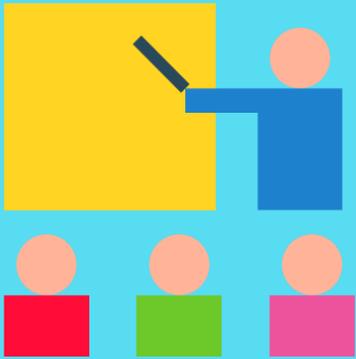


Why We Don't Train Social Skills

Therapist Neurodiversity Collective International

• Therapy • Advocacy • Education •
Established January 2018

"SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING"



Therapist Neurodiversity Collective therapists don't "train" social skills. We don't lead "social skills groups," or provide social skills "intervention" for autistic children and adolescents to learn to imitate neurotypical social skills through masking. We believe in teaching Autistic Acceptance to all children. We provide therapy to teach self-advocacy, self-regulation, perspective taking, safety/boundaries, and problem-solving skills using a trauma informed and pro-neurodiversity approach.

AUTISTIC MASKING

is the use of conscious or unconscious strategies, which may be explicitly learned (through social skills training) or implicitly developed by watching and mirroring neuromajority peers, to minimize the appearance of authentic autistic characteristics in social settings. Autistic masking can be quite harmful, leading to depression, anxiety, lowered self-esteem, autistic burnout, and even suicidal ideation.



AUTISTIC BURNOUT

It's utterly exhausting to mirror neurotypical social skills, mask one's authentic autistic communication style, force eye-contact, imitate body language and facial expressions, conceal stimming, ignore and mask sensory overload, hide quirky behavior, and tone police oneself. In the majority of circumstances the onus is on the Autistic person to socialize, communicate and behave like non-autistic people. Autistic masking leads to autistic burnout.

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING DEVALUES AUTISTIC HUMANS

The true lesson of training social skills teaches autistic children that unless they learn to successfully mask their autistic traits, they are inherently less valuable members of the human race. Social skills training communicates conditional acceptance based on the conditions that non-autistic people determine. It's not fair or ethical.



CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH



is demonstrating that Autistic and Allistic communicate equally well, just differently. It's the mismatch between Autistic and Allistic communication styles that causes problems. Therefore, the "social skills training" model that most schools, clinics and private practices still mandate today for Autistic children is ableist and prejudiced. Social skills training inhibits authenticity, leads to anxiety, self-consciousness, self-doubt and hypervigilance in social interactions.

Our autistic students and clients exist in a constant state of anxiety - all day and every day. And yet, we as clinicians continue to write therapy goals that take away their self-determination, eliminate self-advocacy, attempt to change their entire personalities, "extinguish" their harmless behaviors, force compliance for ridiculous things like eye contact, rote social scripting, mandatory response to all communication attempts from others and compliance with social expectations such as "responding appropriately to bullying or not responding in anger" that even our "typical" students are not expected to meet. It needs to stop.

Just say NO to Social Skills Training.