



Autism Society

Colorado

Autism 101

2025

Learning Outcomes for Today

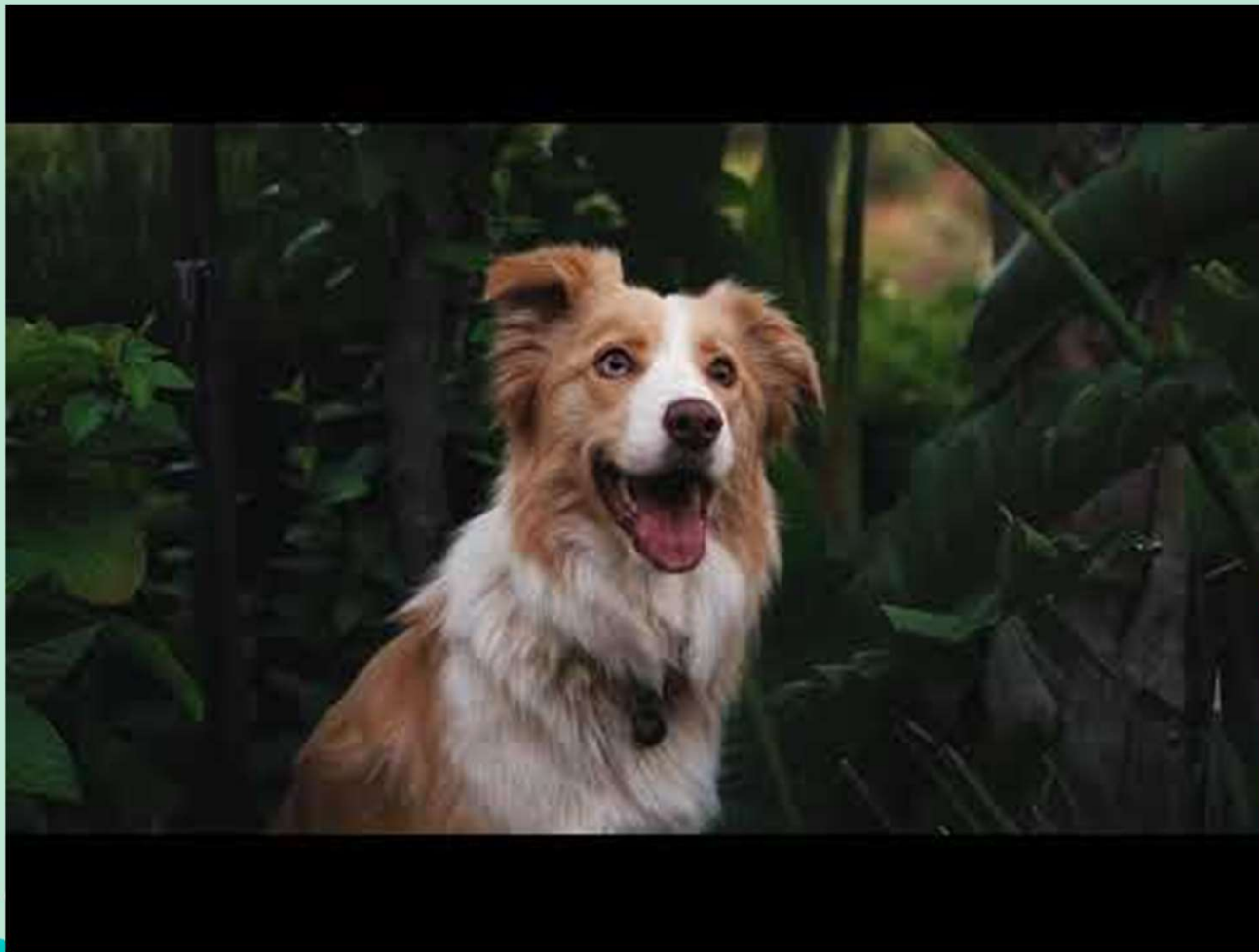
1

I can identify general characteristics of autistic individuals by writing on my note catcher.

2

I know some specific techniques to support Autistic patrons.

NeuroDiversity »



Neurodiversity Terms to Know

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural diversity of human minds. It is a biological fact that we are diverse in our minds just like we are diverse in our ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.

Neurodiversity acknowledges the whole spectrum of neurodiversity from neurodivergent individuals to neurotypical individuals.

created by Judy Singer

Neurodivergent

Neurodivergent is an umbrella term for individuals who have a mind or brain that diverges from what is typical. It can be acquired or genetic, an innate part of you or not.

Neurodivergence just means having a mind that functions differently to what is considered the norm including learning, processing, interpreting, feeling, etc.

created by Kassiane Asasumasu

Neurotypical

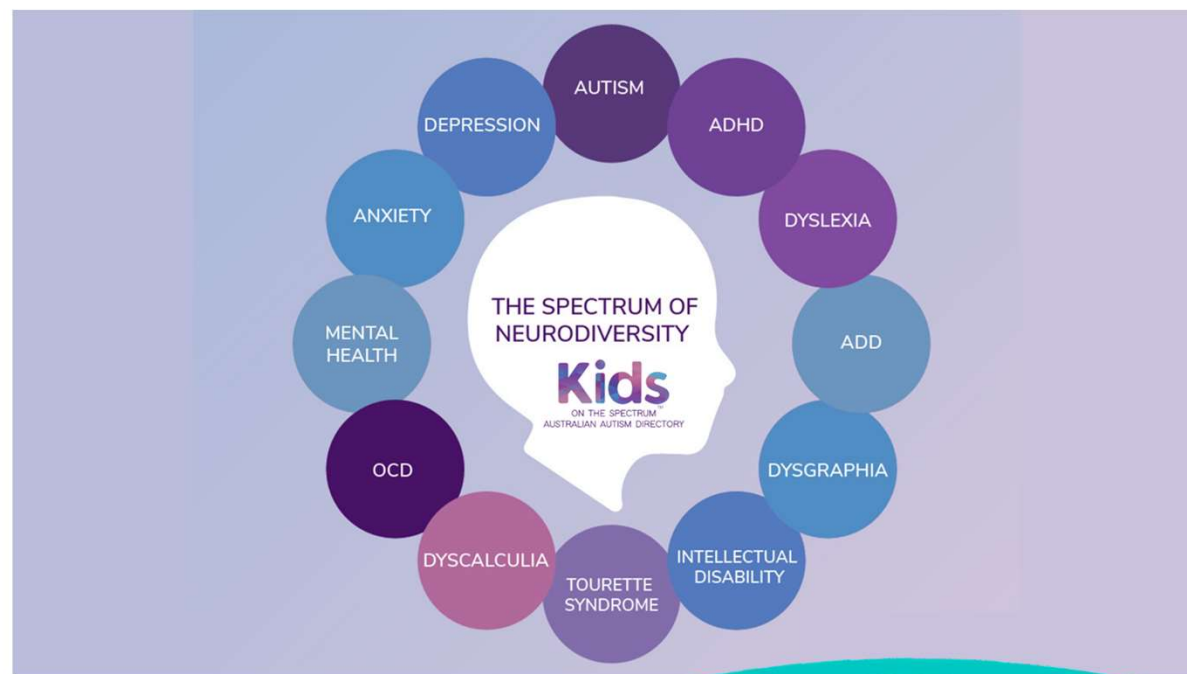
Neurotypical refers to having a mind or functioning that falls within the society standards of what is deemed "typical", "common" or "normal".

Neurotypical is the opposite of neurodivergent, someone who diverges, and it is not a negative word at all but a neutral word.

Neurodiverse

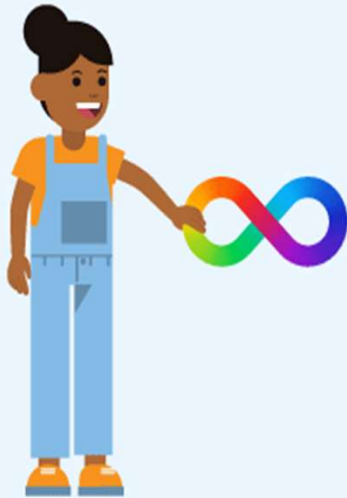
Neurodiverse is a term to describe a group of individuals who represent the spectrum of neurodiversity which includes neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals.

Remember, an individual cannot be neurodiverse. Individuals who aren't neurotypical would be neurodivergent.



Representation in the Autism Community

Person-first language



"I am a person with autism"

Identity-first language

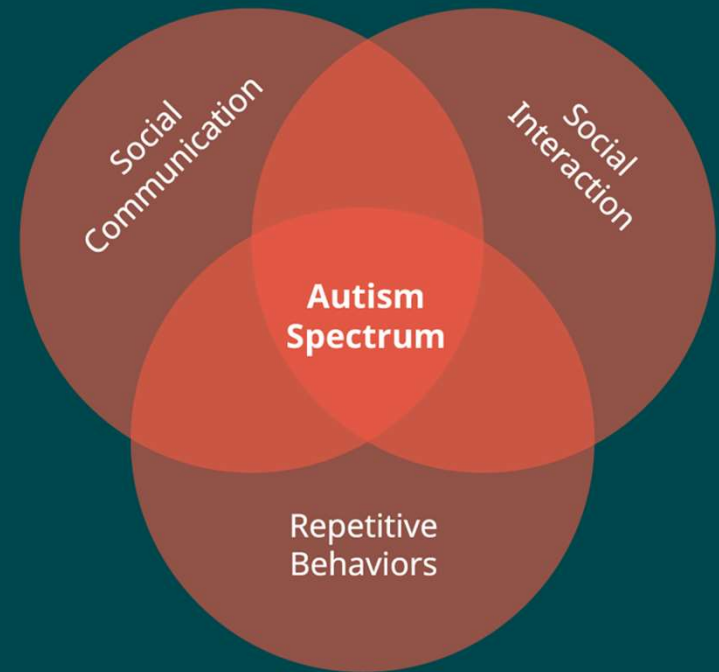


"I am autistic"

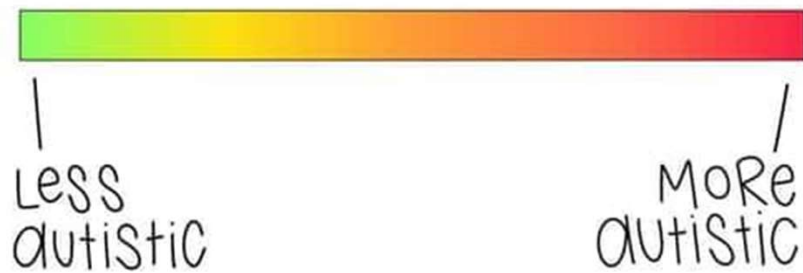
What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a complex, lifelong developmental condition that typically appears in early childhood and can impact a person's **social skills, communication, relationships**, and **self-regulation**.

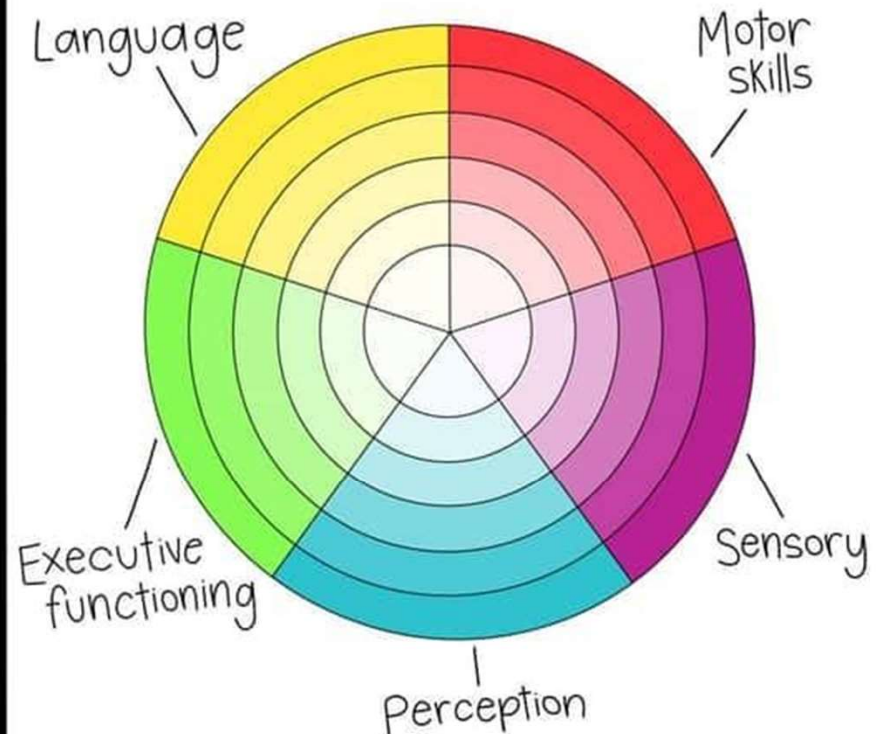
- The Autism experience is different for everyone.
- It is often referred to as a “spectrum” condition.
- Autism affects people differently and to varying degrees.
- Autism looks different at different ages.



What People THINK
the autism SPECTRUM
LOOKS Like:

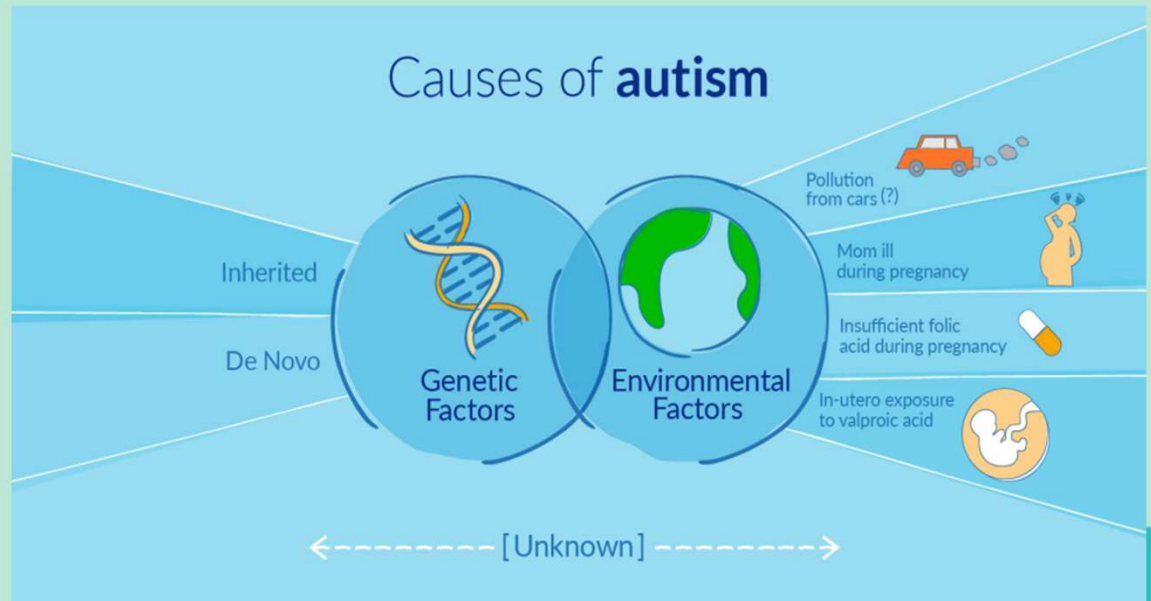


What it CAN
ACTUALLY
LOOK Like:



Autism is NOT

- A disease
- Caused by bad parenting
- Caused by vaccines or nutrition
- A childhood disorder
- Something you can outgrow
- An intellectual disability



Facts & Statistics

It is estimated that over 7 million individuals in the United States are on the Autism spectrum; Autism is the fastest growing developmental disability in the US.

- **1 in 36** children are diagnosed with autism by the age of 8.
- **Boys are 4 times more likely** than girls to be diagnosed with autism.
- Autism affects **ALL** ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
- Vaccines do not cause Autism.
- Over the next decade **1 million Autistic** teens will enter adulthood and age out of school-based services.



51%

are estimated to have an average or above-average intelligence quotient (IQ)

70%

are also diagnosed with co-occurring diagnoses; ADHD, anxiety, depression

18%

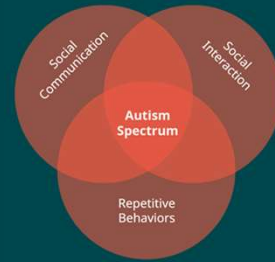
are diagnosed in schools. Students might have either an educational diagnosis or a medical diagnosis.



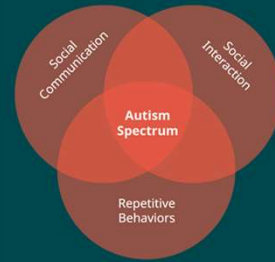
Autistic Traits and Differences

Social Communication/ Engagement

- Atypical social communication to non-speaking
- Difficulty understanding or expressing feelings
- Repertoire of gestures, eye contact and integration of these with the communication



Autistic Traits and Differences



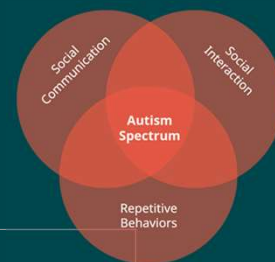
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Repetitive Behaviors/Regulation

- Insistence on sameness and routines
- Rigid thinking
- Sensory processing differences
- High interest in particular subjects, ideas and activities
- Self-stimulating and self-injurious behaviors

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Social Interactions and Relationships

- Social initiations
- Shared enjoyment related to other's interests
- Managing feelings and understanding how others feel
- Problem-solving skills such as reading the context, dealing with disagreements or making decisions in a social situation

Autistic Meltdown

An extreme feeling of **overwhelm** resulting in a loss of control of emotions and behavior.

Triggers are:

Anxiety
Anger
Frustration
Sensory Overload
Stress
Fear

Stages of an Autistic Meltdown

Rumbling: Autistic person may shows signs of distress, pacing, fidgeting, repeating questions

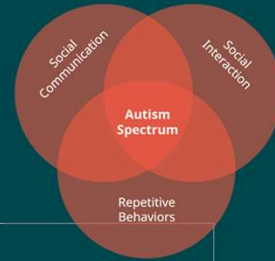
Loss of Control: Autistic person may scream, cry, run or flail, not able to reason or they may completely shutdown

Recovery: Autistic person may feel exhausted and need time alone to recover

How to Help: Remain calm, validate feelings, give them space, process later

A meltdown is not a tantrum.

Support Strategies



Social Communication/ Engagement

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How to Provide Support

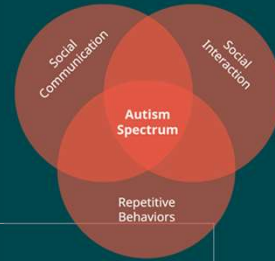
Assume competence

- Allow for thought processing and response time
- Use concrete simple wording (avoid idioms, sarcasm and cliché)
- Acknowledge and accommodate sensory needs
- Give choices instead of asking open-ended questions

Talk less, show more- use visuals

- Have direct explicit rules
- Self Advocacy-Ask Autistic individuals what THEY need; help them identify their strengths and needs and advocate for them

Support Strategies



Repetitive Behaviors/Regulation

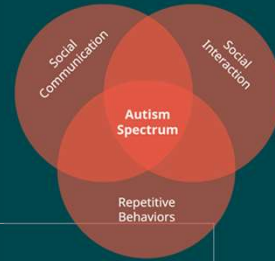
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Assume competence

- Reduce sensory overload
- Provide structures and routines - use schedules or social stories
 - Give ample notice about change
 - Acknowledge and accommodate sensory needs
 - Allow for breaks
 - Talk less, show more- use visuals
 - Be kind, not judgemental

Support Strategies



Social Interactions and Relationships

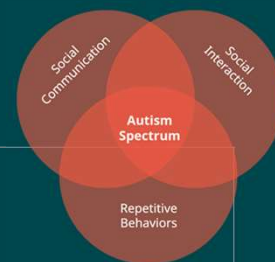
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How to Provide Support

Assume competence

- Explicitly teach social expectations
- Provide lots of opportunities to practice throughout the day (with different people, in different settings)
- Break down complex skills and teach each step
- Use special interests to motivate people (pair yourself with their special interests to facilitate genuine bonding)
- Have direct explicit rules (write them, post them, show them)
- Validate-Listen-Validate-Listen

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The Autism Advantage

- ★ Detail oriented
- ★ Creative
- ★ Honest
- ★ Special interest subject expertise
- ★ Deep focus
- ★ Fair and just
- ★ Strong memory
- ★ Reliable
- ★ Excellent problem solving capability



Autism Society of Colorado Programs

Information &
Referral to Autism
Resources and
Support

Social and Support
Groups for Autistic
Individuals and
Families

Autism 101
Education

Advocacy

Policy

Supporting the Autism Society of Colorado



www.autismcolorado.org »



autismcolorado.org/wwa »



coloradogives.org/organization/AutismColorado »



Volunteer



Promote Autism Acceptance





Autism Society

Colorado

Thank You.