



**DirectEmployers
Association**

Inspiring Autism Acceptance Through Action

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Accessibility Notes

This webinar strives to be as **inclusive** as possible!

No one person can grant or gatekeep access. Access is something we **create together**.

We should have **captions and transcripts** if you need them.

If you need to take a break, log off, answer phone calls, stand up, twiddle your fingers, fidget, or feel overwhelmed – **go for it!**

If you would like a copy of these slides, the images have **alt text** and should be **screen reader accessible** too. 😊

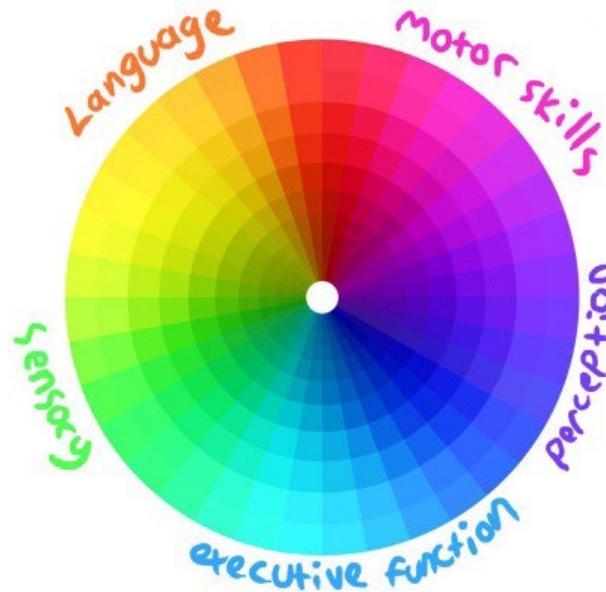
What Exactly is Autism?

Autism is a complex neurological condition and developmental disability characterized by a spectrum of differences in **social communication and interaction**, heightened **sensory processing** and experiences, **intense passions or interests**, and **repetitive behaviors**.

The “Spectrum”

Each autistic person is unique.

The “spectrum” is not linear.



Best Approach

“ IF YOU’VE MET ONE PERSON WITH AUTISM, YOU’VE MET ONE PERSON WITH AUTISM. ”

Understanding Power & Privilege



- ❑ **Privilege**, simply put, is societally granted, unearned, systemic or structural advantages accorded to some people and not others.
- ❑ Privilege impacts people based on identity factors such as race, gender, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexuality, class, and body type.
- ❑ People who are privileged hold **power** in society to make decisions and policies that affect everyone.
- ❑ What does this look like if you are neurotypical?

Neurotypical & Able-Bodied Privilege

- ❑ You might have neurotypical or able-bodied privilege if (adapted from *Everyday Feminism*):
 - People don't stare at you because of your disability
 - People talk to you in a typical manner, not like a little kid
 - You hop in the car to "just go somewhere" without anxiety, distraction, physical inability, etc.
 - Not being viewed as a burden to your family (or others) because of your disability
 - Choosing a life partner and having children without fear of discrimination or worrying about losing disability benefits
 - Being in control of your life

“Charity is all about people in power using their power to be benevolent. Justice means giving power to people who don’t have power.”

– U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan

Each of us holds power and privilege in some way, and each of us are oppressed and marginalized in other ways.

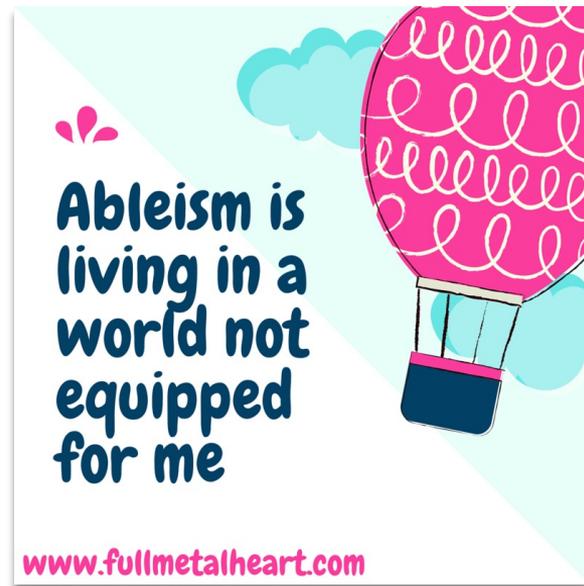
How do we use the privilege we have to give power to others?

Defining and Acknowledging Ableism

“A set of beliefs or practices that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be ‘fixed’ in one form or the other. Ableism is intertwined in our culture, due to many limiting beliefs about what disability does or does not mean, how nondisabled people learn to treat people with disabilities and how we are often not included at the table for key decisions.” – Center for Disability Rights

Ableism in the Autism Context

- ❑ **Ableism** is a prejudice against people with disabilities
- ❑ Includes stereotyping and discriminating against people or treating them negatively because of their disabilities
- ❑ Ableism can be internal or external, conscious or not
 - Think about your events, places you go, what is and isn't accessible for disabled and neurodivergent folks



Dismantling Ableism & Promoting Justice: Policy Advocacy

- ❑ As allies, we can also get involved in making sure people are included
- ❑ We can use our power and privilege to help others
- ❑ All issues are autism issues. Autistic people intersect with all areas of society (here are just a few):
 - Employment
 - Families and communities
 - Criminal justice
 - Housing
 - Education



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Actionable Skills to Celebrate Neurodiversity

Roadmap to Autism Acceptance

1

Encourage
self-
advocacy

2

Reframe
differences

3

Show allyship
and solidarity
with autistic
people

What is Self-Advocacy?

- ❑ Self-advocacy is both a set of skills and a movement
- ❑ Self-advocacy skills empower people with disabilities to make choices that affect their daily lives and allow for greater independence
- ❑ “Self-advocacy – as a personal and political philosophy – is a movement primarily of and by [people with disabilities] who are making their own decisions, speaking for themselves and for others with disabilities, and taking control over their lives.”
- ❑ We also need to advocate alongside autistic people.

I'm Not Autistic. What Can I Do?

- ❑ Parents, professionals, and employers can also encourage self-advocacy in respective settings
- ❑ Can be as simple as a someone saying, “I don’t feel comfortable” and respecting boundaries
- ❑ At work, it can be learning someone’s needs: “I need to take a break.”
- ❑ In school, can apply to all students
 - “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” hashtag and conversation

Disclosing & Requesting Accommodations as Self-Advocacy

- Frame accommodations as a conversation to empower both parties
 - “I work best when...”
- Deciding who needs to know
- Pros and cons
- Advocating for accommodation solutions and workplace policies

Reframing Differences



Attention to Detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



Deep Focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



Absorb & Retain Facts

- Excellent long term memory and recall



Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment



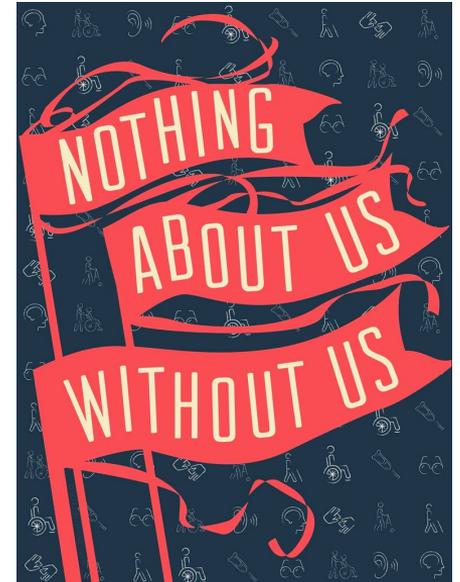
Creativity

- Distinctive Imagination
- Expression of ideas

Source: UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS 

Showing Allyship

- ❑ “Nothing About Us, Without Us”
 - Listen to the perspectives of autistic people
 - Amplify voices, especially if they are multiply-marginalized
- ❑ **“Allyship is who you are in private”**
- ❑ Use your privilege for good
- ❑ Build more inclusive spaces
- ❑ Speak up against injustice when you see it
- ❑ Do all these things not just in April 😊





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