

## Resources Handout from Dr. Scott Michael Robertson

### Resources for Identity, Disclosure, and Culture/Community:

- [Welcome to the Autistic Community](#) by ASAN
- [Information & Resources for Newly Diagnosed or Recognized Autistic Women and Nonbinary Individuals](#) by AWN
- [Loud Hands: Autistic People, Speaking](#) by ASAN
- [And Straight on Till Morning: Essays on Autism Acceptance](#) by ASAN
- [Sincerely, Your Autistic Child: What People on the Autism Spectrum Wish Their Parents Knew About Growing Up, Acceptance, and Identity](#) by AWN

### Resources for K-12 Education:

- [Stanford's Network for K-12 Neurodiversity Education and Advocacy \(NNEA\)](#)
- [Virginia's I'm Determined Project: Resources for Educators](#)
- [Virginia's I'm Determined Project: Resources for Families](#)

### Resources for Higher Education:

- [Navigating College: A Handbook on Self-Advocacy](#) by ASAN
- [Empowering Leadership: A Systems Change Guide for Autistic College Students and Those with Other Disabilities](#) by ASAN
- [National Center for College Students with Disabilities](#)—supported by the U.S. Department of Education

### Resources for Transition and Employment:

- [Roadmap to Transition: A Handbook for Autistic Youth Transitioning to Adulthood](#) by ASAN
- [An Autistic View of Employment](#) by Autism NOW Center in partnership with ASAN
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)—supported by the U.S. Department of Labor

### Resources for Community Living and Health and Wellness:

- [Healthcare Toolkit for Adults on the Autism Spectrum and their Primary Care Providers](#)—developed by the AASPIRE Project (online portal)
- [Accessing Home and Community-Based Services: A Guide for Self-Advocates](#) by ASAN
- [What is Autistic Burnout?](#) by AWN

## Resource for Parents of Newly Diagnosed Autistic Kids:

ASAN's [Start Here: A Guide for Parents of Autistic Kids](#)

## Websites for Organizations, including Self-Advocacy Organizations:

- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
- [Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network \(AWN\)](#)
- [The Neurodivergent Teacher](#)
- [DREAM: Disability Rights, Education, and Mentoring](#) (higher education)
- [DisabledInSTEM](#)
- [Therapist Neurodiversity Collective](#)
- [Autistic Doctors International](#)
- [Lawyers with Disabilities Network](#)

# Empowering Enhanced Supports and Improved Access for Autistic Youth and Adults: Insights from Lived and Professional Perspectives

Lunchtime Keynote Presentation by  
Scott Michael Robertson, PhD

William Carey University's 2nd Annual Autism  
& Neurodiversity Conference

Thursday, March 9, 2023



# The Presenter's Background Consists of...



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Recipient, Henry Viscardi Achievement Award

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# This Framing Quote Marks Today's Talk

“Like tiny seeds with potent power to push through tough ground and become mighty trees, we hold innate reserves of unimaginable strength. We are resilient.”

—Catherine DeVrye, *The Gift of Nature*



# Objectives for This Presentation Include...

- Outline self-determination and its role in empowerment for success
- Differentiate engagement to foster neurodiversity at school/work and help empower neurodivergent students and workers
- Discuss the role of flexible use of technologies (high-tech and low-tech) to help address challenges and barriers
- Describe how focused supports and accommodations can help address key barriers and challenges



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# Rehabilitation Act Turns 50

- Rehabilitation Act of 1973 turning 50 officially in September
  - Passed as the first major civil rights law in America to protect the rights of people with disabilities and drive access and inclusion
  - Signed by President Nixon into federal law
- Schoolhouse Rock also turned 50 years old this year
- Americans with Disabilities Act turning 33 years old in July

# Foster Self-Determination for Inclusion

- Ability to cause change to make opportunities happen in one's own life, have control over life activities, and exercise a need for choice-making [1]
- Associated with:
  - Autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs fulfillment [2]
  - Tailored supports, services, and accommodations (personalized)
  - Self-advocacy skills (communication, rights, resources, and leadership) [3]
  - Successful outcomes for quality of life, inclusion, and access [4]





# Resilience Study Offers Key Insights

- Qualitative study (2020) on resilience co-directed by my colleagues in occupational therapy research and me
- 11 autistic adult participants in the qualitative survey shared their perspectives and thoughts on resilience
- Key theme on Being Proactive/Self-advocacy:
  - “The day before an important day I don’t do as much so that I have the mental and physical energy to do the next day. If there is something that bothers/distracts me that I can stop, I advocate for myself to make that thing stop happening. For example, the ticking of a clock at an appointment, I get the clock taken out of the room”
  - “Deep breathes, asking questions”

# Advance Dignity of Risk for Access

- Self-determination and right to take reasonable risks in life
- Essential connection between informed (measured) risk-taking and dignity to support quality of life outcomes [5]
- Alignment with UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:  
“Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons” [6]



CONVENTION on the RIGHTS of  
PERSONS with DISABILITIES

# Consider This Anecdote for Dignity of Risk

- 3-week high school trip to France, including 2 weeks staying with a host family in the Paris suburbs
- Participation by a neurodivergent student with limited experience traveling away from home at the time

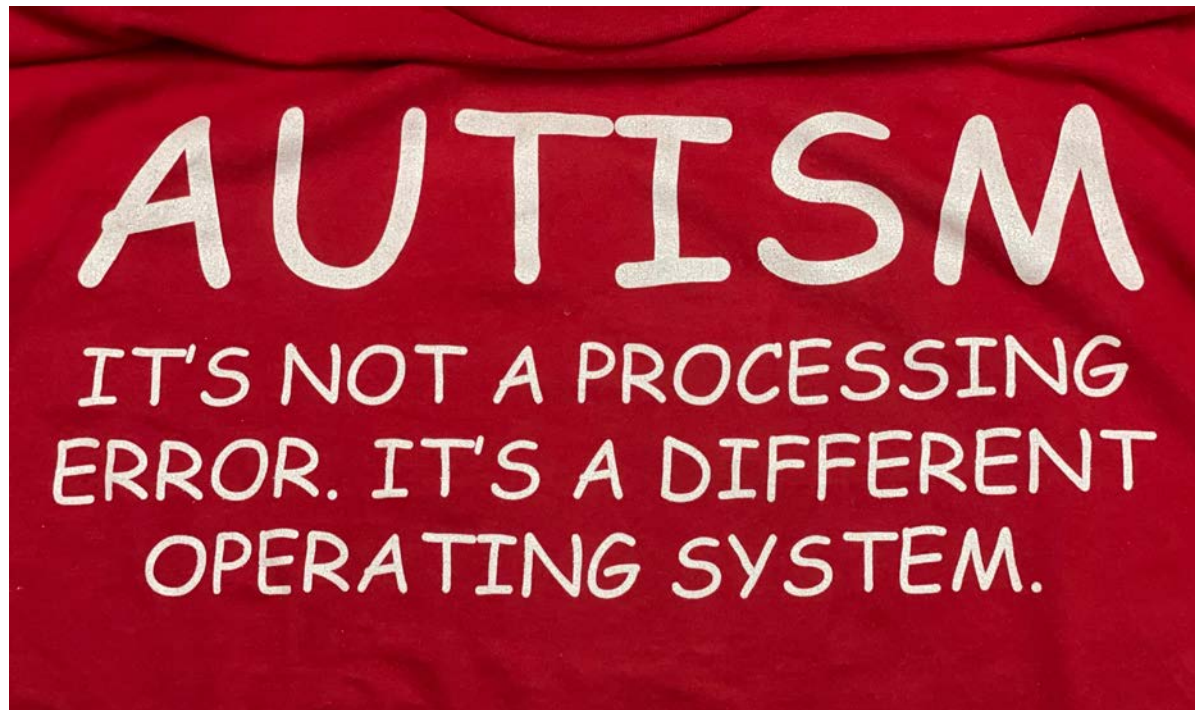


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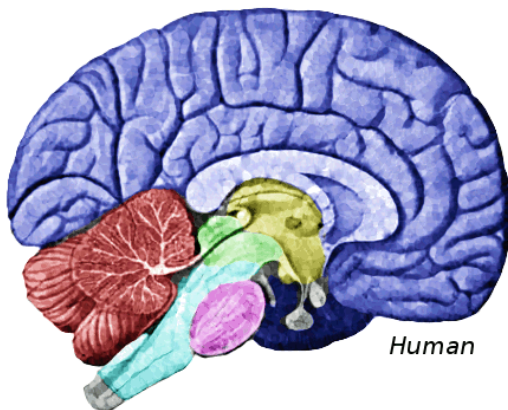
# Think Differently about Neurodivergence and Neurodiversity at Work...



# Foster Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence

## Neurodiversity

- Diversity of all thinking, learning, and perception
- Parallel to biodiversity and Earth's ecosystems

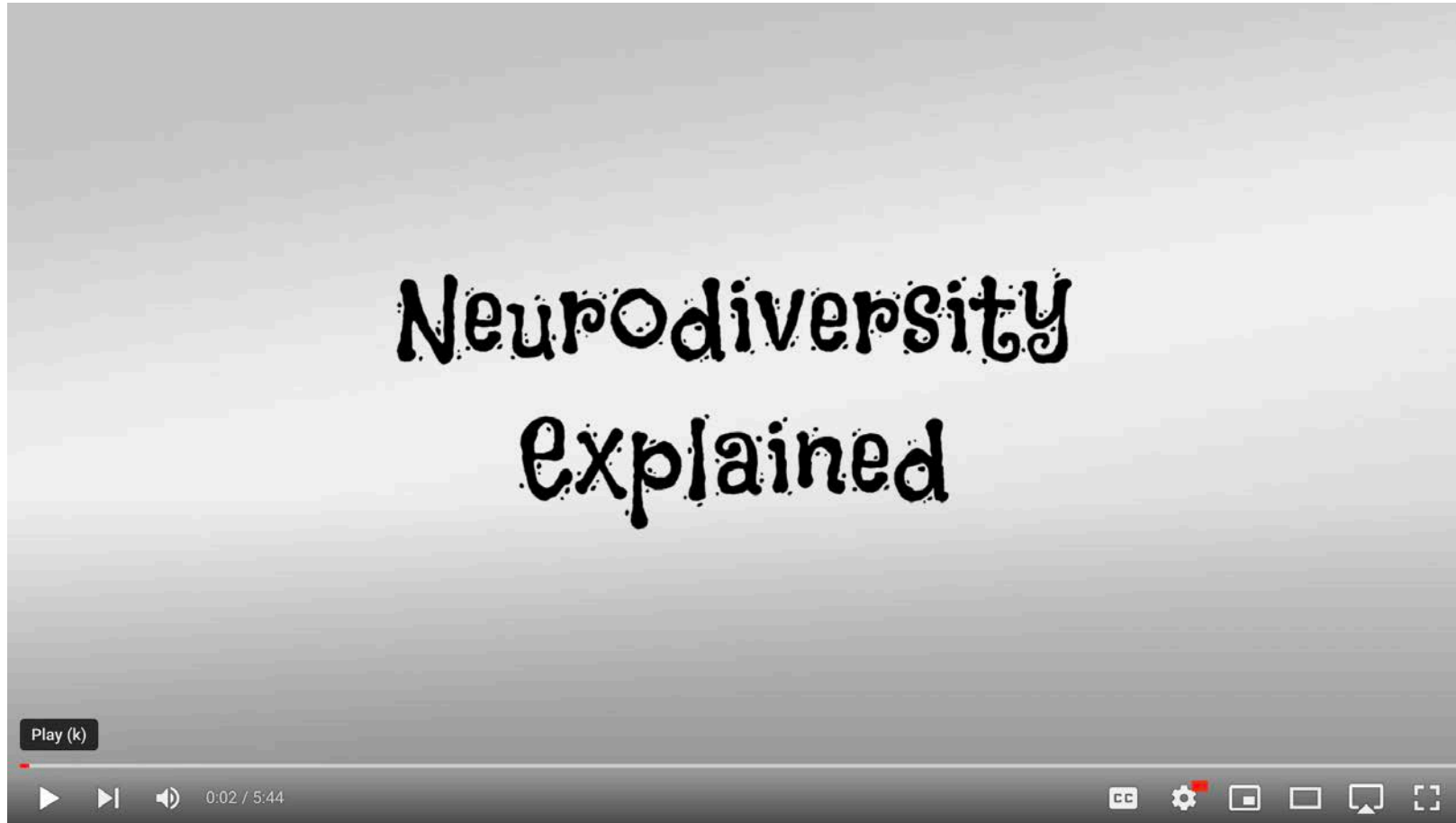


## Neurodivergence/Neurodistinction

- Atypical thinking, learning, perception, and information processing [outliers]
- Divergence measured on cognitive testing and shown in human thought processes (e.g., autism, ADHD, intellectual disability, etc.)



# Video Spotlights Neurodiversity with Lego



# QOL Study Offers Key Perspective

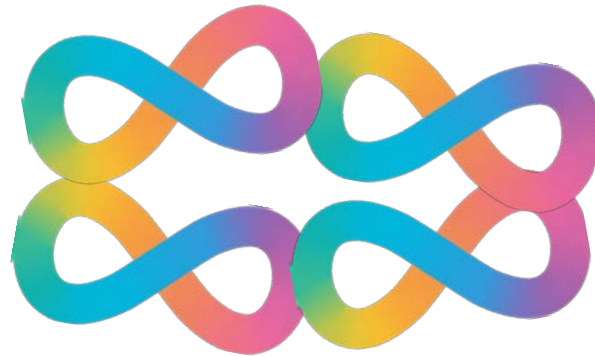
- Qualitative study (2016-2017) on quality of life co-directed by my colleagues in occupational therapy research and me
- 25 autistic adult participants in the qualitative survey shared their perspectives and thoughts on quality of life
- Key theme on Lack of Understanding from Non-Autistic People:  
“Autism effects me most in that nob-autistic people expect me to know the boxes in which their reality resides & to put my reality into those boxes... even though I do not see boxes in my own life”

# April Commemorates National Autism Month

- UN World Autism Day annual event ([World Autism Day website](#))
- Nationwide events celebrating achievements of autistic adults, adolescents, and children in school, work, and community life
- Efforts to highlight personalized supports and services to help address challenges and barriers



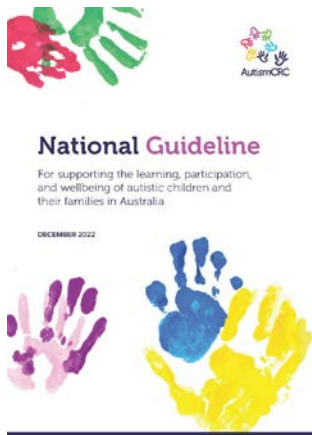
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# Australian Guideline Supports Neurodiversity

- New guideline with recommendations for supporting the learning, participation, and wellbeing of autistic children and their families in Australia
- 84 consensus-based recommendations developed by Autism CRC
- Strong emphasis on neurodiversity-affirming therapies and human rights
- Major focus on early supports helping lay the foundation for a positive future and delivery of supports in the community and clinical settings
- Informed development by input from more than 1,000 Australians, including autistic adults, family members, and practitioners



# Australian Guideline Adopts Core Principles

- Evidence-Based (including the approach to assessment)
- Individual and Family-Centered
- Holistic Framework
- Strengths Focused
- Equity
- Lifespan Perspective



# Explore Supportive Technologies for Life

- Role for brainstorming and exploration of supportive high-tech and low-tech technologies to address barriers and challenges
- Solution frequently arising from from low-cost technologies
- Value from moderate and high-tech technologies to help drive self-determination, self-advocacy, and life success



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# Adopt Empowering Practices (School/Work)

- Positive encouragement (frequent) and flexible thinking
- Informed mentoring programs and systems navigator programs
- Inclusive design, Universal Design (UD), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Engaged collaboration with neurodivergent students and workers
- Focused, personalized accommodations, supports, and services that can adjust and shift to meet access and support needs



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# UDL Emphasizes These Key Principles

- Multiple means of engagement by learners (the why)
- Multiple means of representation of information for learning (the what)
- Multiple means of action and expression (the how)



# UD Emphasizes These Core Principles

- Equitable use by diverse abilities
- Flexibility in use by preferences and abilities
- Simple and intuitive use regardless of experience, language skills, etc.
- Perceptible information regardless of sensory processing differences
- Tolerance for error to help minimize key hazards
- Low physical effort to ensure use with a low amount of fatigue
- Size and space for approach and use to fit varied differences in human bodies, postures, and mobility

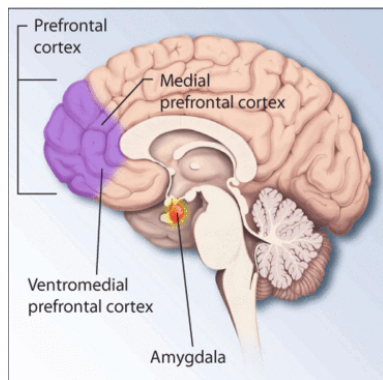
# Connect Practices to Trauma-Focused Issues

- Trauma-informed approaches and care that acknowledge the role and impact of trauma in everyday life and health and wellness
- New way to think about how to support empowerment
- Higher rate of trauma among people with disabilities, including neurodivergent people
- Flexible thinking about trauma at the forefront and its connection to difficulties



# Strategies Drive Trauma-Focused Support

- Train all staff members on trauma-informed approaches and care
- Consider supports, resources, and services for the long-range impact of trauma, including adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Explore supports and resources that can help reduce stress levels and lower stress responses in spaces and engagement among people
- Explore which facets of everyday life and experiences may trigger trauma and painful memories from past life events, as well as PTSD
- Ask “How can we support your success together?” and “What key challenges have you faced?” instead of asserting “What’s wrong with you?”





# This Quote Reinforces the Opening Message

“We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.”

—Jesse Owens



# My Contact Information

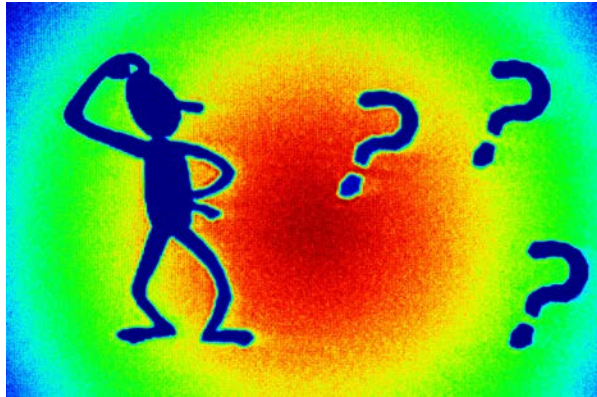
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# Questions?



"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

—Henry David Thoreau



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