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Proud Aspy Mom Newsletter
December 2022

Adulting Defined

Recently I spoke with someone who shared they were autistic. This woman was in her 60's and never knew why she processed differently. We contemplated would it have helped if she had known of her diagnosis all these years- and her immediate response was yes. She went on to explain the following:

- It would have helped to know why her hearing was heightened in some cases.
- It would have helped to know why smells drove her insane.
- It would have helped to know why she was so creative and functional in many aspects and frustrated and challenged in other areas of her life.
- It would have explained her challenges with socializing
- It would have helped to know she was not alone.

While the woman further explained she has had a beautiful and vibrant life - her most helpful statement was that everyone desires to know who they are. I thought about this a lot recently as I was researching transition best practices for Neuro-diverse persons. What I found was unfortunately overwhelming.

I learned that there is a strong correlation with poor health outcomes because there is typically not a strong advocate to support the loved one with ASD as they age. Consequently - when there are communication challenges there is no one to bridge the gap. I learned when I asked in my "unscientific study" what are your plans for your loved one- there was no consistent answer but rather confusion. For example, My daughter will live with me as an adult -or- I guess my son will live with a relative -or- I do not have a plan and I am hopeful that are places for my child to go.

The answers became worse when I asked how do you plan to finance your

adult loved one. There is silence. Literally no response.

Adulting for anyone is socially, emotionally and financially challenging. The best advice I received thus far was to create a menu. Sounds strange but the analogy worked for me. Everyone has different preferences. As parents like us minimize our role or transition our advocacy skills to loved ones with ASD, encourage several choices and hopefully we end up with a premium selection.

Autism as an adult: 'On the many days I spend alone I forget how to talk'
by: Susan Dunne

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OCD Is Real

Many people, including me cavalierly toss around the term Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, ("OCD") often. We say things like- I clean too much- I must have OCD or that person must have order- they have OCD or that person is too structured-they must have OCD. BUT I learned recently this is simply not true. Compulsion + Obsession + Reasonable Fear = OCD. The fear is reasonable to the person experiencing the compulsion and obsession.

I do not think I understood the present fear component of the formula until recently. Now- I fully understand. The person experiencing the fear, despite what you may think- truly feels the fear is real.

- Even if it SEEMS irrational
- Even if it SEEMS unfounded
- Even if it SEEMS completely unrealistic
- The FEAR IS REAL to the person experiencing it

Add the compulsion and obsession and you understand OCD far better. Although there are some shared characteristics OCD and ASD are NOT the same. ASD does not derive from obsessive or compulsive behavior however there are some repetitive behaviors that create confusion.

The therapeutic methods are different. Cognitive behavior therapy helps (1) identify the issues present, (2) determine plausible distractions and (3) reduce or minimize anxiety producing situations.

OCD is real! Learning how to approach loved ones who experience OCD is a substantial step towards fostering independence.

Autism vs OCD
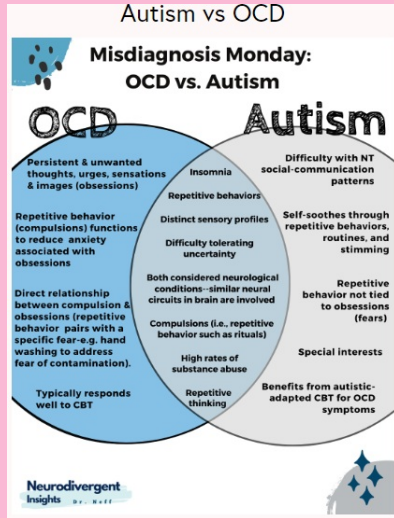
"OCD is characterized by persistent distressing thoughts, ideas, or sensations that cause significant fear and anxiety (obsessions), followed by specific behaviors such as handwashing and door checking (compulsions) intended to reduce the obsessions. It must impact daily functioning and take up significant portions of a person's life (one hour) ([American Psychiatric Association](#))"

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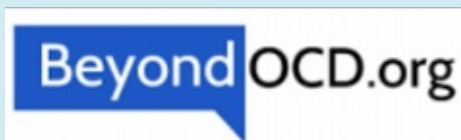
Cognitive Behavior Therapy

"A special kind of therapy called Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is the treatment of choice for OCD. CBT involves the use of two evidence-based techniques: Exposure and Response Prevention therapy (ERP) and Cognitive Therapy (CT)"

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Holidays - Help!

The holidays are stressful for many families and we are no different.

The decorating- THE decorating, the DECORATING!

The gifts- THE gifts- the GIFTS!

The gatherings- THE gatherings! the GATHERINGS!

The other STUFF- STUFF-STUFF!

As much as you try to minimize stress it is just TOO difficult. This year- my advice, again for what it is worth is to accept the inevitable beautiful chaos and create lasting memories.

It is never easy for families with ASD to fill two to three weeks of unstructured time for our loved ones. We need HOLIDAY HELP! By the time the holiday ends we need another one to recuperate- but the magical aspect of just being in each other's presence is worth every minute.

Autistic Adults Share What Helped (and What Didn't) Manage the Stress of the Holidays.

Click Here to Learn More

Podcasts

This month I am honored to share my platform with three women I truly admire, Tiffany Ford and LiFT Founders Keli Mondello and Kim Kuruzovich.

Tiffany is a long time St. Pete servant leader who has shared her time and talent with hundreds of budding thespians. Keli and Kim are Mom's like me- sharing there story and amazingly -CHANGING LIVES!

Goals for ME as we head into 2023!

- **Be present**
- **Enjoy the Journey**
- **Share space with meaningful people**
- **Embrace beauty**

Cheers to a strong and healthy New Year!

In case you missed it ... view our November **Newsletter**

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