

Still Not Quite Part of Your World

**For a Deeper Understanding of and
Better World for Autistic People**

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SCAN ME

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“Some women don’t appreciate how powerful their voice is until they’ve been silenced.”



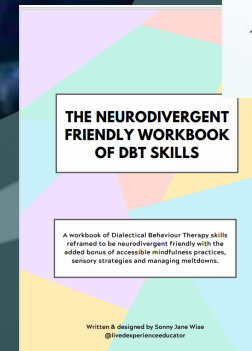
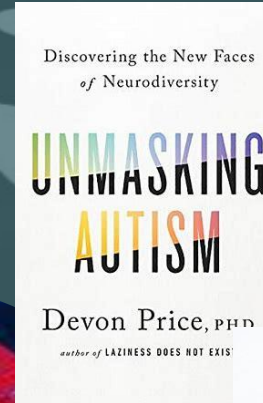
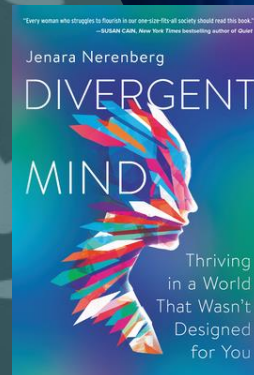
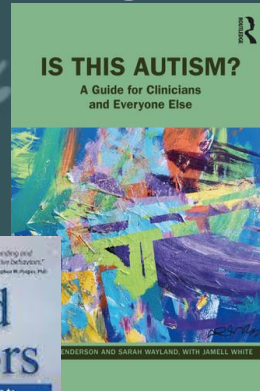
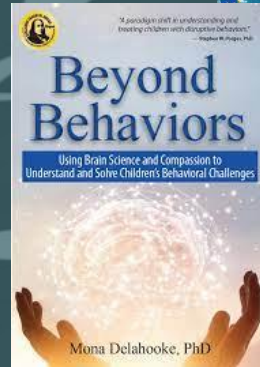
-Ursula



“I never belonged
under the sea. I
thought it was
because I was meant
to be human....but I
don't belong on land
either.”

-Ariel

Now I collect empowering information instead of whozits and whatzits!



What I imagined young adulthood would be like...



VS

How it actually went...



Apraxia is a b*tch...

The Neurodiversity Paradigm

Neurotypical

Dyslexic

Autistic

ADHD

All Neurotypes Have Value and Belong!



Party for “cool” mermaids that I wasn’t invited to.....





Nope!

You need a life
outside of whoozits
and whatzits!

Stop being so
difficult!

The rest of the family are
enjoying themselves.

You are so selfish!

If you just tried a
little harder you'd
have some fun.

Its rude wearing
headphones and
sunglasses!



When you just want to wear sensory friendly comfy clothes....



THE NEURODIVERGENT FRIENDLY WORKBOOK OF DBT SKILLS

A workbook of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy skills reframed to be neurodivergent friendly with the added bonus of accessible mindfulness practices, sensory strategies and managing meltdowns.

Written & designed by Sonny Jane Wise
@livedexperienceeducator

Building a Sensory Tool Kit

Sense

Difficulty

What helps

Sight		
Hearing		
Taste / food		
Smell		
Touch		
Proprioception (body awareness)		
Vestibular (movement and balance)		
Interoception (internal sense eg hot / cold / hungry / pain)		

Why not try this for everyone in your family, it may help to open up conversations!

AUTISTIC REALMS



Neurodiversity
Affirming

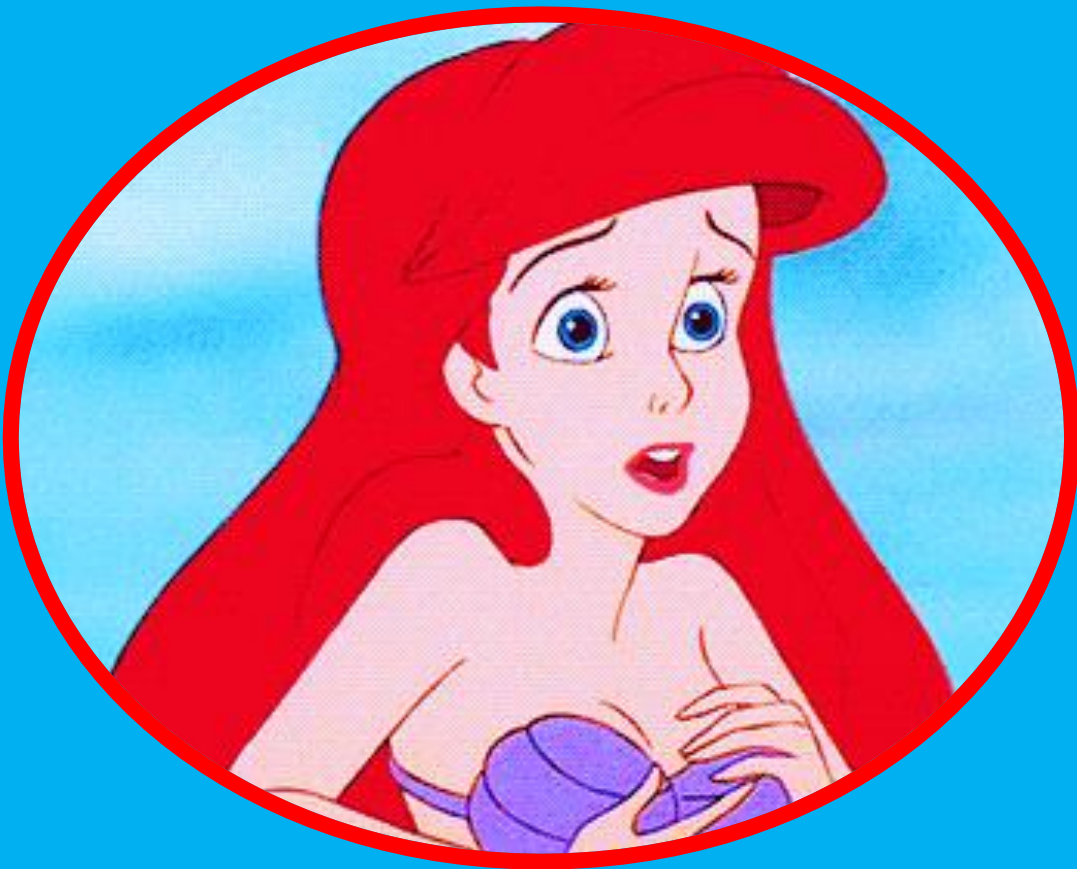
*"You could just suffer so other people don't
have to deal with how weird you are...."*

Ursula

**"Never had she danced so beautifully; the sharp knives cut her feet, but
she did not feel it, for the pain in her heart was far greater."
— Hans Christian Andersen**



*“I can’t process
information or
speak if my
sensory system
is dysregulated.”*
-Ariel



**Skipping my dad's concert to research
human stuff with my one and only friend....**

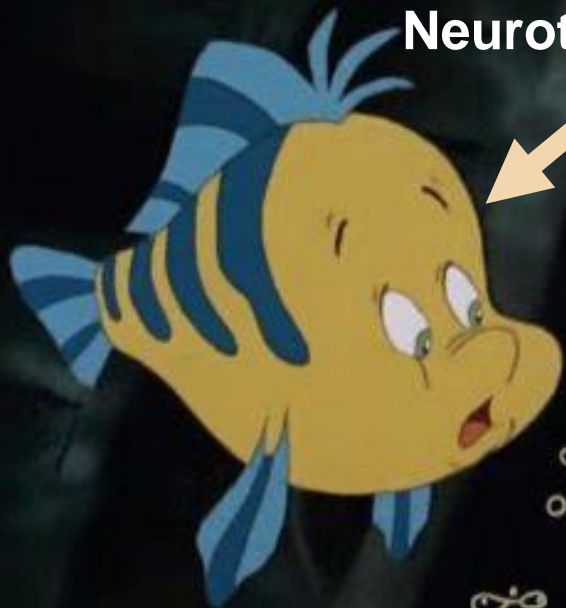


A Fish....

Neurotypical Feeling Ignored

Autistic Mind Inside
Special Interest
Vortex of Attention

Monotropic Attention Style



Inside Special Interest Flow State



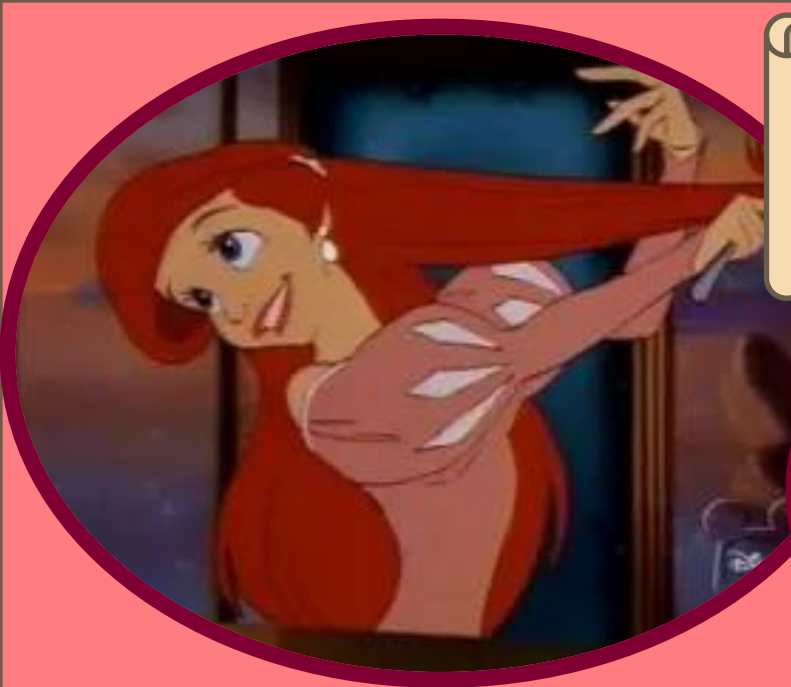
Suddenly Ripped From Special Interest





Supporting Transitions

- Plan ahead as much as possible to reduce anxiety.
- Consider a visual schedule.
- Allow extra time for an autistic individual to adjust.
- Organize tasks in larger chunks.
- Sandwich less demanding events/tasks between more demanding ones.
- Spice up transitions– ie preferred podcast while in car/dolphin-driven chariot



In a state of constant hypervigilance anticipating rejection/miscommunication, it is both draining and difficult to truly connect.



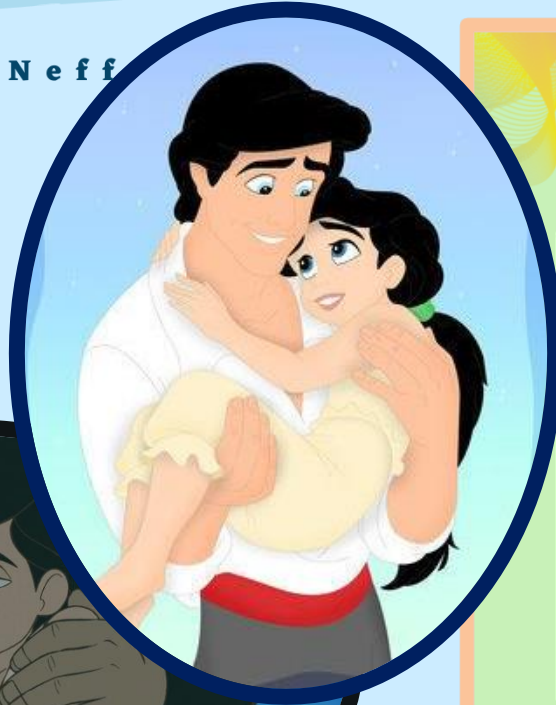
*“Am I talking too much? Am I interrupting? Am I building on what the other person says? It’s exhausting.
Normal humans seem to manage all this unconsciously.” -Ariel*

**Sympathetic
Nervous System in
overdrive!**

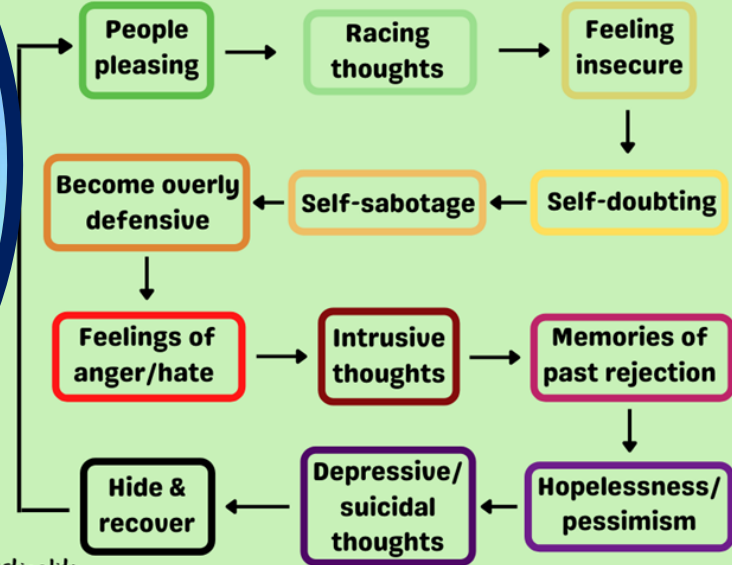
Neurodivergent insights

Dr. Neff

Autisticallity
∞



Experiencing Rejection Sensitivity



@Autisticallity



Panic Attack

- Brief
- May not have a trigger

Meltdown

- Prolonged
- Triggered by sensory/social overwhelm

Shut down

- Fatigue, irritability, and emotional overwhelm
- Typical onset after high stimulation or high socialization demands
- Need rest, unmasking, sensory detox, and engagement in special interests.



Autistic Shutdown

*I need to go reorganize
my thingamabobs to
rejuvenate.*

Just Keep Stimming....



“We have to keep other people at arm's length, because letting them see our hyper-fixations, meltdowns, obsessions, and outbursts could mean losing their respect. But locking ourselves away means we can't ever be fully loved.”

— Devon Price, Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity

Autistic Masking

- Suppressing autistic traits
- Closely watching and analyzing neurotypicals to mimic their facial expressions, body language, and behavior
- Exhibiting excessive accommodation and helpfulness towards others to avoid rejection



“To Mask or Not To Mask...
That is the Question”

The Cost of Masking



Barely enough energy to complete basic hygiene while masking all the time.



Capacity to advocate for better relations between human and merfolk while authentically autistic.

A cost/benefit analysis...

To Mask

- Safety
- Job Security
- Less risk of rejection
- Society is more willing to listen to us

Not To Mask

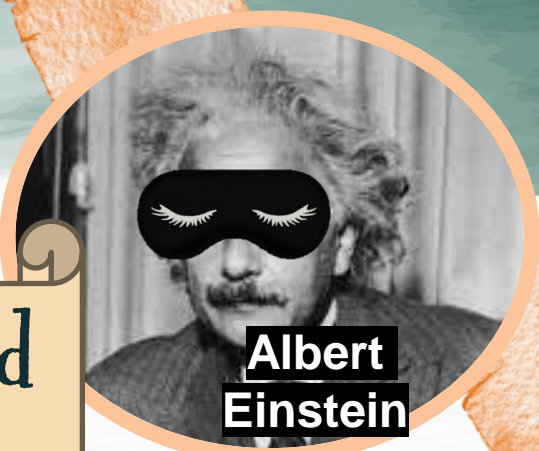
- Freedom
- Lower risk of suicide, anxiety, and depression
- More energy and creativity
- Authentic self-understanding
- Authentic relationships

Pretending to be someone else all the time doesn't allow a person to figure out who they really are or what they really want. When their attention is constantly focused on other people's needs and expectations, they can lose the ability to advocate for themselves.



**Isaac
Newton**

**Charles
Darwin**



**Albert
Einstein**

What does our world
lose when autistics are
fully masked?



**Emily
Dickinson**



Charles Schulz

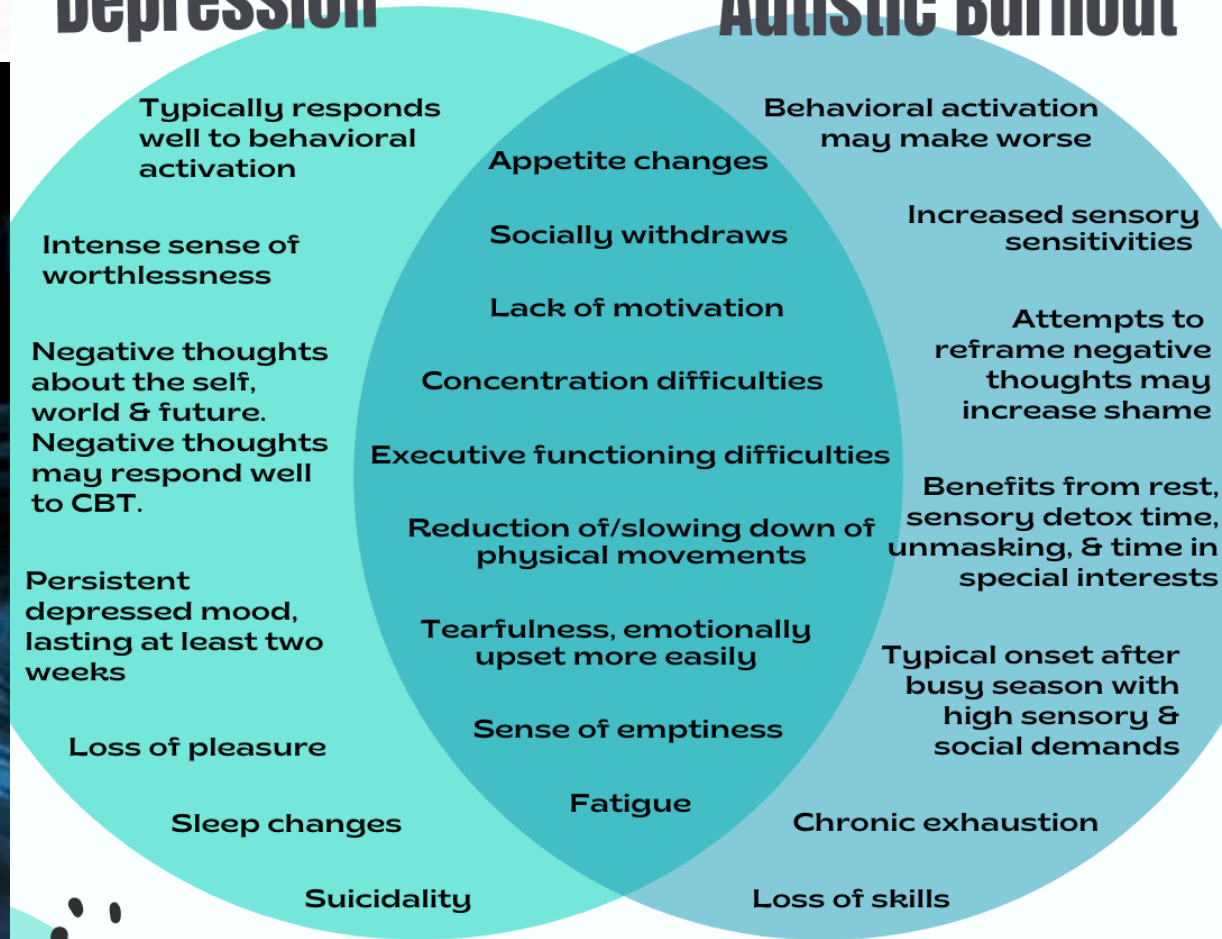


**Jim
Henson**



Depression

Autistic Burnout





Neurotypical Pot



Just a gestalt
sense of what's
going on



Autistic Pot



**Sensory
Details**

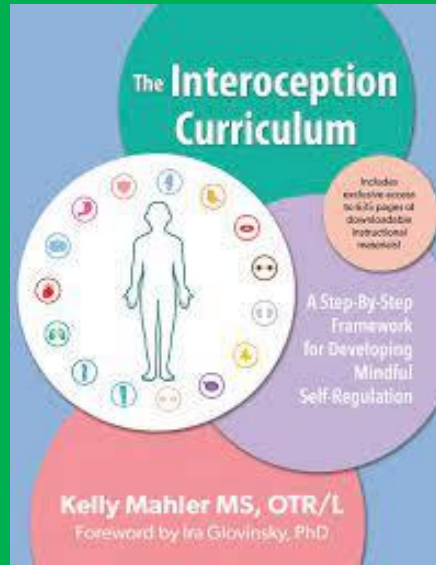
Analyzing other
people's behavior to
figure out what is
socially expected of you

**Language
Details**

“Why are you Overwhelmed so Easily?”

Impaired Interoception in Autism

<https://www.kelly-mahler.com/>

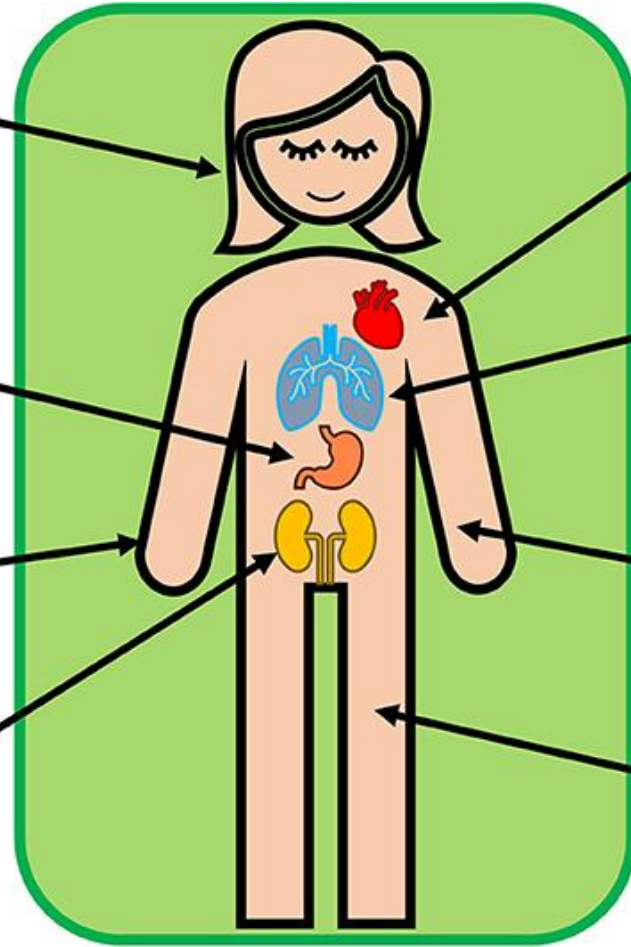


Feeling thirsty, or having a dry mouth

Hunger or nausea (feeling sick)

Feeling hot or cold

Needing to go to the toilet



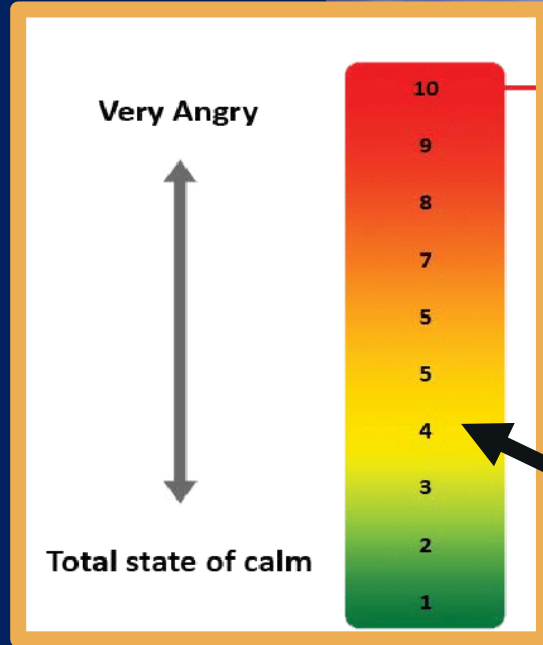
The speed or strength of your heartbeat

How fast or deep your breathing is

Feeling something tickly or itchy on your skin

Pain or tension in muscles

Both Alexithymia and Impaired Interoception Contribute to Autistic Meltdown



Neurotypical
Thermometer

Getting hungry, I
better get a snack!



Alexithymia and
Impaired Interoception
Thermometer

Alexithymia : Decreased Perception of Emotional Detail

“color blindness for one’s inner emotional experiences”

Detailed Emotional Perception
of One’s Feelings



Gummy Fish Easily
Distinguishable

Alexithymia



Gummy Fish
Melted Together

Alexithymia Population

Autistic Population



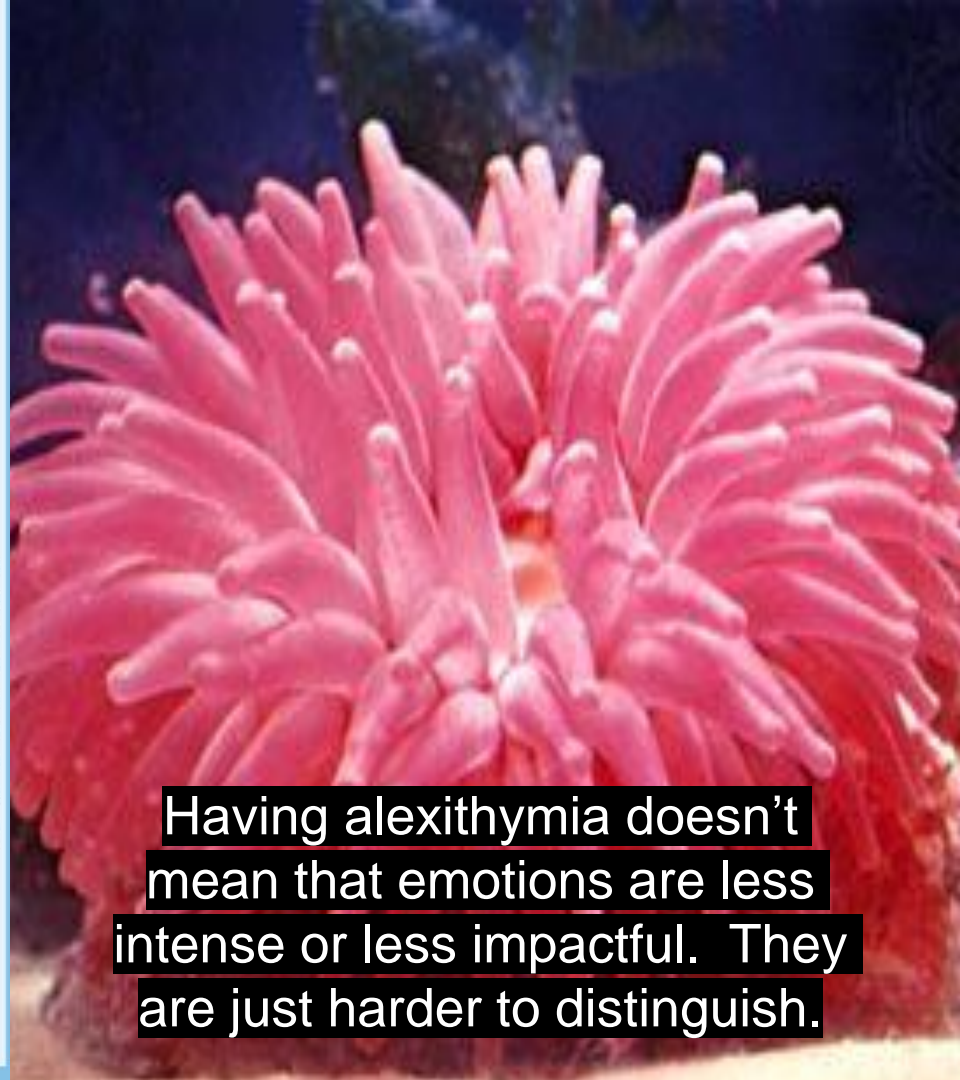
{ Between 40-65% of Autistic people
also have alexithymia }

Empathy: On fMRIs, there were lower levels of brain activity in the anterior insula when exposed to a loved one's pain

Emotional Recognition: difficulty registering emotion in the tone of voice, music, and facial expression

Facial Recognition: Reduced ability to accurately identify facial expressions of emotion

Once differences in alexithymia were accounted for, autism was not associated with deficits in emotional recognition and empathy



Having alexithymia doesn't mean that emotions are less intense or less impactful. They are just harder to distinguish.

"...but a mermaid has no tears, and therefore she suffers so much more"

-Han Christian Andersen



It is a myth that autistic people don't have feelings and an even more harmful myth that autistic people lack empathy.



"My face may look like a statue, but my feelings still just as human."

"A mermaid has not an immortal soul, nor can she obtain one unless she wins the love of a human being. On the power of another hangs her eternal destiny."

-Han Christian Andersen

At the same time that researchers were representing autistic people as lacking theory of mind, society was defining theory of mind as what makes us human, essentially robbing autistic people of humanity.



Many autistic people are actually hyper-aware of the emotions of others, experiencing them more intensely and often have a strong sense of social justice and care for all life forms.



Affective Empathy— feeling with people

“I feel Flounder’s disappointment.”

Feeling with people.

- *Mirror neurons light up that mimic the emotions of others based on facial expressions and body language.*



Compassionate Empathy-

feeling for people

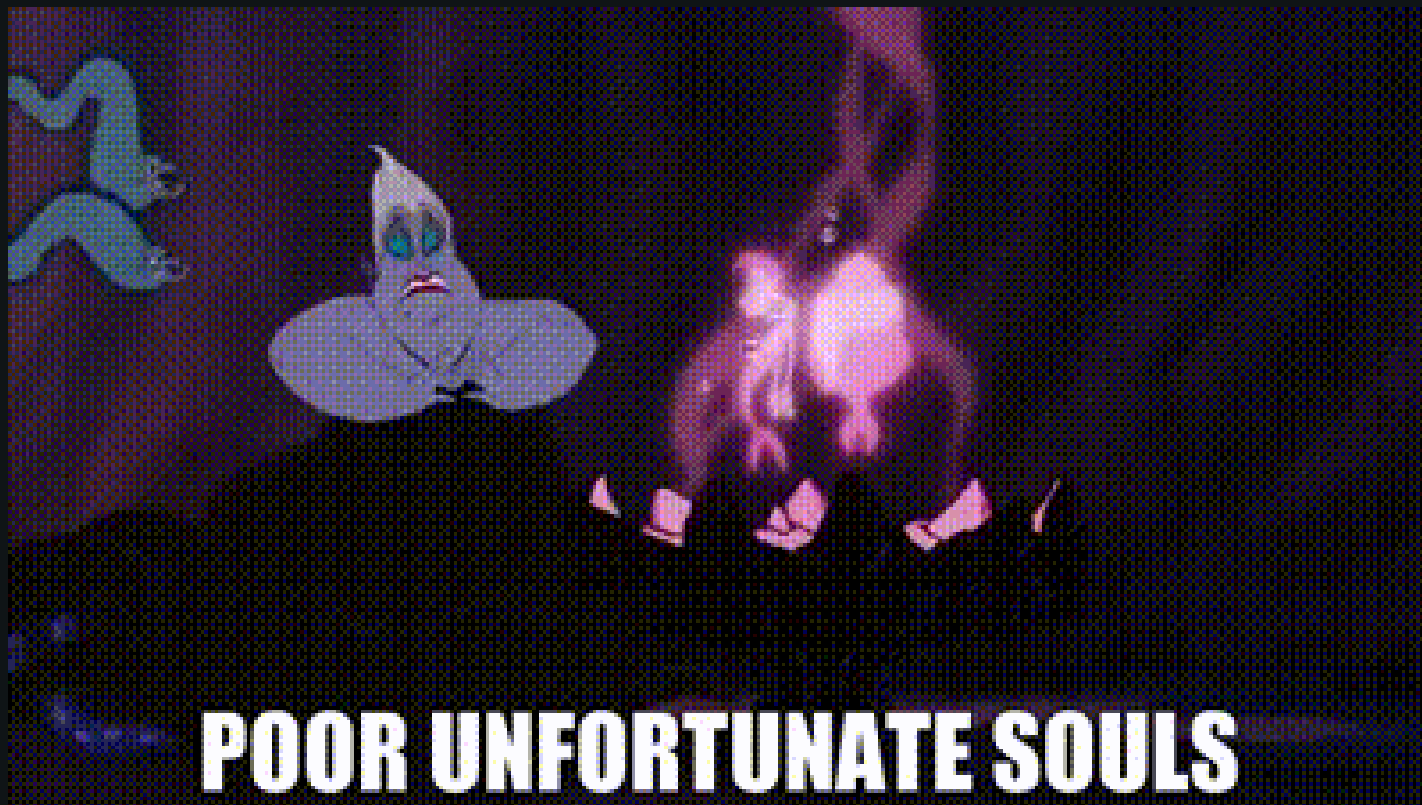
“Poor Flounder, I care about him and hope he catches a break.”

- *Compassion and concern for people and desire to help them.*

Cognitive Empathy— “I understand that Flounder really cares about Ariel and doesn’t want to see her hurting.

Also referred to as “theory of mind” or perspective taking.”

Fake Empathy



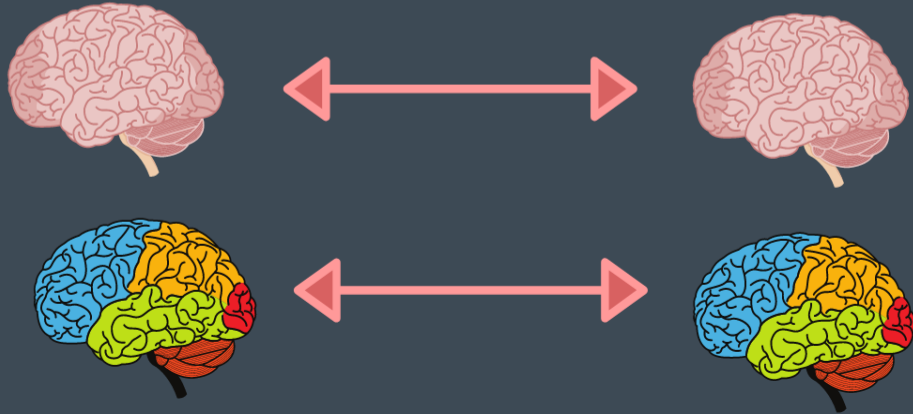
DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM

Communication between same neurotype

From neurotypical to neurotypical
From autistic to autistic



Efficient



Different neurotype

From neurotypical to autistic
From autistic to neurotypical



Not efficient



Impaired Cognitive Empathy or A Cultural Misunderstanding....



Autistic Culture

- Communication is direct and clear.

- Communicating accurate information is priority.

- What is logical/most expedient?



Neurotypical Culture

- “Say it subtly so people don’t think you are disrespectful.”

- Protecting relationships within a social hierarchy is important.

- What is socially acceptable?

Miscommunication is Risky

Vulnerable to Being
Manipulated

“Too Direct”

Sharing too
much (TMI)

Not Recognizing
When Conversations
are Ending

Not Knowing that
Something a Friend
Shared is Confidential

Misunderstanding Other
People's Intentions

Missing what
is Implied

Difficulty Feigning
Interest in
nonpreferred topics

Sharing too
little (distant)



Non-speaking does not equal not communicating!



“You’re so high functioning!
You don’t look autistic.”

-well meaning friend



“Meanwhile,
beneath the
surface.....”



“Women are not less impacted by their autism. They are just less seen.”

Devon Price in Unmasking Autism: Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity

Autistic females (and those raised female) mask more often and more effectively than autistic males.

Girls present as less autistic on the surface, but experience more internal turmoil and stress.

Girls are more likely to internalize (hide) stress instead of externalizing it (exploding and acting out) so fly under the radar.

Autistic girls experience more friendship conflict and tend to believe that the conflict is all their fault.

Autistic women tend to connect less with stereotypical female gender roles.



Women are diagnosed later in life and are more likely to be misdiagnosed.

Being able to compensate for a challenge is NOT the same as not having that challenge!

With neurodiversity, comes gender and sexual diversity too!



Autistics are 7.59 times more likely to not be cisgender.

ADHDers are 6.64 times more likely to not be cisgender.

69.7% of autistic people reported being non-heterosexual vs 30% of neurotypicals.

King Triton's Annual Pride Parade!



The Unseen Autistics

Women

GenderQueer

People of Color

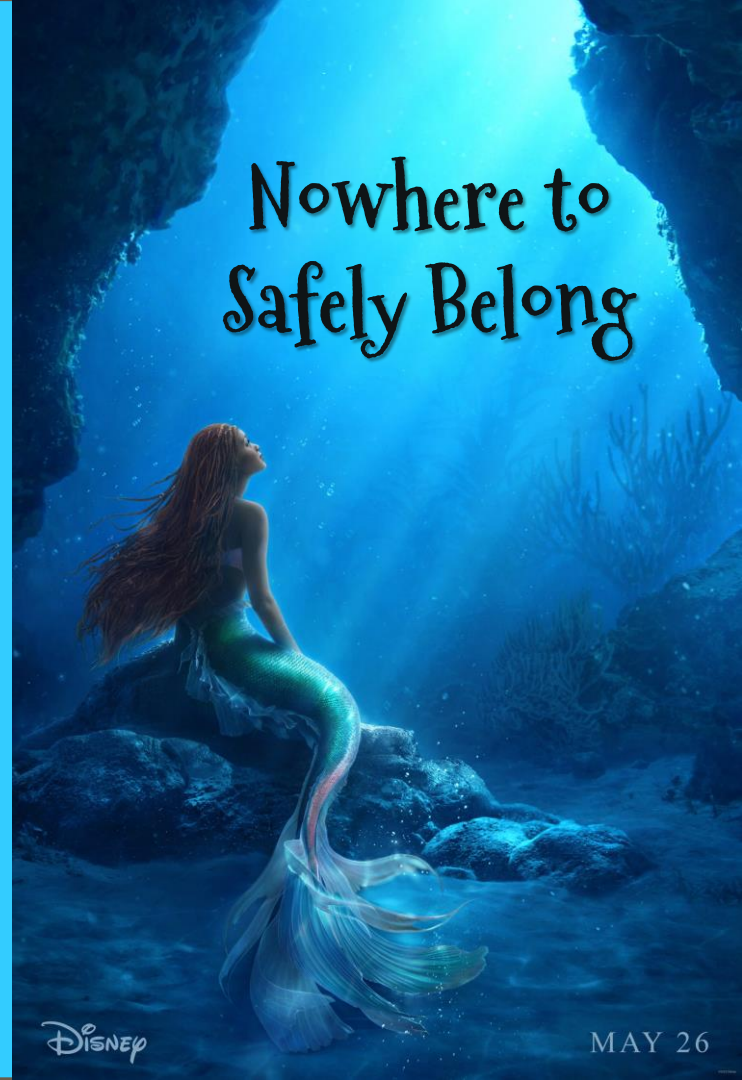


Intersectional Marginalization of Ethnic Minority Autistics



Double Masking

Nowhere to
Safely Belong



Disney


MAY 26

Black autistic children are 2.6 times more likely to be misdiagnosed than white autistic children, most commonly with a diagnosis of adjustment disorder or conduct disorder (Mandell et al, 2007, Straiton and Sridhar 2021).

Seeking an Autism Diagnosis? Here's Why You Might Want to Rethink That.

Know the costs — and the legal risks.



Devon Price  · Follow

17 min read · Aug 4, 2022



Not everyone may need a
formal diagnosis.



Maybe we shouldn't get her diagnosed...."

"Maybe we shouldn't tell her.

What if she uses it as an excuse?

I don't want her labeled like that.



I wanna know who you and Melody are
I wanna see, wanna see you fully
Monologuing about those, what do you call 'em?
Oh, special interests.

A neurotypical view, can't get me that far
Curiosity is required for me to know you
Showing me that, what's that word again?
Stimming

Unmasked and free, but still room for me
Husband, father, and part of this family
Show me please, I want to be

Part of your world
What would I give if I could create an accommodating world
What would I pay to make them accept our little daughter

Bet'cha in the sea, they understand
Bet they don't silence the neurodivergent
Bright young children, sick of hiding
Ready to stand

I'm ready to know what you're feeling now
Interoceptive differences, alexithymia
What's sensory overwhelm and why does it cause, what's the word?
Meltdown

When's it your turn
To show me what it's like to be autistic in this world
Out of the sea
Wish I could be
Part of your world





Maybe we shouldn't get her diagnosed...."

"Maybe we shouldn't tell her.

What if she uses it as an excuse?

I don't want her labeled like that.



*“All the horrible
labels I gave myself
before my autism
diagnosis....”*

Rude

Weird

Misfit

Difficult

*Overly
Sensitive*

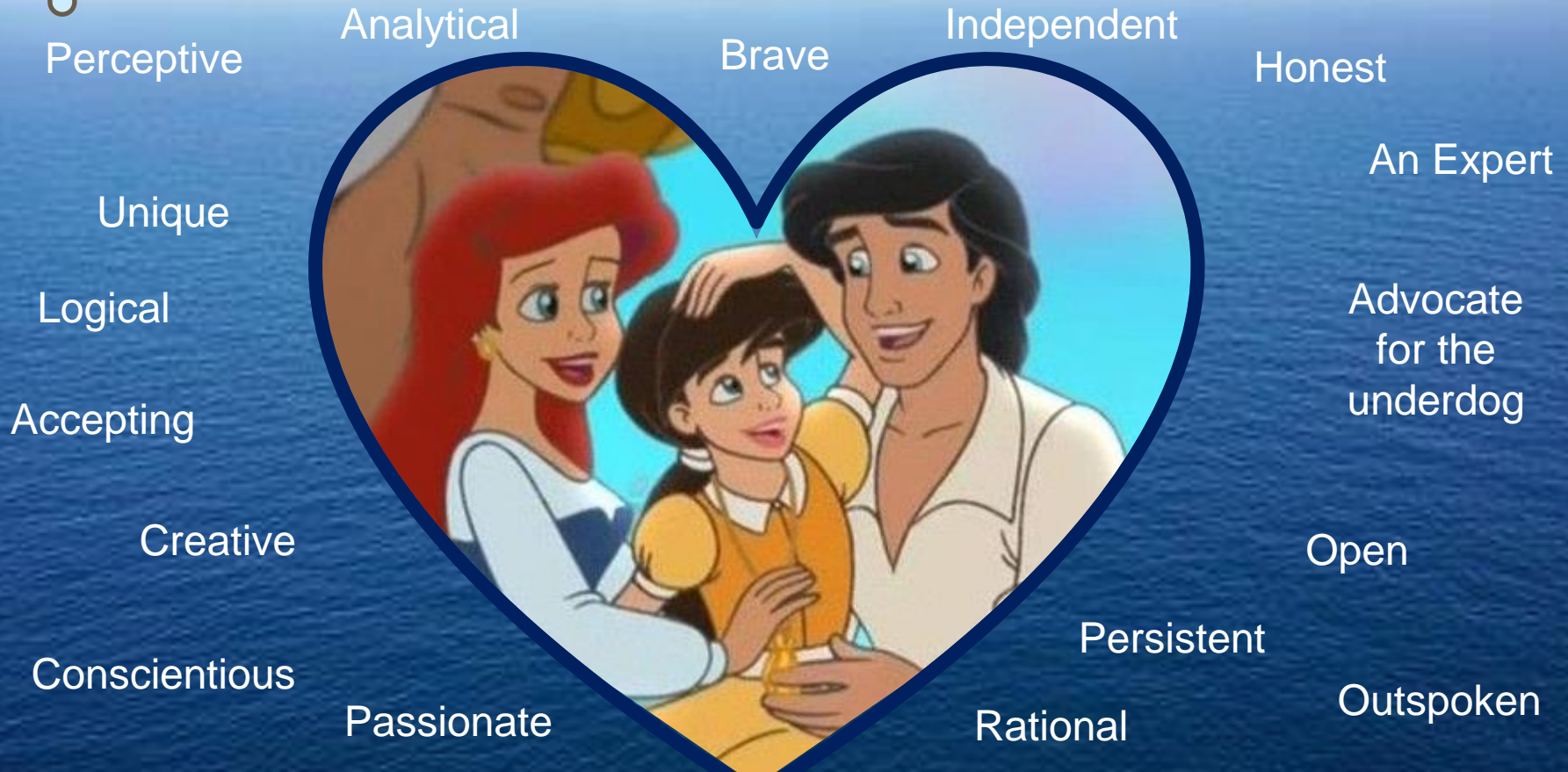
Selfish

*Too
Intense*

Oppositional

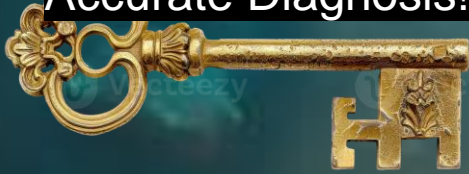


“This is What You Need to Understand About Yourself...”



An Accurate Diagnosis is the Key to Nonjudgmental Self-Understanding

Accurate Diagnosis!



Self-knowledge

Freedom

Self Compassion



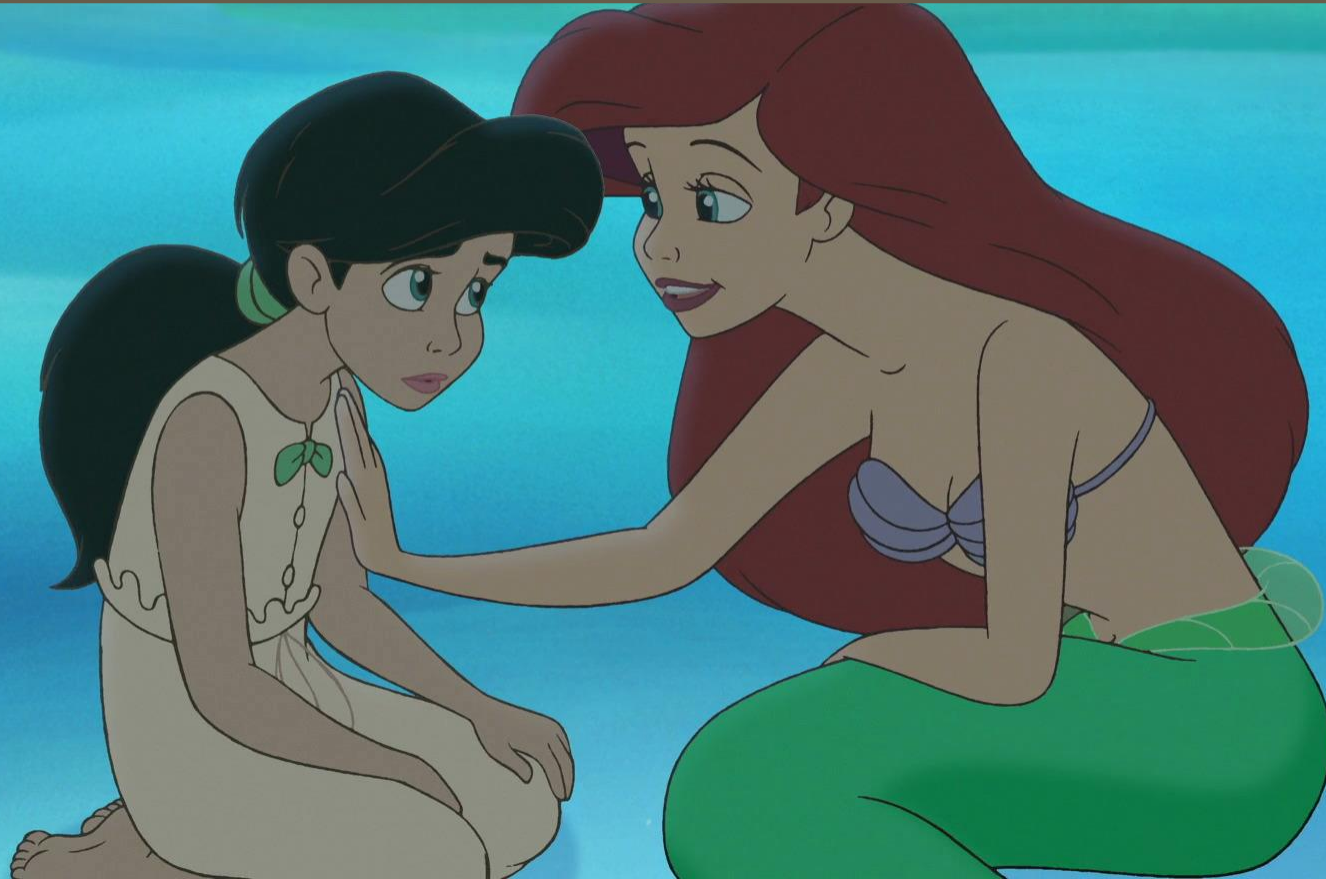
IS THIS AUTISM?

A Guide for Clinicians
and Everyone Else



DEYNA PENDERSON AND SARAH BURLAND, WITH JAMILL

Explaining Diagnosis to Kids





Autistic Strengths!

- Strong sense of social justice
- Honesty
- Hyper-empathy
- Detailed perception and processing
- Outside the box, creative thinking
- Logical thinking
- Expertise in area of special interest
- Less influenced by social norms
- Just to name a few....



Listen to thriving
autistic people.....



Neurodiversity-Affirming Criteria

DSM-5 deficit based

Abnormal social approach and failure of back-and-forth conversation

Deficits in non-verbal communication

Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships

Neurodiversity Affirming

Tendency to talk passionately about certain topics and not engage in small talk

Differences in nonverbal communication, including stimming while talking or looking elsewhere

Due to differences in communication, autistics may be shunned by neurotypicals

Neurodiversity-Affirming Criteria

DSM-5 deficit based

Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines

Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus

Neurodiversity Affirming

Security and comfort in routines decreases sensory overwhelm

Autistics feel very passionately about their special interests and use them for rejuvenation and emotional regulation

Thanks for giving us autistics a voice...



Stacy Greeter, MD
stacygreetermd.com

Jessica Hogan, PsyD

<https://www.neuronandrosepsychology.com/>

See other presentations on our youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@stacygreetermd>



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SCAN ME



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Language and Communication

Sensory Differences and
Intense Interests

Social Relationships



**Autistic
Differences in
Brain Style**



**Three
Primary
Categories**