



Autism & Neurodivergence: Current Trends in Treatment & Advocacy

ALI CUNNINGHAM ABBOTT, PHD, LMHC, QS

Introductions

Me

- Allistic/neurotypical person
- Counselor Educator & Supervisor
- Licensed Mental Health Counselor

*Financial disclosure statement

You

- What are your personal connections to or knowledge on this topic?
- How much professional experience do you have with autistic people?

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Agenda

- Current trends in the autistic community & views of therapy
- Intersection of race, sexuality, gender & autistic identities
- Affirming counseling strategies & advocacy measures for autistic clients

Current Trends & Views of Treatment

The Lived Experience Perspective & Expertise

- Evaluation & diagnosis
 - Self-diagnosis & formal diagnosis
 - Functioning labels
 - Person-first versus identity-first language
- Autistic adult advocates & autism parent conflict
 - Autistic conversion therapy, abuse & applied behavior analysis (ABA)
- Therapy as an exclusive environment
 - Lack of feedback & collaboration with autistic and neurodivergent clients
 - Lack of autistic or ND identifying therapists in the field

Current Trends & Views of Treatment (cont.)

The Trained Professional Perspective & Expertise

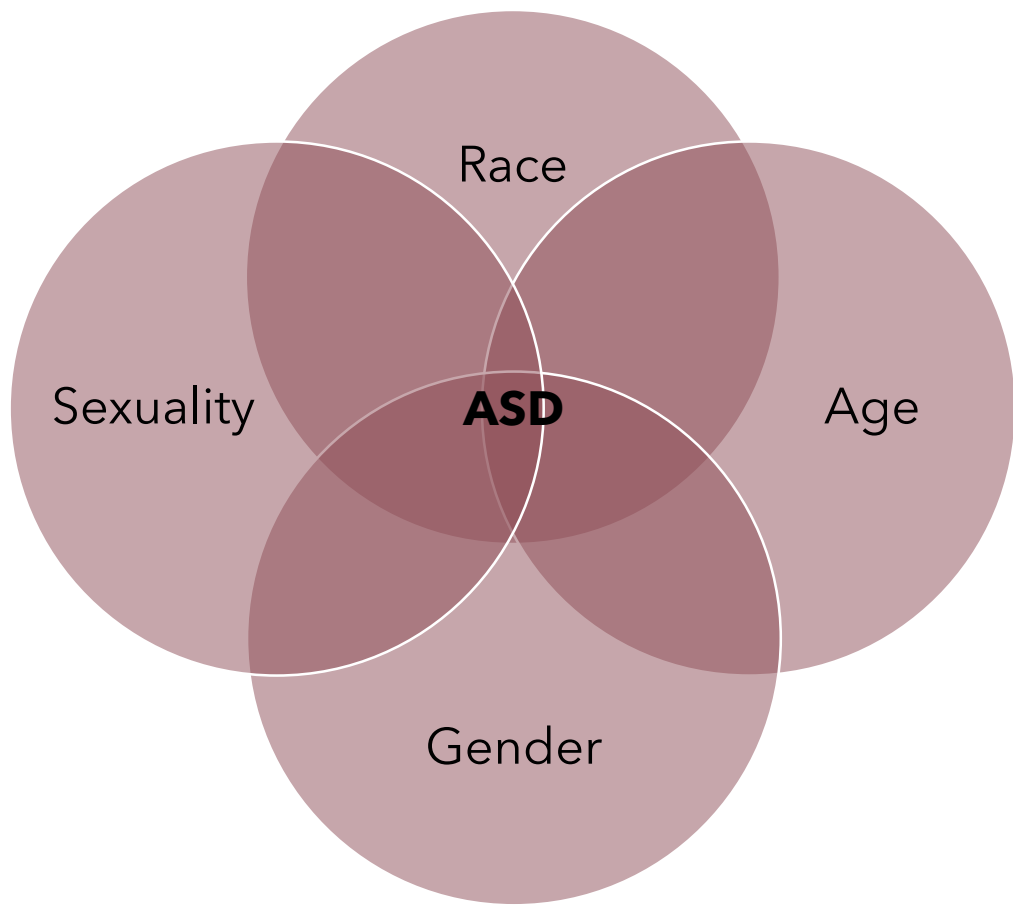
- Competence & confidence
 - All or nothing? Specialty or “bust”
- Challenging industry standards & training
 - What about the evidence?
 - Social skills treatment
 - Learning in non-traditional spaces & from lived experience experts
- Identifying biases & ableism at micro and macro-levels
 - Reflective practice with self
 - Courageous conversations with others







Intersection of Identities



Intersection of Identities & Implications

Race

- Black & Hispanic autistics less likely to be diagnosed, receive later diagnosis & do not access as many services.
- Non-white autistics are more likely to be diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and conduct disorders.
- Non or minimally-speaking autistics of color are at higher risk for engagement with law enforcement.

Age

- Lower support needs = later diagnosis. Difference in average age of diagnosis.
- Emphasis on early intervention services & funding.
- Older autistic adult outcomes lower life expectancy & higher risk for suicide

Intersection of Identities & Implications

Sexuality

- Up to 70% report being queer (gay, bisexual & pansexual)
- Sexual fluidity up to 2-3 times more likely among autists.
- Asexuality & aromanticism more likely
- Less knowledge about sexuality, less exposure to sex education, fewer sexual experiences

Gender

- Girls are under-represented but at different rates (10:1 versus 2:1)
- Non-masculine/male autistics highly susceptible to social & sexual victimization
- Gender variance is up to 6 times more common
- Self-harm among trans autistics is more likely

Break

Autistic Affirming Counseling Strategies

- Recognize and acknowledge oppressive experiences (historical and current)
 - Exploring & discussing neurodivergence early on in treatment experience
 - Be prepared to navigate self-diagnosis in conjunction with clinician testing & evaluation
 - Broach topics of ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia
 - Masking & camouflaging
 - Utilizing the current language in the community (i.e. support needs)
- Learn from autistic people & professionals
 - Professional development: Autism in Black annual conference
 - Advocacy organizations
 - Individual stories & accounts

Autistic Affirming Counseling Strategies

- Presume competency
 - Strengths-based assessment and self-identity
 - Identity-first versus person-first language
- Instilling resilience & optimism
 - Appreciation & embracing neurodivergence
- Utilizing culturally responsive treatment modalities
 - Neurodivergent dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) workbook
 - Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)



Autistic Affirming Counseling Strategies

- Assess & include the system (family & others)
 - Natural social supports
 - Professional social services
- Collaborate with other professionals
 - MDs, SLPs, OTs, BCBAAs, Case Managers, Coaches (Vocational, EF)
- Utilize community resources
 - Florida's CARD centers
 - Virtual and in-person support groups
 - Hiki app

Questions & Appreciation

ATCUNNINGHAM@LYNN.EDU

Resources

Autistic Advocate Social Media/Websites

- [Fidgets & Fries \(Instagram\)](#)
- [Nigh.Functioning.Autism \(Instagram\)](#)
- [Autistic Callum \(Instagram\)](#)
- [Autism Sketches](#)

Articles & Book

- [Fortune ABA article](#)
- [Vulture Media Representation article](#)
- Welcome to the Autistic Community- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- Life Journey Through Autism: A guide to safety (Organization for Autism Research)
- *Counseling Adults with Autism: Comprehensive Clinician's Toolkit* (Abbott, 2019)

Resources

Foundations:

- **Autistic People of Color Fund: BIPOC & ASD**
- Twainbow: LGBTQI+ & ASD
- **Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network (AWN): Women, Nonbinary & ASD**

Websites:

- [Hiki app](#)
- **<https://www.aane.org/>**
- <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>
- **<https://awnnetwork.org/>**
- <https://researchautism.org/>
- **Is it Autism and if so, what's next (Autism Speaks)**



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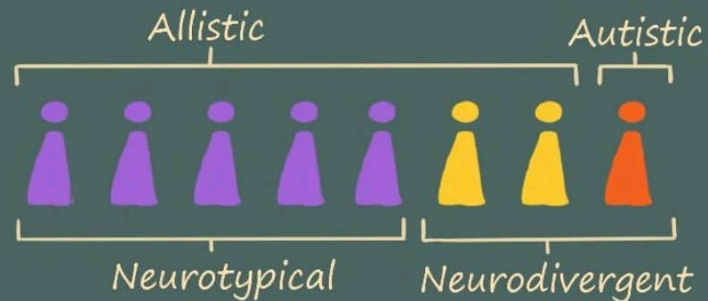
NEURODIVERSITY

Neurodivergent: A person whose Neurotype is divergent of the majority of society (ADHD, tourettes, OCD..)

Neurotypical: A person whose neurotype is typical of the majority of society

Allistic: A person that is not Autistic

Ableism: Ableism is the discrimination and social prejudice against disabled people. Ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and seen as 'inferior'.



@autism.sketches / @standofficial



fidgets.and.fries

Following



I am Autistic.
My son has Autism.

@fidgets.and.fries



4,525 likes

fidgets.and.fries I am Autistic.
My son has Autism.

Autism courses throughout my body, influencing everything about who I am and how I see the world. Autism courses throughout his body, influencing everything about who he is and how he sees the world.