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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

HOW TO CREATE AN ACCEPTING AND SUPPORTIVE SOCIETY FOR ASD

INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental condition that affects an individual's social, communication, and behavioral skills. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in 54 children in the United States is diagnosed with ASD, making it essential for society to embrace autism inclusivity.

Autism inclusivity refers to the acceptance, understanding, and inclusion of autistic individuals in all aspects of life, including education, employment, and community involvement. This article explores the importance of autism inclusivity, the challenges faced by autistic individuals, and the steps we can take to create a more accepting and supportive society.

WHAT IS AUTISM INCLUSIVITY?

Autism inclusivity means accepting, understanding and including individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in all aspects of life. To create an inclusive environment for autistic people, it is important to recognize their strengths and differences, as well as provide them with access to the same opportunities that are available to others. This includes appropriate provisions for education, employment, social activities and community involvement.



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HOW TO CREATE CONTINUED....

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTISM INCLUSIVITY

Inclusivity is vital for the well-being and development of autistic individuals. By fostering an inclusive environment, we can help autistic individuals reach their full potential and contribute to society in meaningful ways. Some benefits of autism inclusivity include:

Social acceptance: When society is more accepting and understanding of autism, autistic individuals are less likely to experience discrimination, isolation, and bullying. This social acceptance is crucial for young people and their emotional well-being, positive behavior, and self-esteem.

Equal opportunities: Inclusive practices in education and employment ensure that autistic individuals have access to the same opportunities as their neurotypical peers. This allows them to develop their skills, pursue their interests, and contribute to society.

Improved quality of life: Autism inclusivity enhances the overall quality of life for individuals and children with autism by providing them with the support, accommodations, and resources they need to thrive in various aspects of their lives.

Increased awareness and understanding: Inclusive practices promote greater awareness and understanding of autism among the general public. This helps reduce misconceptions and stereotypes, leading to a more compassionate and empathetic society.

LEVELS OF INCLUSION

There are three levels of inclusion strategies for individuals with autism: individual, interactive, and communal.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This level focuses on the individual needs of each person. This includes providing them with appropriate accommodations and support in order to meet their educational, social and behavioral goals.

INTERACTIVE LEVEL

This level refers to the interaction between the individual with autism and their typical peers. It involves supporting students providing opportunities for professional development, socialization and communication with others, as well as teaching them how to interact with people in appropriate ways.

COMMUNAL LEVEL

This refers to the larger community environment beyond general education classrooms that includes individuals with autism. This involves creating an inclusive environment by general education teachers promoting acceptance and understanding of students with autism through teaching strategies, raising awareness, and advocating for equal rights.



Continued on page 3.

HOW TO CREATE CONTINUED....

DIFFICULTIES OF AUTISM INCLUSION

Despite the benefits of autism inclusivity, there are some unique challenges that individuals AND children with autism may face. These include:

Difficulty communicating: Individuals with autism may have difficulty expressing their thoughts and emotions, which can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations by others.

Sensory overload: Many people with autism experience heightened sensitivity to certain stimuli, such as sound, light or touch. This can be overwhelming and lead to anxiety or behavioral outbursts.

Trouble with transitions: Individuals with autism may have difficulty transitioning from one activity or environment or one classroom to another due to their need for routine and structure.

STEPS TO PROMOTE AUTISM INCLUSIVITY

Creating a more inclusive society for autistic individuals requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, employers, community and family members. Here are some steps we can take to promote autism inclusivity:

Raise awareness and understanding: Educate the public about autism and its diverse manifestations through awareness campaigns, workshops, special education and other initiatives. This will help dispel common myths and misconceptions and foster greater empathy and understanding.

Promote inclusive education: Schools and teachers should adopt inclusive education practices that cater to the unique needs of autistic students. This includes providing appropriate accommodations, special classes, individualized learning plans, and specialized support services.

Create supportive work environments: Employers should implement policies and practices that support the inclusion of autistic employees. This may involve offering flexible work arrangements, providing necessary accommodations, and fostering a culture of understanding full inclusion and acceptance.

Build inclusive communities: Community organizations, school administrators, and local governments should work together to create inclusive spaces and programs that cater to the needs of individuals with autism. This includes accessible public spaces, recreational activities, and support services.

Advocate for policy change: Engage with policymakers and advocate for legislation that promotes the rights and well-being of autistic individuals. This includes anti-discrimination laws, funding for support services, and policies that promote inclusive education and employment practices.

Support research and innovation: Invest in research to better understand autism and develop innovative solutions that can improve the lives of autistic individuals. This includes advancements in diagnostic tools, interventions, and assistive technologies.

Continued on page 4.

IT TAKES
SOMEONE
SPECIAL
TO HEAR
WHAT
A CHILD
CAN NOT
SAY

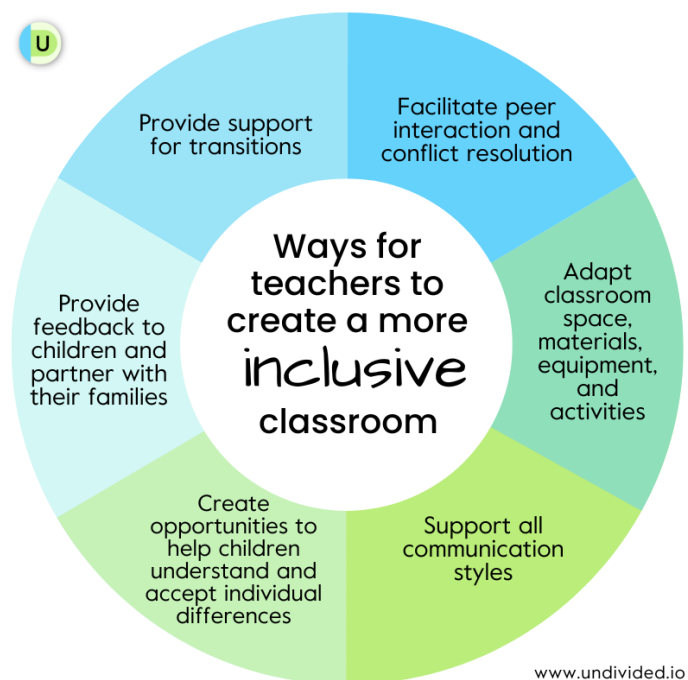
HOW TO CREATE CONTINUED....

IDEAS FOR INCLUSIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM AND TEACHING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

In a classroom setting, there are a number of strategies that can be implemented during school day to foster inclusivity for students with autism. Here are some ideas:

- Provide structure and routine: Create an environment with clear expectations and routines so that students can better anticipate what is coming next. This helps reduce anxiety and confusion.
- Focus on strengths: Encourage students with autism to identify and develop their strengths. This will help build confidence and self-esteem.
- Promote peer and social interactions: Create opportunities for students with autism to interact with their peers in meaningful ways, such as through group activities or collaborative projects.
- Provide accommodations: Modify the curriculum for teaching students if needed, and provide appropriate accommodations so that students with autism can access the material. You can use visual aids to help the students with autism.
- Monitor progress: Monitor the progress of students with autism and provide timely interventions to address any issues.
- Ensure safety by educating students: Create a safe environment where all students feel accepted, respected, and valued. This includes establishing clear rules and expectations around behavior, as well as providing support when needed.
- Foster a culture of understanding: Encourage all students to be open and accepting of their peers who have autism. Educate them about the condition and celebrate differences. This will help foster greater inclusion in the classroom.
- Create meaningful connections: Develop relationships with students with autism that go beyond academics, such as through shared interests or activities. This can help students with autism feel more connected and supported by other students.
- Encourage self-advocacy: Teach students with autism how to advocate for themselves and ensure their voices are heard. This can help them feel empowered and have a greater sense of control over their own lives.
- Celebrate success: Recognize the accomplishments of students with autism, both big and small, to celebrate their successes and build positive self-esteem.

Implement these strategies to create an all inclusive classroom environment that caters to the unique needs of students with autism. With these measures in place, all students can benefit from a safe and supportive learning experience.



Continued on page 5.

www.undivided.io

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HOW TO CREATE CONTINUED....

AUTISM INCLUSIVITY IN SPORTS AND RECREATION

Sports and recreation activities provide an excellent opportunity for individuals with autism to practice social skills, build confidence, and have fun. To ensure inclusivity in sports and recreation activities for individuals with autism, here are some ideas:

- Provide accommodations: Modify rules and equipment if needed to allow autistic participants to participate safely. This includes providing extra supervision, quiet spaces for breaks, and modified instruction.
- Build relationships: Spend time getting to know autistic individuals on a personal level and create meaningful connections with them. This will help foster trust and understanding.
- Create an understanding environment: Educate coaches, teachers, parents, and peers about autism so that everyone can understand how to

CONCLUSION

Autism inclusivity is crucial for creating a more accepting and supportive society for individuals with autism. By raising awareness, promoting inclusive practices, and advocating for policy change, we can help children with autism overcome the challenges they face and enable them to lead fulfilling lives. Ultimately, an inclusive society benefits everyone by fostering empathy, understanding, and diversity.

<https://www.goldencaretherapy.com/autism-inclusivity/>

Some of the Top Autism-Friendly Sports

- Running and walking
- Bowling
- Swimming
- Biking and skating
(if balance isn't an issue)
- Exercise classes

The infographic includes an illustration of two children, a girl in a red shirt and a girl in a blue shirt, celebrating a bowling strike with their arms raised. The background is dark blue with a starburst effect and a bowling lane graphic.

verywell health

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AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH



What is autism spectrum disorder? How to support the community this Autism Acceptance Month

April marks Autism Acceptance Month with [World Autism Day](#) occurring on April 2 every year. The month is meant to be a time for uplifting autistic voices and sharing in the community's joy. But for Samantha Edwards, an [autistic content creator](#) and neurodivergent

life coach, the month also signifies an influx of [harmful myths](#) about autistic people.

"April is a wonderful month to crack down on that and listen to autistic voices and their stories and listen to their struggles," she says. "Acceptance, at the end of the day, is going to promote more inclusivity."

Here's how you can uplift the neurodivergent community this April and all year long.

WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a developmental disability that affects [the way people experience the world](#). This may include differences in processing senses, thinking, physically moving, communicating, socializing and going about daily living.

"We're born autistic and we're autistic our whole lives," says Zoe Gross, the director of advocacy at [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#). "It affects everything about the way we interact with and perceive the world."

Autism affects every autistic person differently, and there isn't one way to be autistic. Gross describes it as an ice cream sundae bar: The traits of autism can be mixed and matched from person to person.

Here's what autism isn't, Gross says – something to be scared of or pity.

"In truth, autism is just a neutral fact about us, it's not necessarily a good or a bad thing," she says.

"It's just the way our brains are."

Another misconception is that autistic people don't have empathy. Gross recalled a time when a teacher asked her if she loved her parents. Of course she loves them, she responded, but the question itself was a symptom of a larger myth about autistic people and emotions.

"Where that comes from is that we may not know what other people are feeling if they don't tell us because autistic people may not be good at reading body language or other kinds of subtle social cues," Gross says. "But that doesn't mean we don't care what people are feeling."

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AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH CONTINUED....

HOW COMMON IS AUTISM?

About one in 36 children have autism spectrum disorder, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states. This number is on the rise, especially as [children of color receive more diagnoses](#) after being largely overlooked throughout history.

[Edwards](#) started her online autism advocacy journey to combat the misconceptions about autism. As an autistic person and a parent of two autistic children, she says she wants to make the world a more accessible place for future generations.



A large part of her work is advocating for the self-diagnosed community, which she says “are very welcome and included in the autistic community.”

One of the more harmful narratives is that people, especially teenagers, are [self-diagnosing after watching a handful of TikTok videos](#) with captions like “Signs you may be autistic” or “10 things that are actually traits of autism.” But that’s “really not the case,” says Edwards. Online platforms like TikTok give the autistic community, like [other marginalized communities](#), more visibility than ever before.

“It is harmful for all of these self-diagnosed autistics that really did put in the research – some have years, even a lifetime of research – to be told, ‘Oh, you watched a couple TikTok videos so you’re not valid,’” Edwards says.

Some medical professionals [push back against self-diagnosing](#), especially when it comes to social media. But there’s also the [nuanced issue](#) of access to healthcare services that may lead to a professional diagnosis, which can be limited for some [autistic individuals](#).

WHAT IS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH?

April is Autism Acceptance Month but many, especially those outside of the autism community, used to refer to the month as “Autism Awareness Month.” Autistic advocacy organizations have been [using “acceptance” rather than “awareness”](#) for over a decade, and the [Autism Society of America](#) shifted the terminology in 2021.

According to ASAN, Autism Acceptance Month was created [by and for autistic people](#) to respect the rights and humanity of all autistic people and center “the perspectives and needs of autistic people with intellectual disabilities, nonspeaking autistic people, and autistic people with the highest support needs.”

The “awareness” approach, Gross says, further stigmatizes autism as something scary.

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AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH CONTINUED...

Using “acceptance” instead of “awareness” is an intentional choice because, as Edwards says, “we’re just moving on.”

“It’s 2023, I do believe most people are aware of what autism is,” she says. “We’ve got the awareness and now we need the resources, we need the advocacy.”

Awareness campaigns have historically focused on how many people have autism or a [search for a “cure.”](#) A now-removed [2009 campaign](#) from advocacy organization Autism Speaks opened by saying “I am autism. I’m visible in your children, but if I can help it, I am invisible to you until it’s too late.”

“That’s not the way we want to approach giving people information about autism, we want people to view autism as a part of human diversity and autistic people as part of their community,” Gross says.



HOW TO SUPPORT THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY

Don’t speak over autistic voices

“[Nothing about us without us](#)” is a disability rights slogan that’s top of mind during Autism Acceptance Month.

When it comes to research, policy and advocacy, the most important thing is that autistic people are “in the driver’s seat,” Gross says. It means that decisions about autism need to be made by or with autistic people. It also means centering the stories and experiences of autistic people.

Avoid harmful labels and language

“Low-functioning” and “high-functioning” are labels often ascribed to autistic people. [These are harmful](#), ASAN says, because “we all have things we are good at and things we need help with.”

“People will say, ‘How can I do without the terms low-functioning and high-functioning?’ And what I want to ask is like ‘What are you doing with them now?’” Gross says. “What I encourage people to do is just say what they mean. If they mean this person can’t speak, (say) ‘I’m talking about someone who can’t speak.’ If they mean this person has a job, just say ‘I’m talking about an autistic person who has a job.’”

Neurotypical people may also wonder what’s more appropriate to say – person with autism or autistic person?

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AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH CONTINUED...

Many self-advocates prefer [identity first language](#) because it works against the stigma that being autistic is something bad or something that makes you less than. Identity first language (“autistic person”) recognizes and validates that identity.

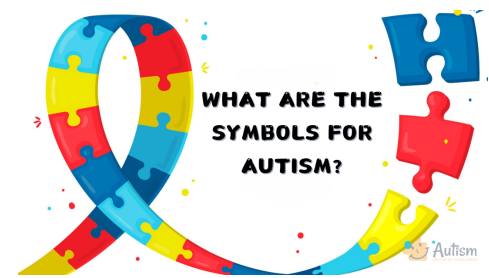
“Autism is something that you are and not something that you have, you’re not carrying autism around in a bag,” Edwards says. “It’s something that makes your brain different.”

But it’s a [personal preference](#). For example, Gross says people with intellectual disabilities may use person-first language (“person with autism”) because “they feel they’ve been so dehumanized and people only see their disability and don’t see them.”

The bottom line: How someone refers to their autism is personal based on what makes them feel the most affirmed and validated.

Support autistic-run organizations and businesses

Edwards recommends supporting organizations that center autistic voices and are run by autistic people, like ASAN and the [Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network](#).



This month, Edwards says she’ll be using her platform to uplift other autistic and disabled creators.

“There’s so many of us that are ... trying to make a really big difference in this movement, so I’m really proud of everyone this past year,” she says. “I just want to uplift each other and get the right message out.”

Organizations with primarily neurotypical leadership have led autistic advocates to [move away from their symbols](#) (like Autism Speaks’ signature blue color and puzzle piece) in favor of new ones created by autistic self-advocates. The first puzzle piece logo in 1963 featured a crying child in the center and was designed to show autism as a [“puzzling condition.”](#) A 2018 study found the general public has a [negative implicit bias](#) against the imagery of a puzzle piece, which participants associated with “imperfection, incompleteness, uncertainty, difficulty, the state of being unsolved, and, most poignantly, being missing.”

“We recognize discord within the community, including those who dislike the puzzle piece symbol or prefer a different symbol, but there are also many who embrace it and want to continue to see it associated with autism,” Autism Speaks told USA TODAY in a statement.

The organization says it is regularly seeking feedback from those within the autistic community on whether or not to continue its use and encouraged feedback at connectwithus@autismspeaks.org.

Many favor a rainbow or gold infinity symbol and use [“Red Instead,”](#) which Edwards says symbolizes the passion autistic people have.

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AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH CONTINUED...

Don't perpetuate myths about autism

Edwards recommends neurotypical people support the neurodiverse community by staying up to date on [current research](#) and taking a second glance before sharing something that furthers stereotypes about autistic people.

“We all deserve our human rights, and we all deserve respect,” Gross says. “We all deserve to be able to make choices in our lives, we deserve to live free from neglect and abuse, we deserve to have services that are truly person-centered and individualized for us and that meet our needs. Those aren't optional, fancy things that you get by being mildly impacted.”

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2024/04/02/what-is-autism-spectrum-disorder/73168467007/>

AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH LINK

<https://autismacceptance.com/>



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NBA COACHES HONOR AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH

NBA coaches honor Autism Acceptance Month with custom Nikes

Head coaches across the league will wear custom Nikes from April 2-7 to support Autism Acceptance Month.

On any given night there is no shortage of elite kicks on an NBA team's sideline. This week will be no different, however, there will be some extra meaning behind the sneakers.

From April 2-7, NBA head coaches across the league will wear custom-designed Autism Acceptance-themed sneakers from Nike during select games. This initiative aims to raise awareness and funds for autism resources and services in honor of Autism Acceptance Month this April.



Each pair of Nikes was custom painted by JSM 801 Customs, a Salt Lake City-based studio with team colors and a rainbow infinity symbol, which symbolizes the neurodiversity spectrum.

The idea stemmed from Utah Jazz assistant coach Scott Morrison. Morrison and his wife Susanne have a four-year-old son, Max, who was diagnosed with autism in 2022. After the campaign, the sneakers will be signed by the NBA coaches who wore them and auctioned off. The proceeds will be donated to the [To The Max Foundation](#), a nonprofit founded by the Morrisons, and will support autistic individuals and their families. "My wife and I wanted to do something just to start trying to contribute to autism acceptance," Morrison said. "We reached out to eight to 10 head coaches that I had either a friendship with or had their contact information, and just sent them a letter with our proposal to wear these shoes in April."

From there the idea snowballed. The National Basketball Coaches Association – led by executive director David Fogel – caught wind of the situation and asked the coaches throughout the league to get involved.

"[It] seemed like a big task at the time, but the coaches seemed very eager to help out ... just watching all the coaches respond like within a day or two, saying they want to participate ... it was very heartwarming," said Morrison.

One of the first coaches to jump on board was Boston Celtics' Head Coach, Joe Mazzulla, who is also Max's godfather. Mazzulla called the initiative a way to show his commitment to Max, but also an opportunity to understand individuals and families with autism and meet them where they're at.

"This cause is important to me because it's about children, it's about people who are dealing with something that's uncontrollable," Mazzulla said.

According to the CDC, autism affects an estimated [1 in 36 children](#) and [1 in 45 adults](#) in the United States today. For Coach Morrison, the shoes are a way to help bring acceptance and awareness to the court.

"These individuals, they're not lesser or better or worse, or anything like that. They're just different," Morrison said when asked what he hopes NBA fans watching this week take away from the campaign. "Just [be] kind to people that are different than yourself."

<https://www.nba.com/news/nba-coaches-autism-acceptance-month-custom-nike-shoes>

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NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING SOCIAL SUPPORT..

PLAY. LEARN. CHAT.

NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING SOCIAL SUPPORT APPROACHES FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Use this (non-exhaustive) checklist to analyse aspects of any 'Social Skills' program, therapy resources or therapy approaches.

Nothing is black and white - use your discretion to use tools in affirming ways and leave out non-affirming aspects!

GREEN LIGHT - These are great approaches!

- Find out child's social preferences, perspective and own goals
- Explore & honour child's interests as basis for social connection
- Honour child's stimming & sensory preferences
- All types of communication & social preferences are valid
- All play is OK - there's no wrong way to play
- Educate & change people around the child
- Make changes to child's physical environment
- Make changes to expectations and schedules
- Build child's self-awareness (including sensory, communication, interests, socialising preferences)
- Build child's self-advocacy skills
- Build child's knowledge of different communication styles




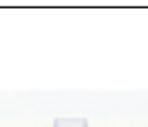
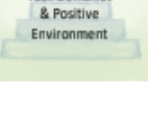
RED LIGHT - Non-affirming approaches

- Ask children to change, 'fit in', and encourage masking
- Teach rigid 'conversation rules' or 'social rules'
- Teach ND children that only *they* need to change or learn skills
- Encourage or force eye contact, or sitting still to listen
- Negative view of sensory needs, preferences and stimming
- Withhold preferred items/activities as rewards
- Only value speech (mouthwords, spoken language) over other forms of communication (AAC, signing, actions, etc)

© Play. Learn. Chat. 2023

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INCLUSION SUPPORTS

SAMPLE ZIGGURAT INTERVENTIONS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION SETTINGS WWW.ZIGGURATGROUP.COM		
 Sensory & Biological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower lights and/or allow sunglasses • Reduce sound/allow to listen to music or use headphones • Allow movement while learning • Provide structured sensory activities (e.g., fidgets, headphones, Velcro, jumping, walking, putty) • Use visual screens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe place to regulate • Provide seating alternatives (e.g., allow to work on floor) • Provide structured breaks between tasks • Provide visual schedules to increase structure and thus decrease anxiety (a biological experience) • Home/school communication regarding health, sleep, medication
 Reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a reinforcer assessment and use a reinforcer menu • Reinforce critical skills (even if most children this age are not reinforced for the behavior) • Use First-Then charts • Reinforce practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with high rate of reinforcement for new skills • Incorporate special interests (e.g., reading material, research areas, visuals -picture of NASCAR/Minecraft/cat on math page) • Consider down-time as a reinforcer • Include reinforcers on visual schedule and mini-schedules
 Structure and Visual/ Tactile supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly prepare for changes or new experiences • Provide scripts (video model, live model or written) • Structure positive social interactions (compliment chair; giving chair; peer buddies) • Provide visual instructions and visual models • Use scales continua, drawing, and cartooning • Build routines into daily activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide visual schedules, checklists • Use visual timers • Give reminders to the whole class for transitions • Provide visual support for answering the question, "How was school today?" • Provide visual support for asking for help • Minimize surprises
 Task Demands & Positive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not insist on "Look at me" • Explain your own nonverbals (e.g., "My eyebrows are showing you I'm confused") • Adjust your tone and volume – explain if you need to speak loudly that you are not angry • Be familiar with the communication strategies of your student • Structure long term projects ("chunk" with due dates) • Assist with understanding figurative language • Provide co-teacher • Maintain routines • Ask the student what helps them to do an activity/participate • Provide choices – (e.g., use pencil, pen, or computer) • Protect from bullying/teasing – use the buddy system • Assist when pairing off or choosing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use whole class physical responses (e.g., stand here if you like bugs; stand there if you don't like bugs) • Work alone or in a small group • Provide alternatives to handwriting • Provide peer support during transitions • Increase social supports as high functioning students transition to secondary levels • Check in with students who do not ask for help until they learn to ask for help independently • Provide a system to text or email questions • Train peers about neurodiversity • Assign lunch buddies • Provide individualized visual schedules and checklists • Avoid using sarcasm
 Skills to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request/use social narratives – teach perspectives, strategies, describe situation/experience • Teach hidden curriculum/unwritten social rules -Do not assume that the student knows what is obvious to everyone else • Teach when and how to ask for help • Teach feeling identification/point out own emotions • Teach class/educational routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach groupwork skills/roles • Teach emotion regulation strategies • Teach idioms as they are used • Recognize that free time, recess, and lunch time are instructional opportunities • Teach how to create, use, and personalize visual schedules

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The best thing we can do to support students with disabilities is to hear what they have to say...

Elizabeth Stein, Ed.D.
Education Week

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INCLUSION SUPPORTS CONTINUED...



Inclusion Support Checklist

Inclusion Supports

Consider the student's participation in various components of an inclusive setting to determine where they might need additional support to improve the quality of their inclusive experience. Use the *Inclusion Support Recommendations* to generate ideas that will help you meet individual needs within the general education environment.

Component of Inclusive Setting	Expectations	Needs Support
Routines (e.g. snack, lunch, recess, arrival, departure)	Participates in most routines independently or with minimal teacher assistance (e.g. one verbal reminder sometimes)	
Attention/Following directions	Follows teachers' directions independently most of the time	
Social communication	Engages in conversation with peers following appropriate social conventions (taking turns, sharing ideas, etc.) most of the time	
Play and peer interaction	Initiates play interactions with peers; Plays cooperative games; Shares materials to make collaborative projects and/or takes turns during play	
Group instruction	Sits with peers and engages in the activity independently most of the time	
Academic activities	Participates in most or all academic or pre-academic activities independently (using environmental cues only)	
Transitioning between activities	Transitions between activities in the general education classroom independently (using environmental cues only)	
Working independently	Works on independent tasks with the same environmental supports provided to general education students	

INCLUSION SUPPORTS CONTINUED...



Inclusion Supports

Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion of All Students

Cafeteria:

- Collaborate with cafeteria staff. Arrange for environmental supports that encourage independence (e.g. visuals for where to stand in line, visual menu, etc.).
- Schedule a mini field trip to the cafeteria. Have students practice standing in line, going through the lunch line, paying for food, etc.
- To prepare for the visit, obtain pictures of staff, and review with students during circle time.
- Practice the lunch routine using a classroom simulation.
- Teach social and communication strategies such as asking for help, communicating with peers, saying "no" to undesired food. etc.
- Create or volunteer for a committee to discuss inclusive menu items representative of cultures, dietary restrictions, etc.



Picture day:

- Prepare a "Picture Day" simulation in the classroom. Practice standing in line, waiting, sitting/standing on the "X" appropriately, responding to cues to smile during the photo, etc.
- If class photos are being taken, coordinate with general education teachers to ensure that your students are included with peers.
- Have a peer buddy assist your students while they are preparing for photos.
- Provide visuals of behavior expectations. Reinforce desired behaviors.

Specials (e.g. music class, P.E. art, etc.):

- Collaborate with general education staff to provide environmental supports for all students. Consider supports for physical modifications, social and behavioral expectations, structure for classroom routines, language and/or cultural considerations, etc.
- Provide visual sequence strips for routines during specials or special events. Have sequence strips be available for all students.
- Train peer buddies to provide social and communication support to students. Refer to the "Peer Buddy Guide" in Routine Essentials: Recess Routine.
- Have an assistant or other adult provide modeling of expectations, visual reminders, or reinforcement.

Field trips:

- Ensure that students in your classroom attend field trips available to their peers. Arrange for any medical or physical accommodations to ensure all students can actively and meaningfully participate.
- Prepare for field trips by practicing community outing routines such as riding on a bus, crossing the street, ordering from a menu, etc.
- Teach safety skills such as: "walk with me," "stop," finding a safe location/adult, identifying community symbols, etc.
- Coach caregivers prior to attending field trips and provide strategies for managing behavior in a community location.
- Provide an emergency and information packet.
- Provide visuals of behavior expectations. Reinforce desired behaviors.

AUTISM LEVEL UP!



Autism Level UP!? Yes, Autism Level UP! Autism awareness is not enough!

Level	Where you are	Taking the next step
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You've heard of autism You know someone who is autistic You may even know diagnostic criteria and typical forms of "support" for autistic people You are wondering why this flyer isn't blue and full of puzzle pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn by listening to the autistic community, including their: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lived experiences Preferences for language Preferences for representation, symbol use, colors Preferred organizations and sources of support
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You embrace autistic people as part of your community You realize that your preconceived notions about autism derived from text books and public awareness campaigns are limited (and possibly wrong) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how much you do not know and how much you cannot know You thought that you understood the "autistic experience" and now you accept that you really cannot (unless you are autistic) BE OKAY WITH THAT!
Appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed by autistics, you strive to understand the reality of autism; that is, the strengths AND challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how your real appreciation of differences, strengths and challenges can translate into support and action addressing the needs of autistic individuals and the autistic community
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You support, follow, and let autistic people lead You strive to arm autistic people with the knowledge, tools and strategies to navigate the world as they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move from passive to being proactive and teaching others You are a true source of support for autistic people and you understand how to empower - spread that knowledge far and wide
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are committed to being an ally to autistic people who is responsive to the priorities of the autistic community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue learning and remain up to date on issues that will influence the autistic community Challenge those who are not as Leveled UP! to take the next step

Instructions:

- 1) Identify your current level
- 2) Immerse yourself in that level. Embrace it! Make sure you that you have a solid foundation from which to grow
- 3) Determine your next step
- 4) Stretch your understanding and beliefs, and get out of your comfort zone. It is the only way you will Level UP!
- 5) Repeat

Note. Don't skip any steps! Success at each step relies on success of all prior steps! They are all needed...we wouldn't have included them all if they weren't necessary.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ways to Play

LYN MILLER-LACHMANN

ILLUSTRATED BY GABRIEL ALBOROZO



Ways to Play

by Lyn Miller-Lachmann

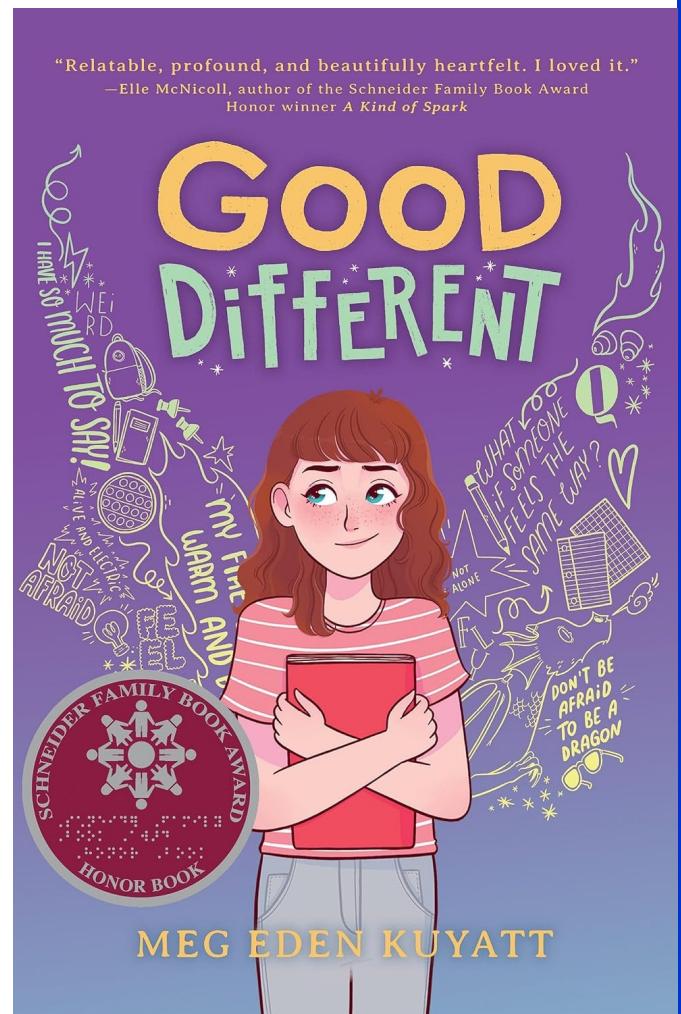
Riley has plenty of ways to play, like lining up dolls and stuffies by size and shape. Or tearing up newspapers and making piles into mountains, using sharp crayons to draw big swirly patterns. Bossy cousin Emma thinks those ways are wrong, wrong, and wrong. Fortunately, Charlie the dog is on hand to help with a breakthrough demonstration that there are MANY ways to play - and all of them are right. Based on experiences that Lyn Miller Lachman had growing up as an autistic child and illustrated by an autistic artist, this picture book is an empowering and fun validation of the value of individual expression.

Good Different

by Meg Eden Kuyatt

This novel, written through poetry, is about a neurodivergent girl who comes to understand and celebrate her difference. Selah, a middle schooler on the autism spectrum, knows her rules for being “normal.” This means keeping her feelings locked tightly inside, despite the way they build up inside her as each school day goes on. However, when Selah explodes and hits a fellow student, her comfortable, familiar world starts to crumble. As Selah starts to figure out more about who she is, she comes to understand that different doesn't mean damaged. Can she get her school to understand that, too, before it's too late?

For a list of other neurodiverse-affirming books and novels, many written by autistic authors, check out <https://xminds.org/autism-literature>.



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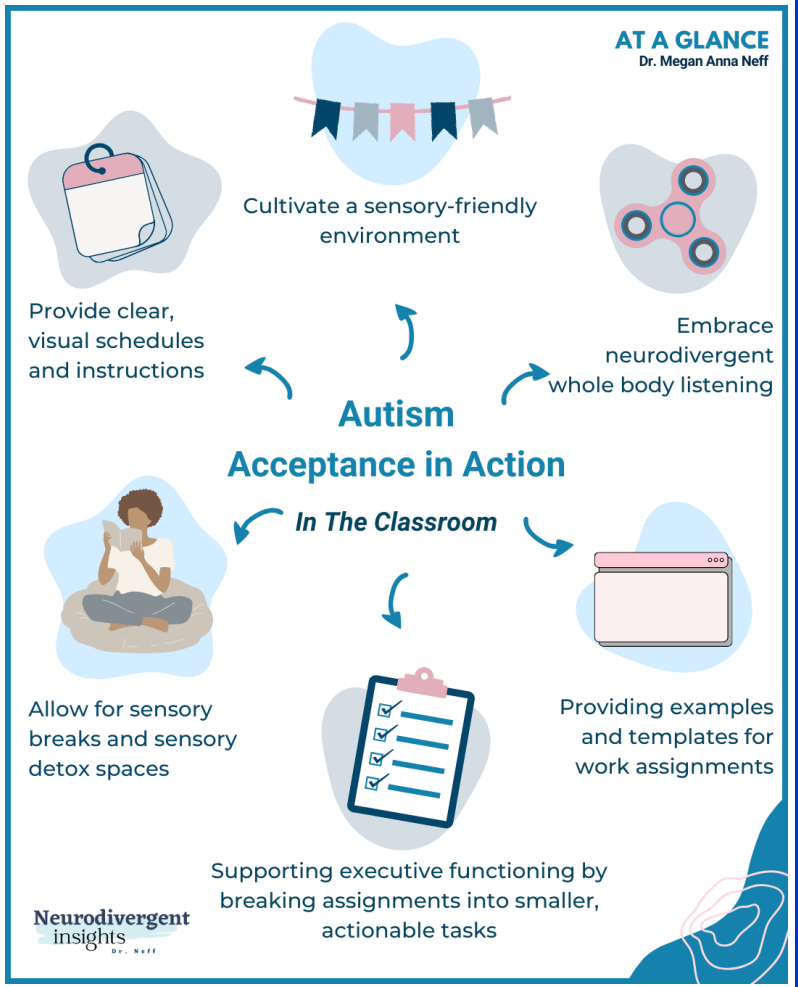
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VISUALS

Daily Schedule

breakfast	bathroom	brush teeth	snack	lunch
school work	nap time	relax	dinner	jobs
shower	bath	get dressed	put on pyjamas	bed time



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