

Workplace Readiness Starts Early

Using Behavior Science to Promote Workplace
Readiness During Childhood



BEHAVIOR PIVOT CONSULTING

Agenda + Intro



- Embracing Neurodiversity to Promote Purpose & Performance
- Strengthen Executive Functioning Skills Early for Long Term Success
- Behavioral Strategies to Create Neuro-inclusive Learning Spaces





“What is attractive about the neurodiversity model is that it doesn’t pathologize and focus disproportionately on what the person struggles with, and instead takes a more balanced view, to give equal attention to what the person can do.”

—JUDY SINGER 2020

Neurodiversity 101/Definitions

- Neurodiversity
- Neurotypicality/Neuromajority
- Neurodivergent
- Neuro-affirmative
- Neuro-inclusion

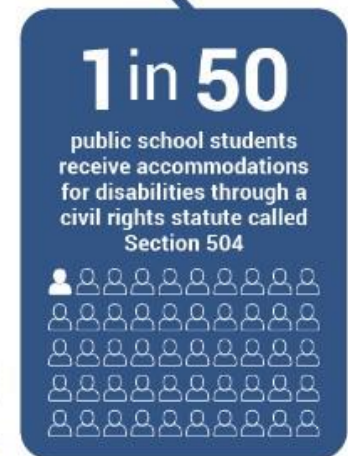


There is no "right" way of thinking

- Neurodevelopmental conditions refer to the brain's development and affects how the brain functions
- Conditions show up early in a child's life and can range from mild impairments to severe deficits



Only a *small subset* receive specialized instruction or accommodations...



...while millions of children with learning and attention issues are *not formally identified*.



Common Co-occurring Conditions

Neurodivergent individuals more likely to have associated mental health concerns
Different signs, symptoms & ranges of experiences



- Social Anxiety
- Mental Health Conditions
- Depression
- Stigma



Implications of Social Stigma

- "Masking" authenticities to conform to social rules
- Unsafe experiences to disclose struggles due to trauma

A 2020 study published in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders found that masking autistic traits is associated with an increased risk of experiencing thwarted belongingness and lifetime suicidality.



Medical vs. Social Models

Medical Model

Focuses on the disability, diagnosis, treatment and "cure" and is deficit-based

Social Model

Focuses the social factors that create barriers to opportunities and is strength-based

BCBA service model is often a medical model.
We are there to change individual behavior,
based on social significance.



Mindset Shift



- Shift from asking autistic people to change to creating social space for differences
- Promote neuro-affirming environments and strength-based learning
- Researchers at the University of Texas, Dallas found that autism acceptance training may help mitigate explicit bias



Mindfulness Beats Cognitive Biases



- Our brains naturally develop cognitive biases to help us understand the world
- Emotions and social pressures contribute to creating biases
- Remain grounded in awareness to eliminate the bias

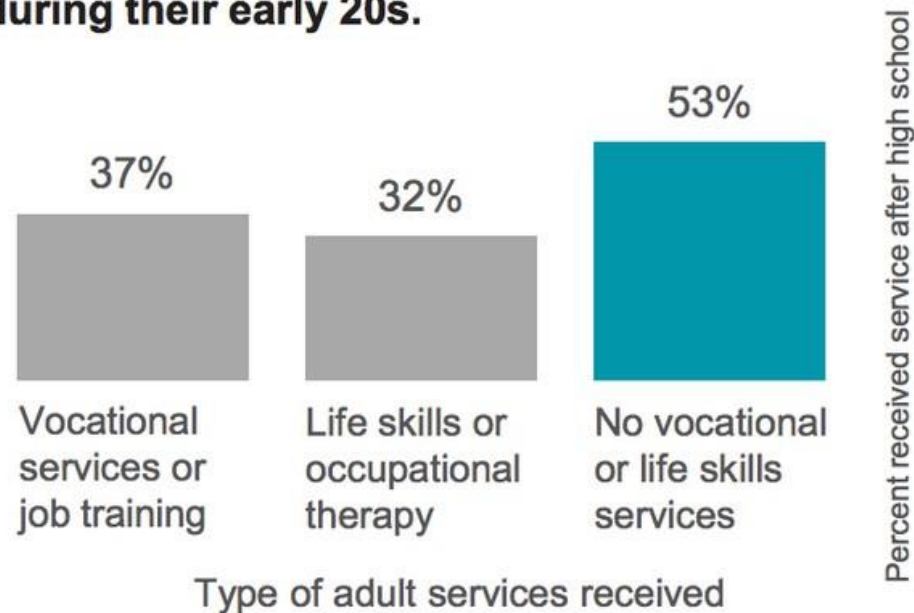


Imagine



Over 44% of autistic individuals enroll in some type of post-secondary education, but only 41% of those graduate, as opposed to 59% of their neurotypical peers

Over half of young adults with autism received no vocational or life skills services during their early 20s.



Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2



The Competitive Advantage of Neurodiversity



Hewlett Packard Enterprise' neurodiverse testing teams are 30% more productive than others (Harvard Business Review)



“Our autistic employees achieve, on average, 48% to 140% more work than their typical colleagues, depending on the roles,” says James Mahoney, executive director and head of Autism at Work at Chase.



Build on Strengths



Neurodiverse minds bring unique talents and strengths:

- Highly focused on preferred tasks
- Different perspectives to challenges
- Strong attention to detail
- Skilled with working with patterns, codes, arts, science, innovation, etc



Consider trauma

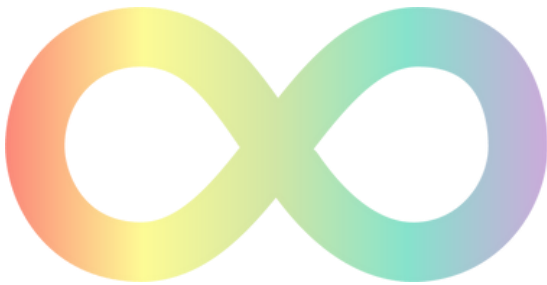
Atypical behaviors by social constructs often receive punishment and judgment

Check your bias

How are we responding to the behaviors of others?

Celebrate and value differences

Recognize individual talents and find opportunities to embrace and celebrate them





Strengthen
Executive
Functioning Skills
Early for Long
Term Success



Executive Functioning

Executive functioning is the cognitive skills that help individuals manage activities to achieve goals, stay organized, and effectively plan future events.



More than 15% of the general population identifies as neurodivergent

THESE SKILLS ARE
COMMON STUGGLES
BUT WE CAN TRAIN
OUR BRAINS TO
LEARN THEM



Prioritize Executive Functioning Skills

All areas of our lives require us to have strong EF skills

- Remain organized with tasks & responsibilities
- Problem solve
- Manage emotions
- Set priorities, achieve goals



How Executive Functioning Impacts Neurodivergent Individuals

Difficulties with Time Management

Some neurodivergent individuals may have a hard time keeping track of time.

Problems with Organization

Organizing thoughts, ideas, and belongings can be challenging for some neurodivergent individuals.

Challenges with Prioritization

It can be difficult for neurodivergent individuals to know what needs to be done first, especially during complex projects.¹⁸



Systems for Success

Timers + Visuals

Self-Management Systems

Behavior Contracts

Visuals + Calendars

Task Analysis

Mindfulness + Meditation



Meet Jane. She is an autistic 8 years old and loves creating art.

How can you promote her EF skills?

Social Skills

To help her connect with her clients and sell her pieces

Self Monitoring Systems

To help her keep track of her goals and keep her focused

Emotional Regulation

For when her art does not come out the way she prefers



Applying Executive Functioning in Everyday Life

1 — Healthy Lifestyle

A set schedule for meals, exercise, and sleep can promote healthy habits and a smoother daily routine.

2 — Education Skills

Using visual cues, creating study guides, and actively engaging in the learning material can make studying more manageable for students.

3 — Workplace Strategies

Setting achievable goals, using technology for project management, and chunking large assignments help promote work productivity and meet deadlines.



Benefits of Using Executive Functioning Strategies for Neurodivergent Individuals

Independence

Improved executive functioning skills will make it easier for neurodivergent individuals to be independent and carry out daily tasks without assistance.

Positive Self-Image

The confidence that comes from successfully completing tasks or projects can improve one's overall self-esteem.

Increased Productivity

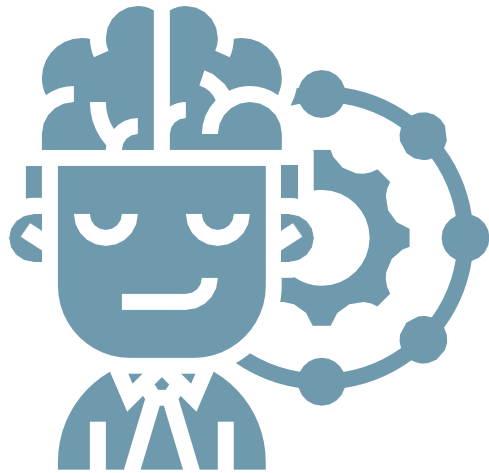
The ability to efficiently manage one's time and tasks can increase productivity and reduce stress in personal and professional life.



Behavioral Strategies to Create Neuro-inclusive learning spaces



Diversity in Neurodiversity



- Learning looks different for everyone
- Build systems that work for the individual
- Consider flexibility and inclusiveness of the system
- Promote Self-awareness and skill building towards advocacy



Function

- What is the function of the behavior?
- If we don't know the why, we are unable to offer an effective intervention
- Extinguishing natural patterns of behavior may lead to secondary disorders

Trust

- Environments that foster trust lead to learning
- Environment, people, experiences, body must practice trust
- Push too hard, too fast =loss of trust



Put on your oxygen mask on first



- We can only show up for others if we are well and our needs are met
- ACT: Evidence-based techniques proven to reduce anxiety/stress:
 - Mindfulness
 - Present Moment Awareness
 - Deep Breathing



ACT +EQ overlap

Present Moment
Recognize patterns of your
emotions

Acceptance

Accept emotions
with an open
attitude



Values

Identify personal
motivation to
improve

Diffusion

Detach from your
thoughts

Committed Action

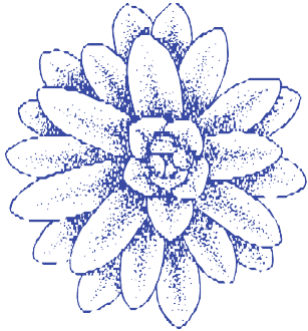
Manage impulses
and maintain
rational responses

Self As Context

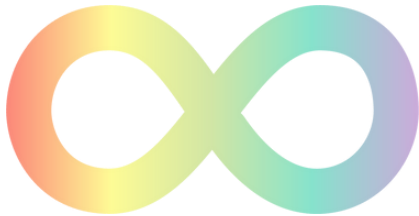
Be objective with
your experiences



Building Curiosity



Become curious of
your own patterns &
preferences



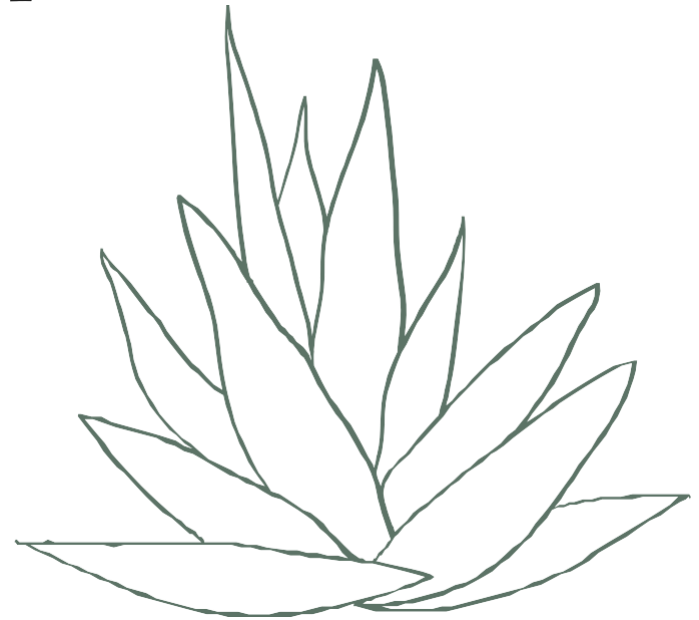
Practice curiosity for
others around patterns
& preferences



Cultivating Environmental Conditions

Environment shapes behavior

- Explore resources
- Find role models
- Build community



Social Responsibility for Neurodiversity



It is Natural



Embrace &
Recognize it



Make space
and build
upon it



Celebrate it



Let's keep the conversation going!

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