

Supporting Neurodivergent Youth

Sessions 1 and 2

March 10, 2025

Themes/Discussion:

There is a misperception of using function labels to describe someone with neurodivergence. For example, “high functioning” assumes that someone is presenting well in society with low support needs. However, this could mean someone is highly astute at code switching and masking to get through situations but need a higher level of support when they get home.

Folks could need a spectrum of support needs throughout their day depending on several factors internal and external (environment, hot/cold, loud/quiet, bright/dark, hungry/thirsty, tired/well rested, etc.) Sometimes interoception and motor planning are impacted by these.

Discussed Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). If a demand does not “make sense” so someone, then they will not complete this demand/task. Not to be defiant, but to gain predictability in their environment.

Discussed that sometimes folks will present as “disengaged” when really they could need more time to process information or have information presented in a different form, such as a visual timer/org. chart.

There was discussion about professionals understanding polices and processes, but a lack of understanding when it comes to what people’s specific needs are. Jess pointed out that “their brains are not broken, but they are using a different operating system”. Stressed the importance of folks “not feeling bad” about how their disability impacts others in terms of asking for accommodations.

Loop earphones can be helpful in some cases along with direct expectations.

Neurodivergence is a spectrum for each person every day.

Resources:

[Making Sense: A Guide to Sensory Issues: Schneider M.A. MHC, Rachel S., Heller, Sharon: 9781935567561: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781935567561)

<https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/>

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network](https://www.autisticselfadvocacy.com/)

[All Brains Belong VT](#)

www.chadd.org

[ADDitude - ADD & ADHD Symptom Tests, Signs, Treatment, Support](#)

[Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities - Vermont Family Network](#)