

EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY

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Special Thanks to:

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*I have
nothing
to gain
(Financially)*

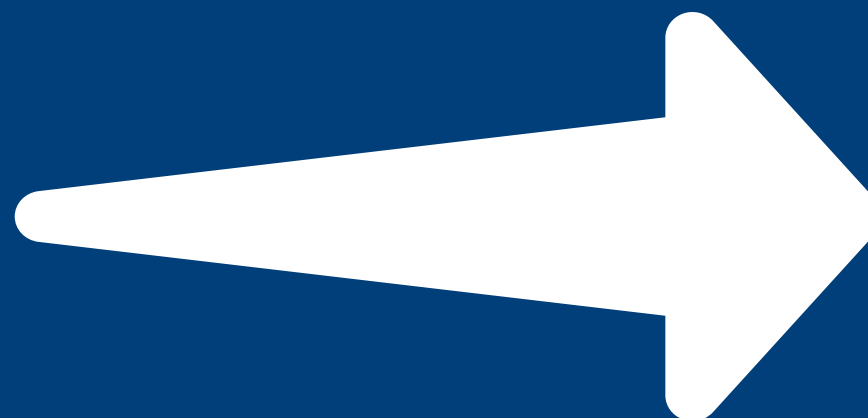


“NEURODIVERSITY”

frames neurocognitive diversity as a normal and healthy manifestation of “biodiversity”

MEDICAL

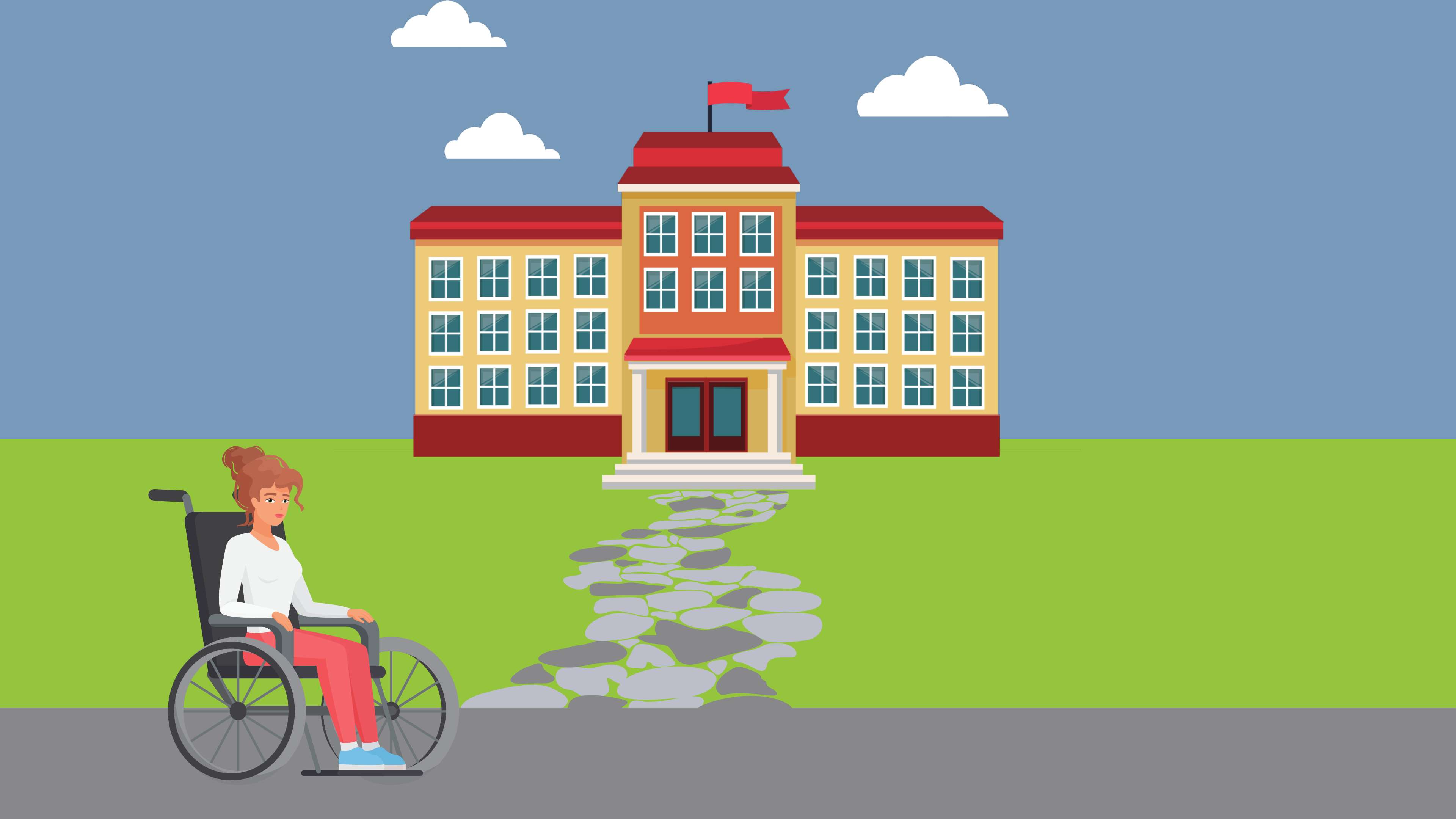
Model of
Disability



SOCIAL

Model of
Disability





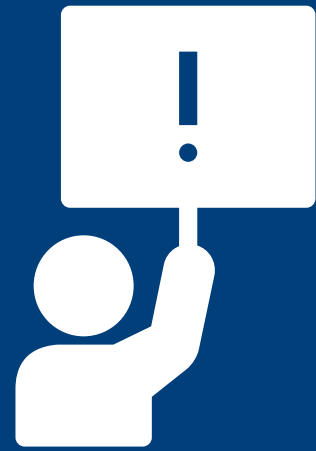
NEURODIVERSITY - AFFIRMING CARE

Opposes cures for neurodivergent traits

Centers well - being, autonomy, and safety

Uses affirming language & emphasizes
strengths

WHY PROVIDE NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING CARE? -



Autistic individuals are at increased risk of negative mental health outcomes, like anxiety and depression.



Unmet support needs and greater *camouflaging* are associated with heightened suicidality.

OPPOSE CURES FOR AUTISTIC TRAITS



What do we mean by cures?

Autism is a puzzle to solve



Recovering from autism

Absence of autism as “optimal outcome”



NOTABLE PEOPLE WITH *DIAGNOSED* AUTISM

Greta Thunberg (Climate Activist)

Courtney Love (Musician)

Susan Boyle (Singer from Britain's Got Talent)

Chris Packham (Photographer)

Anthony Hopkins (Actor)

Breanna Clark (Track and Field Athlete)

Daryl Hannah (Actress)

Joe Barksdale (Former NFL Player)

HISTORICAL FIGURES WITH AUTISTIC TRAITS

Nikolai Tesla

Albert Einstein

Hans Christian Anderson

Sir Isaac Newton

Emily Dickinson

REFLECT ON CLINICIAN

VALUES

To oppose cure and recovery rhetoric, clinicians can reflect on how they relate to these beliefs:

What motivates you to work with neurodivergent families?

What do you consider about your own brain style, or neurocognitive functioning?

How do you relate to the Autistic/Autism community?

PROMOTE AUTONOMY AND WELL - BEING



CONSIDER FAMILY VALUES AND SITUATIONAL DEMANDS

when defining autonomy and wellbeing



What is meaningfully adaptive behavior for the family?

How does the child effectively cope with distressing events?

Let's promote the development of those skills!

DETERMINING WHEN

autistic traits are “problem behaviors”



Is this behavior...

- unsafe for the child?
- infringing on someone else's rights or safety?
- interfering with adaptive skill development?

**If not, we can treat that behavior as neutral
or even positive.**

**USE INTENTIONALLY
AFFIRMING LANGUAGE
AND EMPHASIZE
STRENGTHS**



USE INTENTIONALLY AFFIRMING LANGUAGE

What we communicate influences what others *think and feel* about autism

Consider affirming alternatives offered by the Autistic community



INTENTIONALLY AFFIRMING ALTERNATIVES

LANGUAGE WE ARE USED TO HEARING

High/low functioning, support needs, category labels

Challenging, disruptive, or problem behavior

Psychopathology

Autism symptoms

Cure, recovery, “optimal outcome” from Autism Spectrum Disorder

AFFIRMING LANGUAGE

Describe their strengths and needs for support specifically

Specific description of the behavior (e.g., aggressive, selfinjurious, vocal stimming)

Neurodevelopmental conditions, developmental disabilities

Characteristics, traits, features of autism

Prioritizing quality of life outcomes that autistic people wish for themselves

EMPHASIZE STRENGTHS

Caregivers and their autistic children receive a lot of negative feedback about behavior and traits.

Meet child and family members where they are by recognizing and describing their strengths.



Questions?

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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

Do you have any questions? Comments?
Would you like to connect?

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