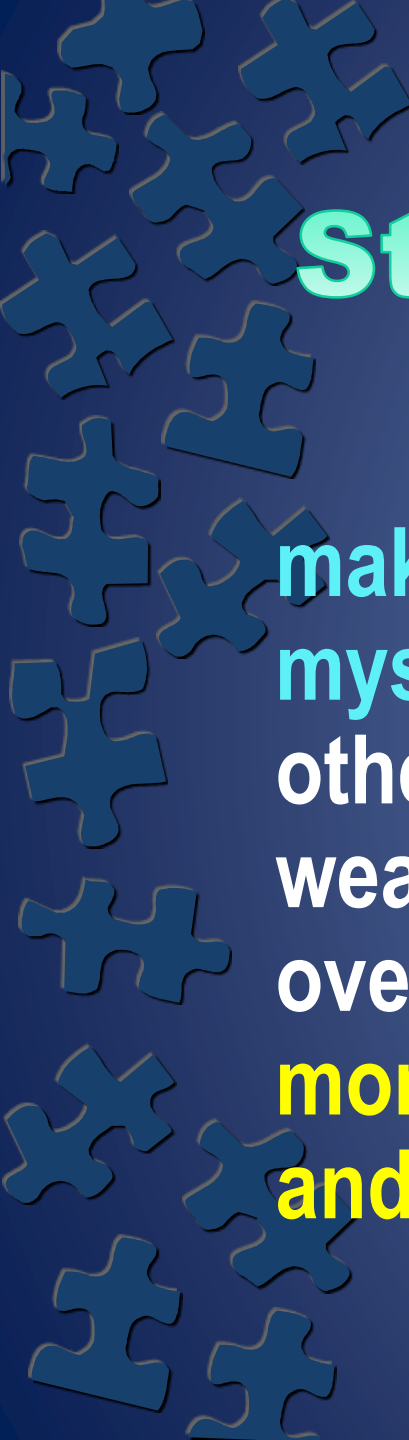


Pro Tip #2: Stop worrying about “Normal”!

Normal is a mathematical concept that means **AVERAGE!**

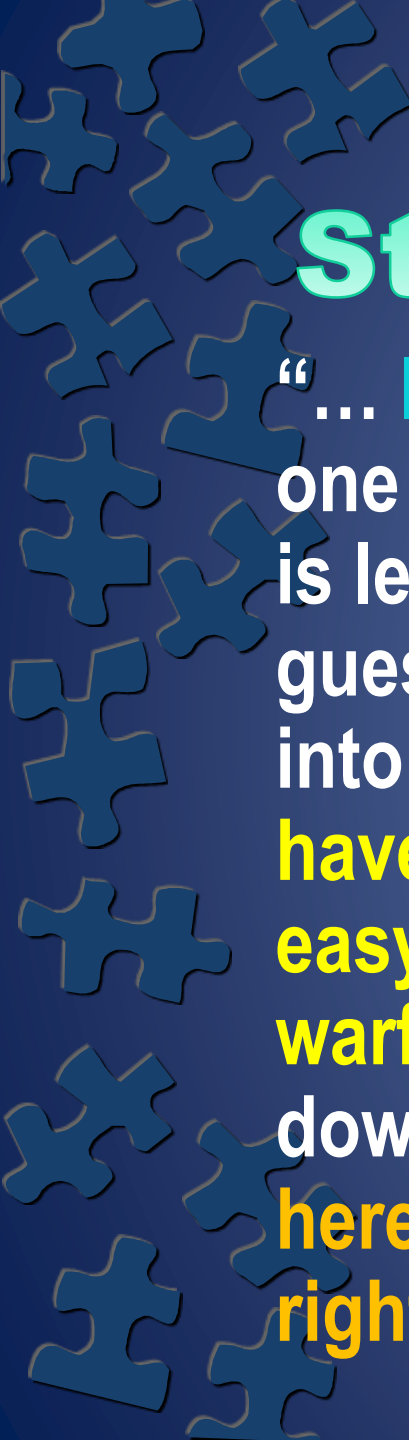


**NORMAL
PEOPLE
WORRY ME**



Pro Tip #2: **Stop worrying about “Normal”!**

“I have spent decades of my own life straining to make myself over into that elusive ‘normal’ and hating myself for not succeeding. I saw myself as ‘less than’ others, furiously lashing myself for my –as I saw it– weakness and stupidity. I lived with chronic depression, overwhelming anxiety, and rock-bottom self esteem. **The more normal I tried to be, the less normal I secretly felt– and the more of a failure.**” ~ASAN member Penni Winter



Pro Tip #2: Stop worrying about “Normal”!

“... I have learned how to fake being *normal*, being *human*... No one has to threaten and force me into some version of myself that is less visibly disabled, less obviously autistic, less real and I guess less threatening— I’ve carved off all those edges of myself into a smooth facsimile of what I need to be... **People tell me I have it easy because I’m ‘High-functioning’, but it’s actually not easy at all. It’s complete and utter psychological and emotional warfare, and there is no winning for us...** In the end it just comes down to ‘you are wrong, and for that you must be punished’... **But here’s the secret: I’m fine. I have a right to be here too. I have a right to be me.**” ~ASAN member Julia Bascom

Pro Tip #2: Stop worrying about “Normal”!

“We live in a country where image is kind of a reality more real than reality... Eagerness to be like others didn't make Pinocchio real — it turned him into a donkey! And eagerness by parents to cure autism ...will not drive great distances toward the final solution to the actual problem. Because *the person who believes ‘I will be real when I am normal,’ will always be almost a person, but will never make it all the way.*”

~ Autistic Pride advocate Eugene Marcus



Pro Tip #2: Stop worrying about “Normal”!

“There is nothing more frustrating than the lifelong accumulation of scars that result from trying to be like normal people and failing daily. It is especially hard when your disability is invisible like mine. I spent almost forty-one years trying to be some kind of normal person that I was never meant to be.”

~Jerry Newport, author of Life is Not a Label

“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.”

~Krishnamurti

Rank↕	Website	↕ Monthly Visitors
1	Google.com	92.5B
2	Youtube.com	34.6B
3	Facebook.com	25.5B
4	Twitter.com	6.6B
5	Wikipedia.org	6.1B
6	Instagram.com	6.1B
7	Baidu.com	5.6B
8	Yahoo.com	3.8B
9	xvideos.com	3.4B
10	pornhub.com	3.3B

Pro Tip #2:
Stop worrying about “Normal”!

**“NORMAL” IS
NOT THE GOAL!**



*There is no such thing as “Normal” –
just be your best self and learn to love it!*



"Normal is an illusion.
What is normal for the spider
is chaos for the fly."
— Morticia Addams

Is “Normal” Ever a Good Goal?

Meaningful Cultural Norms:

- Education?
- Driving?
- Independence?
- Career?
- Dating?
- Marriage?
- Children?

It's all
about
choice and
autonomy!





Pro Tip #2

Stop worrying about “Normal”!

Aim for MAXIMIZATION – *not* Normalization!

(Winter, 2012)

- › **NORMALIZATION** springs out of the belief that disability is somehow inferior or “wrong”; something to get rid of
- › **NORMALIZATION** seeks for “indistinguishability” from NT’s
- › **MAXIMIZATION** accepts the disabled person for who they are and where they are— and where they want to go
- › **MAXIMIZATION** seeks to actualize potential; to grow someone’s capabilities *as a disabled person*
- › **NORMALIZATION** asks: “How can I become the best approximation of everyone else?”
- › **MAXIMIZATION** asks: “How can I become my best self and achieve my best future?”



The Spectrum: Jim Sinclair

Autism is NOT a Tragedy!

“You didn’t lose a child to autism. You lost a child because the child you waited for never came into existence. That isn’t the fault of the autistic child who does exist...”

We need and deserve families who can see us and value us for ourselves, not families whose vision of us is obscured by the ghosts of children who never lived.

Grieve if you must, for your own lost dreams. But don’t mourn for us.” ~Jim Sinclair, founder of ASAN



Stages of Grief

- 1 Shock and Denial
- 2 Pain and Guilt
- 3 Anger
- 4 Bargaining
- 5 Depression and Sorrow
- 6 Testing and Reconstruction
- 7 Acceptance

Pro Tip #3: Don't Mourn For Us!

- › **Help with the grieving process if needed**
- › **Help families and individuals move through the 5 Stages of Transformation!**

20 year study (Higgins, et al., 2002) found 5 Stages of learning to successfully deal with a disability "Label":

- › **Stage 1: Becoming Aware of a Difference**
- › **Stage 2: Getting The Labeling**
- › **Stage 3: Accepting the Label**
- › **Stage 4: Compartmentalization**
- › **Stage 5: Transformation!**

- 1 Shock and Denial
- 2 Pain and Guilt
- 3 Anger
- 4 Bargaining
- 5 Depression and Sorrow
- 6 Testing and Reconstruction
- 7 Acceptance





Don't Mourn for Me!



- › Born on an island in Alaska
- › Program Director at ScenicView Academy
- › UVU Adjunct in the Passages program
- › UAI, UDAC, Chair of the UDDC...
- › Over 20 years working with Autism
- › Over 40 years **LIVING** with Autism!



Introduction



Kodiak Island, Alaska

ScenicView Academy



- I'm excited to be here!!! 😊
- I'm a professional, but...
 - › This presentation is personal 😊
 - › **Deal with it! (slides, speed, etc)**
 - › *I can't speak for everyone with ASD*
 - › Everything will necessarily be generalizations
 - › My hope is it will also be **USEFUL** somehow! 😊
- › In your work with those on the Spectrum, can you intervene based on an understanding of, and empathy for, the actual Lived Experience?

UVU

MELISA NELLESEN
CENTER FOR AUTISM

Objectives for Today:

1. **Look at some *#ActuallyAutistic* Folks**

- Going to use adults
- Going to use mostly “Level 1”
- Because this is what I know best...
- Also because it will give a Bigger Picture!
- *The funny thing about kids with autism...*

2. **Learn some Pro Tips from their stories**

- 18 Tips! (With lots more wedged in... already had 3 😊)
- These are UNIVERSAL– look for specific ways to apply them

3. **Walk away with some New Perspective**

- Some “Cultural Competence”
- And hopefully some tools in your toolbox!



A Word on “Cultural Competence”



BACB Ethical Code

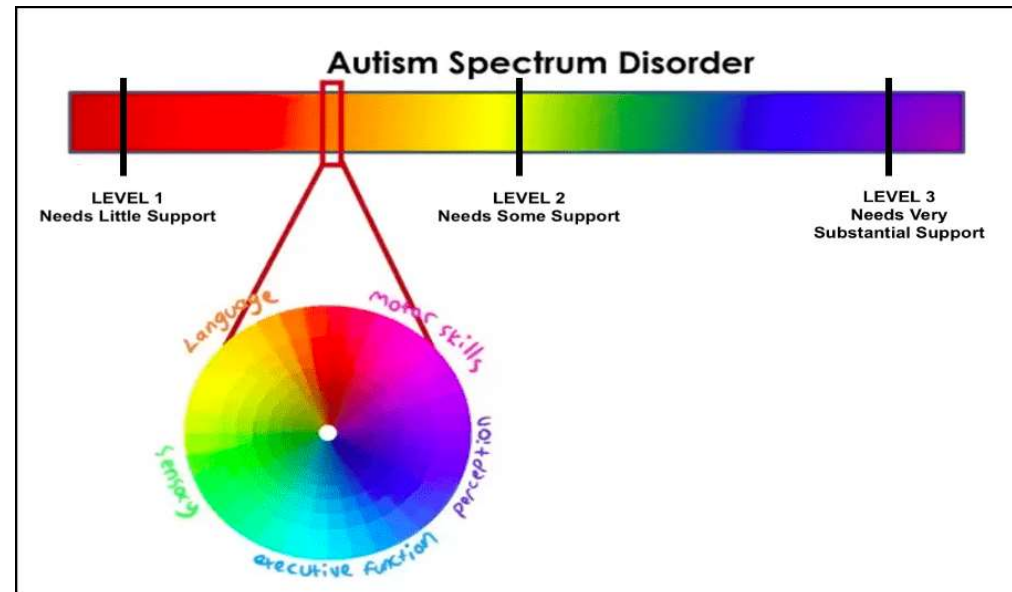
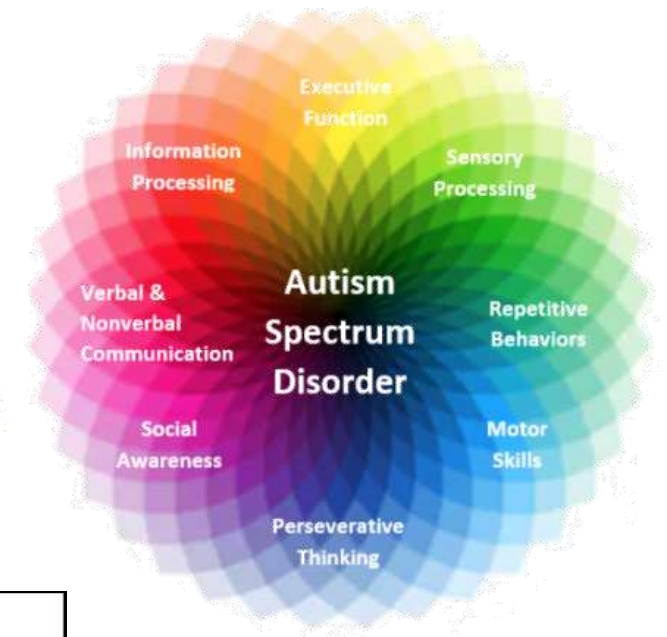
1.07 Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity

Behavior analysts actively engage in professional development activities to acquire knowledge and skills related to cultural responsiveness and diversity. **They evaluate their own biases and ability to address the needs of individuals with diverse needs/ backgrounds** (e.g., age, disability, ethnicity, gender expression/identity, immigration status, marital/relationship status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status).

“A culturally competent behavior analyst is not one who knows everything there is to know about every culture. This would be impossible. It is someone who can acknowledge that patterns of cultural difference may be present, and are then able to view a situation from a different cultural perspective than one's own.”

Different Roads to Learning; November 14, 2019

Let's Start Seeing the Spectrum!

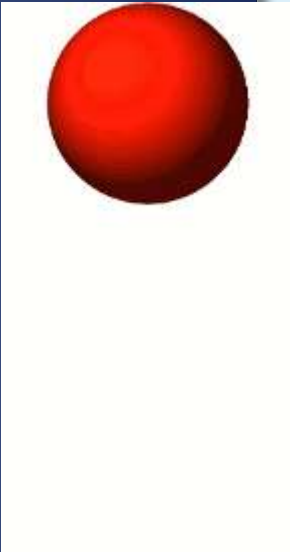


The Spectrum: Britini D'Angelo



Pro Tip #4: Build an Identity of Resiliency

- › You are not “Wrong”
- › You are not “Broken”
- › You are not Doomed!
- › You will have many challenges (some unique)
- › You will have many strengths (some unique)

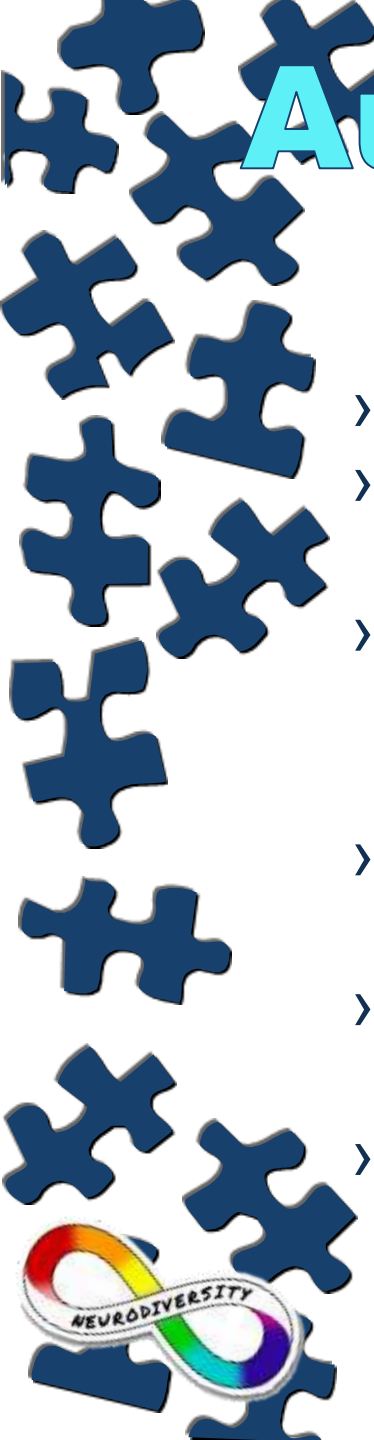
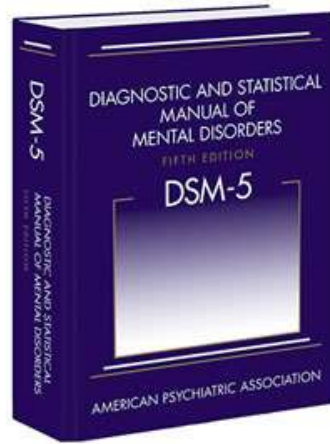


***BUT YOU ARE “ENOUGH” JUST BEING YOU, and
THERE IS NO POINT MAKING YOURSELF MISERABLE
COMPARING YOURSELF TO SOME IMAGINARY IDEAL!***

Autism Spectrum Disorder IS Challenging

- › The whole DSM is just unending lists of challenges
- › Could you imagine going through life focusing entirely on your weaknesses?
- › Getting up every day, knowing that you were going to spend almost every hour talking about, working on, doing things that you JUST AREN'T GOOD AT???
- › How depressing... Yet this is how we've approached neurodiversity from the beginning
- › As far as laypeople and professionals are concerned, ND is a **TRAGEDY**, definitely no cause for celebration
- › **The Neurodiversity movement begs to differ...**

*“Unfortunately in autism, there is often **too much emphasis on the deficits**, and not enough on the strengths.” ~Temple Grandin*



Autism Spectrum Disorder IS Challenging

Viewed from the Inside...

We're Generally Bad At:

1. Verbal communication (talking to other people)
2. Non-Verbal communication (looking like other people)
3. Making and Keeping Friends (connecting with other people)

Partly because we often:

1. Make "strange" use of objects, words, and our bodies
2. Struggle with Rituals and Rigidity
3. Have Hyperfocused Interests
4. Have Hyperactive Senses



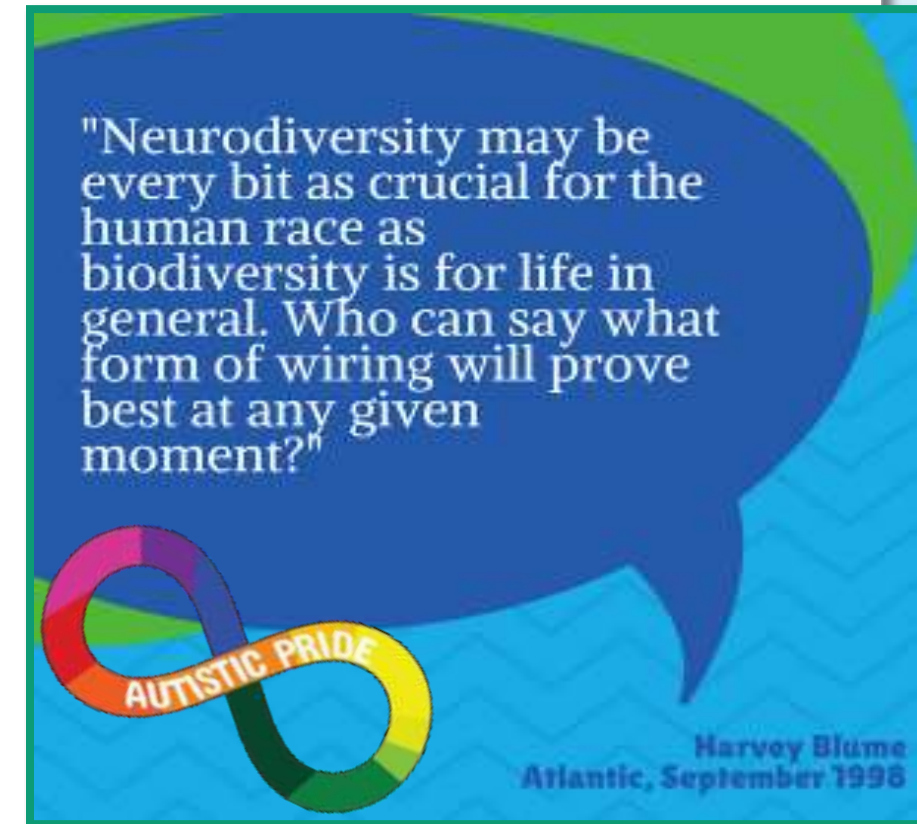
But...

Diversity is NOT a “Bad” thing!

The **neurodiversity movement** holds that variations in neurological development and functioning across humans:

- **May be a disability** (largely because of the interactions between a non-standard individual and an unaccommodating environment; [Oliver, 1990](#))
- **But** should be viewed as a natural and valuable part of human variation and therefore **not necessarily pathological** [Jaarsma and Welin, 2012](#); [Kapp, 2020](#)

Neurodiversity as a social justice and civil rights movement intersects with the wider disability rights movement [Hughes, 2016](#)



*Many of our challenges
are cultural/environmental
in nature!!!*

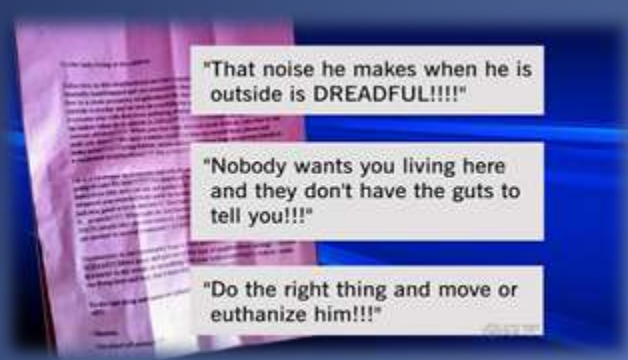
The Autism “Wave”

- <1980's = 1 in 2,500
- 2007 CDC study = 1 in 150
- 2012 CDC study = 1 in 88
- 2023 CDC stats = 1 in 36 nationwide
- South Korea = 1 in 38
- Utah = 1 in 40 as of 2023
- Utah Whites = as high as 1 in 25! (4%)
- Males = 4 times more likely to be diagnosed
- Current estimates = >2% worldwide



Sources: New York Times, Medical News Today, February 11, 2007
Baron-Cohen, Cambridge Autism Research Centre, 2008
Pinborough-Zimmerman, et al., 2011
www.cdc.gov (ADDM Network Site Snapshots, 2023)

The Response has been VERY mixed!



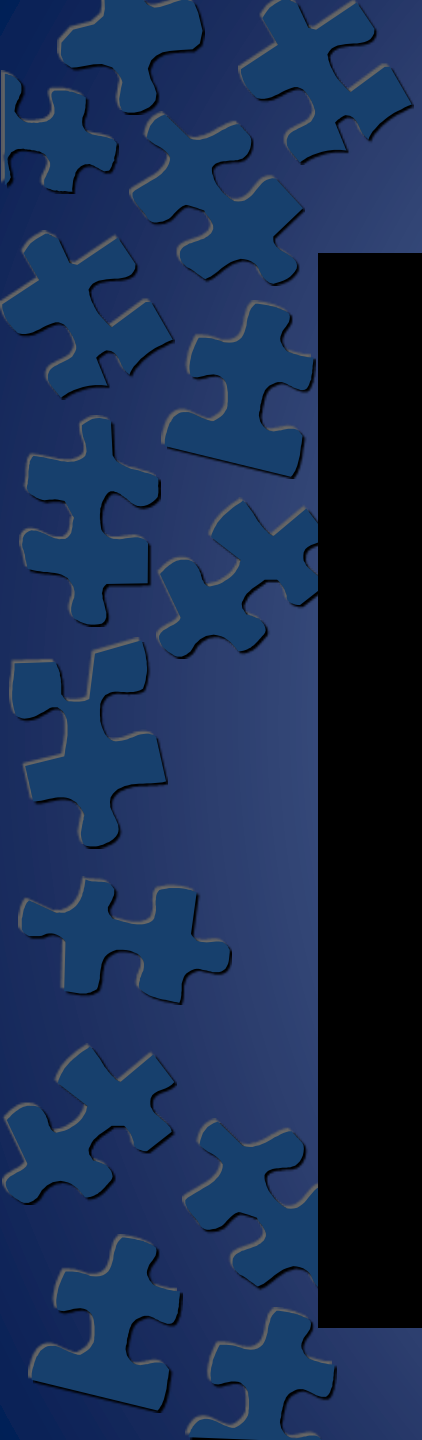
Long, dark history of how NT's have treated ND:

- Ostracized
- Stigmatized
- Institutionalized
- Infantilized
- Eugenized

I AM AUTISM



Judge Rotenberg "Educational" Center



I AM AUTISM

2009



The Child Study Center 2007

› **Lasted 2 weeks...**

WE HAVE YOUR SON. WE ARE DESTROYING HIS
ABILITY FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION AND DRIVING HIM
INTO A LIFE OF COMPLETE ISOLATION.

IT'S UP TO YOU NOW.

ASPERGER
SYNDROME

We have your **son.**

We will make sure he will
not be able to care for
himself or interact socially
as long as he lives.

*This is only the beginning.

Autism

Don't let a psychiatric disorder take your child.
The NYU Child Study Center is dedicated to giving children
back their childhood by preventing, identifying, and treating
psychiatric and learning disorders.
To learn more, call (888)7-NYU-MED or visit AboutOurKids.org.



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
CHILD STUDY CENTER

World Autism Awareness Day, April 2

Bob Wright, co-founder of Autism Speaks:

*“**Combating** autism is going to require worldwide effort. It is not politically, geographically or economically centered. It is an equal **destroyer**.”*

*“**[N]**avigating April for many Autistics has been like walking through a field of stroller-shaped land mines.”*

~Autistic Advocate Durbin-Westby



NBC News: “150 strollers lined up in Central Park dramatized the **ravages of a **disease** that has no cure.”**



Awareness or Acceptance?

“As long as people prefer to think of autism as a kidnapper, a killer, a barrier, or an opposing army—as opposed to merely another aspect of personhood—Autistic people will never be truly accepted.”

~Autistic Self-Advocate Zoe Gross

Acceptance- the process or fact of being received as adequate, valid, or suitable

- **Awareness → Acceptance →**
 - **Advocacy (Self-Advocacy) →**
 - **Self-Determination →**
 - **Self-Reliance →**
 - **Self-Discipline →**
 - **Self-Esteem!**
- 

Make a Difference

[illegible]

Things are still not great...

“Why did they shoot me?”



**SALT LAKE CITY (ABC4) –
April 29, 2021**

Seven months after a Salt Lake City police officer shot him 11 times, an autistic 13-year-old boy continues his long road to recovery.

“On the ground! Get on the ground!” the officer was heard yelling at **Linden Cameron** on the night of September 4th, 2020. The shots rang out and he collapsed on a sidewalk

<https://www.abc4.com/news/why-did-they-shoot-me-14-year-old-linden-cameron-continues-his-long-road-to-recovery/>



Kobe Heisler, Ricky Hayes, Isias Cervantes, Osaze Osagie, Eric Parsa... Olly Stephens

Guan, et al (2020) found that at least **52** autistic children and young adults had been murdered as a direct result of their autism in the US over the past 20 years. **85% by their own caregivers!**

Things are getting better!

UVU THE MELISA NELLESEN CENTER FOR AUTISM

APPLY TO UVU

WHY UVU

MYUVU



ABOUT US AUTISM STUDIES & SPECIAL ED. M.E.D. & ABA PASSAGES WOLVERINES ELEVATED EVENTS RESOURCES DONATE NOW

FIRST RESPONDER TRAININGS



TRAINING SAVES LIVES

First responders encounter people in highly stressful situations quickly to ensure the well-being of individuals. Now estimated at 1 in 54 Utah children, it is critical for the community with a practical understanding of how to respond to a crisis involving a person with autism. It can mean the difference between safety and harm.

The Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism and UVU Service will be hosting First Responder Trainings. Information will follow.

REGISTER BELOW FOR ONE OF OUR UPCOMING TRAININGS

Please register here for the Autism and Policing Training

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26

Please register here for the Autism and Policing Training

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30



Utah Attorney General's Office

May 21 · 🌐

Autism Awareness training: A new Utah law requires it for law enforcement. The Utah Attorney General's office is offering such training.

Attorney General Sean Reyes told ABC News: "We view this as a very positive step forward to help empower law enforcement with the tools that they need to better serve and protect communities -- in particular vulnerable communities."

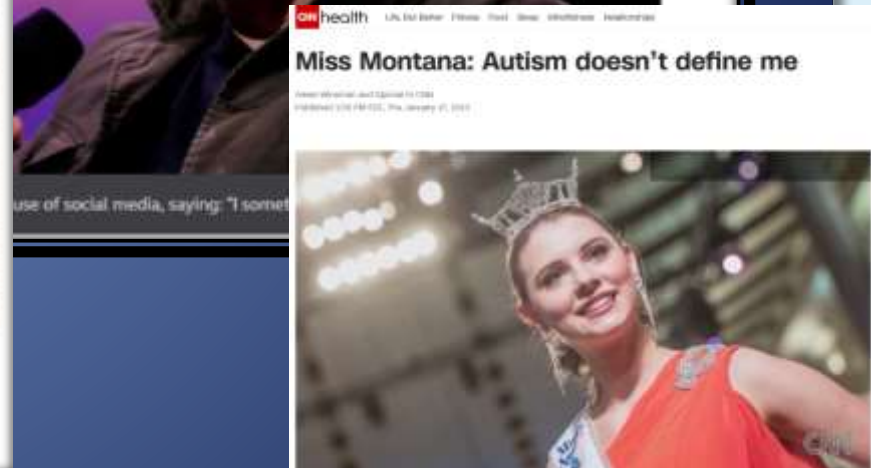


ABCNEWS.GO.COM

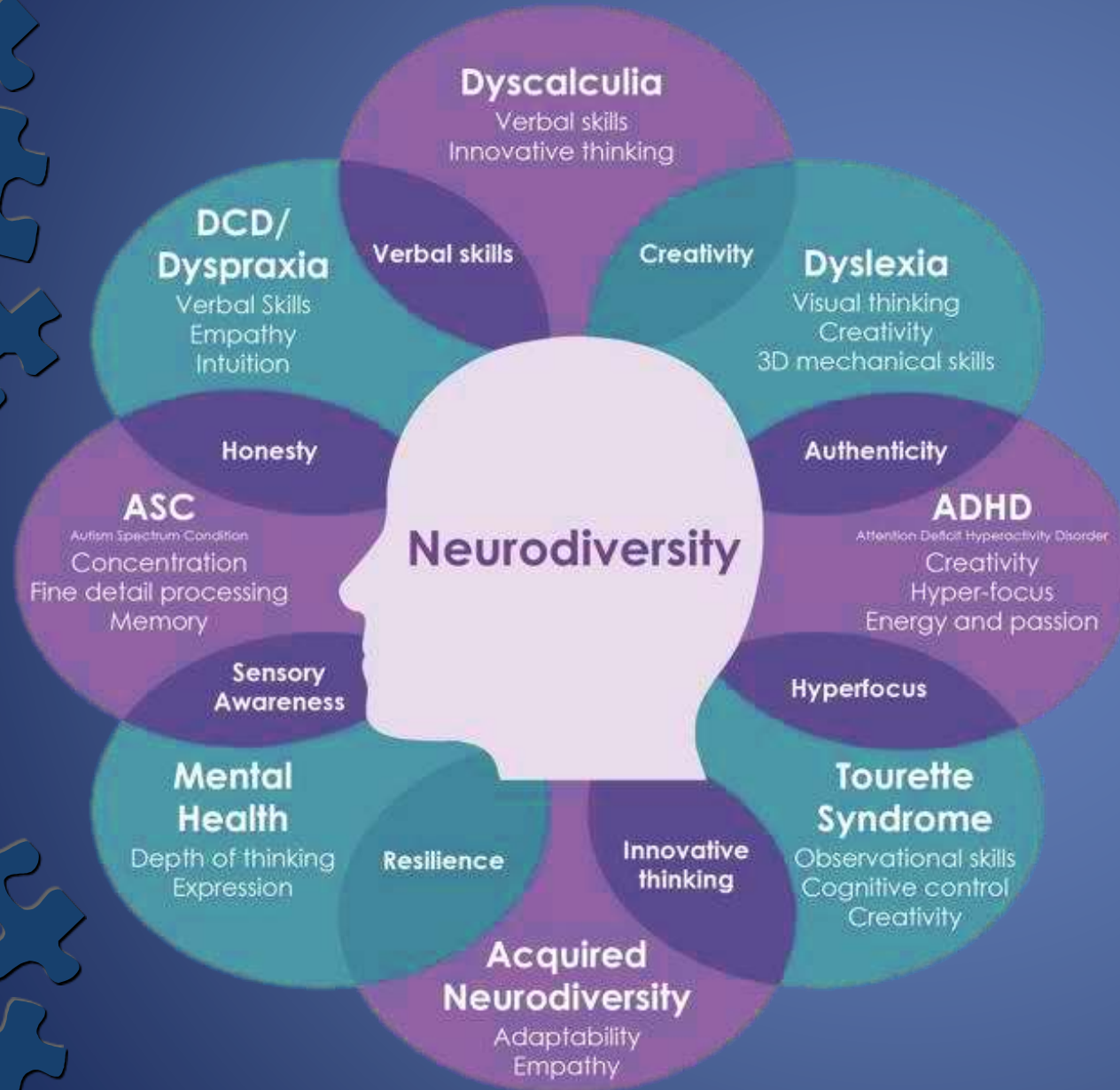
New law mandates Utah police undergo autism awareness training

Police officers in Utah will undergo mandatory training to learn how better to interact with people with autism.

Things are getting better!



NEURODIVERSITY = Strengths!



**The
Neurodiversity
Movement is at
the heart of Self-
Advocacy in a
Neurotypical
World!**



Some Basic Vocabulary

NEURO = Brain!

DIVERSITY/DIVERGENT = Different!

In other words...

WE HAVE UNIQUE MINDS! (DUH! 😊)

Neuro _____

- ❖ **Neurotypical**
- ❖ **Neurodivergent**
- ❖ **Neurodiversity**
- ❖ **Neurotype**
- ❖ **Neuromajority**
- ❖ **Neurominority**



“I know of nobody who is purely autistic, or purely neurotypical. Even God has some autistic moments, which is why the planets spin.”

— Jerry Newport

“NEUROMINORITY”

**People with Disabilities
make up the Largest
Minority in the World!**

**Because of our minority status,
it puts those of us who are
neurodivergent at the mercy of
the majority to define us and
our so-called “deviancy”,
“disabilities”, and “disorders” ☹️
(ABLE-ISM!)**

“I’m autistic, which means everyone around me has a disorder that makes them say things they don’t mean, not care about structure, fail to hyperfocus on singular important topics, have unreliable memories, drop weird hints and creepily stare into my eyeballs.”

Autisticnotweird.com
www.facebook.com/autisticnotweird

“So why do people say YOU’RE the weird one?”

“Because there’s more of them than me.”



Neurotypical (NT) Syndrome

(According to the "Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical" (ISNT) and others)

A neurobiological disorder characterized by:

I. Excessive preoccupation with socializing and social conformity, as exhibited by 5 or more of the following:

- a) Begins talking by 18 months, although such "talking" is often about other people, social situations, and emotional experiences; or uninteresting social norms such as the sounds of farm animals or the names of people or items
- b) Demands that others speak, make eye contact, and engage in back and forth "conversation" about unimportant, socially normed topics (e.g. sports, relationships, hygiene, etc)
- c) Assumes the superiority of social norms, fads, and peer or culturally dictated behaviors and speech patterns, and that any deviance from this must be altered in order to conform with such expectations
- d) Experiences difficulty being alone, being quiet, or pursuing solitary interests
- e) Pursues relationships even when the other person is not present or not interesting

Neurotypical (NT) Syndrome

(According to the "Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical" (ISNT) and others)

A neurobiological disorder characterized by:

I. Excessive preoccupation with socializing and social conformity, as exhibited by 5 or more of the following:

- f) Makes rote use of phrases of little apparent meaning, particularly in social contexts, often related to things such as the weather or the feelings of themselves and others
- g) Adheres to apparently inflexible, nonfunctional routines or rituals, such as wearing a tie, high heels or other uncomfortable clothing, or excessive preoccupation with brand names
- h) Engages in stereotyped and repetitive manners or mannerisms around other people (e.g., ritualistic thanking of people for useless, unsolicited, and unwanted gifts)
- i) Reads social significance into absolutely everything—including body movements, vocal tones, eye contact, touch, clothing, personal preferences, personal hygiene, or even the absence of such non-verbal behaviors
- j) **Actively avoids peer relationships with non-neurotypical people; occasionally even exhibiting the need to bully, manipulate, or gossip about non-neurotypical people**

Neurotypical (NT) Syndrome

(According to the “Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical” (ISNT) and others)

A neurobiological disorder characterized by:

II. Odd experience of sensory phenomena, as exhibited by at least 3 of the following:

- a) Often fails to recognize when sensory stimuli are too high or too low
- b) Often fails to register visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, or other sensory experiences of non-neurotypical people, and may even deny the existence of such experiences
- c) Engages in excessive touch, eye contact, smell, and sound levels—and expects non-neurotypicals to do the same
- d) Exhibits preference for frequent changes to sensory input, environment, and/or types of entertainment— often relating to social circumstances
- e) Experiences difficulty ignoring external sensory inputs to stay focused on a task for a full 8 hours or more

Neurotypical (NT) Syndrome

(According to the "Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical" (ISNT) and others)

A neurobiological disorder characterized by:

III. Acute avoidance of directness, as exhibited by all of the following:

- a) Exhibits preference for abstract, idiomatic, metaphorical, and subjective speech
- b) Often experiences direct observations of fact as insulting
- c) Often experiences difficulty comprehending the literal meaning of language
- d) Often experiences difficulty with honesty—may lie easily, or intentionally seek to deceive especially in social situations
- e) Exhibits irrational expectations for others to pick up on hints and subtext

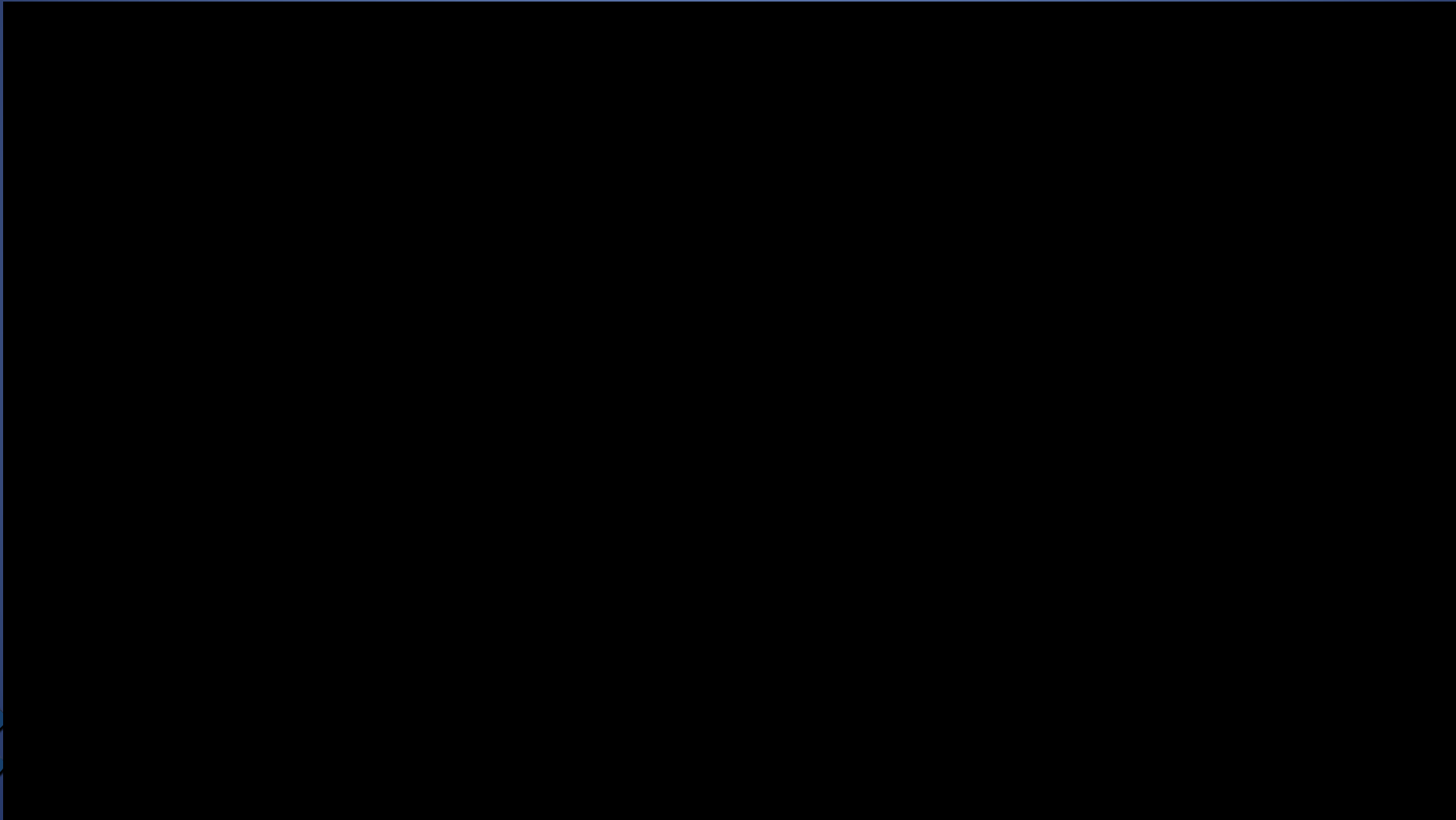
❖ **Neurotypical Syndrome affects roughly 35/36 children worldwide.**

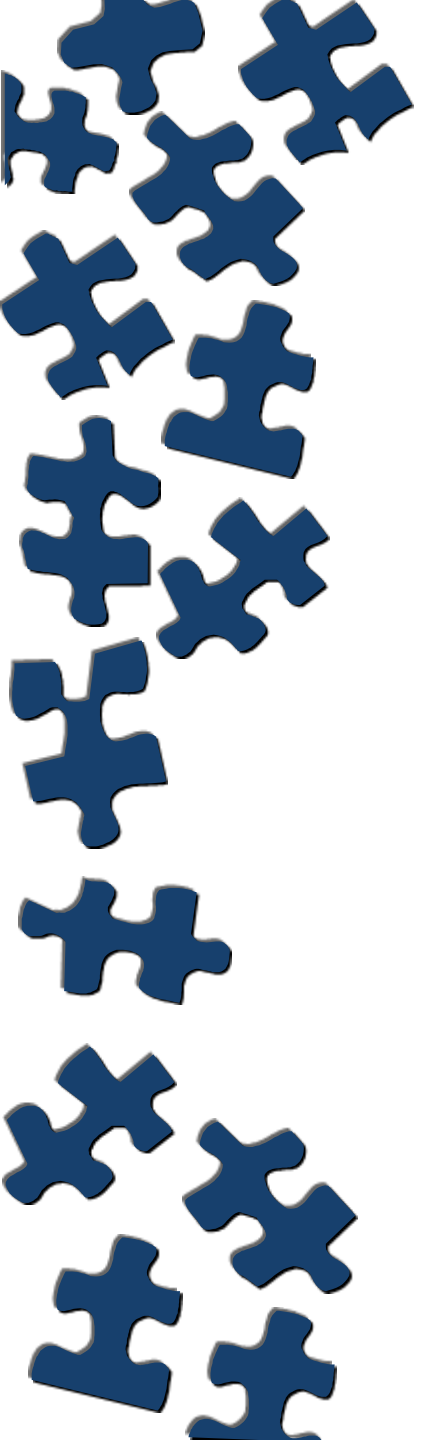
❖ **Neurotypical Syndrome is incurable, pervasive, and may be apparent in infants as young as three months old.**

❖ **Despite their challenges, many NT's have learned to compensate for their disabilities and to interact normally with an autistic person or specialized interest.**

Neurotypical (NT) Syndrome

(According to the "Institute for the Study of the Neurologically Typical" (ISNT) and others)





#Acceptance! #AutisticPride!

Let's Do This!!!!



Autistics Unite!!!!



*Oh right— like we're
gonna hold hands.*

The Spectrum: Jacob Barnett

***“Your autism gives you strengths. Use those.
Autism is something to be proud of.”***

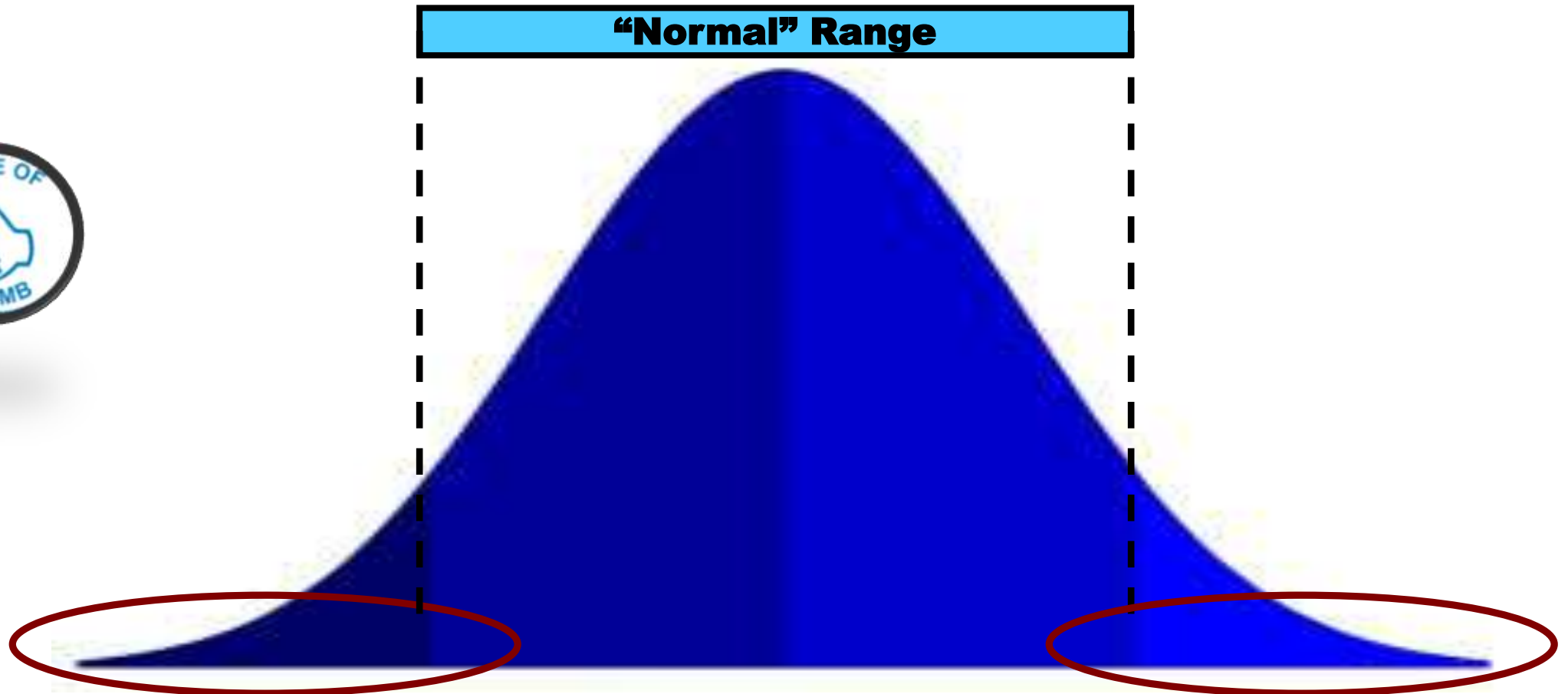


60
MINUTES

Pro Tip #5: Growth Will Be Uneven!

Autism is a Disorder of Extremes!!!

➤ Those with ASD are best described as **“Outliers”**

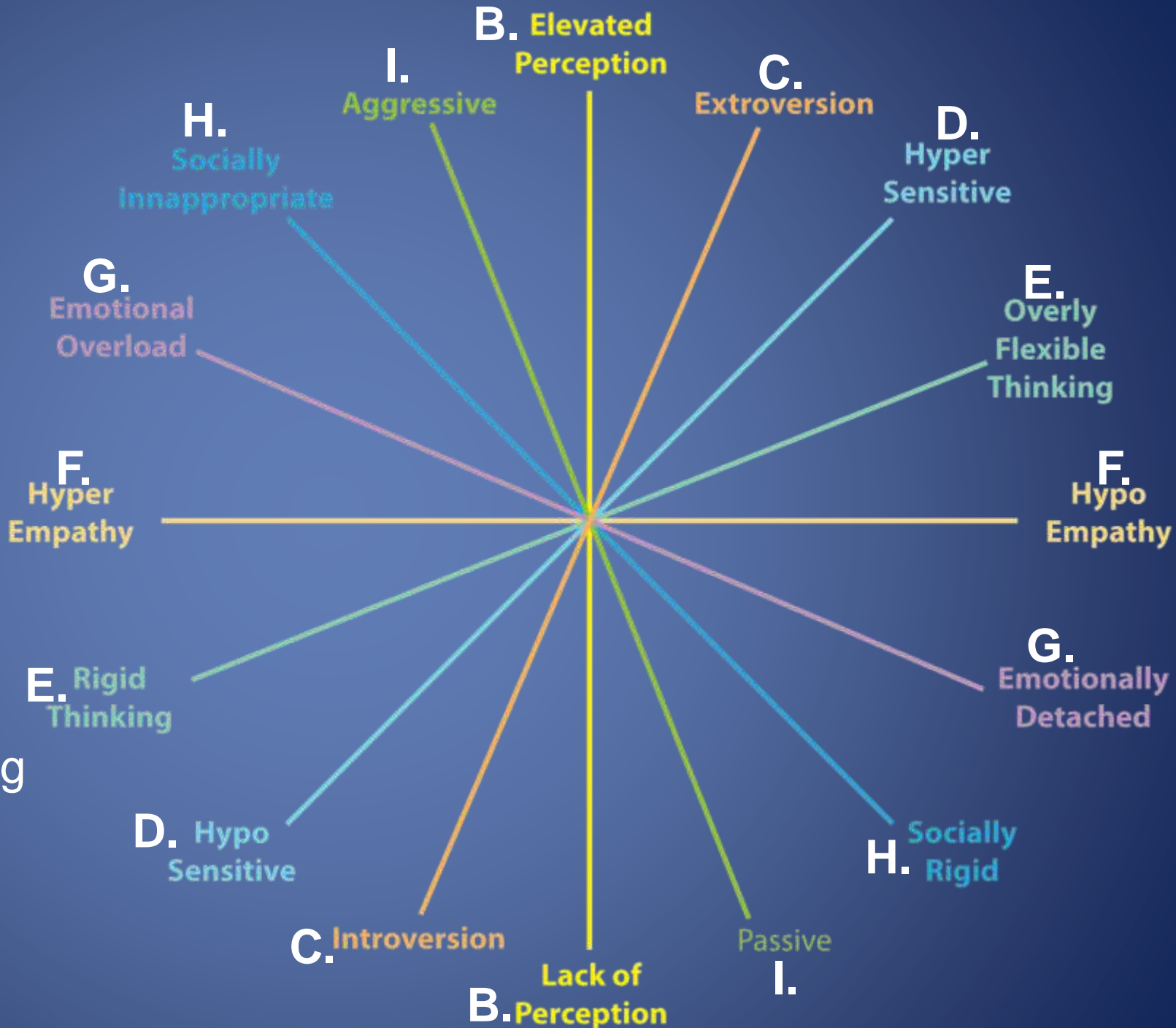


Autism is Uneven...

High

Low

A.
Cognitive
Processing



Autism is Uneven...

● = Mike, 22, Level 1

▲ = Cage, 18, Level 1

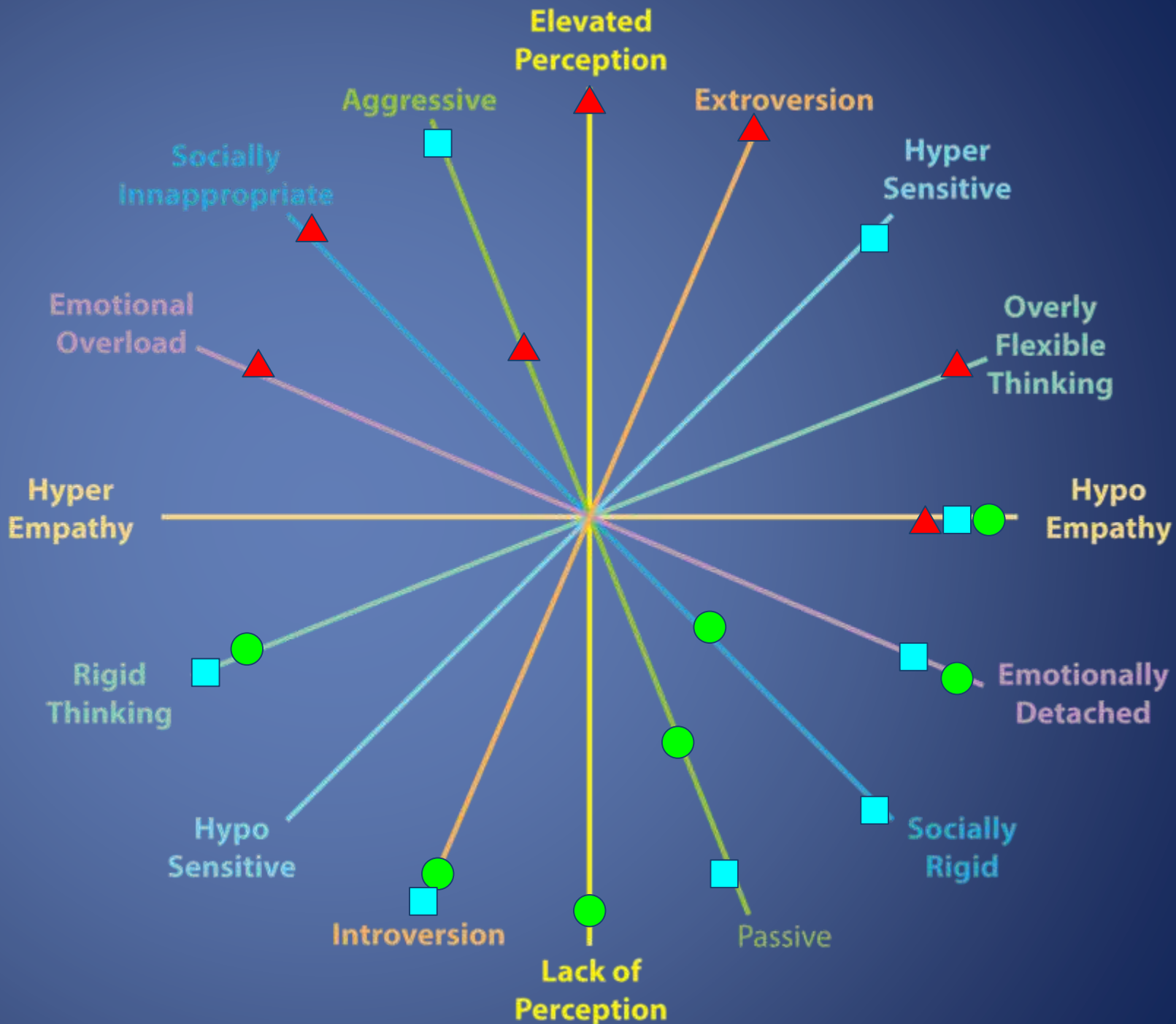
■ = Will, 27, Level 1

High



Cognitive
Processing

Low



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Speech and Language Issues:

- delayed and/or advanced development
- overly formal language which often includes too much (or too little) detail
- repeats words and phrases (echolalia)
- odd prosody, peculiar voice characteristics
- dominates conversations or almost non-verbal



Sources: Attwood (2007), Baron-Cohen (2008), Downey (2001), Gillberg (1989), Harrison and Hare (2004), Knight (2001), Stewart (2007)

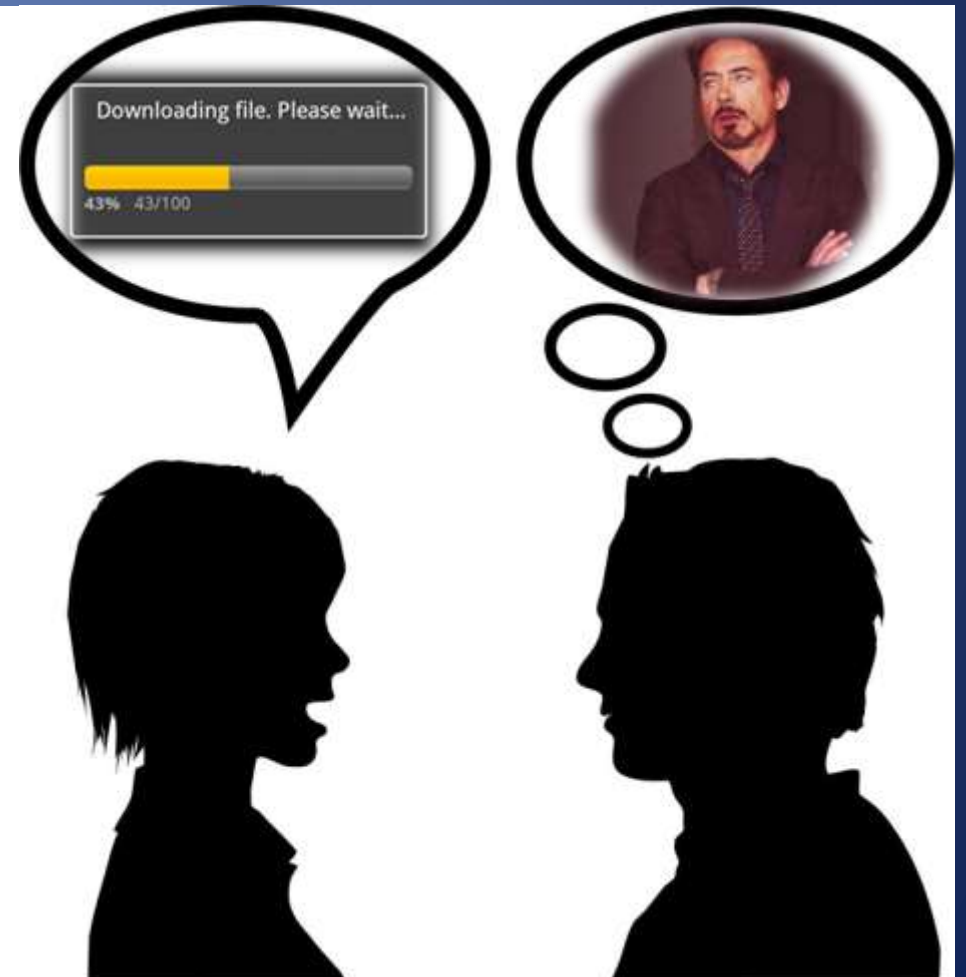
Growth Will Be Uneven:

Disorder of Extremes: **Hyper-verbal**

'When I am around other people, I feel an absolute *compulsion* to be the one to display interest in others, start conversations, ask questions, compensate for silences, be compulsively social. It is very terrible and exhausting.'
Laurel Evans



When I
Start
Talking
about an
Interest
Area...



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Disorder of Extremes: **Hypo-verbal**

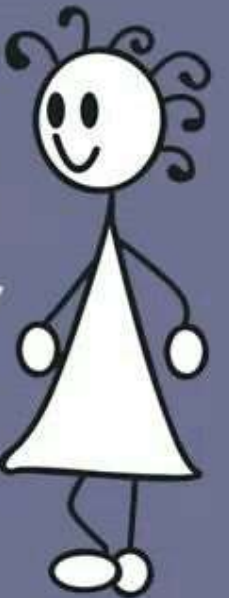
“My silence isn’t your silence. My silence is rich and meaningful. My silence is trust and comfort... and only in silence can I really know and appreciate the things and people around me... My silence is, in fact, a compliment. It means that I am being my natural self. When I dilute my silences with words– I often do so out of fear... Fear that my ways of communicating will be branded as pathology, as aberrant, as not being communication at all. Fear that I will lose my job. Fear that I will lose your friendship, guidance, or interest in me. Fear that I’ll be institutionalized... infantilized. Fear that I’ll be seen as less than human.” ~ Melanie Yergeau

'I'm not distant or silent. I just cannot translate the pictures in my head, into words. This is incredibly frustrating for me, if i'm being pushed into making conversation - because sometimes I just can't.' Nele Maylaert



'I am very conscious that others are uncomfortable with my silence but, I have nothing to say unless I have something to say (it makes sense to me!). I often just don't know how to respond to people's chatter and I can't do inane small talk. People who know me get used to my silence usually.'

Linda Cole



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Cognitive Issues:

- tendency to think of issues as being “black and white” (e.g. in politics or fandoms or morality)
- general inflexibility and aversion to change (“**Psychological Rigidity**”)
- over or under conscious of mistakes
- hyper or hypo-rationality
- focus and attention issues (perseveration)
- difficulty habituating (basal ganglia)





Growth Will Be Uneven:

Cognitive Challenges (and Strengths!)

Forests and Trees...

Autism is...

Finding the Needle
BEFORE

Noticing the Haystack
~Anonymous



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Sensory Issues:

- hyper- and hypo-sensitivity to stimuli
- self-“stimming” behaviors
- distortions, tune-outs, and overload
- filtering problems—too little or too much filter
- averse reaction to many “normal” sensations
- This is the primary source of “meltdowns”!



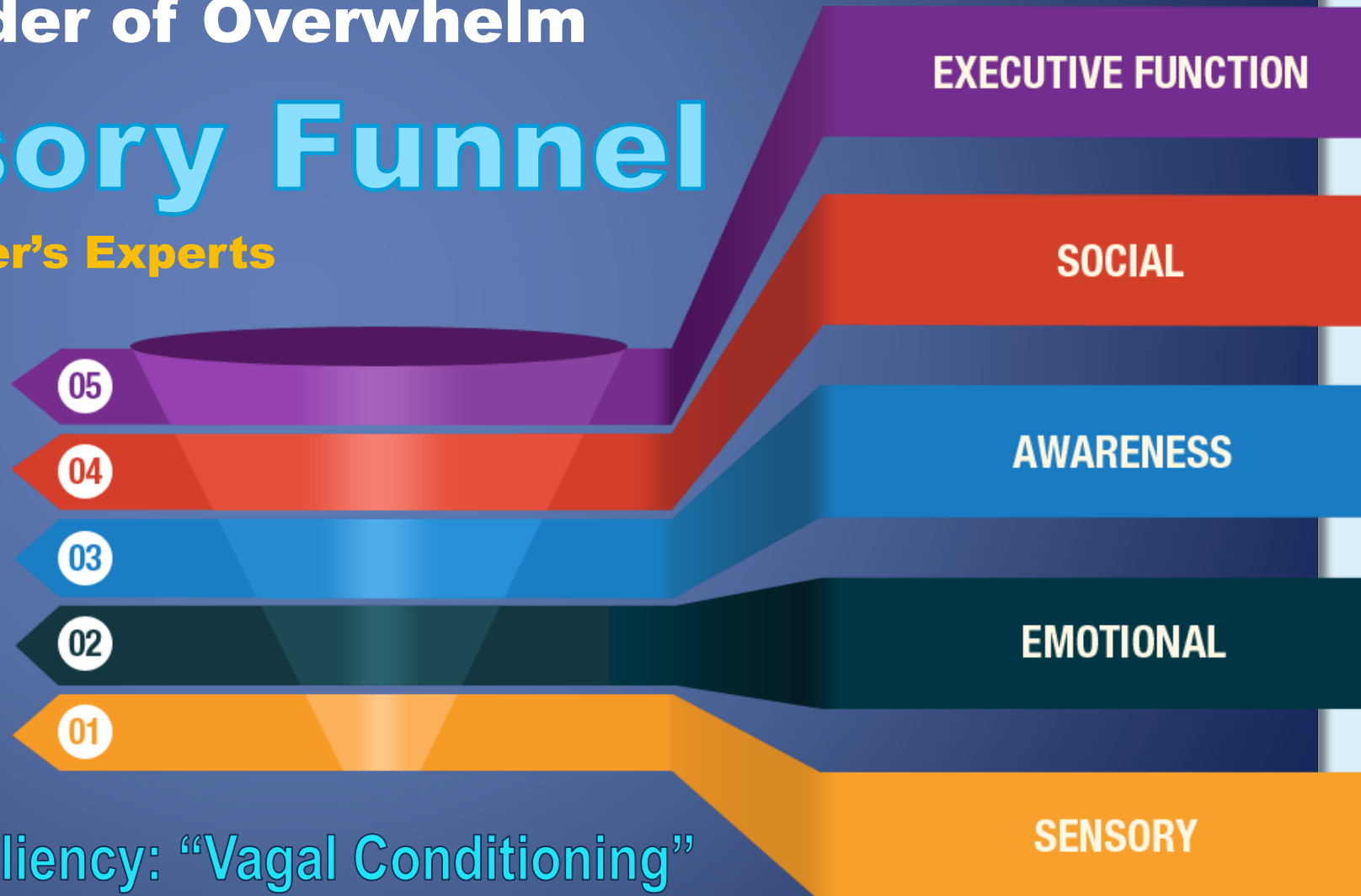
Awareness and Acceptance



Autism is a Disorder of Overwhelm

The Sensory Funnel

©Asperger's Experts



Resiliency: “Vagal Conditioning”

Growth Will Be Uneven:



Autism is a Disorder of Overwhelm



“I wish that Neurotypicals knew that they’d act autistic too if we just turned up the temperature, blasted noise at them, made them wear uncomfortable clothes, stood too close to them, and asked them questions while poking them and forcing them to do a math quiz.”

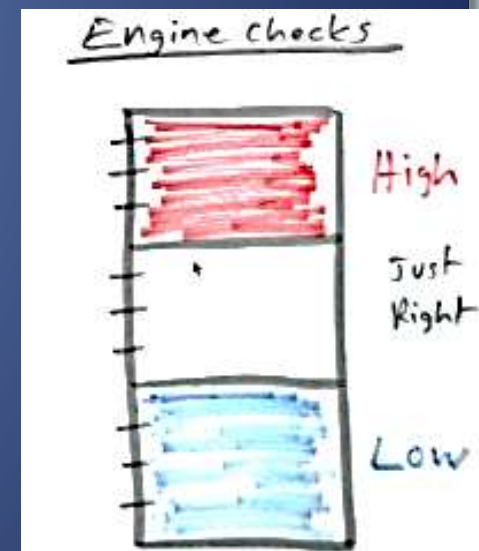
~Zach A.

A Word on **Stimming**...

- › **Stimming Rocks!** 😊 (Pun Intended)
- › Unless it is dangerous, illegal, and/or totally socially unacceptable, it's best to just **Allow the person to stim!** (Be flexible!)

Some Pro Tips:

1. Stim to increase, (not just decrease), sensory levels
2. Stim in a way that doesn't disturb others
3. Stim with the sense NOT required by the Task!





Sensory Issue Extremes:

Sensory Overlap

Autism is...



**Hearing better when you wear
glasses with tinted lenses**

~Shannon Des Roches Rosa

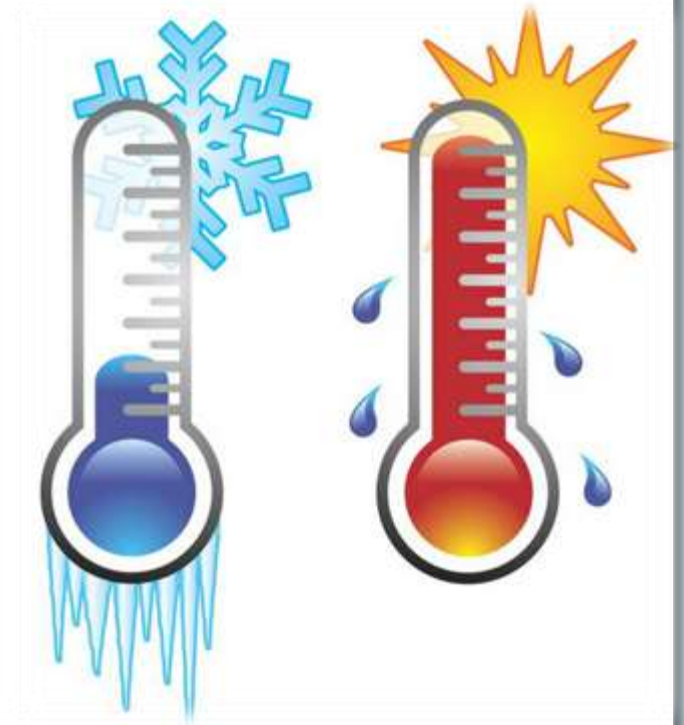


Sensory Issue Extremes:

Environmental Shift

Autism is...

Feeling physical pain and hypersensitivity when you come from the hot outdoors into an air-conditioned room...



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Motor and Musculature Issues:

- general gross-motor clumsiness
- possible fine-motor challenges
- overly loose or overly tight muscle tone
- involuntary movements or tics
- difficulty formulating “muscle memory”
(habituation and the basal ganglia again...)





Motor/Musculature Issues:

Physical Education

Autism is...

**Ruining your 4.0 GPA
because of the stupid
PE credit requirements
for graduation**

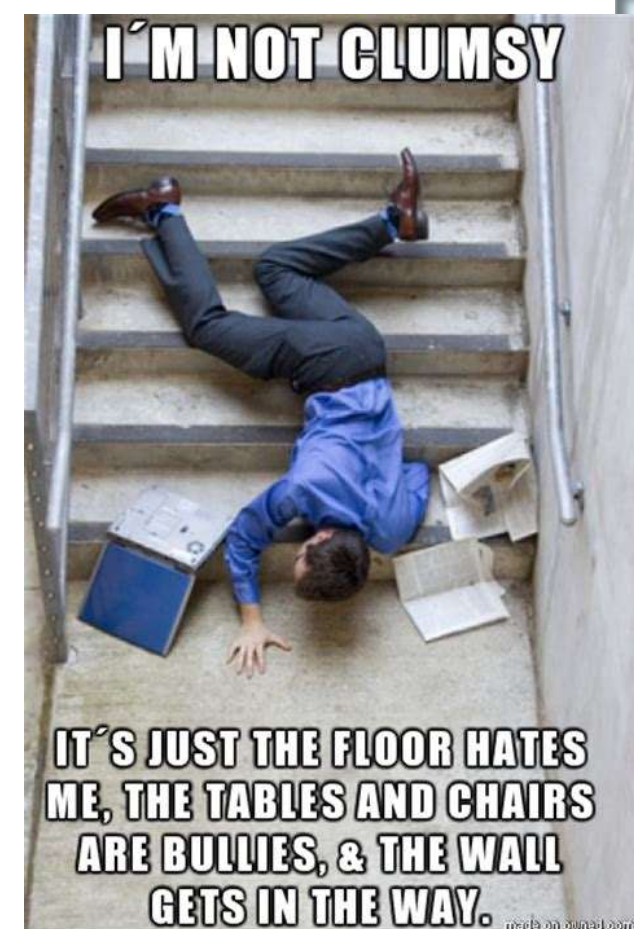


Motor/Musculature Issues:

General Clumsiness & Coordination Issues

Autism is...

Being hugely relieved when people give up trying to teach you to ride a bike or swim because you took so long and failed so badly



My bruises and scars tell a story...



...It's a story of a woman who's really very clumsy.

Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Emotional Issues:

- difficulty expressing emotion in correct “dosage”
- difficulty with reciprocating emotion (“Non-empathy”)
- difficulty with predicting/communicating emotion
- difficulty with identifying/understanding emotion (“Alexithymia”)
- tendency to yo-yo between highs and lows (“Cyclothymia”)
- frequent tendency to say or do things without considering or comprehending the emotional impact on the listener



Emotional Extremes:

Logic Trumping Emotion

Autism is...



- **Reporting on a group of missing hikers,**
- **And predicting that they are definitely dead**

Emotional Extremes:

Emotional Attachment to Objects

Autism is...



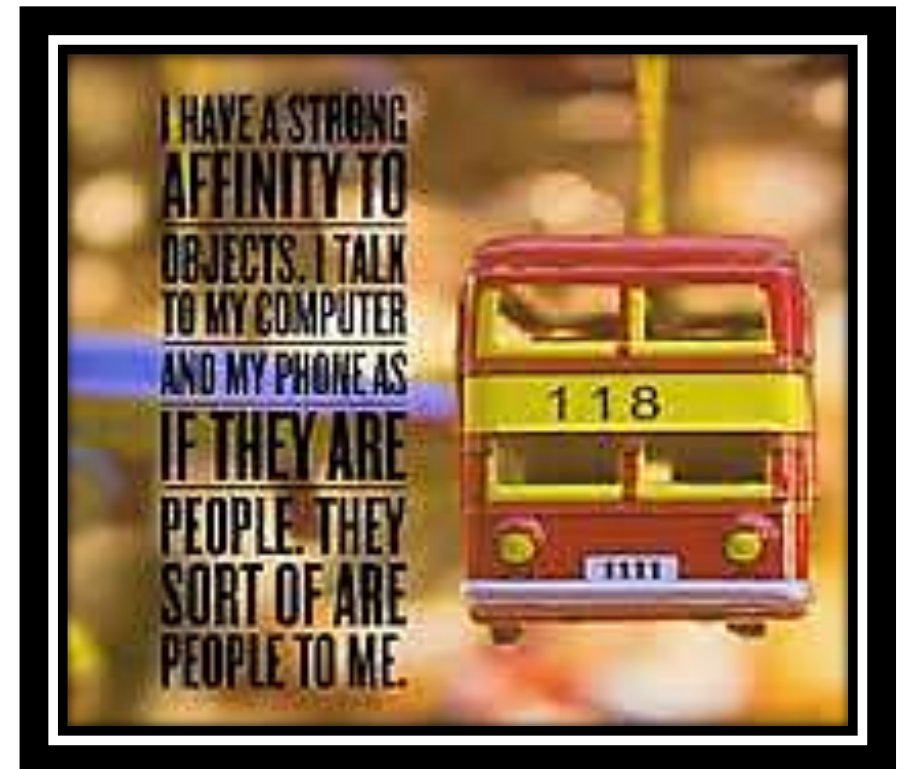
- **Reporting on a train accident,**
- **And asking if the train is OK**

Emotional Extremes:

Emotional Attachment to Objects

Autism is...

- **Collecting Toys**
- **Counting your toys as friends**



Growth Will Be Uneven:

Characteristic Challenges and Strengths



Challenges:

Rule of Thumb = Disorder of Extremes

Social Issues:

- social-emotional age does not match chronological age
- verbal and nonverbal messages often do not match
- appears overly withdrawn or overly excited in social situations
- difficulty understanding social situations and other's thoughts/responses
- limited or exaggerated use of gestures and facial expression flat affect
- inappropriate expression for situation (or appropriate but delayed)
- peculiar, stiff gaze and/or problems with eye contact
- inability to recognize when the listener is interested or bored
- deficient hygiene and grooming
- failure to make “small talk” or to see the point of superficial social contact, niceties, or passing time with others, unless there is a clear discussion, point, debate, or purpose to the activity



Social Issues: “Specialty Slots”

AsPARDY!

ANIME & MOVIES	FAN-FICTION	VIDEO GAMES	SOCIAL SKILLS	SUPER HEROES	SCI-FI & FANTASY	RPG'S & CCG'S
			\$100			
			\$200			
			\$300			
			\$400			
			\$500			

Social Issue Extremes:



Autism is...

Calling in sick...

Because there's a "Staff Retreat"



Other Challenges of Autism, AKA: “Doubly Disabled”

Co-morbid Physical and Mental Health Issues:

Attwood (2007); Baron-Cohen (2008); Kirby, et al (2019); Muris et al. (1998); Richdale (2000)

1. **ADHD**—as high as 75%
2. **Allergies** (including asthma, eczema, food, seasonal allergies)—as high as 50%
3. **Eating Disorders** (including Anorexia, Bulimia)—as many as 23% of females with Anorexia may have Autism
4. **GI Disorders/Irritable Bowel Syndrome**—at least 50%
5. **Learning Disabilities** (including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and other processing disorders)—25%
6. **Mood Disorders** (Apathy, Depression, Bi-polar, Cyclothymic, Paranoia, Delusion, Conduct, and Anxiety Disorders such as Panic Disorder, Generalized Anxiety, etc)—nearly 100% with 33% at any given moment and 50% with clinical depression
7. **Movement Disorders** (Dyspraxia, muscle-tone issues, movement disturbances, etc)—nearly 100%
8. **PTSD**—at least 25%
9. **Sleep Disorders**—unknown, but possibly as high as 66%
10. **Suicidality**—1.5 - 9 times higher rates, depending on the study!
11. **Tourette’s Syndrome**— at least 10%

Watch Out for “Diagnostic Overshadowing”!!!





Growth Will Be Uneven: Characteristic Challenges and Strengths?

Dr. Tony Attwood:

“Professionals and service agencies tend to see children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders who are having problems that are highly conspicuous and difficult to treat or resolve, *and this may lead to an overly pessimistic view of the long-term outcome.*”



The Spectrum: Amy Gravino

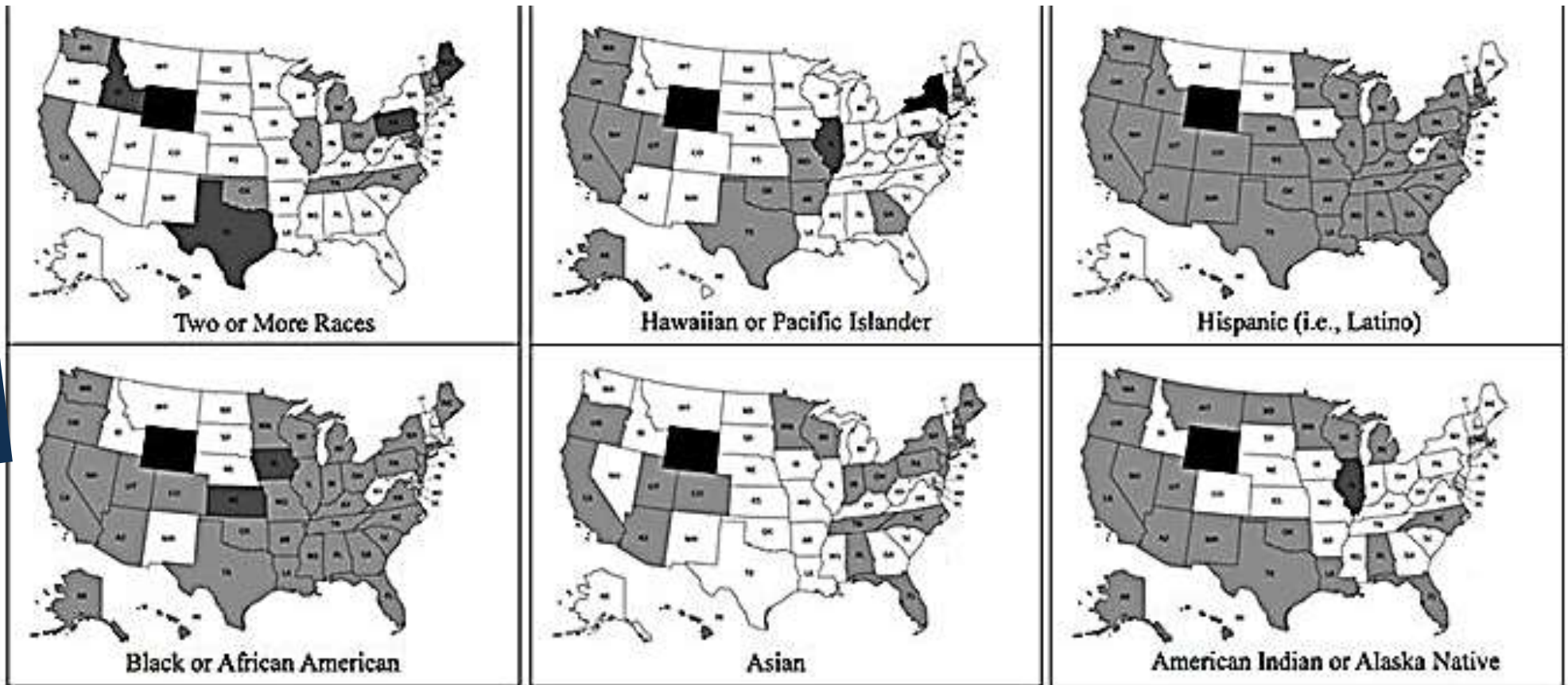


iris



Pro Tip #6: It Gets Better (Even for Women)!

❖ Race



□ = Proportionate identification, □ = Underidentification, □ = Overidentification, □ = No data

**“Doubly
Discriminated”
is getting
better!!!
(UADDM 2023)**

Pro Tip #6: It Gets Better (Even for Women)!

- ❖ **Race**
- ❖ **LGBT+**
- ❖ **Gender**

**“Doubly
Discriminated”
is getting
better!!!
(UADDM 2023)**



**PROUD
& INCLUDED**

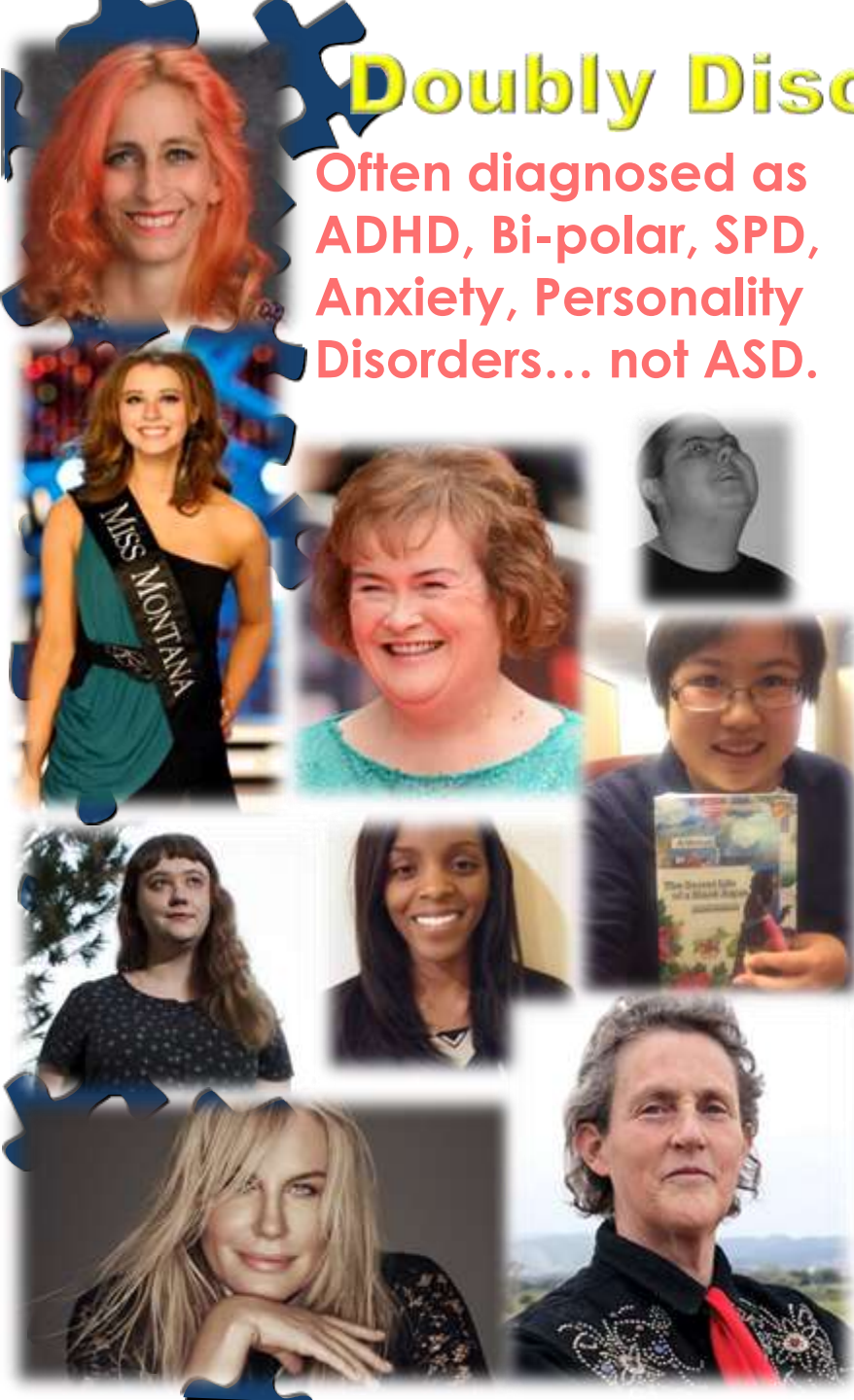
creating community & inclusion
for LGBTQ Adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Doubly Discriminated– Females with ASD

Often diagnosed as
ADHD, Bi-polar, SPD,
Anxiety, Personality
Disorders... not ASD.

Some Unique Issues:

- ▣ Generally better at masking symptoms (often develop a social skills special interest and hyperfocus on relationships)
- ▣ Cultural bias that girls are shy, bad at sports, highly emotional and “mysterious” makes symptoms harder to notice
- ▣ Tend to be more verbal than boys on the spectrum (and better writers)
- ▣ Want friends, but don’t know how to go about it
- ▣ Social skills requirements MUCH higher than for boys
- ▣ Dress and grooming more important/complex
- ▣ Tend to be seen as “bossy”, one-sided, or “blunt”
- ▣ May be manipulative/dishonest (anything for standing)
- ▣ Social naiveté can lead to exploitation/abuse
- ▣ Behavior extremes: e.g. doesn’t date or else very promiscuous
- ▣ Poor body image, often feel uncomfortable in own skin
- ▣ At least 5x more likely to identify as LGBTQ+
- ▣ Constant camouflaging often leads to severe anxiety disorders
- ▣ More vulnerable to self-injury and suicidal thoughts (at least 4x higher risk!)
- ▣ Up to 25 TIMES more likely to have an eating disorder!!! (watch for this...)



Jennie's Diagnostic Experience

- › "How am I supposed to just turn off 40 years of masking?"
- › "I moderate myself in public!"
- › "Of course I have more than one interest now!"
- › "[The therapist] told me at the results meeting that 'autistics can't learn to hold conversations' and 'your eye-contact is far too good'."
- › "The therapist had obviously reached a conclusion before they started."

Used with
permission

"...on average females received a diagnosis at least 1 year later than males... The results confirm delays in access to ASD diagnosis and suggest that females are more likely to receive a ASD diagnosis later than males." (Bonney, E., et al., 2022)

According to the
CDC in 2021:
autism is about 4.2
times more
prevalent in boys
than girls.

"Relative to males, women with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have neurobiological and clinical presentation differences. Recent research suggests that the male/female ASD prevalence gap is smaller than previously reported. Sex differences in symptom presentation as well as the male bias of ASD account for delayed/missed diagnosis among women. Investigating ASD and providing psychological evaluation referrals for women who are struggling socially and present with complex mental health conditions (e.g., ADHD, depression), even when they do not show typical autistic characteristics, is important."

(Ochoa-Lubinoff, C., Makol, B. A., & Dillon, E. F., 2023)

“Doubly Discriminated” is Getting Better! Females with Autism: Temple Grandin



FIRST Face of Autism:

of the VERY FIRST people
the autism became accepted as
damage
but had a caring family that did
own unique potential
psychology in 1970
in 1989 (both in Animal Science)



▣ **We ALL owe Templ**

Temple Grandin's Pro Tips:

- › "I had people in my life who didn't give up on me: my mother, my aunt, my science teacher... I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a good teacher."
"Use Mentors!"
- › "The most important thing people did for me was to expose me to new things... You have to keep trying things, because you never know when you'll hit on something that will keep [them] motivated."
- › "Choices are very important for children with ASD... There was always an opportunity for choice, but [self-defeating behaviors] were not allowed. Providing choices, combined with advance preparation (surprises scare!), gives a child a sense of control so that he can handle new life-expanding experiences."



› "When I was a teenager, I was never allowed to become a recluse in my room. I had to be at meals, attend church, and participate in family gatherings."

› "Parents need to let go and give careful, loving pushes to get their child to try new things."

"My advice is: You always have to keep persevering."

Pro Tip #6:



It Gets Better (Even for Women)!

Autism is very context-specific—symptoms generally improve out of the K-12 school system

- ❖ Different rules and societal expectations of adults than of students.
- ❖ Many adults with ASD find success in college or technical programs.



Dr. Dawn Prince-Hughes:

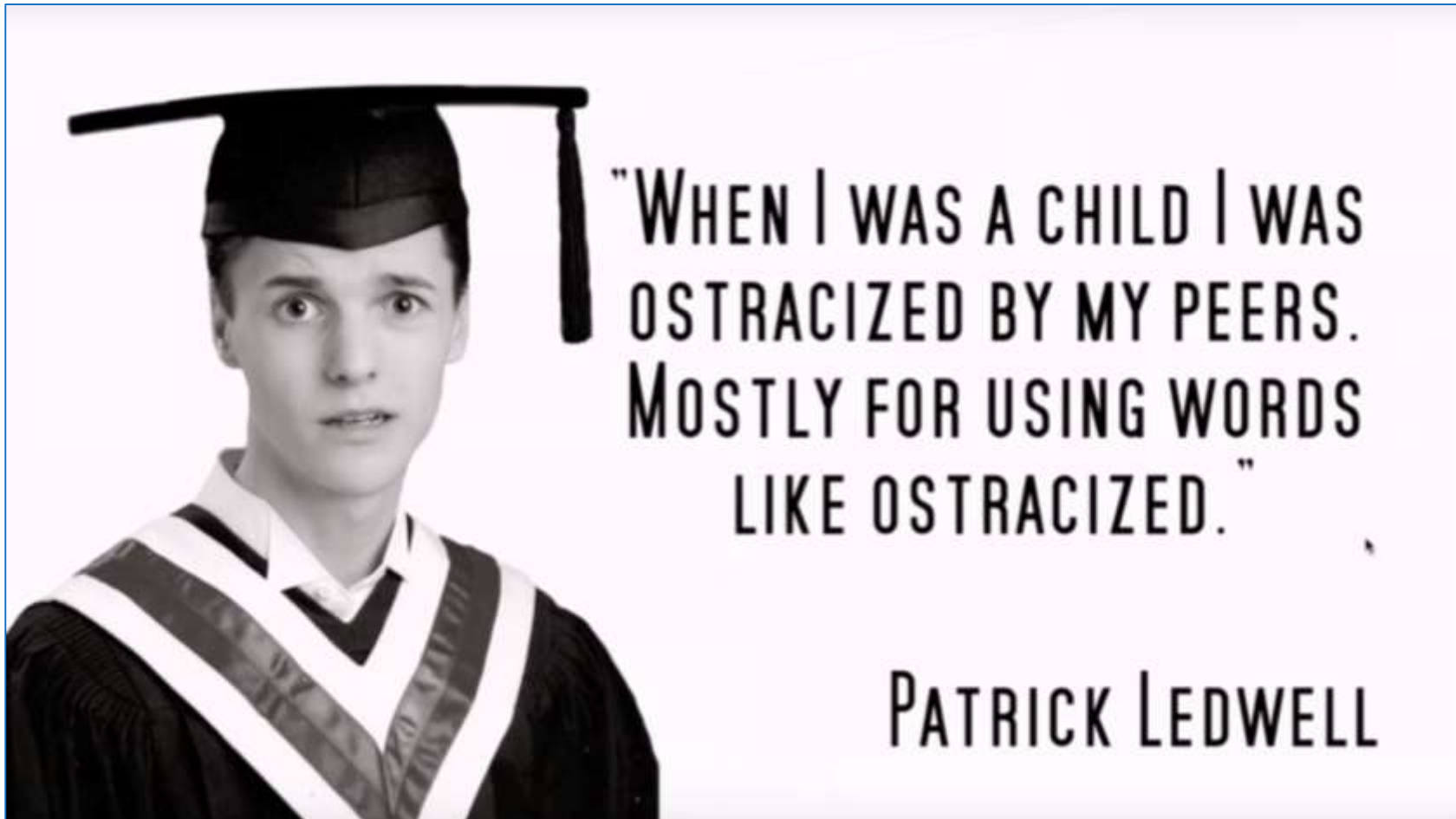
“[Going to college] was very difficult and scary: I had abandoned school and was thrown into terror every time I considered going back... [but college] people, to my amazement... would help me. I still looked away a lot. I rocked and cleared my throat loudly and compulsively. I laughed at things that weren’t funny to them, and I interjected thoughts that they didn’t think were relevant.

In spite of these things, they understood not only what I was trying to say in real social situations, but what I wanted to do with my life... [A]s a new college student... I was free to come and go as I pleased, and in addition to my formal learning I continued to read all I could... *I was never so happy.* I had to deal with only a few people, usually one on one, and I could spend all my time learning.”

~Songs of the Gorilla Nation



Autism generally improves out of school...



Pro Tip #6:



It Gets Better (Even for Women)!

Adulthood often means vastly improved Potentials for individuals with ASD.

Social



- ❖ Adults with autism show significantly greater brain activity during social tasks, such as looking at faces, than children with ASD do (Dickstein, et al, 2013)
- ❖ Adults can put on better “Masks” and better control their focus/symptoms
- ❖ Adults’ “Special Interests” are broader; more likely to find common ground
- ❖ Adults usually have at least some social circle (often online or at work...)
- ❖ Many adults with autism (>10%) actually get married! (Farley, 2008)

“Sometimes parents and professionals worry too much about the social life of an adult with autism. I make social contacts via my work. If a person develops her talents, she will have contacts with people who share her interests... The thing about being autistic is that you gradually get less and less autistic, because you keep learning... It's like being in a play; I'm always in a play.” ~ Temple Grandin



Pro Tip #6: It Gets Better (Even for Women)!

❖ **Some things never quite “get better”... ☺**



*And we're
always at
least a little
awkward...*

The Spectrum: Elon Musk

*This guy could
build 1000
ScenicView's
and have
enough left over
to spend
\$1,000,000.00
a day for
300,000 years!*



Pro Tip #7: Make Tourists, Not Clones!

A Word on navigating the NT World...

- › The world is NOT built for us...
(The majority determines most things)

Learning to navigate is crucial!



- › **But I'm NOT interested in making autistics into NT clones!!!!**
- › Imagine you were a tourist in Japan (*"Anthropologist on Mars"*)...
 - We are free to be our "authentic self", but we are also striving to be our "best self"!
 - It's all about **WORKABILITY** and **FUNCTIONALITY**, not conformity

Pro Tip #7: Make Tourists, Not Clones!

Pro = Comfort and Fluency

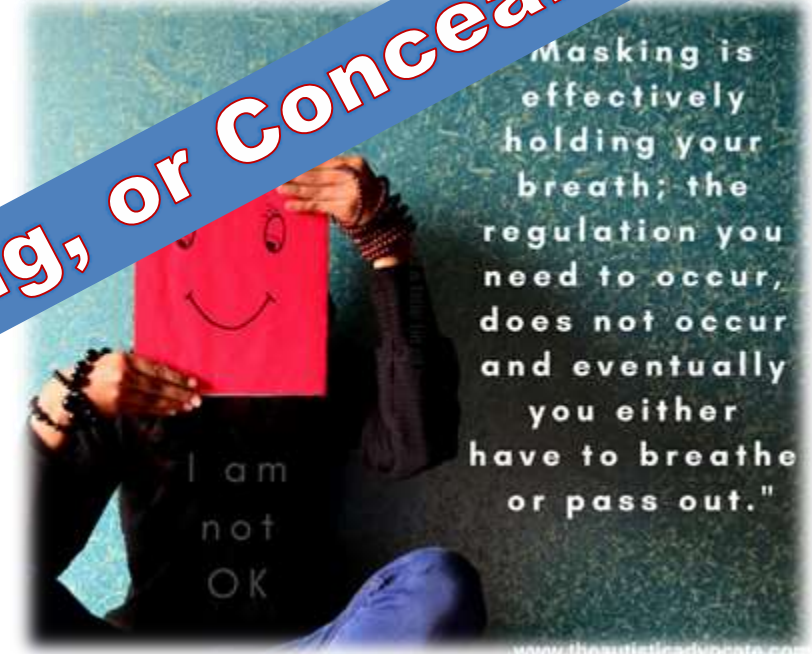
Cons =

- When it isn't working!
- Dishonest masks (chronic stress)
- Exhausting masks (chronic stress)
- Forced/enforced masks
- Masks that confuse us or fragment our identity
- "Imposter Syndrome" and "Autistic Burnout"...

**» It is the INTERPRETATION of the person
AND the social group that determines if the
masking/camouflage is harmful or not!**

<https://twitter.com/ZebraW2015/status/1020527352697303040/photo/1>

Pros and
Cons of
Masking



Are you a Tourist, or a Spy? Connecting, or Concealing?

A Word on navigating the NT World

- › For Whose Benefit? Evidence, Ethics, and Effectiveness of Autism Interventions
<https://autisticadvocacy.org/policy/briefs/intervention-ethics/>
- › Includes 25 “Never Acceptables” and Red Flag Practices to Avoid
- › Perfect? No... 100% Accurate? No...
- › **Extremely useful guidelines, written by autistic adults, that will help inform your treatment decisions from the ND perspective? YES!!!**
 1. Targeting “undesirable” traits or behaviors that are common in all people of a certain age
 2. Deeming a trait or behavior “desirable” or “undesirable” based on whether it is typical of people of a certain age.
 3. Stating or implying that there is only one possible or “correct” way for all people to learn a skill
 4. Teaching autistic children to assume that their viewpoint or way of being in social situations is wrong
 5. Punishing autistic people differently than non-autistic people for the same behavior

ETC!

Pro Tip #7: Make Tourists, Not Clones!

The “Double Empathy” Problem:

› **Nick Walker:** “If we start from the assumption that neurotypicals are ‘normal’ and Autistics are ‘disordered,’ then **poor connections between neurotypicals and Autistics inevitably get blamed on some ‘defect’ or ‘deficit’ in Autistics.**

—If an Autistic can’t understand an **NT**, **it’s because Autistics have empathy deficits and impaired communication skills;**

—If an **NT** can’t understand an Autistic, **it’s because Autistics have empathy deficits and poor communication skills.”**

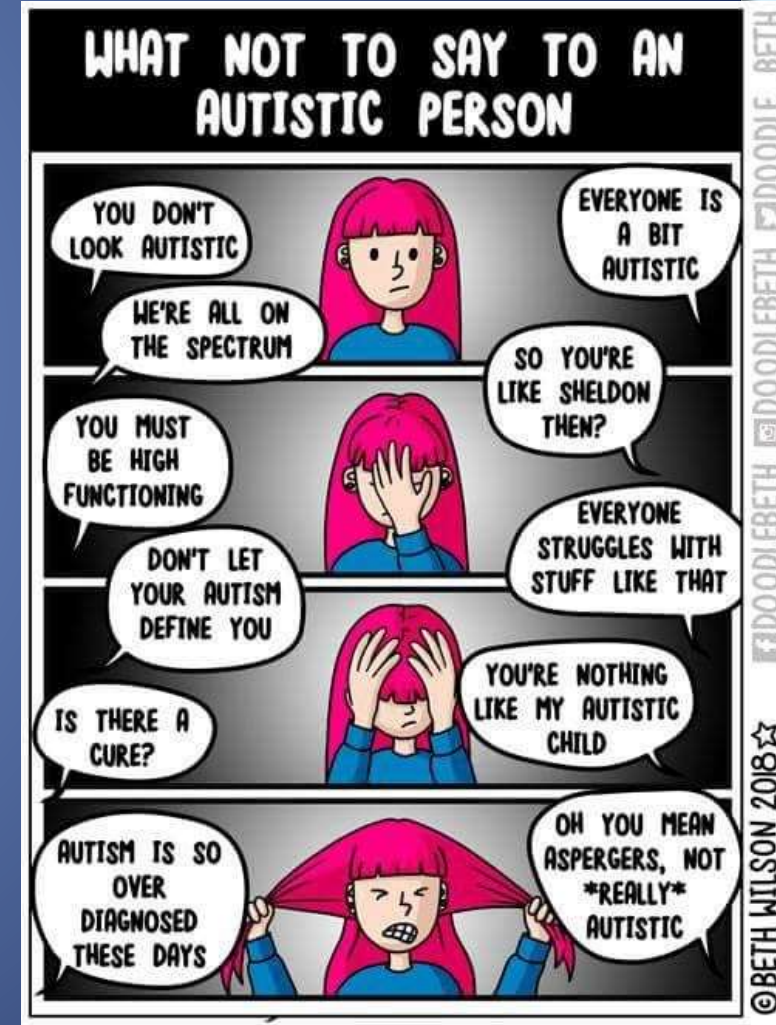
★ **NT’s need to work on their social skills too!**

#You Can Be a Tourist Too!!!!!!



Tips for Communicating with the Neurodiverse...

1. Respect our accommodations
2. Consider timing from our POV
3. Consider setting from our POV
4. Minimize sensory overload
5. Don't require eye-contact
6. Don't take silence personally
7. Don't freak about our non-verbals
8. Try to sincerely connect to our interests and strengths
9. Allow space to process/comment
10. Ask one question at a time
11. Never make multiple requests
12. Try to stick with a topic to the end
13. Please– No Surprises!



You Can Be a Tourist Too!!!!

How to Avoid Damaging Autistic Children Without Even Knowing It

from Chris Bonnell (@NotWeird.com)

1. Instead of talking about them as if they're not in the room:

- Remember that they can hear you, and always assume they are listening and understanding.

2. Instead of assuming a person's autism defines their character:

- Remember that they get to make personality choices like non-autistic people.

3. Instead of believing that their perspective makes them less reliable:

- Remember that you're actually making your own perspective on autism by making this assumption.
- Remember if bullying is reported by a distressed child-- it must be taken seriously.

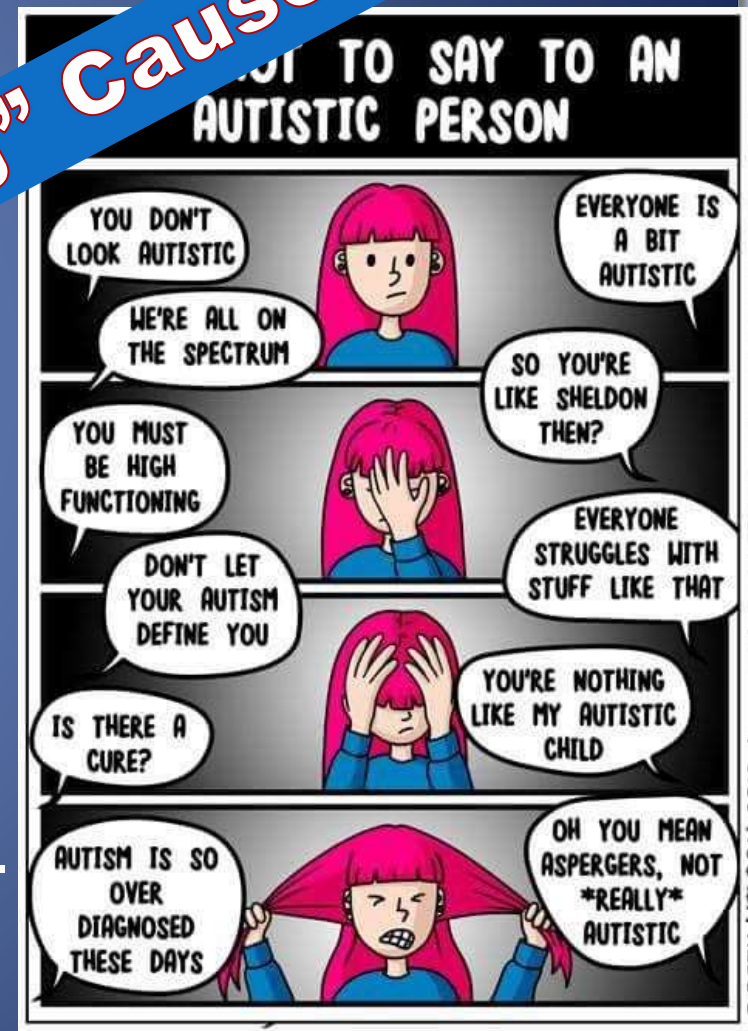
4. Instead of telling the world to teach them their autism is A Bad Thing:

- Address the problem head-on and remind them how awesome they are.

5. Instead of loving the child but hating their autism:

- Love the child.

Teaching someone that they are "Wrong" Causes Trauma!



The Spectrum: The Downside

- **Stalkers & Shooters**
- **Terrorists & Trolls**
- **Suicidal Ideation**

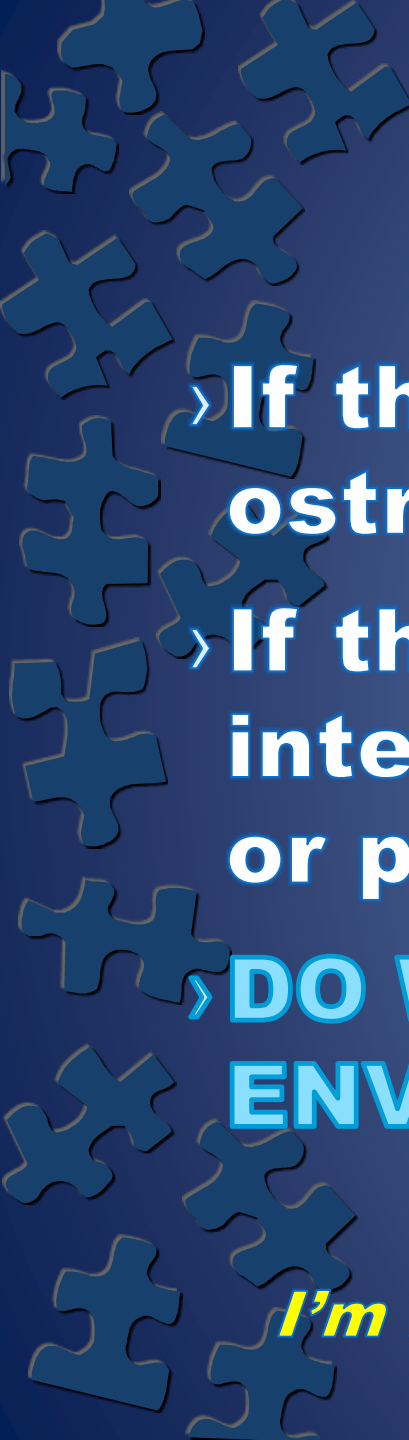
Paradox: Autistics are less likely to engage in violence, but 8 Times as likely to become a mass shooter compared to NT's! (Allely, C.S.; et al., 2016)



PENTAGON: PUTIN HAS ASPERGER'S



"The similarities between [autistic] school shooters Nicolas Cruz, left, and Adam Lanza reveal important gaps in the country's mental health treatment system" ~L.A. Times, Feb. 26, 2018



Pro Tip #8:

Avoid Anti-Social Isolation

- › **If the person is completely shunned and ostracized (or consistently bullied)**
- › **If the person is developing intensive interests in real-life killings, starting fires, or philosophies of hate and violence**
- › **DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT AND ADD CONNECTION!**

I'm not talking about Autistic "Social Batteries" here...

The Spectrum: Alexis Wineman

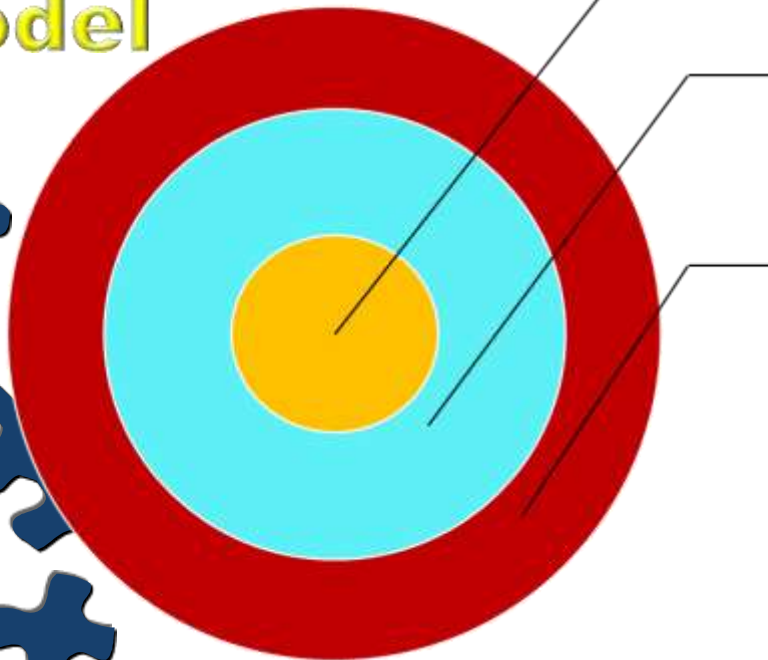
"You can't overcome fear or anger, and you certainly can't overcome autism, but you can't let them define you, either. You can, however, find ways to pick yourself back up and get back in whatever fight that got you down to begin with, because you'll find out that no matter the situation or obstacle in your way, you can and will rise to the challenge."



Pro Tip #9: Expose Them and Stretch Them!

- The Loving Push =
 - **COMFORT ZONE + 1!**

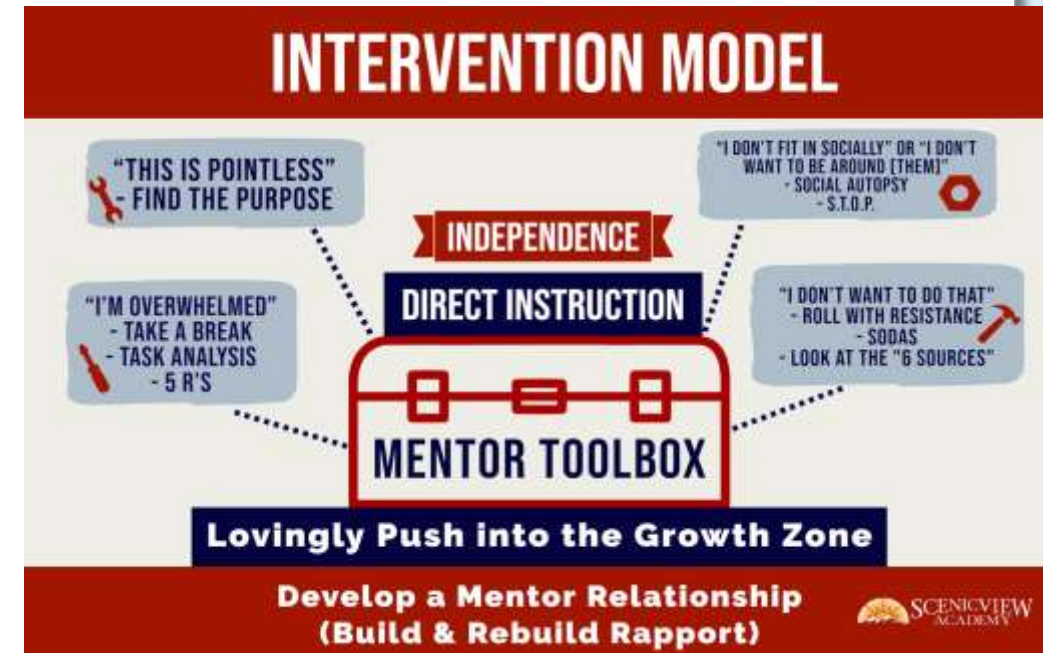
SVA
Program
Model



Comfort
Zone

Growth
Zone

Danger
Zone



- Live, Work, Thrive in the **Growth Zone!**
- Stay out of the Danger Zone (reduce demands)

The Spectrum: Brad Fremmerlid



Pro Tip #10: Employment IS Possible (and Critical)!

› “**Discovery**” = process of identifying the person’s strengths and interests

› Start work experiences as early as possible!

› Find alternative ways to “interview”

› **Customize something!**

› *I’ve been working since I was 7...*

Soft Skills: Check for F.I.T.!

(Five Important Targets)

1. **Sensory:** Are the demands of the work environment compatible with your sensory needs?
2. **Communication:** Do the job’s communication style and demands match your style and ability?
3. **Activity/Task:** Do the job’s level of challenge and options for performance match your skills?
4. **Routine/Predictability:** Can you handle the rate of change and flexibility required by the job?
5. **Social:** Can you handle the number, proximity, and demands of people in the work environment?

~Ohio Center for Autism & Low Incidence

A poor F.I.T. can leave S.C.A.R.S. that scar!



Pro Tip #10: Employment IS Possible!

These are REAL Adults with ASD!

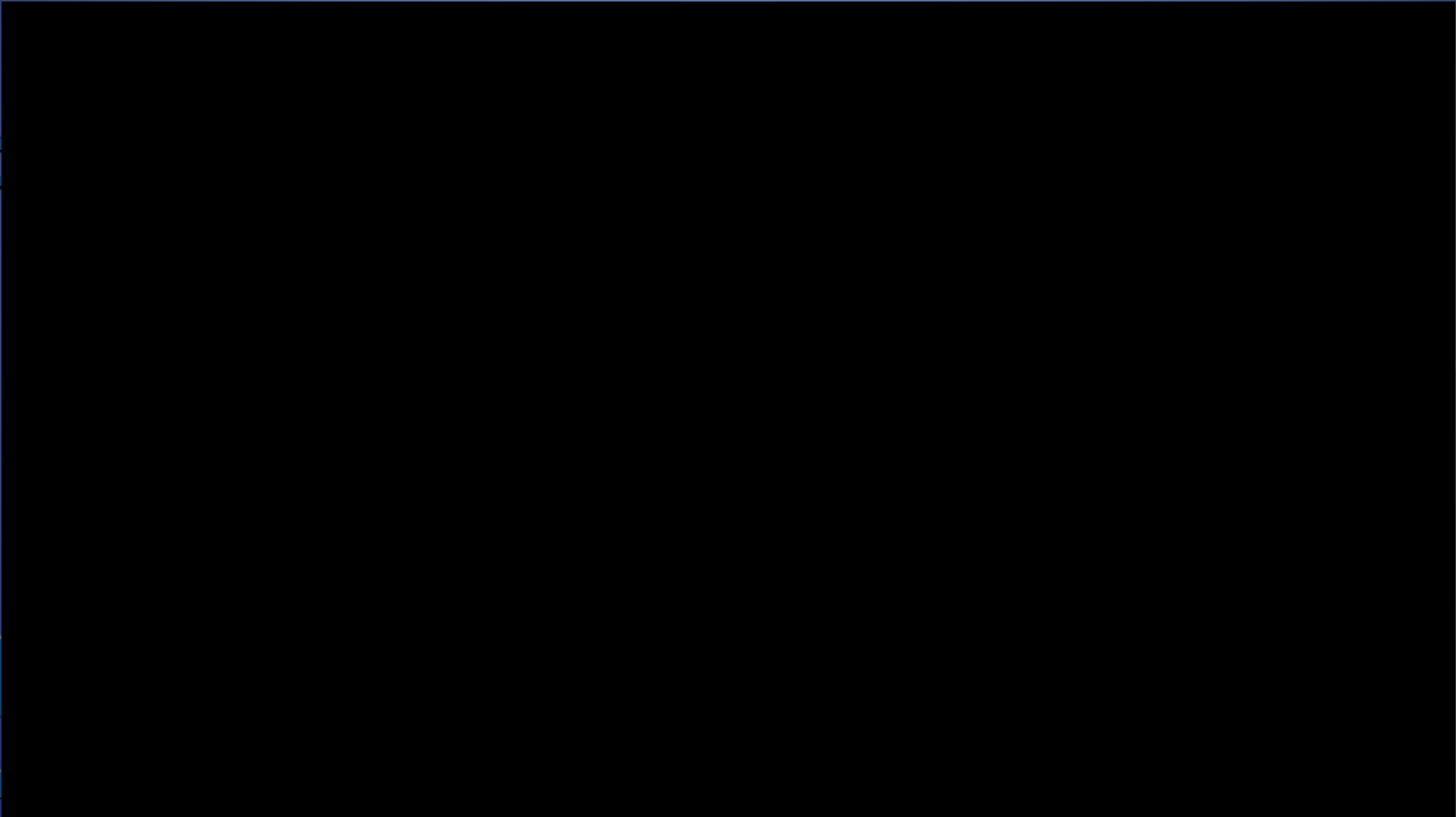
The W.A.L.M.A.R.T. Cluster:



- **Writers** (Tim Page, Liane Holliday Willey, Orson Scott Card, etc)
- **Actors/Comedians** (Anthony Hopkins, Dan Aykroyd, Josh Thomas, Daryl Hannah, etc)
- **Leisure/Athletic** (Tom Stoltman, James McClean, Clay Marzo, Satoshi Tajiri, etc)
- **Musicians** (Questlove, Derek Paravacini, James Durbin, Susan Boyle, Ladyhawke, etc)
- **Artists** (Stephen Wiltshire, Richard Wawro, Alonzo Clemons, etc)
- **Research/Educational** (Vernon Smith, Dawn Prince-Hughes, etc)
- **Technical** (Elon Musk and TONS of programmers, engineers, accountants, doctors, etc)

ASD is much higher in regions with more tech-type jobs! (Baron-Cohen et al, 2011)

The Spectrum: Lindsey, Dave, Lenny, and Stephen (Autism in Love)



Pro Tip #11: Relationships Are Possible!

- › People with Autism ARE PEOPLE!
- › Connection, relationships, belonging, etc are UNIVERSAL!
- › There is no “separate set of dreams”!
- › There is no separate list of needs!
- › They'll have to build social skills
- › They'll have to create, run, and modify SYSTEMS
- › They'll have to deal with anxiety and rejection
- › They'll have to put in the time and effort
- › They'll have to watch for safety and values
- › But so does everyone else!!! 😊



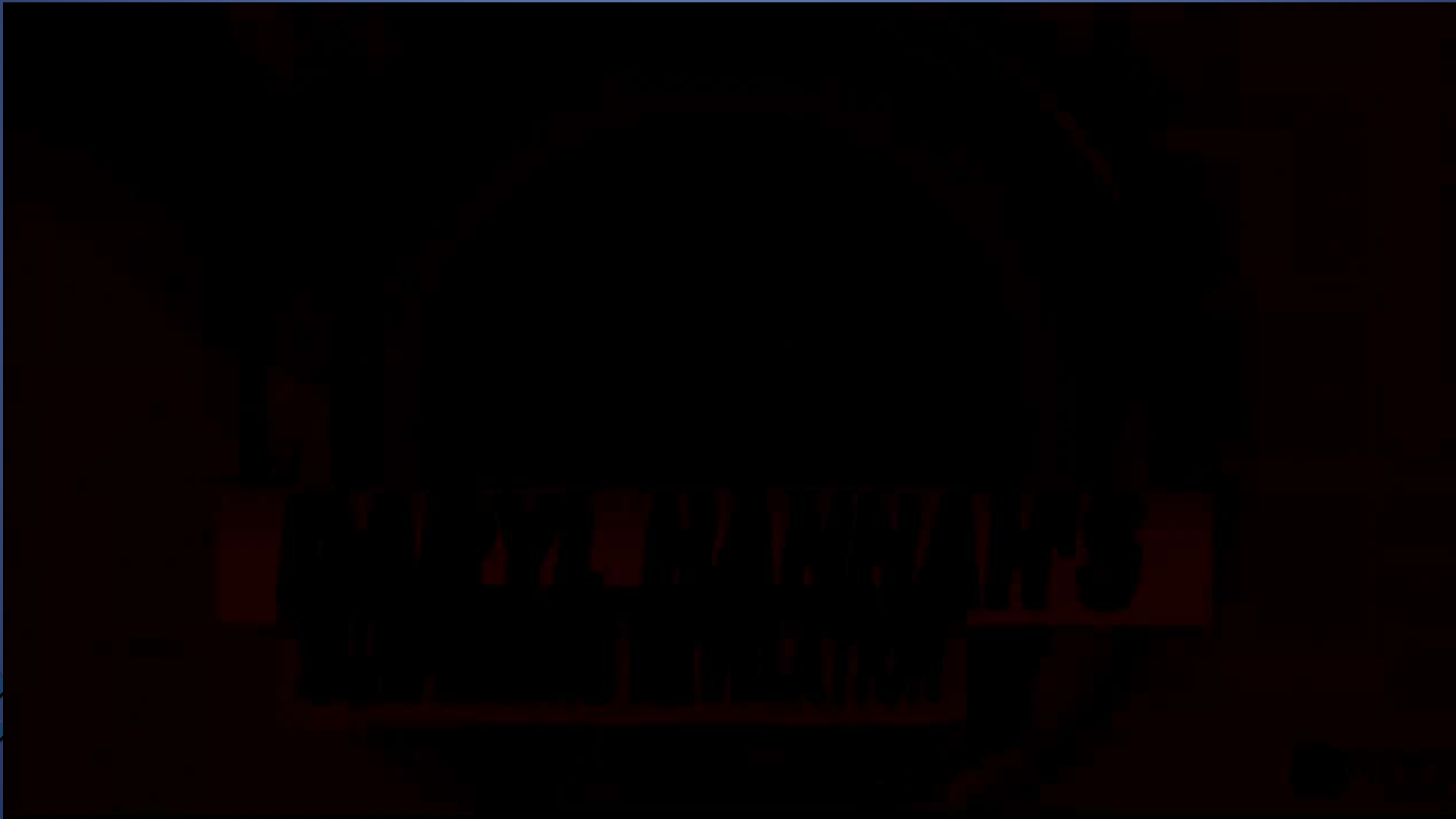
Pro Tip #11: Relationships Are Possible!

- › I KNOW TONS OF COUPLES! (Many of whom met MUCH later than average)
- › *Many on their second or third marriage/relationship...*
- › *All of them facing and dealing with challenges! ☺*



The Spectrum: Daryl Hannah

"I'm 50 and I feel like I'm just getting started."



Pro Tip #12: Autism is a Developmental Delay!



- › **Rule of Two-Thirds...**
- › An Autistic Person's Developmental Age is usually roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ of their Chronological Age!
- › **The Good News =**
- › **All Humans Are Neurodevelopmentally Delayed!**
- › *Think about how long it takes human vs. animal brains to develop...*
- › **Look for maximum growth between 18 and 30! (aka: 12 and 20! 😊)**



On having twins at 61: "I have the uterus of a 20 year old and the eggs of a teenager."

Pro Tip #12: Autism is a Developmental Delay!



Dr. Paul Shattuck: *“Their development is not frozen in time and forever the same. That’s just not the case.”*

❖ **Mirror Neurons:**

- ❖ Function not as impaired as once thought (Dinstein et al, 2010)
- ❖ Not broken, just slowly developing (Jojanneke et al, 2011)
- ❖ Hyper-empathizing—related to hypersensitivities and “stimming”

❖ **Improvement with age:** (Mayes and Calhoun, 2010)

- ❖ Restrictive, Repetitive Behaviors (Esbensen et al, 2008)
- ❖ Communication and Maladaptive Behaviors (Shattuck et al, 2007)
- ❖ Executive function/goal achievement (Attwood, 2007)
- ❖ Sensory Sensitivities (Lever & Geurts, 2018)

❖ **No longer a “disability” in apx. 15%!** (Fein, 2009)

❖ *Individuals with I.D. do not show as much improvement, but even among those individuals, more show improvement than show decline!*

(Shattuck 2007)



The Spectrum: Rosie King



Why are so many
people striving
to be normal?
Why are people
pouring their brilliant
individual light
into a mold?

- Rosie King

A photograph of Rosie King, a woman with short red hair and glasses, wearing a patterned dress and black shoes, standing on a red circular rug on a stage. Behind her is a large screen displaying the word "TEDMED" in red and grey letters. The stage is dark with blue vertical light accents.

TEDMED

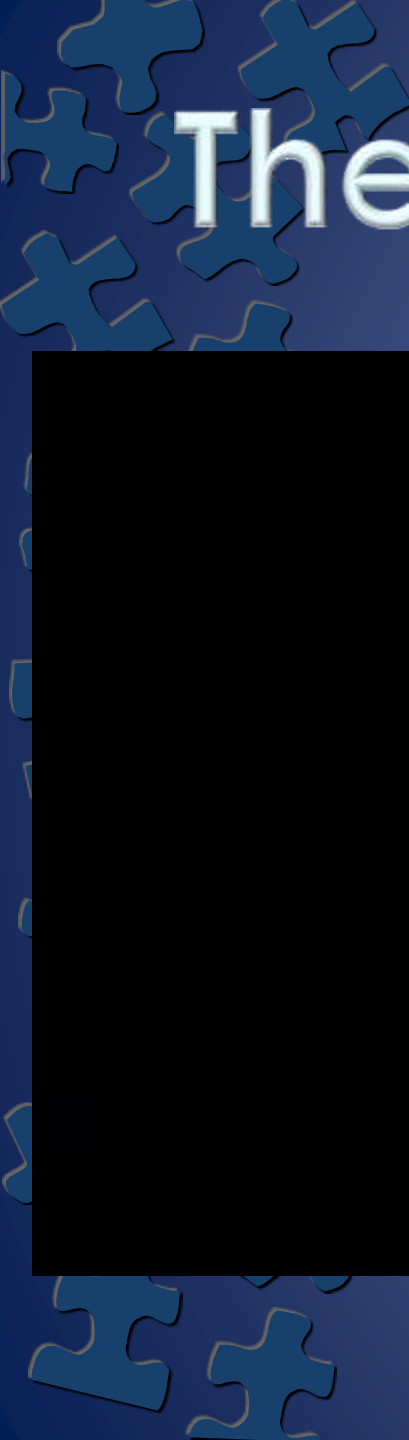
Pro Tip #13: Nurture Creativity!



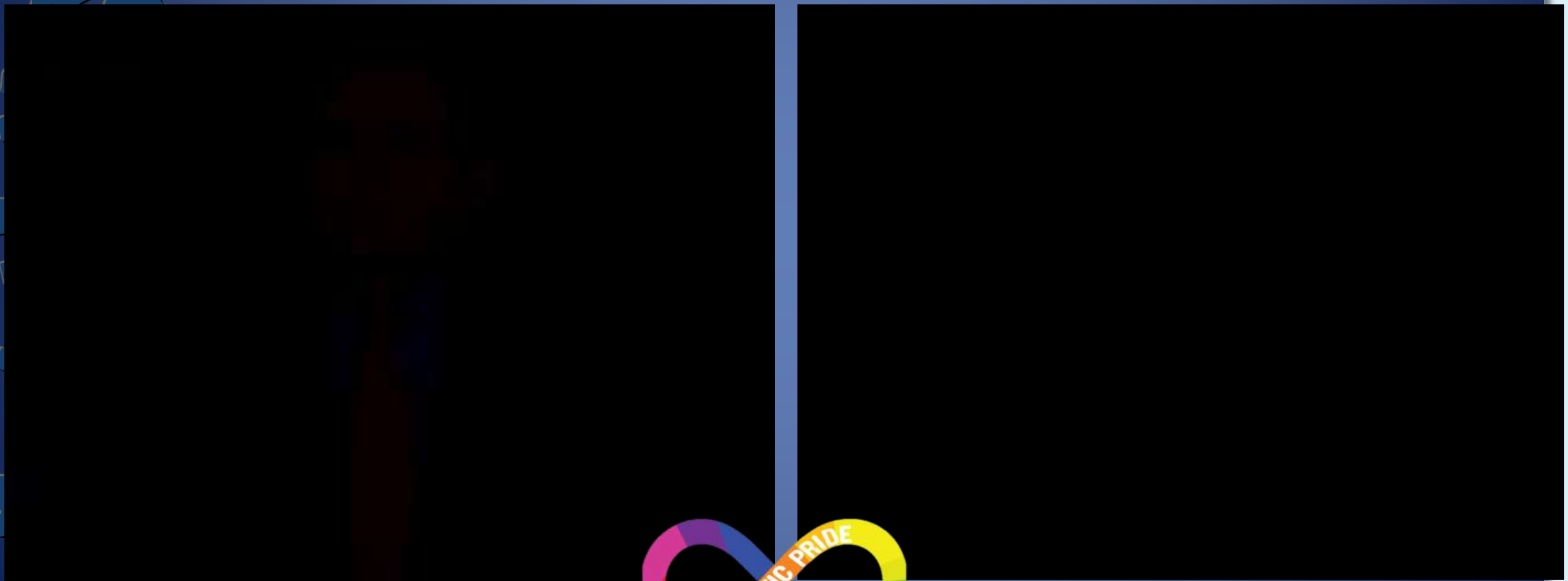
- › By default, a neuro-divergent mind thinks differently
- › ***Thinking differently = Creativity!!!***
- › Best, C., Arora, S., & Porter, F. et al. (2015) found strong correlations between autism and creativity:
- › “Generation of novel ideas is a prerequisite for creative problem solving and may be an adaptive advantage associated with autistic traits.”
- › Plus, **IT'S FUN!!!!** 😊
- › Check out UVU's annual “**Super Spectrum Soirée**”
- › <https://autismcenter.myportfolio.com/>

“Autistic strengths and skill sets are there, right from the beginning, but they need time and encouragement to flourish...If [parents] could get into their children's worlds, instead of expecting their kids to come out to them, they'd find some beautiful things.”

~Kristine Barnett, *The Spark*



The Spectrum: Steven Wiltshire



Pro Tip #14:

Cultivate SYSTEMS for Success!

- Autism has strengths in systemization!
- Systems are going to be created ANYWAY, so...
- **Create, utilize, and reinforce intentional, person-controlled systems that will empower them to live their values, achieve their goals, and do the things that really matter to them!**
- Start with concrete, then move to more abstract systems
- **Create systems that MAKE LIFE WORK BETTER!**
- Focus on reinforcing/habitualizing **one system per context** so that additional systems can be layered on top of them
- **The ultimate Systems goal is PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT!**

Systems for Success ~ © David Bennett		
A System for Systems		
1. What	~	Title/Desired Result
2. Why	~	Purpose
3. When/Where	~	Situational Cues
4. How	~	Process/Application
5. If	~	Sensory/Contingencies

The Spectrum: Lacey Fletcher



- › Lived in small town in Louisiana
- › Diagnosed Autistic, but no supports
- › Developed severe anxiety throughout her school years – no therapy
- › Got progressively worse in her 20's
- › Around 2010, the anxiety got so bad that she could not leave the couch in her living room, no matter what her parents tried

The Spectrum: Lacey Fletcher



- › January 3, 2022; Her parents called 911 to report that their daughter wasn't breathing
- › Police came across a strong stench when they entered the house. They found Lacey, dead, sitting in a hole worn into the couch where she had been for at least the last 12 years!
- › She was covered in waste and insect bites, weighed 96 pounds, had severe ulcers on her body and was positive for Covid-19. She was just 36 years old.
- › Her parents have been charged with murder



Pro Tip #15: Find Ways to Minimize Challenges!

- › Be understanding and compassionate
- › Learn (and teach) to deal with meltdowns, shutdowns, anxiety, depression, etc!

ASD = Anxiety, Stress, and Defense Modes

- **Do NOT neglect these!** (watch for “Diagnostic Overshadowing”)
- Prolonged Fight/Flight/Freeze can lead to terrible
- Long-Term Issues:
 - **Gastrointestinal** (IBS, Gastroparesis)
 - **Autoimmune** (Lupus, RA, POTS, etc)
 - **Severe Anxiety Disorders/Trauma** (PTSD/OCD, Attachment, etc)



Pro Tip #15: Find Ways to Minimize Challenges!

ASD = **A**nxiety, **S**tress, and **D**efense Modes

Helpful Tips: (“5R’s”)

1. **Recognize** the ASD
2. **Reduce** the Overwhelm
3. **Retreat** and **Recharge**
4. **Reach Out** Respectfully
5. **Redirect/Reframe** when **Ready**



Pro Tip #15: Find Ways to Minimize Challenges!

DEALing with Inappropriate Behaviors

1. Determine Context

- › ABC's (antecedent, behavior, consequences)
- › Sensory/Biological factors? (what were they?)
- › Purpose of behavior? (what were they getting out of it?)

2. Explore Causes

- › Comprehensive assessment
- › Physical factors (health, pain, comorbid, etc)
- › Environmental factors (hyper/hypo stimulation, boredom, etc)

Minimize Behavior (using intervention strategies)

- › Facilitate Communication! (student, family, & educational team)
- › Teach social/emotional coping skills as well as academic skills
- › Therapy as necessary (ABA, Group, Speech, OT, ACT, CBT, etc)
- › Incorporate these strategies into written plans!

Empathy Tip: Always assume that the person you're working with is doing their very best under the circumstances!

KEEP
CALM
AND
DEAL
WITH IT

Pro Tip #15:

Find Ways to Minimize Challenges!

- **Purpose, Priming, Predictability, Patience**
- **Antecedents, Autonomy, Aids, Affinity**
- **Consistency, Clarity, Consequences, Compassion**
- **Environmental modifications, EF Supports, Exposure, Exceptionality**
- **P.A.C.E. yourself! (Marathon Mindset)**

The Spectrum: Tom Stoltman

“Autism is my Superpower... It’s a cheat code.”



2020 World Record Atlas Stone 272kg by Tom Stoltman



**That’s 600
pounds for all
you Yanks! 😊**





Pro Tip #16: Autism Has Strengths!!! (Focus IS the Autistic Superpower!)

- › “In dealing with autism, I’m certainly not saying we should lose sight of the need to work on deficits, But the focus on deficits is so intense and so automatic that people lose sight of the strengths.” ~ Dr. Temple Grandin
- › **“Recent data...suggest it’s time to start thinking of autism as an ADVANTAGE in some spheres, not a cross to bear.”**
~Dr. Laurent Mottron, University of Montreal
- › “I think traditionally we saw neurodivergence as maybe conditions to be treated, whereas now we’re actually realizing the huge benefits and huge strengths neurodivergent workers bring to the workplace.”
~Dr. Jill Miller, policy advisor at CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development)

Denisovan DNA Proves Autism Bestowed Strengths!?



- › 79% of people studied had a specific CNV (copy number variant) in their DNA that came from the mysterious Denisovan species
- › “Any evidence of *conserved* CNV’s [is] evidence that these variants conferred *benefits*.”
- › Fascinatingly, the CNV we’ve inherited “is directly adjacent to the area of the chromosome where genes known to be associated with autism are.”
- › Study is just beginning, but it looks like we now have proof that autism (and related conditions like ADHD and LD) arose as a genetic ADVANTAGE!
- › *So many strengths associated with autism...*

(quotes from article in Extreme Tech by Joel Hruska, October 18, 2019; based on a study by Hsieh, et al. 2019)

Pro Tip #16: Autism Has Strengths!!!



- Powerful learning style strengths (implicit; vis/spat.; log/math; naturalistic; etc)
- Exceptional rote memory (often vast stores of facts and figures)
- Exceptional visual abilities (static spatial, illusions, patterns, colors, etc)
- Exceptional auditory abilities (hyperconnected auditory brain centers)
- Superior ability to process/locate information
- Laser-like focus of energies/attention on topic of interest
- Highly deductive/analytic
- Strongly logical—able to make more rational decisions than NT's
- Better at driving than NT's (less likely to crash or speed!)
- Ability to put ideas together in a unique manner—highly creative
- Exceptional ability with puzzles, mazes, and word games
- Ability to thrive on routines and clear expectations
- Five times more likely than “neurotypicals” to have perfect pitch
- Ten times more likely to have savant skills (music, art, calculation, etc)
- Great honesty and respect for rules
- Deep concern, caring, and love for “safe” beings
- Deep curiosity and desire to learn (usually prefer independent learning)
- Idealism and a strong sense of right and wrong/social justice
- Often natural leaders and naturally funny
- Perfectionism (this can be both a strength and a challenge)
- Exceptional ability to systematize



Sources: Attwood (2007); Baron-Cohen (2008); Curry, et al (2021); Dolan et al (2008); Happe (1999); Heaton, et al (2008); Grandin (2008); Remington et al (2012); Reser (2011); Samson, et al (2011); Stewart (2007); Xiong (2012)

The Spectrum: Jerry Seinfeld?



Pro Tip #17: It's not a Bug, It's a Different OS!

- › The Spectrum is B-R-O-A-D!!!
- › The Operating System will take longer than average to boot up and get going
- › **BUT– the OS can be put to an infinite variety of purposes, and perform at remarkable levels if supported effectively**
- › Stop trying to force Linux to be Windows and foster the strengths of their “**alternate mindset**” – their Neurodiversity!



Conclusions

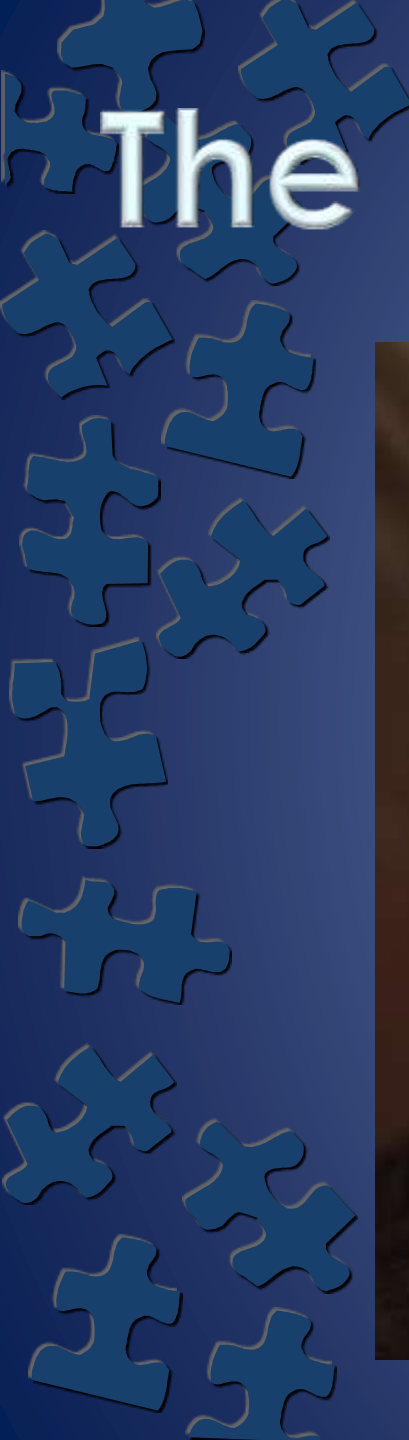
- Remember that Autism is PART of Identity... *but not the whole*
- When you're Autistic, there are good days, bad days, and everything in between
- *KINDA LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE...*
- And if you can't "fix" our autism, at least try to accept, acknowledge, and celebrate our Uniqueness!
- **VALUE OUR LIVED EXPERIENCE!**



God Created Autism

To offset the excessive number of boring people in the world 😊





The Spectrum: Nancy Roundtree



Pro Tip #18: It's COOL to be Different!

- *“Don’t Be Them, Be Yourself!”*
- **Why would anybody choose an “ordinary” “average” life???**

Lydia Brown’s 5 Edicts:

1. **Accept Us!** (for who we are)
2. **Respect Us!** (as human beings)
3. **Support Us!** (so we can Maximize)
4. **Include Us!** (in treatment; in communities)
5. **Listen to Us!** (we are the experts on us!)



Conclusions

- Autism is not a death sentence (it doesn't go away—but it tends to get better over time)
- Kids with autism become adults with autism
- **Build skills, Build Resiliency, Avoid Isolation**
- Customize interventions—there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to the Spectrum!
- NT's need to work on their flexibility too!!!!

Let's Start Seeing
the Spectrum!

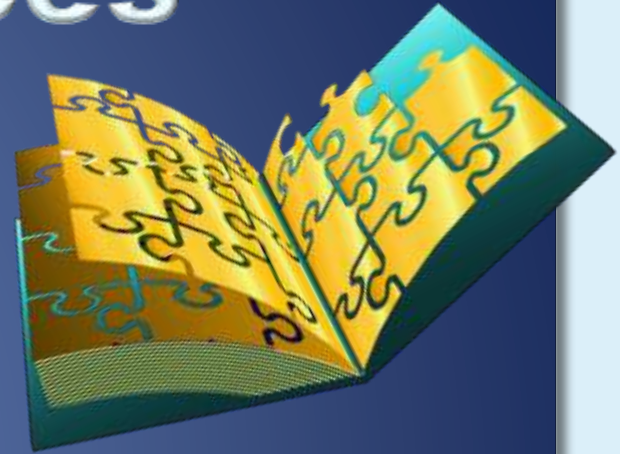
God Created Autism

To offset the excessive number of
boring people in the world 😊



Suggested Resources

1. [Loud Hands](#), ASAN (2012)
2. [Neurotribes](#), Silberman (2016)
3. [The Loving Push](#), Grandin & Moore (2015)
4. [The Ziggurat Method](#), Aspy & Grossman (2008)
5. [LIVED EXPERIENCES!](#) Talk to Autistics and LISTEN!
([The Way I See It](#); [The Spark](#); [Songs of the Gorilla Nation](#);
[Look Me In The Eye](#); [Born on a Blue Day](#); [Atypical](#); **ETC!**)



Thank You For Your Time!



Please feel free to contact me
with any questions! 😊

jareds@svacademy.org

And Follow me on Facebook!

› <https://www.facebook.com/Jared-Stewart-MEd-100101462395693>