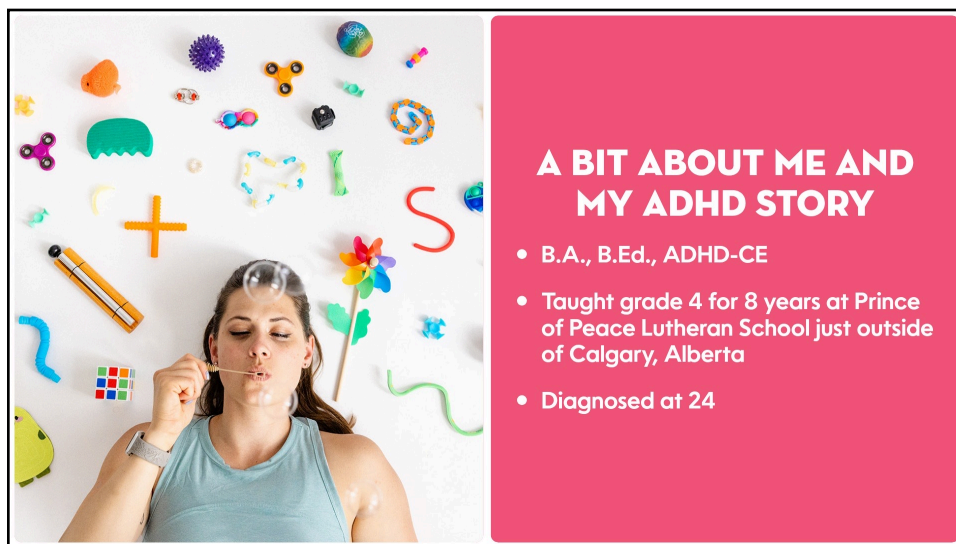






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- **For Parents**
- **For Adults (and their partner/spouse)**
- **For Teachers**  
Launched Feb 1, 2026!
- **For young adults**  
2027/2028?



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## WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

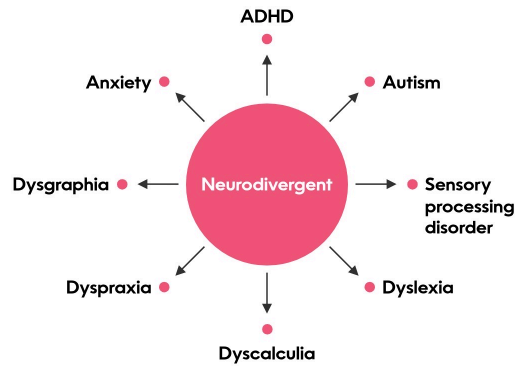
- **Neurodiversity**  
Everyone's brain develops differently  
The spectrum of neurological differences are ok, acceptable, and valuable
- **Neurotypical (NT)**  
Brain processing, functions, and behaviours that are considered standard or 'typical'
- **Neurodivergent (ND)**  
A brain that processes language, emotion, behaviour, learning, etc. differently from what is considered 'neurotypical'
- **Allistic**  
Anyone who is not Autistic



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## NEURODIVERGENCE IN THE CLASSROOM



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## A NOTE

- The primary basis of this presentation is based on communication styles seen most often in ADHD and level 1 and 2 Autistic individuals
- More research needs to be done on communication styles present in different neurotypes, including level 3 Autistic individuals

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## LET'S TALK ABOUT COMMUNICATION

- Impaired Theory of Mind vs The Double Empathy Problem
- Autistic individuals struggle to read body language, facial expressions, engage in "typical" social norms
- Research is showing that non-autistic (allistic) individuals struggle with the same things towards autistic individuals

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### Autism Diagnostic Criteria

**Criteria A** "Persistent deficits differences in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history."  
**(All three subcategories must be present for a diagnosis).**

Note: This is not my preferred language, but for this series I'm sticking with the direct DSM for this series. I'm sticking with the direct DSM for this series. I've made it changing language. The only edit I've made is changing deficit to difference. For a strengths-based DSM for Autism, see references.

1. "Differences in social-emotional reciprocity"
2. "Differences in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction"
3. "Differences in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships"

The DSM-5 TR made an editon where they mentioned that an Autistic person may mask these differences which may delay identification.

## AUTISM: IMPAIRED THEORY OF MIND

Gained popularity in the 1990s

### "MIND BLINDNESS"

- A reduced ability to intuitively understand or infer other people's thoughts, beliefs, emotions, or intentions
- Turned into "Empathizing-Systemizing Theory"
- A deficit in the Autistic person's abilities

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Autism Diagnostic Criteria: A1 <span style="float: right; font-weight: normal;">A1</span>	Autism Diagnostic Criteria: A2 <span style="float: right; font-weight: normal;">A2</span>	Autism Diagnostic Criteria: A3 <span style="float: right; font-weight: normal;">A3</span>
<p style="font-size: small;">Criteria A Subcategory 1: Differences in social-emotional reciprocity.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">EXAMPLES INCLUDE:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Tendency toward flat affect / monotone voice         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty initiating conversation (outside of areas of interest)         </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty with small talk (may use pre-scripted lines and may describe it as "confusing" and "exhausting")         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulties with back and forth conversation (particularly in context of small talk)         </div> </div> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 10px;"><small>Dr. Seif notes: Many of these observed difficulties are no longer present when an Autistic person is involved in an area of intense interest. This may be particularly true with other Autistic people. A person may also only only mask and these patterns aren't observed until the person is no longer or stopped to observe the social rules and they will be appear in during burnout/loss of camouflage.</small></p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;"><small>Neurodivergent Insights   SOURCE: DSM-5, 2013</small></p>	<p style="font-size: small;">Criteria A Subcategory 2: Differences in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">EXAMPLES INCLUDE:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty intuitively understanding non-verbal social cues (body language, gestures)*         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Tendency to minimally communicate through facial expressions/body gestures. Dislike of eye contact**         </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Verbal and non-verbal presentation fragmented (not aligned)         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty moderating tone and/or volume of voice         </div> </div> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 10px;"><small>Dr. Seif notes: * May vary widely on each factor/interaction and body gaps through involving postural cues but don't do this through body language. ** May be overly dramatic in gestures, particularly if theater school or theater in an area of special interest.</small></p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;"><small>Neurodivergent Insights   SOURCE: DSM-5, 2013</small></p>	<p style="font-size: small;">Criteria A Subcategory 3: Differences in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">EXAMPLES INCLUDE:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty initiating and developing allistic friends*         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty maintaining friendships**         </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty with shared imaginative play (shared group projects that require high reciprocal input/output)         </div> <div style="text-align: center;">               Difficulty with context-shifting***         </div> </div> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 10px;"><small>Dr. Seif notes: *Outside of areas of shared interest and values, outside of Autistic autistic communication. **Research indicates Autistic girls tend to have less difficulty making friends but experience difficulty maintaining friendships. ***Context shifting refers to the ability to shift responses, tone, body and paraverbal only of being there are context to the other then to act on behavior, group roles or a party.</small></p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin-top: 5px;"><small>Neurodivergent Insights   SOURCE: DSM-5, 2013</small></p>

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### Study One: Telephone Game

In a 2020 study led by Dr. Crompton, researchers explored how messages were transmitted within and between different neurotype groups: autistic-only, non-autistic-only, and mixed groups. Participants played a structured "telephone game," passing along a story about a bear on an adventure.

**Allistic-Allistic**

**Autistic-Autistic**

**Allistic-Autistic**

Reference:  
Crompton, C. J., Fisher, D., Crane Williams, C. K., Flynn, E. G., & Fletcher-Watson, S. (2020). A study paper for peer review exploring interplay between autistic and non-autistic groups in the transmission of information and accuracy. *ACT*, 1(1), 1-10.

**Neurodivergent Insights**

## STUDY 1

### TELEPHONE GAME

- Information chain task
- Unpredictable story
- Story was lacking in inherently social aspects

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### Study Two: Neurotype Matching

They then looked at the level of connection each pair felt. Keep in mind that if autism was a deficit in communication, you'd expect these pairings to be lowest (two people who don't communicate well being paired).

But ... that isn't what they found.

**Self-Report Rating**

**Allistic-Allistic Pairings**

**Autistic-Autistic Pairings**

**Mixed Neurotype Pairings**

\*This is a simplified visual representation of the study's findings. The actual results, which are more complex, can be found in the detailed study.

Crompton, C. J., Sharp, M., Atkey, H., Fletcher-Watson, S., Flynn, E. G., & Ripar, D. (2020). Neurotype-Matching but Not Being Autistic Influences Self and Observer Ratings of Interpersonal Support. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

## STUDY 2

### NEUROTYPE MATCHING

- Groups of 2
- Complete 3 semi-structured tasks
- Measuring rapport

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## **AUTISM: THE DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM**

An alternative framework for cross-neurotype communication challenges

- The problem isn't that Autistic people are "mindblind"
- In the same way Autistic people struggle to understand allistic people, allistic people struggle to understand the minds of Autistic people.
- Empathy is a two-way street
- Learning cross-neurotype communication needs to be an equally shared burden

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## IF IT IS A DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM...

- **Treat cross-neurotype communication like cross-cultural communication**  
Not deficits, but differences
- **Increase awareness of different communication styles**
- **Find adaptations**  
Help reduce miscommunications by adapting to meet in the middle

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**WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT BOTH ND AND NT STUDENTS NEED TO LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER'S COMMUNICATION STYLES. THE BURDEN TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER MUST COME FROM BOTH SIDES, NOT JUST THE ND INDIVIDUAL.**

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## RE-EVALUATE WHAT IS "GOOD COMMUNICATION"

- What does it look like to be a good listener?

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## IN RESPONSE TO "HOW CAN I MAKE THEM LISTEN"

“IT IS FAR MORE ABOUT THE 'FEELING' OF BEING UNHEARD AND MISUNDERSTOOD THAN THEY ARE ABOUT THE OUTCOMES OF LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING. TO LISTEN SUCCESSFULLY BY THIS WAY OF MEASUREMENT IS NOT TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS BEING SAID - BUT TO GIVE THE SPEAKER THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAVE THE FULL ATTENTION OF THE LISTENER - IN OTHER WORDS, 'LISTENING' OFTEN INVOLVES MAKING THE SPEAKER FEEL HEARD.”

Dr. Beth Radulski

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## GENERAL COMMUNICATION TRENDS

### Neurotypical

- Highly structured
- Lots of non-verbal communication
- Questions to continue conversation
- Small talk - motivation is primarily for connection more than the topic
- Enjoyment is in the connection
- "Good manners" = show engagement by quiet listening and positive non-verbal signals
- "Bad manners" = Jumping in, sharing personal experiences

### Neurodivergent

- Less structured, straight to the point
- Less non-verbal communication (more direct language, meaning is in the words)
- Motivation for conversation is discussing the topic
- Enjoyment is in the topic and shared interest
- "Good manners" = show engagement by jumping in and sharing their own experiences
- Lack of jumping in and sharing own experiences could be interpreted as a lack of interest and lack of wanting to connect

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## BODY LANGUAGE

- Importance of body language
- Importance of eye contact
- **Body posture**  
Side-by-side vs face-to-face

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## BODY LANGUAGE

- **Activity**  
Doing something vs staying still
- **Personal space**  
Stand closer or further
- **Physical contact**  
Touch or no-touch

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## THINKING

- **Processing speed**  
Regulated emotions  
Dysregulated emotions
- **Processing style**  
Verbal vs internal processing
- **Task vs relationship oriented**  
Issues as problems vs issues as unmet emotional needs

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## THINKING

- **Top down vs bottom up thinking**

Top down = general ideas --> details

Bottom up = details --> general ideas

- **Global vs specific**

Global = see the big picture

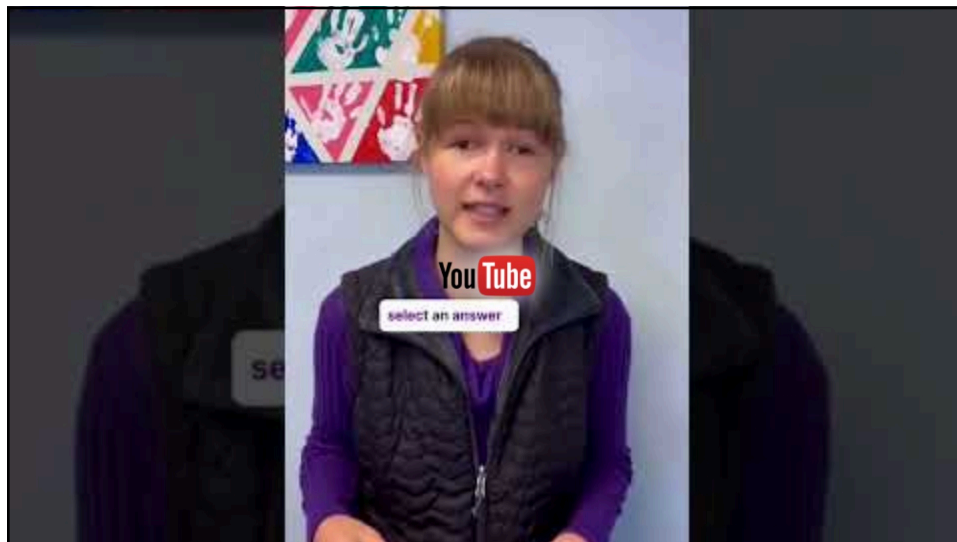
Specific = one issue at a time

- **Literal vs figurative**

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## SOCIAL

- **Object vs social based communication**

Social = Prioritizes emotional connection and relationship

Object - Content focused

- **Vulnerability**

Under vs over sharing

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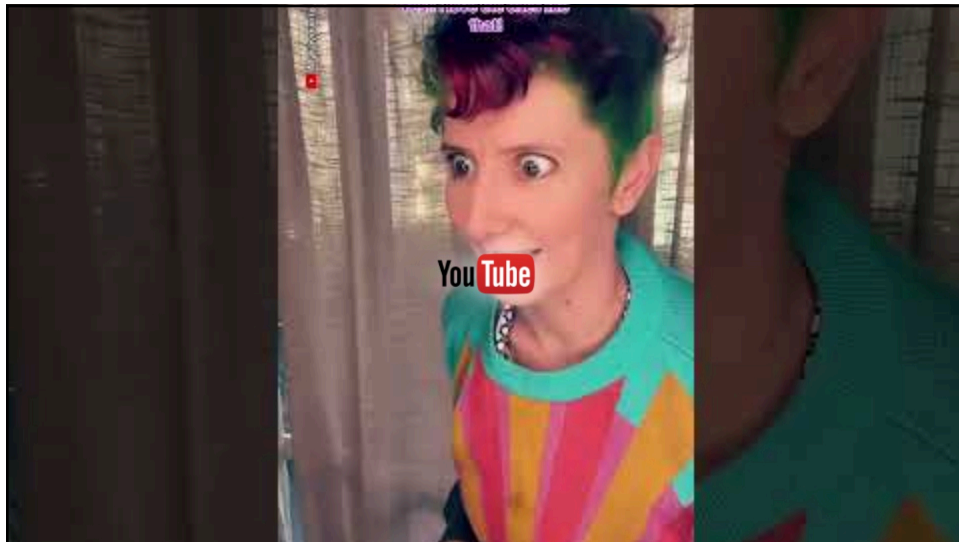
## COMMUNICATION STYLE

- Direct vs indirect
- Anecdotal vs question based
- Communication goal  
Emotional connection vs discussing a topic

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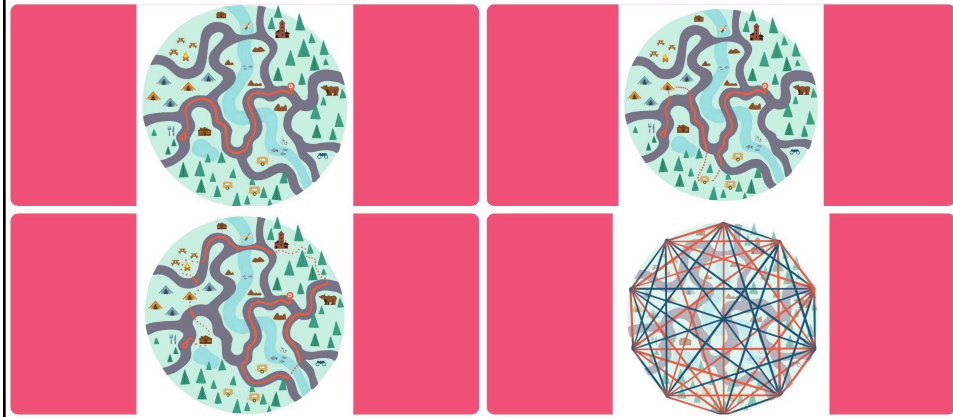
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## ONE MORE... CONCLUDER VS WEAVER

Neuroclastic



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## WEAVER CONVERSATION EXAMPLE

- Weaver Jo: I stubbed my toe again.
- Weaver Alex: I got my tie caught in the paper shredder at work.
- Weaver Jo: I poured myself a pot of coffee but forgot the filter.
- Weaver Alex: I put the soap on my toothbrush again.
- Weaver Jo: You win.

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## WEAVER/CONCLUDER EXAMPLE

- Weaver Jo: I stubbed my toe again.
- Concluder Reese: That must have hurt. Are you okay?
- Weaver Jo: I guess. It still hurts a little.
- Concluder Reese: Do you need to go to the doctor?
- Weaver Jo: I can bend it.
- Concluder Reese: So you don't think it's broken?
- Weaver Jo: It isn't swollen or bruised.

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## SO NOW WHAT?

- **Treat cross-neurotype communication as we would cross-cultural communication**  
Neither is a deficit, but instead is viewed as a difference
- **When teaching ND children "social skills," it's important to clarify that they are learning allistic social skills. While these might be useful, they are not the "right" way to communicate.**
- **Support students in learning and embracing their natural communication styles, and to find middle ground with others who do not have the same styles**

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## SO NOW WHAT?

- **Re-evaluate IPP communication goals**  
 Are these necessary for communication?  
 Or are we just pushing neurotypical communication styles as the "right" way to communicate?  
 Ensure that goals are ND affirming
- **Speechdude.com**

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**LET'S TALK!**

[theadhdt toolkit.com](https://theadhdt toolkit.com)

[theadhdt toolkit.com/teachers](https://theadhdt toolkit.com/teachers)

Instagram/Facebook/Tiktok/YouTube:  
[@theadhdt toolkit](https://theadhdt toolkit.com)



**SCAN ME**

A promotional graphic for 'theadhd toolkit'. It features a light grey background on the left with the text 'LET'S TALK!' in bold, followed by the website 'theadhdt toolkit.com', a link to 'theadhdt toolkit.com/teachers', and social media handles for Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube: '@theadhdt toolkit'. On the right, there is a QR code with a red circular logo in the center. Below the QR code is a black button with the text 'SCAN ME' in white.

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