

EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY: **Creating Inclusive Environments**



PRESENTED BY:
Happi**M**ESSTM

1 UNDERSTANDING MODELS OF DISABILITY



What is a “model” of disability?

In this case, “Model” means a certain way of thinking about disability. To understand this concept, it’s useful to compare it to the “medical model” of disability.

MEDICAL MODEL



SOCIAL MODEL

Views disability as arising from an individual's impairments or differences.

Advocates for “fixing” or changing impairments through medical treatments, even if they don't cause pain or illness.

Focuses on the individual's perceived “deficiencies.”

Lowers expectations for individuals with disabilities.

Often leads to loss of independence and control.

The person is disabled by their environment and its physical, attitudinal, communication, and social barriers.

Emphasizes removing societal barriers to expand life choices for disabled people.

Aims for independence and equality when barriers are eliminated.

Prioritizes autonomy, choice, and informed consent for disabled individuals.

Developed by disabled people to explain their experiences and promote inclusivity.

Recognizes barriers include not only physical but also attitudinal and social factors.

Disability is not a dirty word;

Disabled people are your equals. We can’t achieve true inclusion in society if we are seen as lesser, even in a seemingly benevolent way!

ALL disabled people have a right to autonomy, no matter how much support they need to communicate their choices.

2 **HIDDEN** DISABILITIES

Hidden disabilities are not immediately noticeable. But they can be as life-altering as disabilities marked by distinctive physical features, behaviours, or by the use of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, hearing aids or white canes.

There are no national statistics about exactly how many Canadians have hidden disabilities. But according to a 2012 Statistics Canada survey:

3.8
MILLION

Canadians aged
15+ report that a
disability limits
their daily
activities

1 IN 5

of these people
said they don't
use an assistive
device.

20%

of Canadians
will experience
mental illness,

1 IN 10

Canadians has
a learning
disability.

This suggests that many of us are navigating a world primarily designed for those without disabilities, and often those around us may not fully comprehend the challenges we face.

3

NEURODIVERSITY



“Neurodiversity” is a word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work. While everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function just alike. Neurodiversity includes both Neurotypical and Neurodivergent individuals.

NEURO○TYPICAL

Refers to individuals whose neurological development and functioning are considered typical or within the expected range of societal norms. In other words, neurotypical people do not have conditions or variations that significantly differ from the neurological "norm."

NEURO○DIVERGENT

Refers to individuals who have a mind or brain that diverges from what is typical. This can include Autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, FASD, and others. Neurodivergent people may have unique cognitive, sensory, or social processing styles, which can lead to diverse perspectives and experiences.

Embracing neurodiversity means recognizing and valuing this diversity of neurological traits and abilities in society.

4

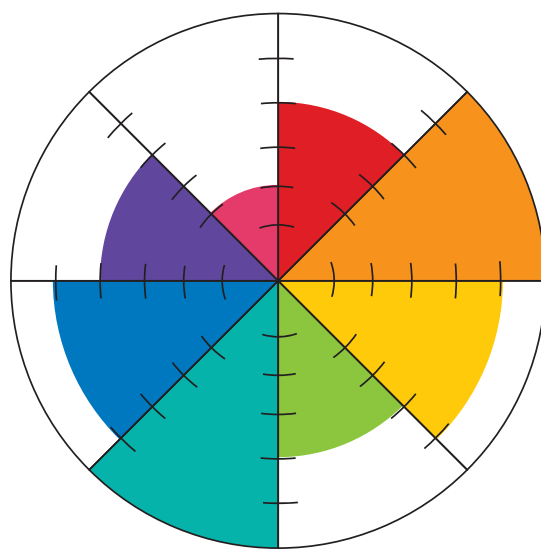
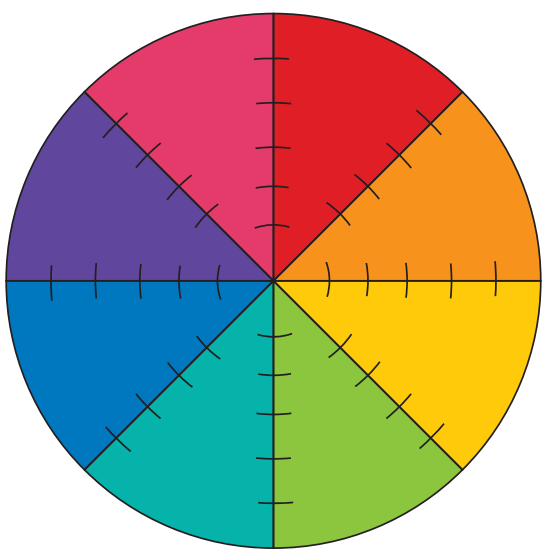
AUTISM

It's not what you think it is

The Autism Spectrum is not linear



The Autism Spectrum looks more like this



- Pragmatic language
- Social awareness
- Monotropic mindset
- Information processing
- Sensory processing
- Repetitive behaviors
- Neuromotor differences
- Other

Autism isn't a single condition; it's a complex collection of interconnected neurological conditions, making it challenging to separate them. Autistic individuals typically exhibit a variety of traits, covering a broad spectrum. Each autistic person is affected strongly enough in one or more categories for it to be disabling in some way. But each person's dominant colour palette may look different.

If you only check one or two boxes, then they don't call it autism– they call it something else. For instance, having sensory processing issues doesn't mean you're "a little autistic" but rather someone with sensory challenges.

You can see how ridiculous it seems, therefore, when someone says "we're all a little autistic" because they also hate fluorescent lights or because they also feel awkward in social situations.

Using binary descriptors like "High functioning" & "Low Functioning" are harmful as they over-simplify the needs and challenges faced by autistic people.

5

AUTISM 101

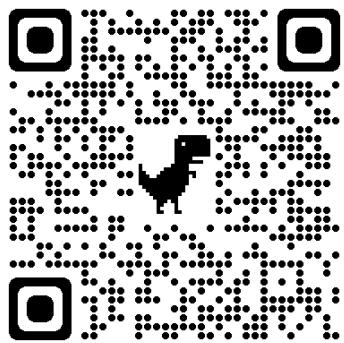
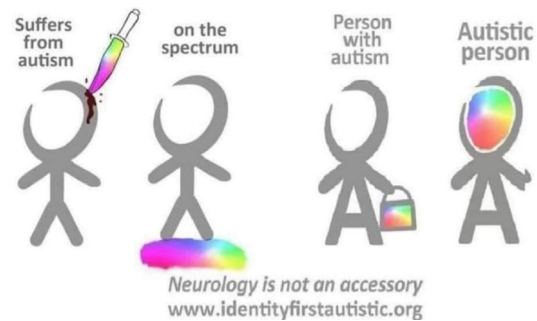
Quick facts

Autism is a Neurotype

It is not a disease/illness that needs to be cured.

Language

The Autistic community prefers identity-first language over person-first ie “Autistic” instead of “with autism.”



Autism Speaks

Autism Speaks is a hate group despised within the Autistic community. Scan the Qr code to read why and this April please DON'T light it up blue!

ABA

ABA is an abusive compliance therapy that is worse than dog training for Autistic children. It encourages masking and scars Autistics for life, be that through PTSD, depression, anxiety, burnout or generally terrible mental health etc.

Nonspeakers

Nonspeaking does not equate to unintelligent, nor does it mean the person is “afflicted with severe autism.” There are other modes of communication besides verbal speech.

Stimming, Meltdowns, Shutdowns & Masking

Meltdowns result from sensory/emotional/mental overload and are not tantrums; Shutdowns are internal implosions of emotion, and masking, while concealing autistic traits, can be detrimental to mental and physical health, highlighting the complexities of managing these aspects in the autistic experience.

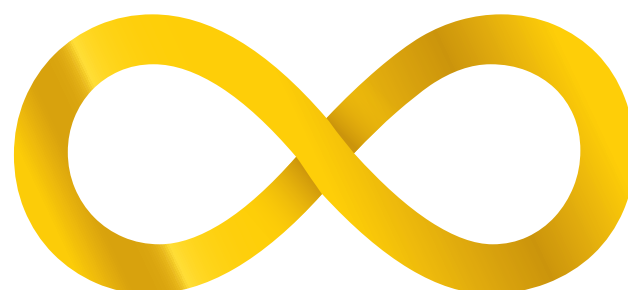
Acceptance over Awareness

Autism Acceptance and not Autism Awareness, please. Awareness is nothing without acceptance.

6 SYMBOLS



Rainbow infinity symbol – used to represent neurodiversity, which “describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one “right” way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.



The gold infinity symbol is about Autism Acceptance and was chosen by the autistic community as the first two letters of autism and autistic are “Au” which is the chemical symbol for gold.

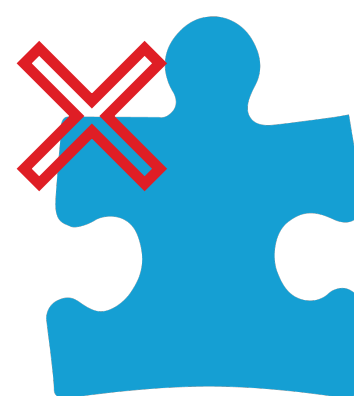
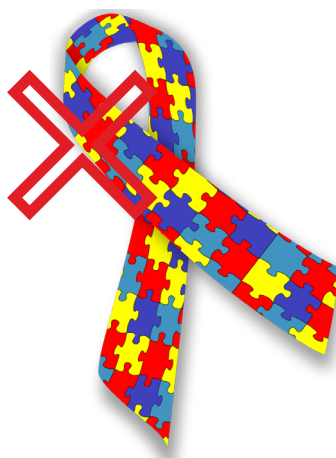
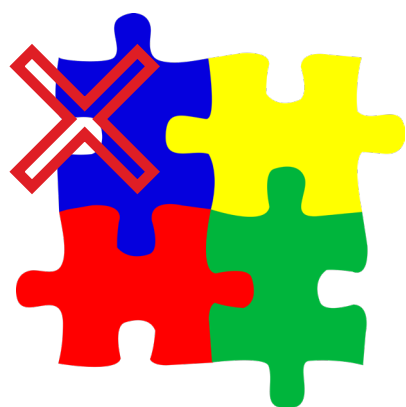


The butterfly symbol pictured below resonated with many, symbolizing how ADHD minds typically flit from one thing to the next. The rainbow butterfly symbol pictured is a current popular version.



The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is designed to discreetly indicate the wearer or someone with them has a hidden disability, letting everyone know that you might need extra help, understanding, or just more time.

PLEASE DO NOT USE:



EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY: Creating Inclusive Environments



To embrace neurodiversity and build inclusive communities:

LEARN:

- If you're working with disabled people, spend some time in disability spaces where there's no power dynamic. You'll be uncomfortable, socially awkward, say all the wrong things, and be educated. But you'll stop seeing yourself as the default and will learn to truly understand and be in community with diverse ways of being human.
- Embrace humility, curiosity and respect.

FOUNDATION OF EQUITY:

- Advocate for a world where all autistic people have equal access, rights, and opportunities. "Nothing About Us, Without Us"

DO NO HARM:

- Admit the need for continuous learning.
- Commit to avoiding harm and fostering inclusion.

CONCRETE STEPS:

- Promote acceptance of neurodiversity.
- Advocate for universal design and clear communication.
- Highlight inclusive education and workplaces.
- Support community initiatives, advocacy, and allyship.

**BY TAKING THESE STEPS, WE CREATE A MORE INCLUSIVE WORLD
WHERE NEURODIVERSITY THRIVES.**