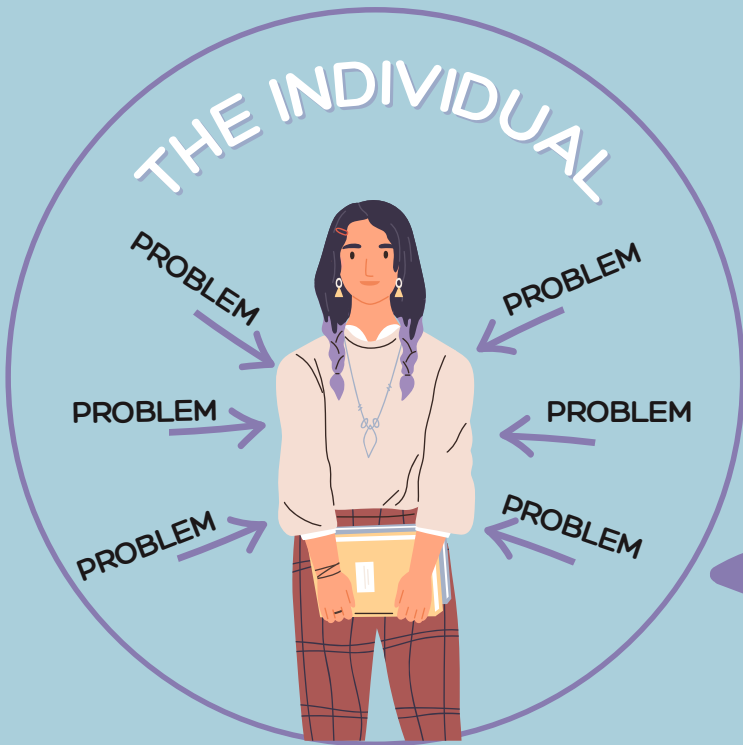


MODELS OF DISABILITY

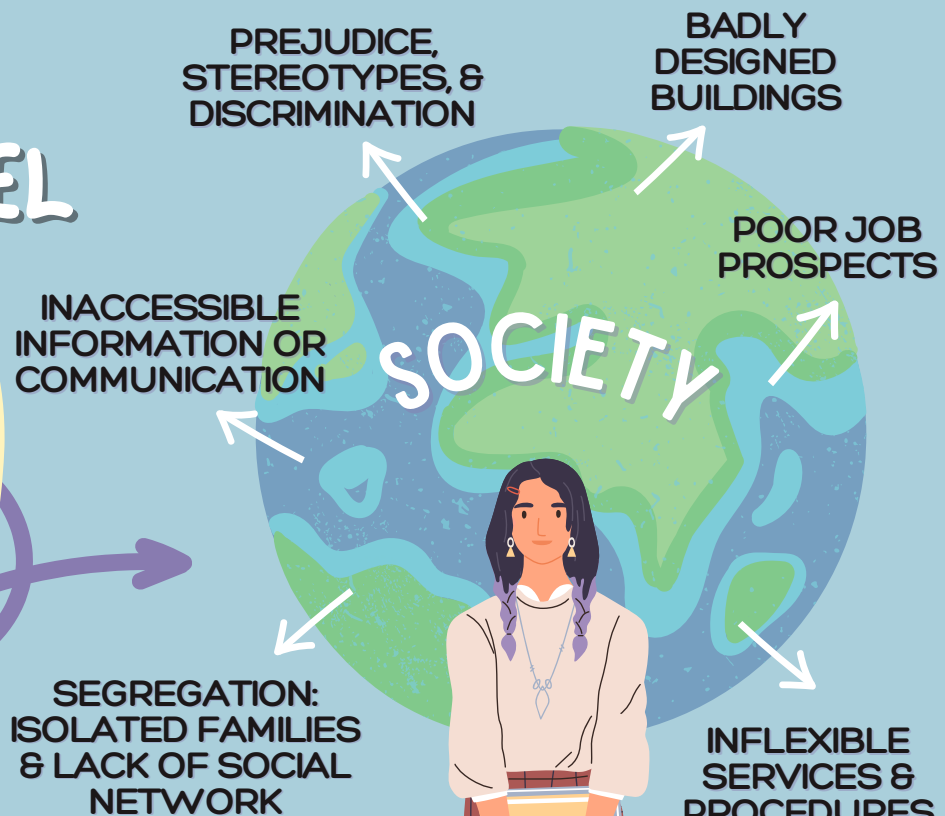
MEDICAL MODEL

Disabilities cause all of the problems for neurodivergent individuals.



SOCIAL MODEL

The difficulties faced by neurodivergent people are often caused by the way society and infrastructure are designed.



Common Challenges of the Neurodivergent

Filtering sensory stimuli and processing information

Some neurodivergent people struggle with focusing on one environmental stimulus at a time. Multiple stimuli may cause them trouble processing information and lead them to experience sensory overload.

Multi-tasking and planning

Neurodivergent individuals may have trouble making plans for the future and performing multiple tasks at once.

Self-determination

Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with making choices and advocating for themselves.

Understanding social norms

Neurodivergent individuals may experience difficulties understanding neurotypical social interactions and communication (body language, eye contact, figurative language, and humor).

Being viewed as impaired

Neurodivergent individuals may encounter people with a deficit-focused view, who see neurodiversity as a weakness. Additionally, neurodivergent individuals may be judged by others for appearing disorganized, fidgety, or accident-prone.

Social inclusion and self-disclosure

Self-disclosure may lead to discrimination against neurodivergent individuals.

Maintaining employment/material well-being

Neurodivergent individuals are more likely to experience difficulties securing and maintaining employment and locating compatible housing/living options.

Lack of support in higher education

Without adequate assistance in higher education, neurodivergent individuals may struggle with personal development. However, they may be hesitant to disclose their condition due to fear of stigma.

Physical and emotional well-being

Due to difficulties with healthcare accessibility and comorbid conditions, neurodivergent individuals may experience more problems maintaining their physical and emotional well-being.



What Helps Neurodivergent People?

Many neurodivergent people can benefit from:

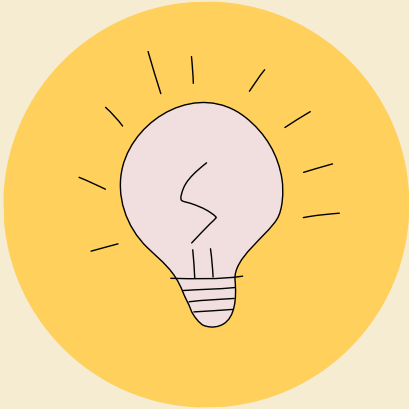
- Meaningful and understanding support systems that advocate for them and encourage their resilience.
- Making connections and engaging within their community, work, home, school, and other areas of their life.
- Participating in activities that they enjoy.
- Discovering their innate strengths and understanding their own challenges.
- Being informed about their diagnosis and advocating on their own behalf.
- Viewing themselves as more than their disability.
- Developing reasonable expectations and goals for themselves and not focusing on societal expectations.
- Having a strong sense of control over their life, self-understanding, and acceptance.

(Wilson & Savery, 2013; Ghanouni & Quirke, 2022; Scheffers et al., 2022)



Supporting People who are Neurodivergent

General Accommodations in Any Setting



Utilize dimmed lighting

Reduce the use of strong smells (perfume, cologne, etc.)

Have quiet spaces without loud/sudden noises

Adjust the environment to provide accessible services to the client

Minimize clutter and distracting patterns

Ensure settings are easy to physically navigate



Utilize directional signs and signs that clearly identify the purpose of the area

Offer physical devices that increase the individual's comfort (e.g., technology, sensory soothing objects, etc.)

Provide conversational accommodations (e.g., visual aids, etc.)



Offer alternative ways to schedule appointments

Provide online and/or text reminders of appointments



NEURODIVERSITY AND ADVERSITY

Neurodivergent people experience higher levels of:

**Social
exclusion &
isolation**

**Suicidal
ideation**

**Comorbid
neurodevelopmental
disorders**

**Racism, sexism,
ageism, ableism,
etc.**

**Mental &
physical
illness**

**Poverty &
unemployment**

**Bullying &
discrimination**

Abuse



Basic Neurodiversity & Trauma-Aware Communication Strategies

- **Introduce** yourself and explain your role at the beginning of the interaction
- **Ask** them how they would prefer to communicate
- **Ask** them how they would like to be referred to, including their preferred name, personal pronouns, and preference in people-first or identity-first language
- **Be prepared** for de-escalation intervention as some neurodivergent survivors of trauma may experience sudden intense emotions
- **Understand** that body language is important in building trust
- **Avoid** intimidation by not standing over them. Give them personal physical space
- **Refrain** from touching them because they may feel threatened or overstimulated
- **Recognize** that silence is sometimes a form of communication
- **Listen** attentively to ensure that you understand what the individual is saying



(CHADD, n.d.; Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center, n.d.-b; Polaneczky, 2016; Streeby, 2017; Tourette Association of America, n.d.; Trevisan et al., 2017; Vicker, 2001)





BE KIND!

**REMEMBER
THAT MANY
DISABILITIES
ARE INVISIBLE!**

