

Supporting Neurodiverse Library Patrons (and Staff!)



Today's Presenters



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Neurodiversity Network
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Fermi Co-investigator since
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Dr. Anne Holland
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#actuallyautistic



Christine Shupla
Science Engagement
Manager
Lunar and Planetary
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Panelists



Molly Creveling, MLIS
Vestal Public Library



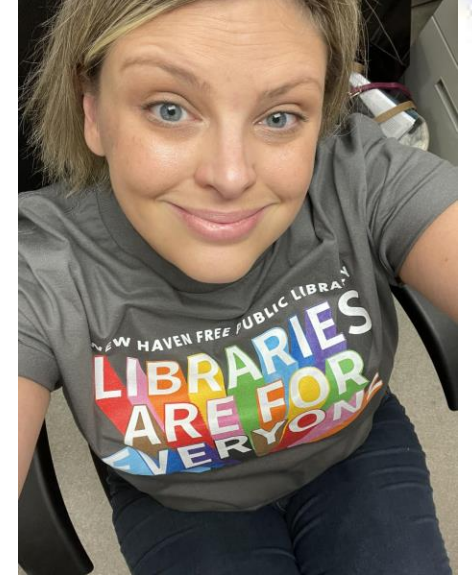
Dr. Courtney Tsahalidis
Millbrook Library



Douglas Fortunato
Maricopa Library



Tenille Miller, MLS
Rockwall County
Library



Rory Martorana
New Haven Free
Public Library



Resources to use throughout our presentation

- Blog post with slides and other resources is available in chat
- **Do you need additional accommodations?**
 - Please send a private chat to Ariana or raise your hand!
- **Do you have a question?**
 - We will be monitoring the chat and raised hands throughout the presentation

About Our Projects

N3 Program Goals, 2021-2025

Providing a pathway to NASA participation and STEM employment for neurodiverse learners, with a focus on those on the autism spectrum.

- Enabling STEM education for a segment of the population that is significantly underserved by co-redeveloping existing NASA resources with autistic learners.
- Improving scientific literacy for this underserved population by providing authentic NASA experiences
- Providing internships, mentored by NASA Subject Matter Experts, to selected neurodiverse learners.



Autism Self-Advocacy Movement

“Nothing for us or about us without us”

- Autistic people should be included in the development of autism supports
- We are co-designing and co-redeveloping existing NASA resources with autistic learners and adults using a strengths-based approach.
- The internship program is also being developed with input from autistic youth and young adults.

Initial resources targeted for co-redevelopment

2021

Photometry activities on AfH were developed as part of NASA's Universe of Learning in an informal learning pathway that starts with image analysis using MicroObservatory



2023

Heliophysics activities that include building a sun spotter and getting ready to observe eclipses in 2023 (annular) and 2024 (total) or partials.

Credit: https://nationaleclipse.com/maps/map_2023_2024.html

2022

Model rocketry and payload development program for URM community college students



<https://www.starnetlibraries.org>

NASA @ My Library

Let's Connect!

Please use the chat to share your personal experiences with neurodiversity.

- *Do you have a neurodiverse family member?*
- *Do you identify as neurodiverse/neurodivergent?*
- *What would you like to learn about supporting neurodiverse colleagues?*

Share whatever you're most comfortable with!

What is Neurodiversity?

The diversity or variation of cognitive functioning in people. Everyone has a unique brain and therefore different skills, abilities, and needs.

Examples of Neurodivergence

- Autism
- Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia
- Synesthesia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Depression/Anxiety
- Hyperlexia
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- PTSD/CPTSD

Mental Health Statistics

Anxiety



Diagnosis is
2 to 3 times higher



Depression



Diagnosis is
4 times higher



Suicide

2/3

of us considered



1/3

have attempted

A note about language:

"Autism isn't something a person has, or a "shell" that a person is trapped inside. There's no normal child hidden behind the autism. **Autism is a way of being.** It is pervasive; it colors every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence. It is not possible to separate the autism from the person—and if it were possible, the person you'd have left would not be the same person you started with."

- Jim Sinclair (1993)



A note about labels:

- Although some autistic people identify as “high-functioning,” many autistic people (and researchers) say it is time to leave the terms “high-functioning” and “low-functioning” behind. Asperger’s Syndrome is another diagnostic term that is no longer used.
- These terms are very poorly defined. While some use “functioning” to refer to intelligence, some mean language skills, some mean autism symptoms, and some don’t specify which they mean.
 - This imprecision can promote the misconception that people who don’t speak struggle to think. This is inaccurate. How all people function varies across contexts.
- More informative terms relating to the supports people require such as “high support needs” or “low support needs” can replace these terms.

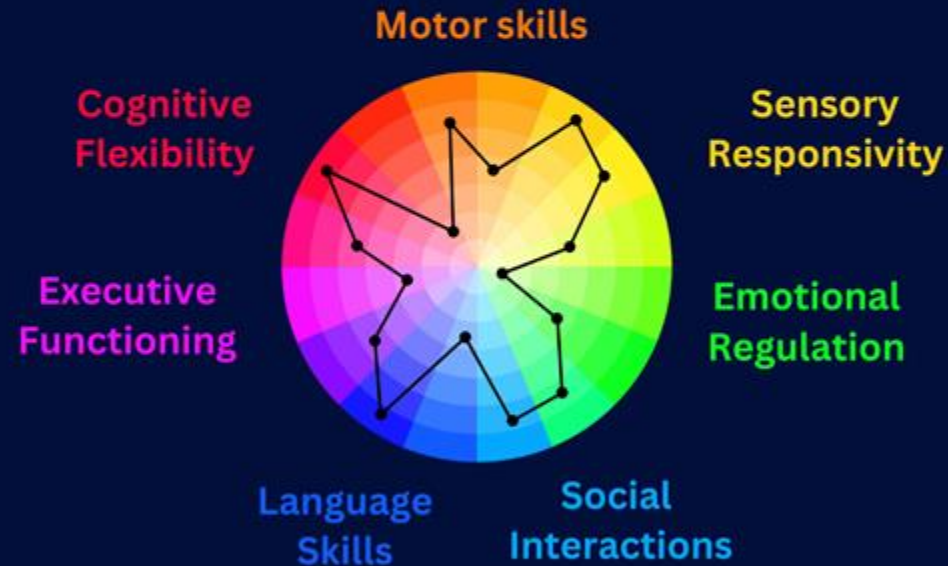
What people think the autism spectrum is:

Less
Autistic



More
Autistic

A more nuanced view of the autism spectrum:

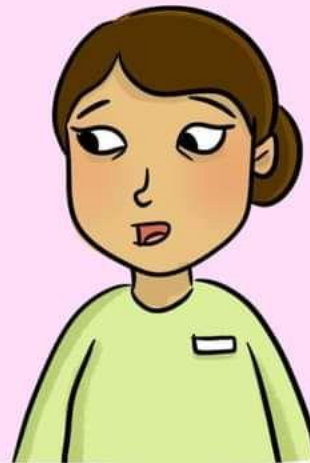


This model highlights multiple, interconnected domains, each with the potential for both strengths and challenges.

Image courtesy of pngtree.com

Jack seems to be doing quite well lately. Does he still need all those supports?

Yes. He's doing well BECAUSE he is appropriately supported.



Socialization Differences

- **Autistic** communication prioritizes **information**
- **Neurotypical (NT) communication** prioritizes **social relationships**

“If a person's behavior doesn't make sense to you, it is because you are missing a part of their context. It's that simple.”

- Devon Price

The background of the slide is a stylized illustration of space. It features a dark blue, wavy, abstract shape that resembles a hand or a cloud, set against a black background with white stars. Within this blue shape, there are several celestial bodies: a large orange sun in the top right, a red planet (Mars) in the bottom left, a blue and green Earth in the center, and a grey moon in the bottom right. The overall theme is space and exploration.

Creating a More Inclusive Workspace and Program Space



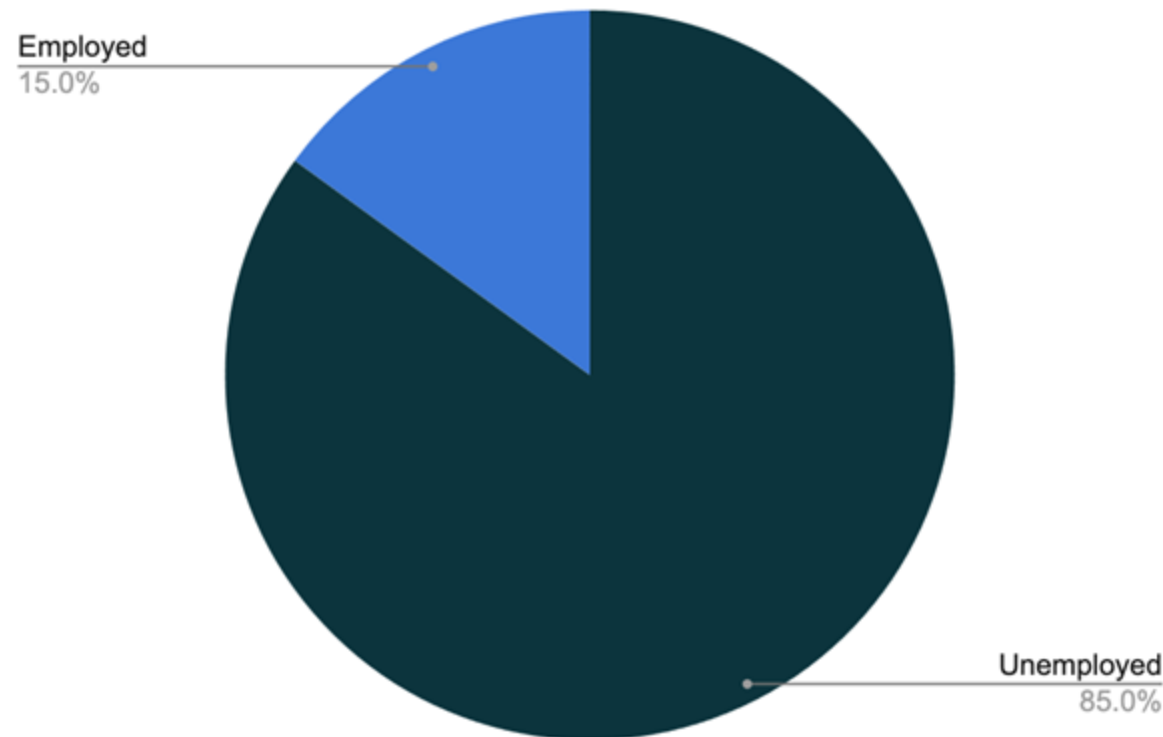
**Supporting
Neurodivergent
colleagues (and
patrons) supports
EVERYONE**

Tips for working with ND learners

- Provide a visual schedule
- Prime students and colleagues for what's to come so they understand the context and process for their learning
- Embed interests
- Establish clear expectations. Be direct and set guidelines.
- Provide supportive visuals and/or other reference materials

Barriers to Successful Employment

Autistic Adults with College Degrees



Neurodivergent people who are employed have generally gotten there by masking

Risk of masking

- Not healthy or sustainable
- Leads to burnout (often dropping out of the workforce)
- Unable to contribute to the full extent of ability
- Risks of not masking

Creating space for a Neurodiverse team

- Understand your organization's policies and speak with HR when appropriate
- Review interview processes and performance metrics
- Ask
- Flexibility
- What to do when someone discloses

Basic Etiquette

When someone discloses that they are autistic or neurodivergent

Things NOT to say:

- I'm sorry to hear that.
- You don't look ____.
- I never would have known / you hide it really well.
- No wonder you're so good at math / why aren't you better at math.
- I have a ____ who's ____.
- Anything about Temple Grandin / Sheldon Cooper / etc.
- Anything about Autism Speaks.
- We're all a little autistic.

Panelist Breakout Sessions

Panelist	Topic	Room
Anne	Nuts & Bolts of supporting neurodiverse colleagues	Anne
Lynn and Ariana	Lessons Learned from N3 – how you can best support ND learners & their mentors + building a co-designed project for your community	Lynn & Ariana
Molly	Multi-sensory instruction and learning tools: Personal experience as neurodivergent person/librarian. Adapting and running youth programs with neurodiversity in mind.	Molly
Courtney	My research on ADHD: How to support patrons with ADHD at your library	Courtney
Douglas	Adapting existing programs for neurodivergent participants	Douglas
Tenille	Beginning a program: My experience as a teacher and librarian with and advocacy for inclusive education and programming for the neurodivergent population	Tenille
Rory	Ask me anything: ask your questions about neurodivergent people	Rory
Christine and Claire	NASA Stuff: Just chat with us	Stay in main room



In the Chat - Let's Connect!

Please use the chat to share:

- *What new information did you learn today?*
- *How might you use this information to create a more inclusive space in your community?*

Wrap up and Questions

Thank you!

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