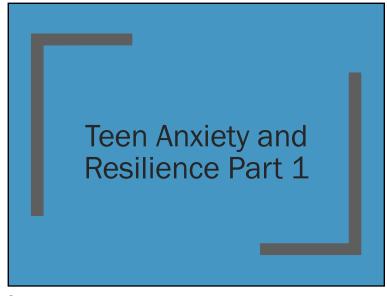


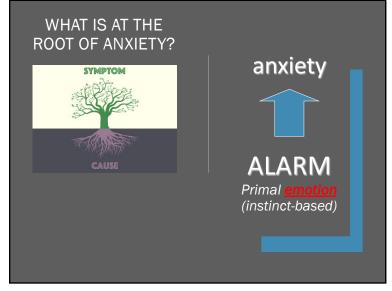
Presentation overview

- · Summary of Teen Anxiety and Resilience Part 1
- · Neurodiversity and Anxiety
- · Trauma and Anxiety
- · Practices to avoid, and why
- Neurodiversity Affirming and Trauma-informed Practices

1



2



3

#### What is the difference between?

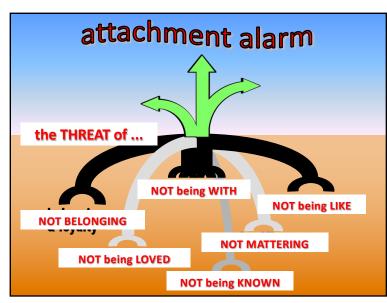
- ALARM: instinctive primal emotion in response to a <u>danger or threat</u>
- ANXIETY: a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness



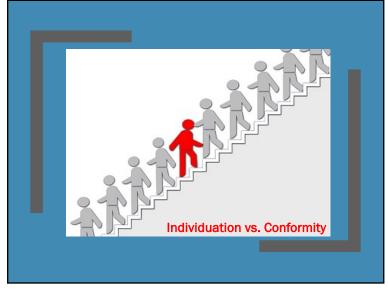
#### WHO AM I?

- Discovering the SELF
- Being self-concerned
- Being self-conscious
- Making room for ALL parts of oneself

5



6



7

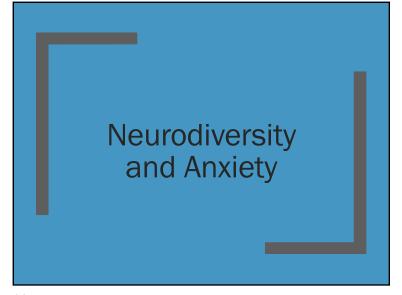
Ω



#### Performance anxiety

- Focused on doing well
- Needing to 'win'
- Cannot make mistakes
- Trying to be perfect

10



Addressing anxiety

Natural solution to anxiety is building:

**RESILIENCE** = CAPACITY TO BOUNCE BACK

The dictionary defines neurodiversity as:

What is neurodiversity?

• individual differences in brain functioning regarded as normal variations within the human population

Sense of Courage

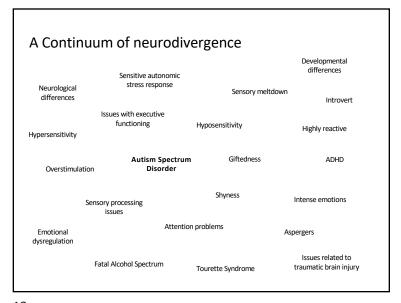
- the concept that differences in brain functioning within the human population are normal and that brain functioning that is not neurotypical should not be stigmatized"
- the inclusion in a group, organization, etc. of people with different types of brain functioning

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neurodiversity

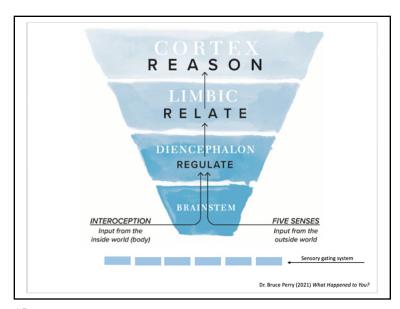
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4



13



Sensory
Gating
System

Auditory
and visual
stimuli

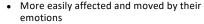
Impaired Sensory Gating

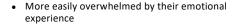
Auditory
and visual
stimuli

14

#### Emotional sensitivity and emotion regulation challenges

Neurodivergent individuals are:





- More likely they are to be "stuck" emotionally:
  - Emotional intensity evokes more defenses
     Intellectualization of experiences (escape of
  - Intellectualization of experiences (escape of emotions)
  - o Loss of tears necessary for adaptation

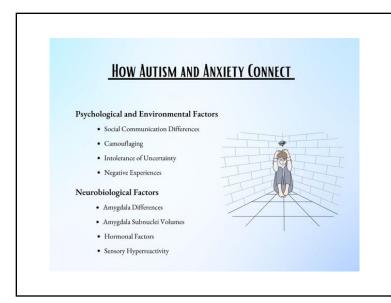
Adults typically attempt to calm the child in order to avoid emotional eruptions, which doesn't help the situation.

15

#### Some differences in neurodivergent individuals

- Sensory: differences in how they perceive and process sensory information. They may also have sensory dislikes or aversions.
- Communication: differences in how they communicate E.g., may be non-speaking, need a speech augmentative or alternative device, have a multimodal way of communicating (words, gestures and icons), or use echolalia (repeating language that was heard previously).
- Motor: gross motor differences (in their gate or walk, muscle tone, balance, or coordination, and may need supportive equipment for movement), fine motor differences (challenges grasping or manipulating objects, difficulty isolating movement of a certain body part), or apraxia (cannot voluntarily control their precise body movements).
- Executive functioning: differences in certain cognitive processes that allows for planning, preparing, problem-solving, time management, organization, focus attention, self-regulation, and remembering the steps to a plan. E.g., they may struggle with keeping an organized desk, turning in finished work, or not shouting out answers in class.
- Play and interests: having special or deep interests, which may show up repeatedly in their play.
- Emotions and empathy: differences in identifying and describing emotions in self and others; however, they do feel what another person is feeling, possibly even quite too strongly.
- **Stimming**: a repetitive action or movement of the body, including making noises, to help with self-regulation, as an expression, or simply for enjoyment.

17



The high rates of anxiety in autistic individuals, with up to <u>84% experiencing</u>

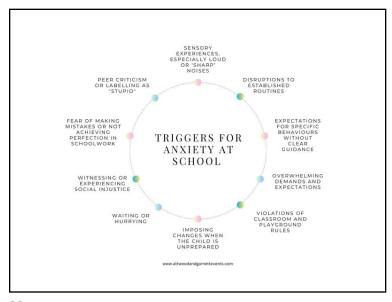
<u>IMPAIRING ANXIETY</u>, EMPHASISE THE

CRITICAL NEED FOR AUTISM UNDERSTANDING, INCREASED SUPPORT AND TAILORED ANXIETY

INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THE AUTISM

COMMUNITY.

18



19 20

## What is stimming?

"Stimming" is a term for self-stimulatory behaviour – a repetitive action or movement of the body, including making noises. It is common adaptive behaviour amongst neurodivergent individuals, and it serves an important purpose.

Here are some examples of stimming:

- Twirling hair
- · Biting nails
- · Rocking back and forth
- Flapping hands
- Flicking fingers, or repetitive motions with the fingers
- Arching or tensing parts of the body
- Visual stimming, such as watching something intensely or on repeat, looking at something with peripheral vision
- · Chewing or mouthing items
- Spinning or twirling
- · Repeating behaviours, like opening and closing a container
- ETC.

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## What is masking?

When a neurodivergent person works to suppress or hide their natural qualities or differences, this is called "masking". It can occur in a variety of settings and for many different reasons, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Reasons for masking may include:

- Fitting in or trying to uphold social norms in order to feel a sense of belonging
- Keep oneself safe from bullying, judgment, or stigma
- · Performing at school or in activities
- · Trying to make friends
- · Not meaning to mask, but doing so out of a learned need or habit

Here are some examples of masking:

- Trying to withstand sensory discomfort when in front of others
- Minimizing or hiding stimming in front of others
- Mirroring or mimicking the facial expressions or gestures of others
- Forcing oneself to give eye contact
- Downplaying or avoiding personal interests
- ETC.

#### Stimming serves a purpose

#### SELF-REGULATION. Stimming can:

- distract from or dampen sensory input from outside sources
- · enhance or provide additional sensory input
- help manage emotions and/or sensations
- · help bring to a state of calm
- help to handle stress or overwhelming paces/events

#### **EXPRESSION**. Stimming can:

- be a form of expression to release strong feelings or reactions
- communicate frustration, fear, overwhelm, etc.
- also communicate joy, excitement, happiness, etc.

#### **ENJOYMENT**. Stimming can:

- · just be done because it feels enjoyable, and that's okay.
- \* Stimming should be honoured and left to complete its purpose, unless it is harming to the individual or to others.

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## Masking and mental health

The neurodivergent population reports masking can be extremely stressful, exhausting, and creates dysregulation and burnout.

Studies\* have shown that masking can lead to some extremely negative outcomes, including higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation.

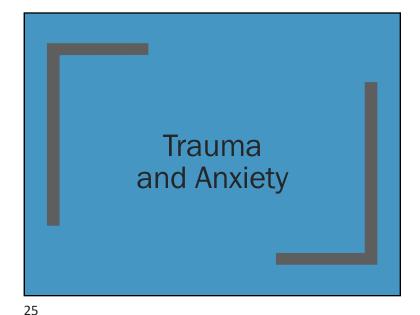
As educators and allies, we can support their mental health by:

- Not teaching "social Skills" that promote masking (e.g. enforcing eye contact)
- Embracing and supporting individual students' interests
- Openly talking to students about neurodiversity and promoting an environment of acceptance
- Encouraging self-advocacy by helping students recognize their individual needs

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29071566/ https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2156869318804297

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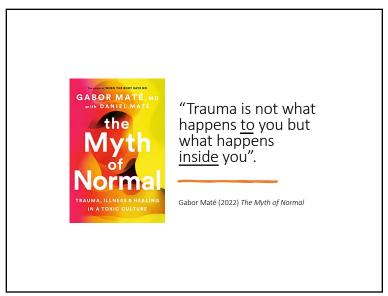
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Trauma

physically, or both.

There are different types of trauma:

or the loss of a parent.



**Adversive Childhood Experiences** PH YSICAL ABUSE EMOTIONAL ABUSE PHYSICAL NEGLECT **EMOTIONAL** NEGLECT SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN HOUSEHOLD MENTAL ILLNESS OF DIVORCE MOTHER TREATED VIOLENTLY HOUSEHOLD INCARCERATED Togetherness SPECTRUM OF TRAUMA IS the threat is threatened

Trauma literally means "wound, injury, or shock." Trauma is one possible outcome of exposure to adversity. Trauma occurs when

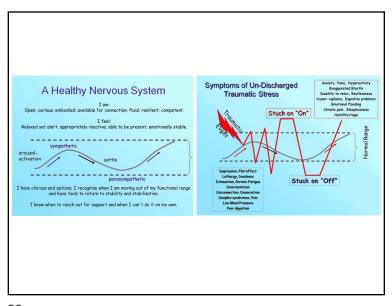
a person perceives an event or set of circumstances as extremely frightening, harmful, or threatening—either emotionally,

- Big traumatic experiences (ACES), such as a child being abused

- Hurtful experiences that leave long lasting marks, such as bullying by peers, repeated harsh comments of a parent, chronic distress experienced by a hypersensitive child.

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8



Healthy Brain
This PET scan of
the brain of a normal
child shows regions
of high (red) and low
the brain that health and the brain that a Romaniar
paris set in the brain that the brain that a Romaniar
paris stem center are
fully functional; in
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31

Ability to regulate emotions is diminished

REASON

COMPROMISED
PREFRONTAL CORTEX /
CORPUS CALLOSUM
functioning

THE DOUBLE INVISIBLE HANDICAP

INTEGRANVE CAPACITY

COGNITIVE CASTORITY

COGNITIVE CASTORITY

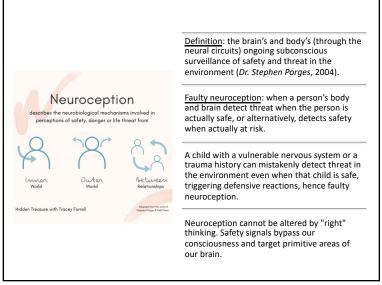
DANGER EMOTION

INSTINCT

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Teen Anxiety and Resilience Part 2 Oct 13, 2023



SENSITIZED

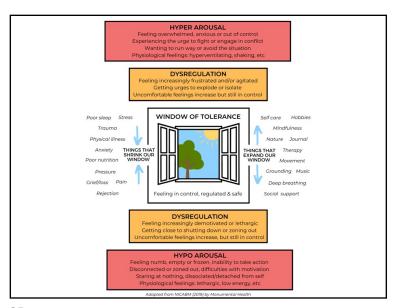
3.

NEUROTYPICAL

Daily challenge Moderate stress Distress – threat

Dr. Bruce Perry (2021) What Happened to You?

33





9

35

#### WHAT DOESN'T WORK



- Projecting intentionality in the behaviour obscures the true nature and purpose of emotions. We are moved by our emotions rather than being under our control.
- Focusing on appropriateness of behaviour can endanger its unfolding (shame and guilt can cause defenses and numb out necessary feelings towards emotional health and growth).
- Thinking rewards/consequences is the answer can undermine intrinsic motivation for good intentions and true, deep, long-lasting change.

Gordon Neufeld (2017) Science of Emotion

37

## WHAT DOESN'T WORK

#### **Compliance-based strategies**

- Compliance-based strategies teach a dangerous precedent to an already vulnerable community: "I have to do what you say, regardless of how I feel about it". It puts ND individuals in a position of being at risk for future abusive situations.
- Compliance-based strategies often ask a student to mask, or to adhere to neurotypical norms. Masking can be detrimental to the mental and physical health of ND students
- Compliance-based strategies do not validate the internal feelings and/or needs of ND individuals. It also overlooks critical development areas, such as self-awareness and self-advocacy.

## WHAT DOESN'T WORK

#### Conventional Classroom Management and Problem Behaviour Centered Intervention



- Rewards/Consequences
- Behaviour management tracking systems
- Being sent to the Principal's office
- Detention/Reflection Room
- Student behaviour contract
- Zero tolerance discipline measures
- Suspensions

It doesn't help change or improve student behaviour and it exacerbates the problem with neurodivergent students

38

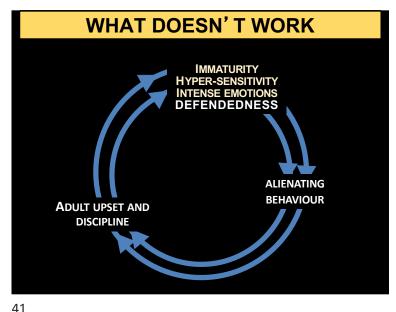
# WHAT DOESN'T WORK

## When the natural influence is lacking

- We expect students to listen to any adult based on their role
- We tend to assume the problem is lack of knowledge and seek know-how
- Some give up on their nurturer responsibilities (become more reactive)
- We tend to seek for some leverage or resort to forcefulness

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## WHAT DOESN'T WORK

#### **REASONING, TALKING especially about CONSEQUENCES**

- Talking keeps them in high arousal flight or fight mode – intensifies the agony.
- When the child is in "survival" mode they cannot hear our words, just our tone.
- They can't process language (the words we are using) just keep hearing the TONE
- They can't remember the future (what will happen if they don't stop) - only feel the intensity of the present moment.

Waiting to hear: "And I've had it with you."

WHAT DOESN'T WORK



- Focusing on irrationality of the behaviour conceals the true purpose of emotions. Although the behaviour may seem irrational, the brain has its reasons to function in such a way (survival, stress response).
- Focusing on cognition as a priority negates the underlying needs that are communicated by the emotion.
- · Focusing on thinking blinds to the feelings involved. Also, mixed emotions are the answer to tempering the behaviour.

Gordon Neufeld (2017) Science of Emotion

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# WHAT DOESN'T WORK THE PROBLEM WITH "RIGHT" THINKING • focusing just on being positive • pursuing happiness • resisting the 'let-down' pursuing calmness & tranquility

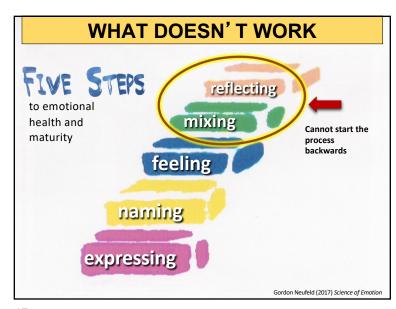
#### WHAT DOESN'T WORK

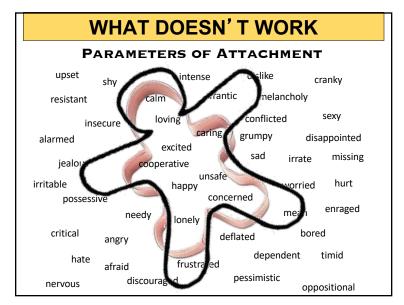


- Assuming that self-control can be taught intellectually negates the importance of emotional experience (especially the vulnerable feelings) to help maturation along.
- Focusing on self-regulation <u>prematurely</u> can endanger the very process by which it is achieved (shame and guilt can cause defenses and numb out necessary feelings towards emotional health and growth).
- Focusing on 'calming-down' disregards the more fundamental need of expressing and of building a healthy relationship with one's emotions.

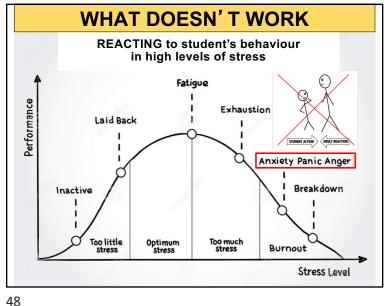
Gordon Neufeld (2017) Science of Emotion

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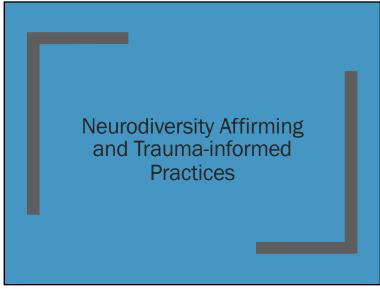




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#### Neurodiversity affirming language and practices

The language and practices we choose have an impact on how people view and treat neurological differences.

Instead of "red flags and deficits", try traits or individual differences. Neurodivergence is not a problem to be solved, but a different way of being, which needs to be honoured. Language matters; using the terms red flags and deficits invoke fear, negativity and unacceptance, whereas traits and individual differences neutrally describe.

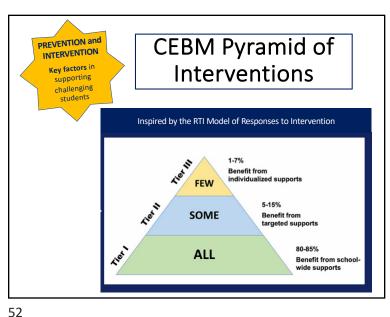
e.g. "Sarah is non-speaking and she uses a device to communicate" or "Johnny expresses joy by hand-flapping"

Instead of "obsession", try special interest or deep interest. The term obsession carries a negative connotation and insinuates that the interests of that particular individual are problematic. In reality, deep interests can be a beautiful strength, as well as being extremely meaningful and rewarding

e.g. "Jordan has strong visual special skills" or "Katie tells great stories about her favorite character"

Neurodiversity affirming language and practices Instead of "low/high functioning", try describing Level 1 requiring some support the student and their support support needs. Functionality labels limit the Level 2 requiring further support perception of the student in o question and distort the reality Levels of the individual being described Level 3 requiring intensive support It is much more accurate, ethical, and useful to describe strengths and challenges, as well as level of support

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#### It's about Prevention

- Students typically don't respond well in crisis intervention and it is quite difficult to make headway in those circumstances, because they are:
  - ✓ Indisposed and not receptive when under stress
  - ✓ Not accessible when disengaged/disconnected from the adult(s) intervening.
- A student's success depends on:
  - ✓ Sense of safety, building attachment (requires conducive conditions)
  - ✓ Structure, routine and predictability
  - ✓ Introduction to tools/supports, exploration and practice
  - ✓ Growth happens in moments of rest

It's about adapting to the student's specific needs and challenges



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It's about understanding the root of behaviour

**BEHAVIOUR CHANGES WHEN...** 

**Sensory - Stress Response** 

Behaviour changes when the body/brain is feeling safe

**Attachment** 

Behaviour changes when feeling connected to a nurturing adult

**Vulnerability - Emotions** 

Behaviour changes when emotions are felt

**Maturation** 

Behaviour changes as the brain matures

It's about managing the circumstances, not trying to control the student's behaviour

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# It's about addressing the fundamental needs

**SAFETY**: helping the brain become regulated and receptive

**ATTACHMENT**: providing nurturing and safe relationships

**EMOTION**: inviting the whole range of emotional expression

PLAY: making space for true play

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# TIER 1 – UNIVERSAL Practices in the Classroom

- At Tier 1, the classroom supports benefit the group as a whole.
- These are daily practices lead by the Teachers.
- The focus is on <u>PREVENTION</u>:
  - ✓ Setting up the physical and social environment of the classroom with an ND or complex trauma student in mind
  - ✓ Using inclusive practices that move away from neurotypical norms and that don't push ND students to mask
  - ✓ Using trauma-informed practices
  - ✓ Offering an array of tools and resources to answer to a range of needs and differences

## It's about the power of teamwork

- Sharing the responsibility of the student and class group (each adult having a complementary role to the other).
- Sharing the weight of the challenging students (ex. Foster Classrooms, Nurturing Support Centre, etc.)
- Communicating with one another so all involved are in the 'know' of certain student profiles and relevant situations that have come up.
- Receiving the collaboration and support of school board personnel and outside services.

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#### MINIMIZING SENSORY INPUT

Be aware that your classroom decor may be overstimulating to a neurodivergent student. While the decor may appear fun to you, lots of bright colors with no place for the eyes to rest could be hard on the sensory system of ND students in the classroom.

Consider toning down the decor to include:

- fewer decorations
- less intense colors
- a place (perhaps towards the front of the classroom) where a child can rest his or her eyes

You'll likely find a less stimulating classroom to be beneficial for neurotypical children as well as ND students.

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#### **PROVIDING TOOLS**

- Figure out which sensory tools work best for the student
- Create a sensory retreat for the student
- Include sensory breaks as part of the school day
- Provide choices for sensory input opportunities
- · Make sensory activities fun and engaging
- Help the student to recognize their internal cues and when they need a break

## Flexible Classroom

Offer alternate seating options and alternate workstations to help students with attention and manage their bodies

https://www.cebmmember.ca /individual-work-stations



62





17 Brain Breaks Tailored for High Schoolers
As high school students navigate more rigorous academic tasks and
denser curricular material, the occasional 3-to-5-minute break deliver
a wide range of benefits.

https://www.edutopia.org/article/17-brain-breaks-tailored-for-high-schoolers

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#### **TIER 2 – TARGETED Practices**

in the Classroom and School

- At Tier 2, the student requires a more targeted support.
- These supports measures and accommodations are meant to be assigned to or scheduled for the student.
- Practices lead by the Teachers with the help of Support Staff.
- The student continues to benefit from Tier 1 supports in addition to supplemental Tier 2 measures.

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Flexible
Seating
and Work
Station
ASSIGNED
to the
student

.....



66

#### **INDIVIDUAL BIN**

#### Contains

- activities to engage the student if they need a moment of respite
- less demanding educational work
- can be easily transported to another location or another room





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# TIER 3 – INDIVIDUALIZED Practices with the help of Support Staff and/or Professionals

- At Tier 3, the student requires a more intensive and individualized measures. One-to-one support is needed.
- These accommodations and adaptations are tailored to the student's individual needs and interests. The student may require an adapted schedule as well.
- A collaboration is needed between the school team, the board consultants/professionals, the parents, as well as outside partners (if present).
- The student continues to benefit from T1and T2 supports in addition to supplemental T3 measures.



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#### **USE TIME AWAY INSTEAD OF TIME OUT**

#### KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND WORK WITHIN THEM

If you are starting to "reach your limit" with a student:

- 1. Send the student to another place
  - The "Quiet Area" in the classroom
- Send the student TO SOMEONE with a "task" (use a dignified way to have the student leave)
  - a book or an envelope
    - ✓ Another adult Counsellor, Support worker, secretary
    - ✓ Nurturing Support Centre
- 3. Always let the student know that the **relationship is still intact** and that you will continue to be there for them.

#### Nurturing Support Centre (NSC)

- Provide student with passes to visit the NSC, to work, to talk, to have supervised 'alone time'
- Participation in 'interest clubs' with adult supervision during recess and lunchtime
- Sheltered lunch (small group) orchestrate the schedule to 'divide & conquer' clusters of students who struggle together





https://www.cebm.ca/nurturing-support-centre

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# Supporting feelings and emotions

**Co-regulate with them.** Given that many ND and complex trauma students experience intense and overwhelming emotions, they do not always have a way to communicate or to regulate them effectively. They need us to model and support them in co-regulating their emotions.

Validate their emotions. ND students are sometimes taught to let others describe their emotional experience "No Johnny, this is a SMALL problem; you don't need to be upset". Instead, let your student know their emotions are valid. Try "I understand that this is important to you and that it's upsetting". Talk about the situation and help draft some possible next step, if needed and if the student is receptive.

**Provide supports.** Sometimes we over-emphasize the importance of using words to describe our emotions. If this approach is difficult for your student, try another method (e.g. visual support).

Make it part of everyday life. Don't wait until the student is experiencing strong emotions to practice using the tools and strategies. Practice these regularly to normalize using them and during times when the student is regulated so they are in a better place to be trying and adjusting them.

Fatigue

Laid Back

Exhaustion

Anxiety Panic Anger

Breakdown

Stress Level

Not REACTING to student behaviour

74

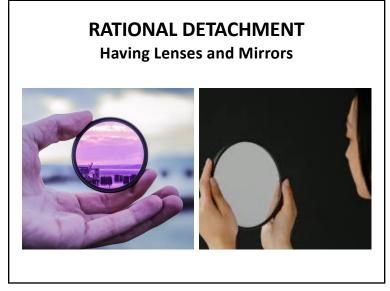
73

#### RATIONAL DETACHMENT

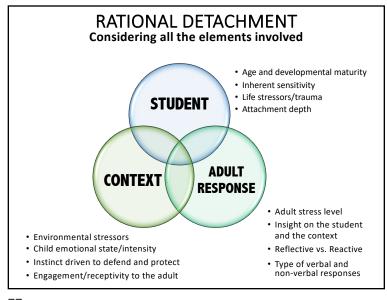
Recognizing the need to remain professional by managing your own behavior and attitude.

#### **Observe the Behavior**

- What is the other person communicating?
- How am I responding?
- What am I expressing or conveying?
- How are they responding to me?



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#### **SCHOOL TEAM**

#### Use your existing a school team to

- Plan regular meetings to discuss students with challenging behaviours and how best to help support them so they can handle being in school
- Put together a team of adults to <u>share the</u> responsibility of caring for these students
- Use adult resources in the school creatively
  - Identify one "key" adult to connect with the student – to try for a regular check-in or recap at the end of the day by means of another activity e.g. breakfast programme, recycling, exercise "group".

INTERVENING WITH THE DEFENDED AND HARD TO REACH STUDENT

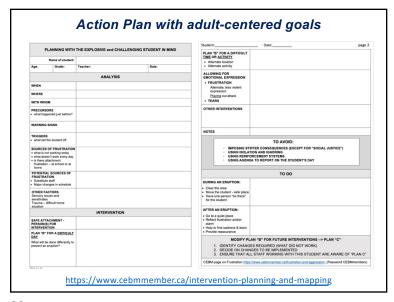
- When situations continue to be difficult and challenging team meetings are helpful for deciding interventions.
- It is important to remind adults of small changes that are happening
- It is key that all adults working with the student are informed of changes and decisions regarding interventions being tried.

Even with the most challenging cases, the guiding principles should be:

- ❖ How can we keep everyone safe?
- How can we help this student have a better day at school?
- What can we do to help this student feel hopeful about his/her future?



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## Neurodiversity affirming IEP goals

The purpose of an IEP is to provide special-needs students with an education "designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living." Therefore, for ND individuals, we must move away from neurotypical norms that asks the student to mask their neurodivergent traits.

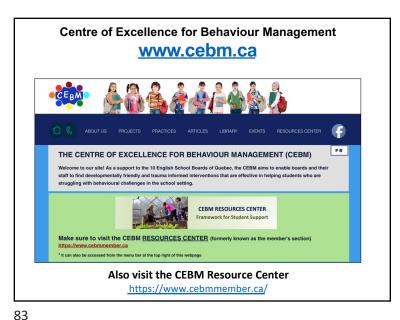
To do this, we need to collaborate with the student and their family. Take the time to ask what goal areas are important to them. What are the student's long-term goals?

What makes a goal neurodiversity affirming is that it:

- · views the student as a whole, complete person
- · is based on a lens of differences, not deficits
- · considers an individual's joys, interests, preferences
- · considers an individual's strengths and builds from them
- · considers the person's well-being and personal needs/viewpoint
- · embraces the student to thrive using accommodations and supports
- factors in executive functioning scaffolds/supports
- considers and supports sensory and emotional needs
- embraces ND communication styles
- fosters positive self-identity, self-awareness and self-advocacy

\* Consult attached document for concrete ideas

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#### SUPPORTING THE STUDENT'S GROWTH

Find a balance between "Pushing" and "Protecting"

- Recognize when the child has reached a "limit" of being stirred up and needs pressure to be removed
- Encourage the child to try challenging activities but in small steps.

Remember that these children experience higher cortisol levels for "normal" stressors than other children. And we need to help them to tolerate some level of "stress" but not too much.