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Neurodivergence and Emotional Health

Emma Holmes
& Rosy Hall

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Agenda

- Introduction
- We are all unique
- True or False
- Mental Health v Neurodivergence
- Noticing
- Tell us
- Practical resources
- Key takeaways
- Questions

Introduction Emma & Rosy

Emma

- Ex-Education
- Co-ordinated ND and Mental Health Programmes (CAMHS and Local Authority)
- SEND Information, Advice, and Support Coordinator
- Trainer/Facilitator of training programmes (Autism/ADHD)
- Lived experience
- Passionate advocate

Rosy

- Local Authority Emotional Health Service Coordinator
- Certified National Autism Trainer Programme trainer (CAMHS community)
- PgCert Autism, Sheffield Hallam
- Peer support facilitator
- Specialist Practitioner (Autism/ADHD)
- Lived experience

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Before we start...



get comfy

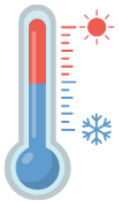


just listen





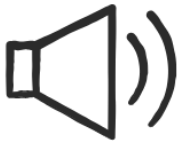
lighting



heat



doodle



noise

This is a safe space



shoes off



anything else



sensory aid

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“A forest is healthy because its trees are different, not because they are the same.” Neuroclastic



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True or False

Autism and ADHD are mental health conditions

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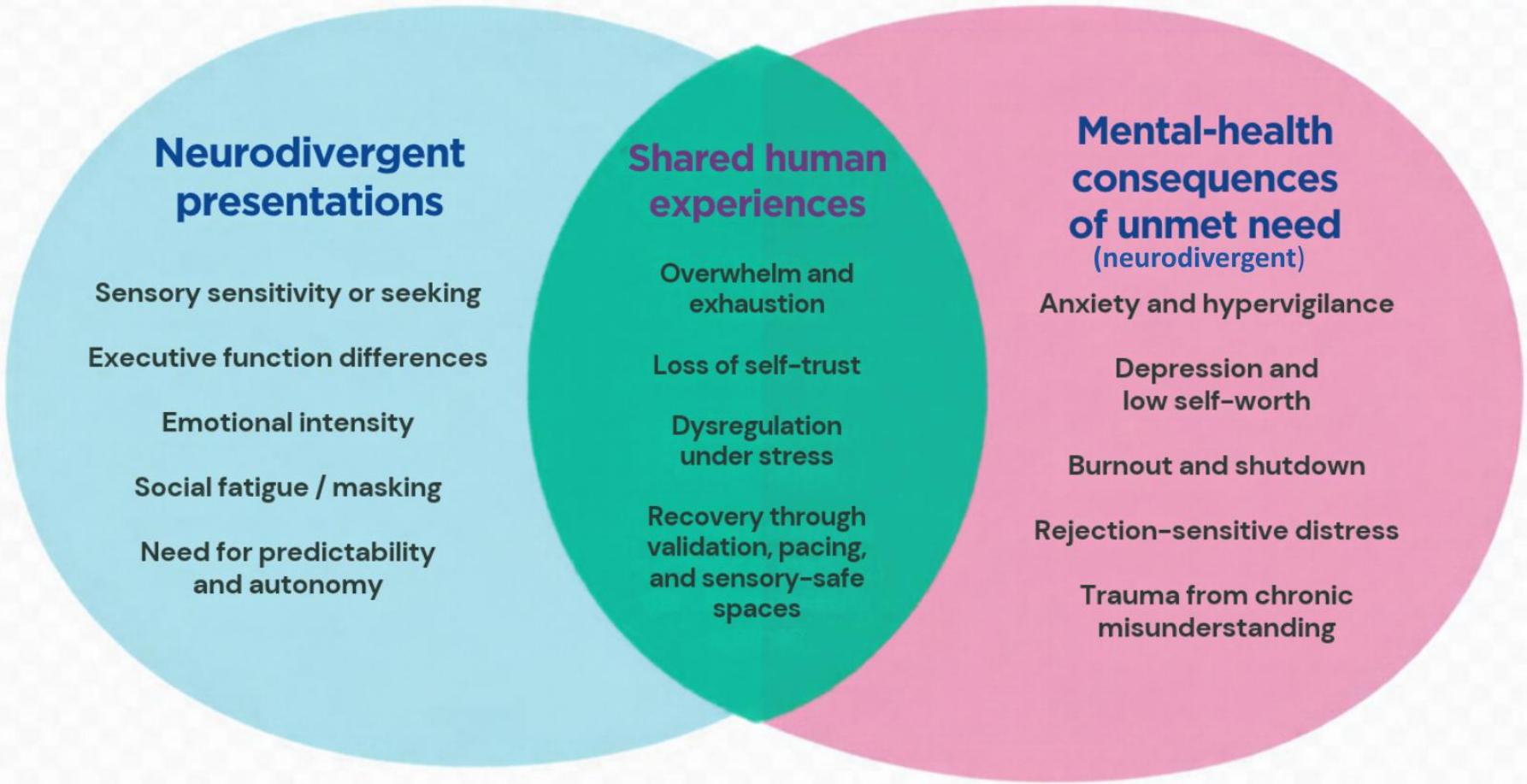
True or False

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) means a child is missing days of school

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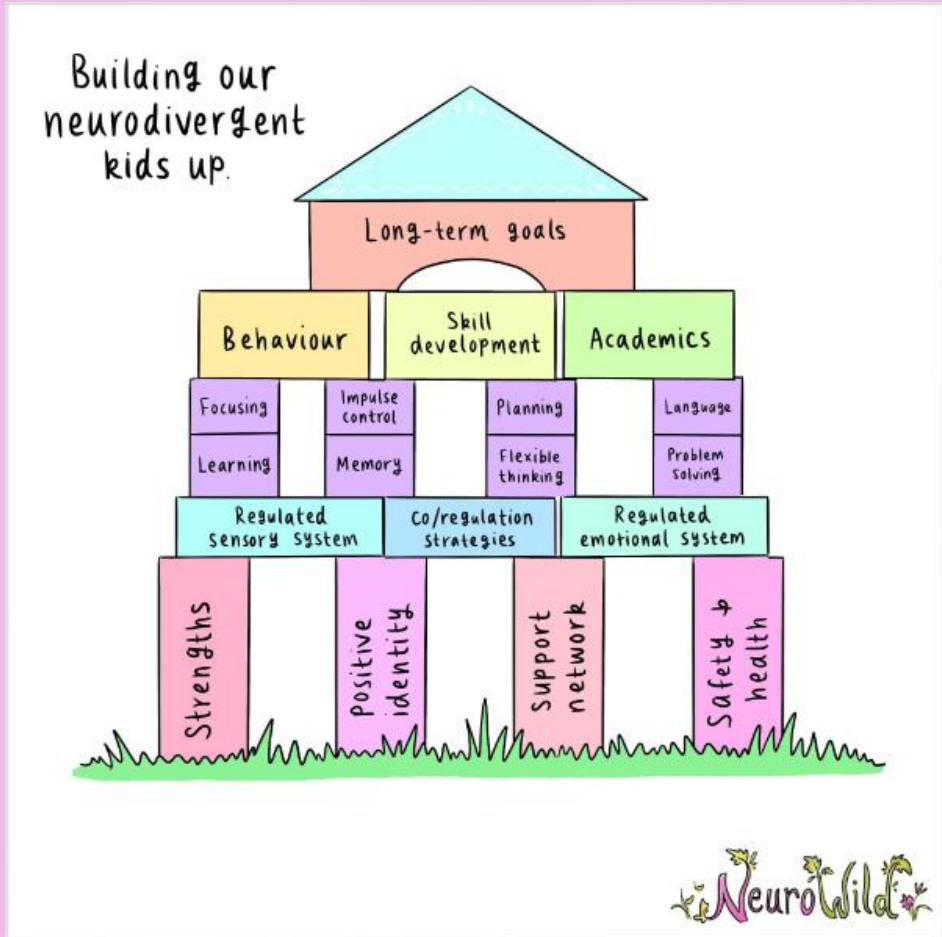


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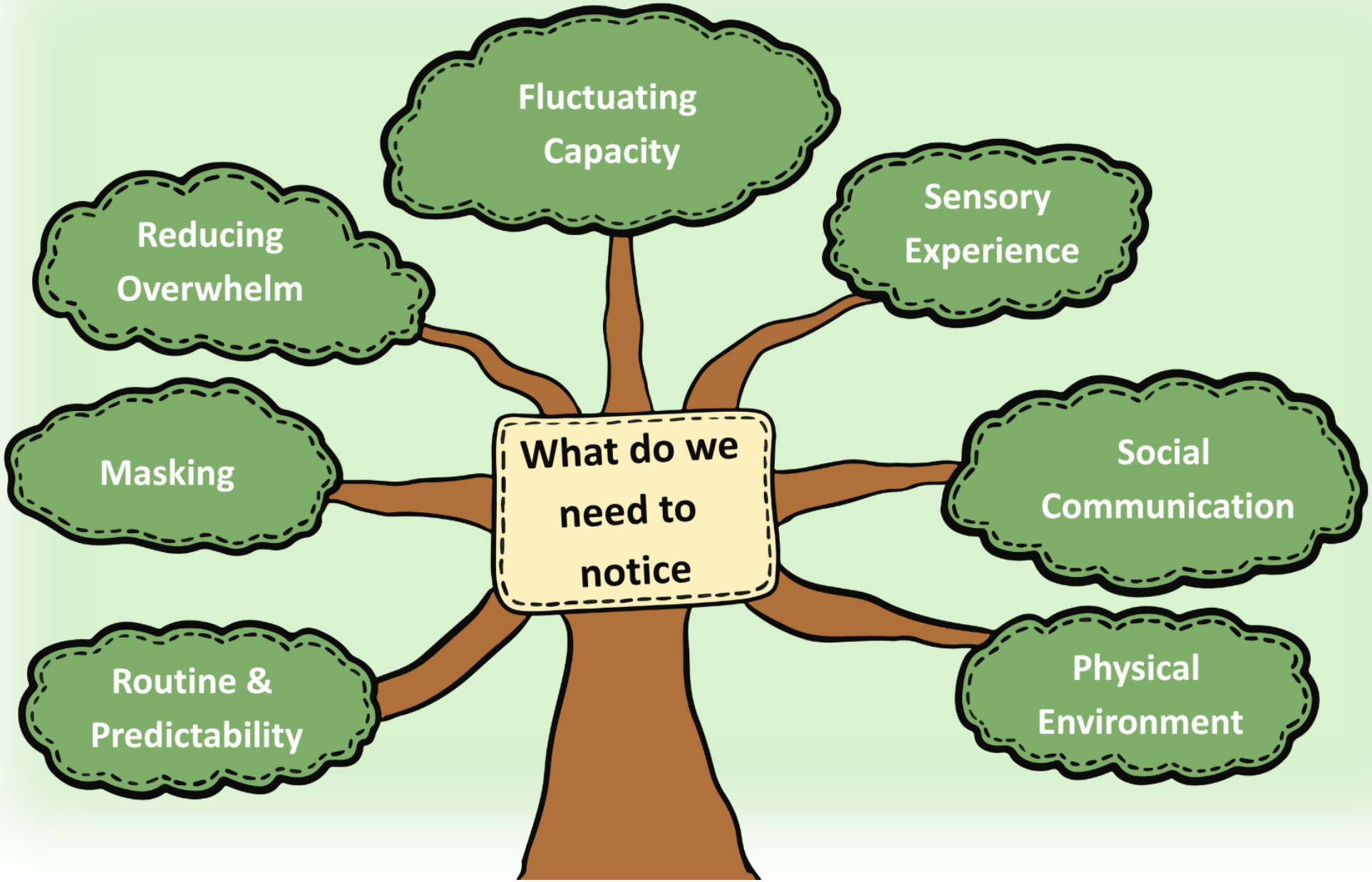


Mental-health challenges do not "come from" neurodivergence — they arise when environments and expectations don't fit a person's neurotype.

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Building our neurodivergent kids up.
Long-term goals
Behaviour
Skill development
Academics
Focusing
Impulse control
Planning
Language
Learning
Memory
Flexible thinking
Problem solving
Regulated sensory system
Co/regulation strategies
Regulated emotional system
Strengths
Positive identity
Support network
Safety & health
NeuroWild

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Fluctuating Capacity
Reducing Overwhelm
Sensory Experience
Masking
What do we need to notice
Social Communication
Routine & Predictability
Physical Environment

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Tell us...

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After-School Regulation Toolkit

They've held it together all day. What might help now?



Crunchy or chewy snack

Can help with regulation and provide sensory input.



Drink from a sports bottle or straw

Can be easier than an open cup and support regulation.



Toilet check

They may not have noticed they needed to go all day.



Quiet, low-demand time

A safe space to just be. No pressure.



Heavy work

Such as carrying a rucksack, moving laundry or helping around the house.



Deep pressure

Such as a weighted blanket, if this is something they already use safely and find helpful.



Movement

Gentle movement can help release built-up energy and reduce anxiety.



Reduce noise and sensory demands

A quieter environment can help their nervous system settle.



Fewer questions

Give them time. They may need to regulate before they can talk.

The Autistic Teacher

www.autisticteacher.co.uk

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GROUNDING Techniques for children



Senses

Name
5 Things you can see
5 Things you can feel
4 Things you can hear
3 Things you can smell
1 Thing you can taste



Teddy Breathing

Place a soft toy on your tummy, breath in an out and watch the teddy rise and fall with your breath. See if you can make bigger breaths to make teddy move more.



Sensory Regulation

Find movement that feels good:
Jumping on a trampoline
Swinging in a swing
Doing wall push ups
Dancing



Focus

Find something shiny or fluffy.
Spend some time looking at it. What colours can you see? How does it look? What does it feel like in your hands?



Alphabet Search

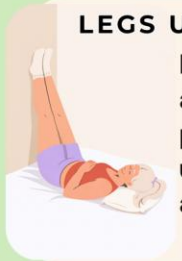
Find something in your room beginning with A, B, C etc. Make your way through the alphabet - can you find something for X?

By Amy Peters, author of Neurodivergent Affirming Therapy: Rethinking Approaches for Autistic and ADHD Clients - Jessica Kingsley Publishers
www.newgladecounselling.co.uk

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GROUNDING Techniques

LEGS UP THE WALL



Lay on the floor or a bed and position your legs up a wall, relax and breathe

TOUCH



Put your hands in cold water. Focus on the feeling

BREATHWORK



Breathe in for 4 seconds
Hold your breath for 4
Breathe out for 4
Hold for 4

INTENSE EXERCISE



e.g. shaking the body, dancing, jogging on the spot

FOCUS



Spend some time focusing on an object. How does it feel? How does it look? Pay attention to the detail

SENSES



5 things you can see
4 things you can feel
3 things you can hear
2 things you can smell
1 thing you can taste

SOUND



Listen to your favourite song or playlist

GO BAREFOOT



Walk outside on the grass with barefeet to literally 'ground' yourself

By Amy Peters, author of Neurodivergent Affirming Therapy: Rethinking Approaches for Autistic and ADHD Clients - Jessica Kingsley Publishers
www.newgladecounselling.co.uk

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Newglade
NEURODIVERGENT THERAPY SERVICES

Body SCAN

A body scan is a mindfulness technique which helps reduce anxiety symptoms, and help you strengthen the connection between your brain and your body.

Start at the head and bring your focus to each body part in turn and notice how they feel.

Notice any tension, aches and pains, or other sensations like tingling



Try tensing and then relaxing your muscles in the area you're focusing on

As you finish, take a deep breath and ask yourself "What do I need?"

TIP: Practice daily and use also whenever you start to feel anxious or overwhelmed. Notice where the feelings arise in the body

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neurodivergent friendly

SELF CARE Tips



Sensory

- Wrap yourself in a soft blanket
- Puton noise cancelling headphones
- Listen to your favourite music or white noise
- Change into cosy comfy clothes
- Dim or change the lighting
- Run cool water over your hands
- Find a scent you like
- Eat a sensory safesnack



Connection

- Bodydoubling with a friend (oruse an video of someone working or crafting)
- Connect with yourself - what do you need right now?
- Engage with/watch your favourite social media account
- Listen to a podcast or audiobook
- Spend time with a pet or outdoorsin nature



Body-based

- Shake your hands,feet or stim freely
- Drop your shoulders, unclench your jaw and take one big breath
- Lie down with your legs up the wall
- Dance!
- Sing - challenge yourself to hit the long notes or just hum along
- Drink some cool water and concentrate on the sensation



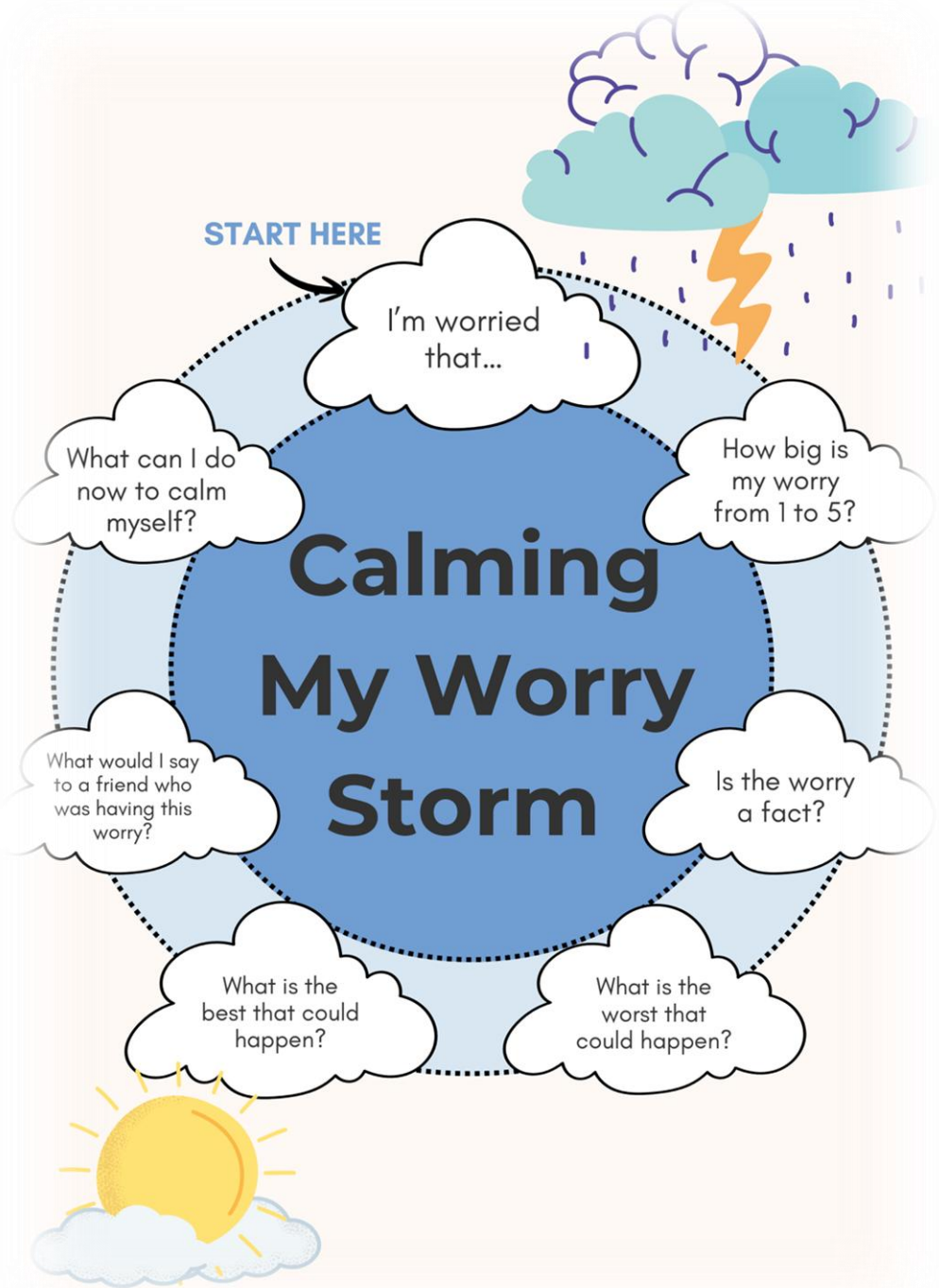
Emotional

- Do a 2 minute brain dump
- Turn off notifications or spend 10 minutes with your phone in another room
- Draw a doodle or find an emoji that matches your mood
- Voicenote yourself and say whatever you need to

By Amy Peters, author of Neurodivergent Affirming Therapy: Rethinking Approaches for Autistic and ADHD Clients - Jessica Kingsley Publishers

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CYP Wellbeing Resources – with thanks to facebook.com/wellnesswithcharl

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today's check-in

LOW MOOD

www.AnxietyHelpBox.com



1. How are you feeling right now?

2. What might be making you feel this way?

3. What usually helps you feel a little better?

4. What is one kind thing you can do for yourself right now?



5. Who can you talk to or ask for help?

6. What is one small step you can take today to help your mood?

It's okay to have tough days. You are important.
Be kind to yourself. Better days can happen.

with thanks to anxietyhelpbox.com

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What is wrong with you?

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Validation Scripts

FOR PARENTS



Dr. Danika Maddocks &
Dr. Megan Anna Neff

Neurodivergent insights

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General Hard Moments



"You weren't expecting that."

"It makes sense you're feeling that way."

"This is stressful / overwhelming / exhausting / tough / tricky."

"I know you hate that."

"Thanks for letting me know you don't like this."

"This is a hard moment."

"This is no fun / no good."



"Who designed it this way?"

Neurodivergent insights

Morning or Bedtime Routine



"Brushing teeth is no fun."



"I know, showering is your least favorite activity."

"Getting through all these bedtime things can feel exhausting."

"This is a lot to keep track of."

"Those sandals are tricky to buckle."





"Someone should design pajamas that put themselves on."

Neurodivergent insights

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School or Homework Stress



"Homework is no fun."

"You already worked hard all day."

"Hm...I can see why you solved it that way. That's what I would have done too."

"You probably just want to relax."

"It would be better if there was never any homework."

"You probably just want to relax."



"Why did they write it this way? It's confusing."



Neurodivergent insights

Perceived Unfairness



"You hate when things aren't even."

"It would be better if it were equal."



"It makes sense you're upset about that."

"I messed that up."

"Yeah, that rule's not fair."



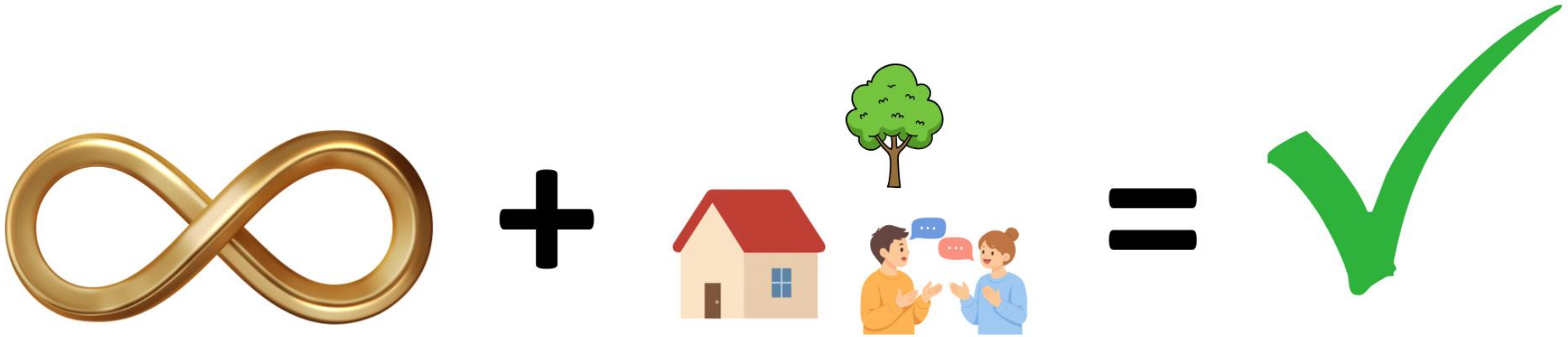
Neurodivergent insights

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Key Take Aways...

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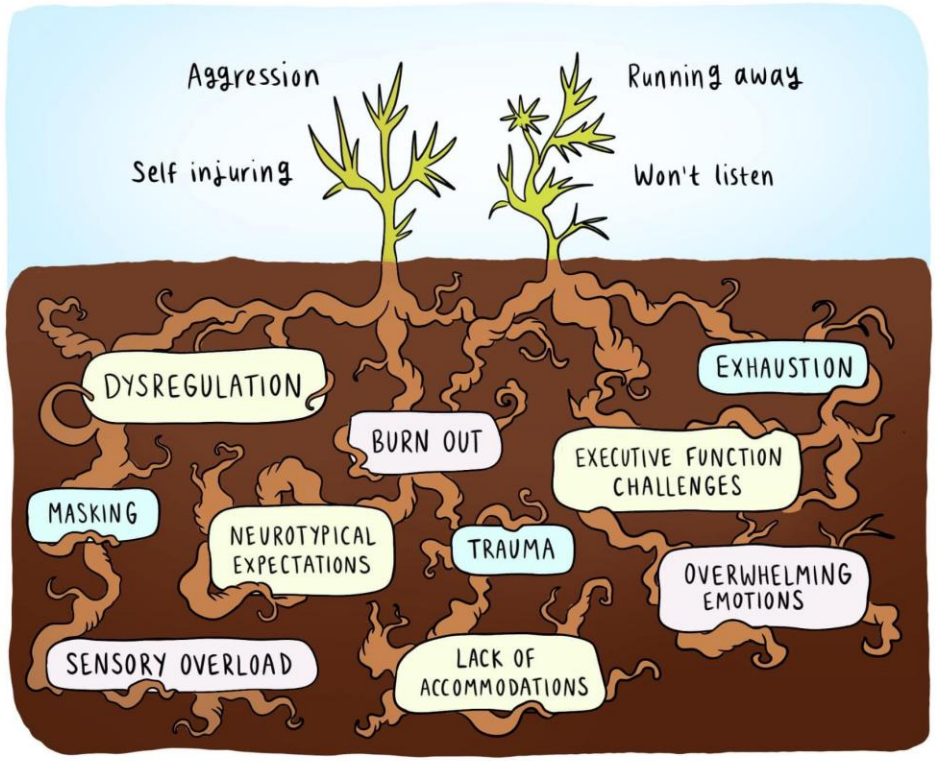


Autism + Environment = Outcome

Dr Luke Beardon

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"This child's behaviour is so hard-
we don't know what to do."



Sort out the causes underneath.

NeuroWild

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Resources: Tools to collaborate with

Tools and Practical Resources - Barriers to Education Created in response to the rising number of young people struggling to attend school, this website offers neuroaffirming practical support and guidance for both parents and professionals, along with an inclusive environments toolkit.
www.barrierstoeducation.co.uk/bte_tools-to-education-school-checklist

https://www.spectrumgaming.net/post/introduction-to-autism-anxiety
https://www.spectrumgaming.net/post/what-is-autistic-burnout Spectrum Gaming have lots of resources specifically for neurodivergent young people; here are two in particular that may be useful.

www.spectrumgaming.net/post/energy-accounting Spectrum Gaming also thinks about each individual as different and has different things that drain their battery. Some things that are drainers for one person, might charge energy for another.

www.autisticgirlsnetwork.org.uk/downloads/ A collection of resources including a list of reasonable adjustments, information on the internal presentation of autism, a school passport template, and other excellent materials across the website, including their neuroaffirming book list.

www.autismcentral.nhs.uk Offers support for working with neurodivergent children in the classroom. Five sessions are available, and you can sign up for free.

neurodivergentinsights.com develops affirming, insight-driven tools that help bridge the gap between psychological research and everyday neurodivergent experience. (Validation Scripts)

Resources: Tools to collaborate with

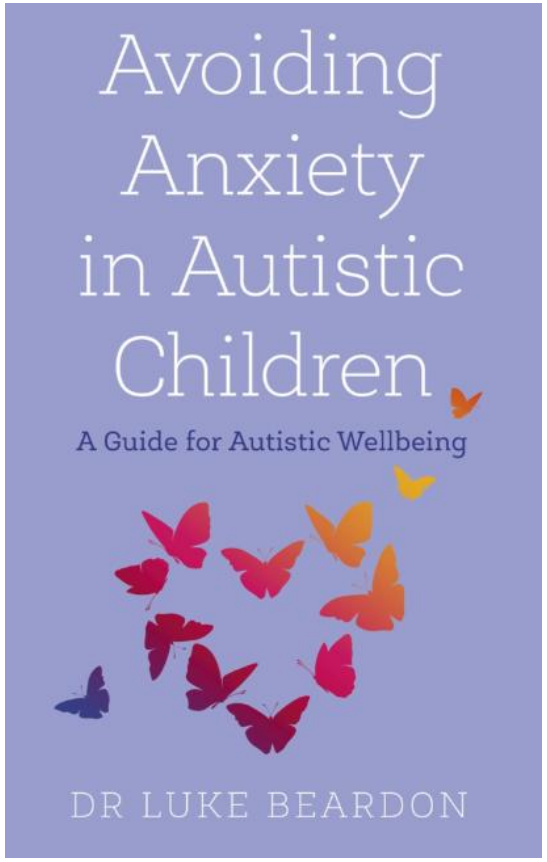
laurahellfeld.substack.com

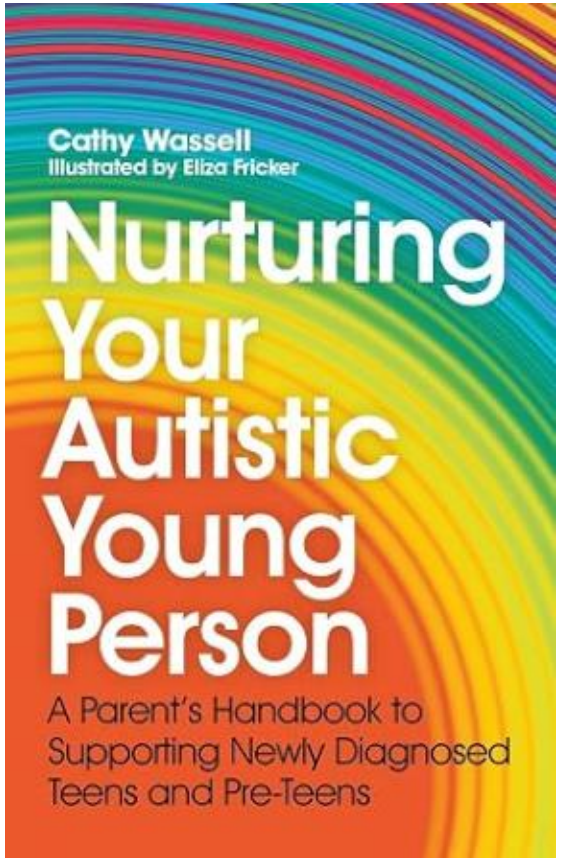
Laura is a neurodivergent nurse and has numerous resources to help such as

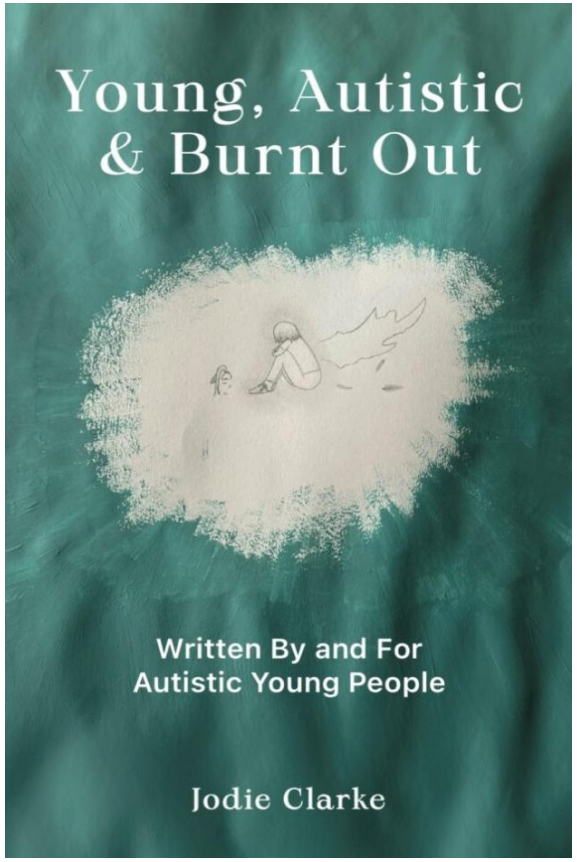
- Protecting Relationships When Sleep is Hard for PDAers, Blog
- Why Waking Up in the Morning Is Hard (It's Hormones, Not Behaviour)
- Going to Bed for Any Other Reason Than Sleep: Taking the Pressure Off
- Webinar Recording: What can we do about sleep difficulties when home doesn't feel safe?
- Waking Up Can Be Hard: Understanding Sleep Inertia and Easing Into the Day
- The Power of a Tiny Nap: Why even a few minutes can make a difference
- Monotropism After Dark: Why Your Brain May Need Time to Settle Before Sleep

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Resources: Tools to collaborate with

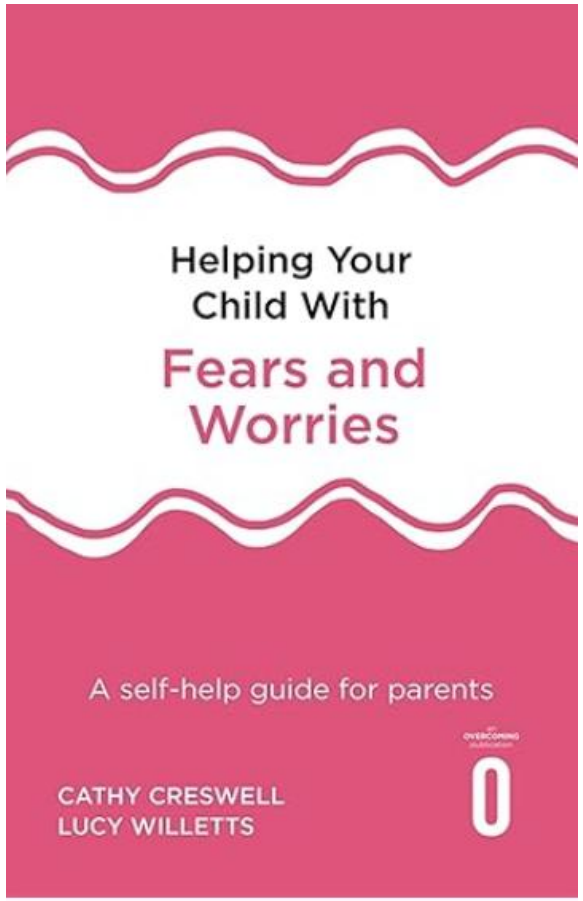




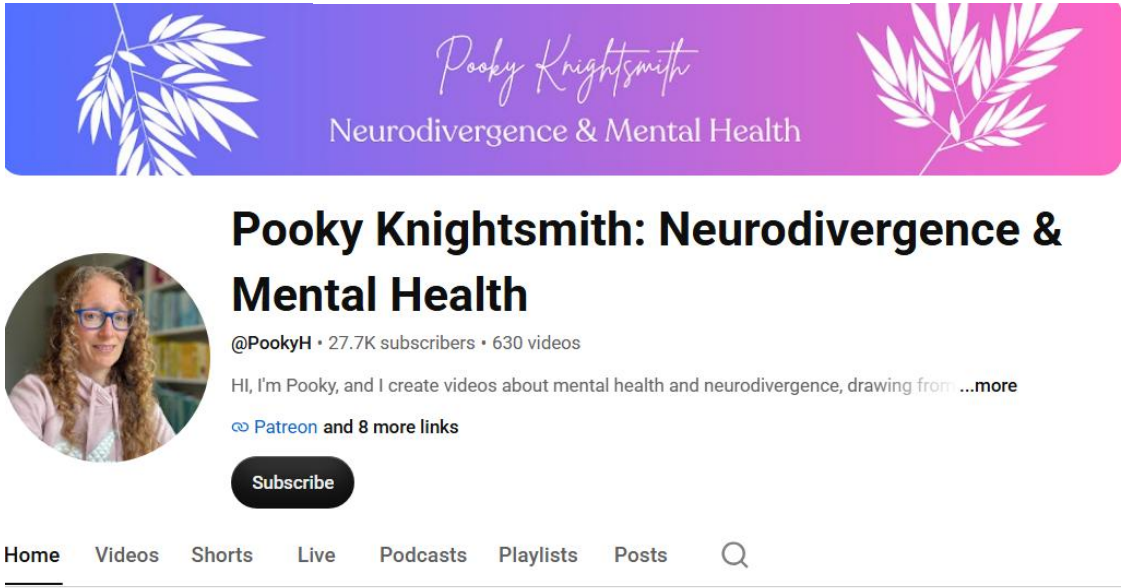


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Resources: Tools to collaborate with



YouTube



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Thank you for being curious

Any questions?