



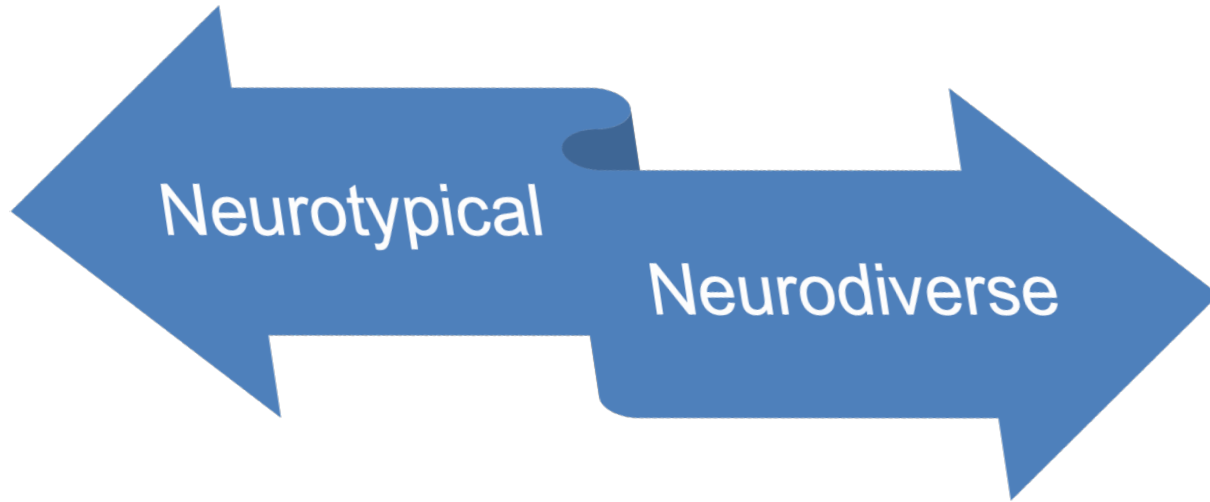
The Challenges and Opportunities of Neurodiverse Relationships

Silicon Valley Therapy

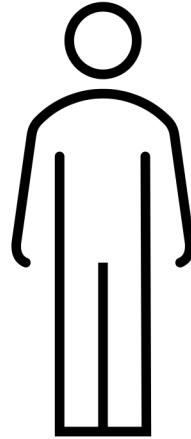
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Autism ASD Asperger's HFA

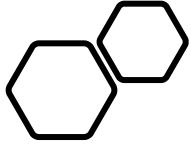


Social interaction

Special interests

Autos Self-focus Solitary Within Alone Routine Same
Leo Kanner, 1943

Monologues Special interests Lack reciprocity Social challenges Restricted repetitive behaviors
Hans Asperger's, 1944



Autism Prevalence

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

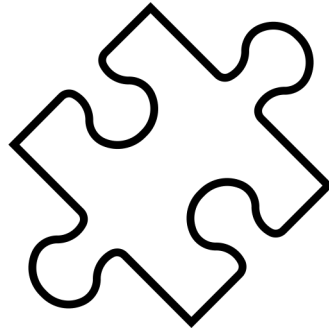
Children

- **1 in 54 children ASD**
- **All racial, ethnic, socioeconomic groups**
- **4 times more common in boys**
- **1 in 6 children developmental disability**

Adults

- **2.21% of population**
- **Highest number of adults with autism: California, Texas, Florida, New York**

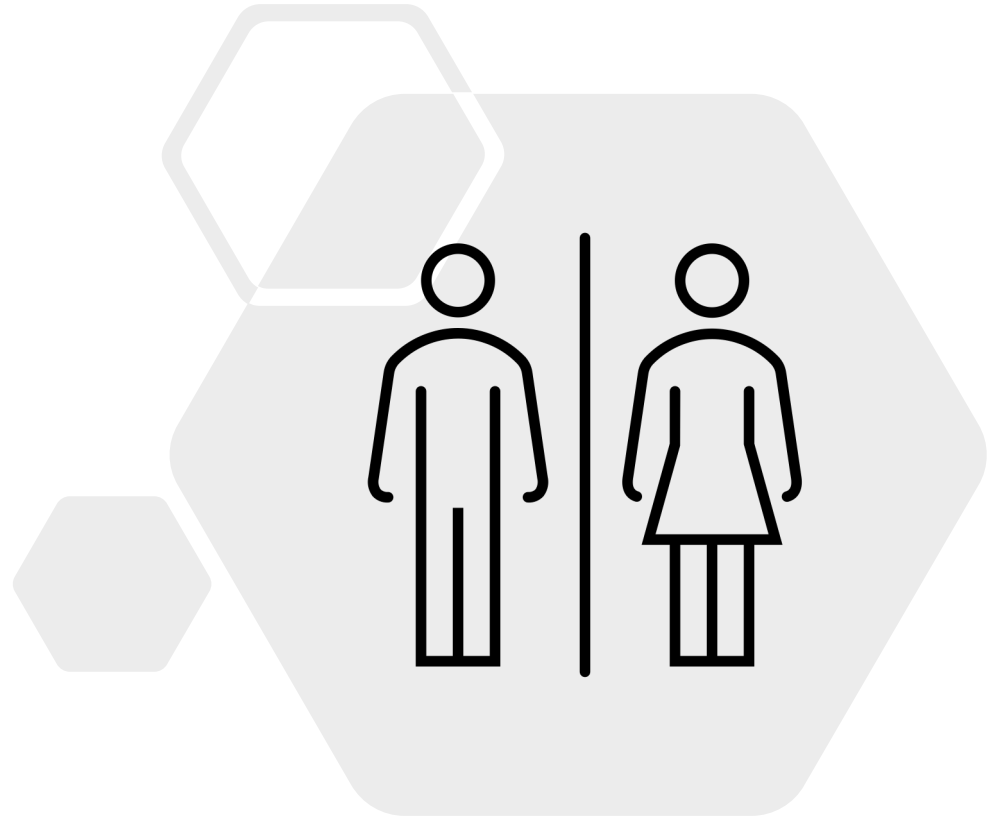
Challenge vs Opportunity



Labeled as a deficit or thriving with a neurodivergent brain

Identity

- Inherently relational
- Self perception
- Other perception



Autistic Masking

- Protective response to negative feedback from others
- Suppress natural responses and adopt socially acceptable behaviors
- Conscious or unconscious
- Hard work, exhaustion, anxiety, stress
- Always viewing self through eyes of others
- Reactions indicate masking and distress

Alexithymia

- Unable to describe my emotions
- Internal experience invalidated since infancy
- Deeply ingrained masking
- Lack empathy
- Attachment and interpersonal difficulties

Autistic Burnout

Masking

Alexithymia

Boundaries

Change

NT
Expectations

Gaslighting



Myths

- Autism is only present in childhood
- Autistic individuals don't want relationships
- If autism exists it will be identified in childhood
- People with high intelligence don't have autism

Neurodiverse Relationship Challenges

- Lack reciprocity and emotional nurturing
- Communication
- Interests
- Sensory sensitivity
- Socialization
- Trauma
- Conflict avoidance
- Boundaries

Neurodiverse Relationship Opportunities

- Social
- Communication
- Personality
- Interests
- Intelligence
- Creativity
- Growth

Neurodiverse Relationship Solutions

- Revisit your initial attraction and intimacy
- Understand brain differences
- Get help from a therapist or coach **who also understands neurodiversity**
- Treat trauma (developmental, OTRS/CP, PTSD)
- Educate (intimacy and neurodiversity) and connect (structure, consistency, love)
- Commit to relationship with new knowledge and a plan for implementation and tracking
- Shift from a problem-centered to appreciation-centered view of your relationship



Phase 1 – Damage Control

In this phase we do a deep dive into your story and understand how your relationship got to where it is today. In addition to this exploratory work we introduce strategies and tools to disrupt any patterns that continue to damage your relationship. Foundational to this phase is taking a hard look at your communication styles and introducing Silicon Valley Therapy's Island of Shared Meaning (ISM) Communication process.



Phase 2 – Rebuild Intimacy

Once damage is controlled we move to rebuilding intimacy. We learn about your love languages, love maps, and how you're doing with the 5 components of intimacy. Central to this phase is reconciliation. All relationships have past wounds. We introduce a 5-step process that guides you through reconciling past wounds so the past becomes the past. When this happens we are free to ground ourselves in the present and look to the future with renewed hope for nurturing emotional and physical intimacy.



Phase 3 – Sustained Intimacy

In this phase we focus on how we can take all the work from our previous two phases and set your relationship up for success for the long term. In all 3 phases we measure your growth using Silicon Valley Therapy's Couple's Progress Report (CPR). We take all the learning we've obtained through the CPR and elsewhere so we can dream big about the possibilities that your renewed relationship offers. Central to this phase is our Relationship Dreams tool which helps you take the best relational theory and bring it to life in your shared co-created life together.

References

Silicon Valley Therapy Resources

<https://www.siliconvalleytherapy.co/resources/>

Autism Prevalence

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>

Adult Autism

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/features/adults-living-with-autism-spectrum-disorder.html>