***Neurodiversity: From Abnormal to Extraordinary* Facilitator Notes**

**Description**

The primary component of this training material is the *Neurodiversity: Abnormal to Exceptional* narrated PowerPoint presentation, which can be used as a standalone product. This document provides supplemental activities and resources. The content can be used to design a session that suits your goals and format, such as in-person or remote and asynchronous participation.

The PowerPoint itself is designed to be relevant for all audiences but included below are some audience-tailored questions. They are separated into three categories: Students, faculty/staff, and general interest. Feel free to utilize or modify these questions as needed. For instance, the questions for students are appropriate for any audience made up of neurodivergent people, and the faculty/staff questions can be modified for use with workplace supervisors. The attendant pamphlet provides some brief information for the audience and can be provided to them digitally or in print. The script for the PowerPoint is also available as a separate text document.

**Goal**

This session is designed to provide participants with an introduction to the concept of neurodiversity. Participants will learn the definitions of terms, the benefits of neurodiversity, and ways to implement the concept. Utilizing supplemental activities will give participants a more detailed understanding of neurodiversity and how the related concepts are applied in different circumstances.

**Suggested Agenda**

* Facilitator introduction
* PowerPoint presentation
* Discussion
  + Initial reactions
* Facilitator presents scenario or discussion questions
* Group activities
  + Scenarios
  + Discussion questions
* Group reflection on activities
* Discussion on ‘next steps’
  + How will participants incorporate ideas into their thinking/actions?

**Discussion Questions**

Students

* How do these ideas relate to your own self-perceptions?
* What impact do you think the neurodiversity movement has on your school or college community?
* What are ways that everyone at your institution, including students, faculty, and staff, can be more inclusive of neurodivergence?

Faculty/staff

* What are obstacles for neurodivergent students in a typical classroom?
* What are some assumptions that you make about students that behave differently in the classroom?
* How can you make neurodivergent students feel more accepted?
* A student is misbehaving in class by doing things such as repeatedly tapping their foot, speaking out of turn, or refusing to participate, which is disrupting the class. What is your gut reaction? How does the concept of neurodiversity change how you would react?

General interest

* When can you see neurodiversity being important (what situations/contexts)?
* Have you ever been in a situation that made you feel like you weren’t normal? What was that like? How would you feel if you experienced that every day?
* What are specific actions that you can take in your life to be more inclusive for neurodivergent people?
* How does neurodiversity relate to other forms of diversity?

**Extension Topics**

1. Focus on ADHD

Watch [*A Stressful Simulation of ADHD*](https://www.landmark.edu/center-for-neurodiversity/voices/a-stressful-simulation-of-adhd) created by Landmark College student Gabrian Raphael

Questions

* How does this portrayal conform to your understanding of ADHD? How does it differ?
* What are some things in the classroom or workplace that can be disruptive for people that are ADHD?
* What are some examples of environments that may be disruptive for people with ADHD? How can those environments be altered to be more inclusive?

1. Camouflaging

Camouflaging (also known as masking) is a term for the behaviors that neurodivergent people adopt in order to hide their differences and fit in with neurotypicals. This has most commonly been observed in autistic people. Some actions include mimicking expected facial expressions, suppressing urges to stim, and staying informed on topics solely to aide in social interactions. Camouflaging is a stressful and exhausting process, stemming from the fear of the consequences of being different.

Questions

* Why do you think camouflaging happens? Why is it important to appear ‘normal’?
* What effect do you think that camouflaging has on a person?
* In what ways does the neurodiversity perspective effect camouflaging?

Resources

* *What Is Autistic Masking (Are YOU Masking Your Autism?)* YouTube video by autism advocate IndieAndy explaining camouflaging
* [*Understanding the Reasons, Contexts and Costs of Camouflaging for Autistic Adults*](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6483965/), Journal article by Eilidh Cage and Zoe Troxell-Whitman investigating the reasons, contexts, and costs of camouflaging in autistic adults

1. Neurodiversity Critics

Neurodiversity is not without its critics. There are many detractors of the neurodiversity perspective, even within the autism community itself. Some autistic people see their condition as a disability and wish they could be cured. The parents of autistic children that cannot live independently may feel that the movement is inclusive of the challenges they and their children face.

Questions

* What are some possible criticisms or arguments against the neurodiversity perspective?
* How can the neurodiversity perspective be reconciled with the concerns of its opponents?

Resources

* [*Neurodiversity: Just Say No*](http://www.jonathans-stories.com/non-fiction/neurodiv.html), article by Jonathan Mitchell, author and outspoken critic of neurodiversity
* [*What is autism? How the term became too broad to have meaning any more*](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/26/autism-neurodiversity-severe?), by Tom Clements

1. The Double Empathy Problem

The ‘double empathy problem’ comes from a journal article by Damian E. M. Milton. Simply put, Milton challenges the assumption that the social challenges faced by autistic people are due to their own deficits. Instead, Milton presents the alternative perspective that these challenges are due to different communication styles employed by autistic and neurotypical people. This is an important distinction to make, as it removes the blame from autistic people and establishes the validity of their perspectives on social interactions. The Double Empathy Problem serves as an example of the philosophical weight to neurodiversity and how it reshapes the way neurodivergent perspectives can be reinterpreted.

Questions

* What are the consequences of the Double Empathy Problem?
* How can other aspects of neurodivergent experiences be reinterpreted in a similar fashion?

Resource

* [*On the Ontological Status of Autism: the ‘Double Empathy Problem’*](https://kar.kent.ac.uk/62639/1/Double%20empathy%20problem.pdf) by Damian E. M. Milton

**Additional resources:**

* [Landmark College Center for Neurodiversity Webpage](https://www.landmark.edu/center-for-neurodiversity)
* [Center for Neurodiversity LibGuide](https://libguides.landmark.edu/CenterforNeurodiversity)
* Sources of advocate quotes from presentation:
  + John Elder Robison – video of [2019 Landmark College Fall Convocation Ceremony speech](https://www.landmark.edu/center-for-neurodiversity/voices/2019-fall-convocation-john-elder-robison-speech) (with transcription available)
  + Wolf Dunaway – [Neurotypical (2013)](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1760416/) available to stream on IMDb
  + Johnathon Mooney – [At Risk in the Culture of ‘Normal’](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/09/opinion/learning-disability.html)
  + Lydia X. Z. Brown – 2019 guest lecture [Neurodiversity and Disability Justice](https://youtu.be/kwivWC6-WbQ)
  + Greta Thunberg – [Instagram post](https://www.instagram.com/p/B12ChnkioB9/?utm_source=ig_embed) and [CBS interview](https://www.cbsnews.com/video/greta-thunberg-on-the-advantage-of-aspergers-in-fighting-climate-change-we-need-people-who-think-outside-the-box/)
* Blog post by Dr. Nick Walker explaining terminology at [neurocosmopolitanism.com](https://neurocosmopolitanism.com/neurodiversity-some-basic-terms-definitions/)
* [*What is Neurodiversity (The DERS Guide)*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4stO8fTujE), a short YouTube video by Autistamatic explaining neurodiversity