Therapist Neurodiversity Collective International

• Therapy • Advocacy • Education •

Established January 2018

# EYE CONTACT GOALS

## STOP WRITING THESE ABLEIST THERAPY GOALS

**Just a Few of the Countries Where Eye-Contact is not always considered part of Cultural Norms:**

**China, Japan, Iran (gender interactional related), Vietnam (gender interactional related), Cambodia, Indonesia (disrespectful to elders), Kenya (disrespectful to elders or higher status), Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand, Australia (sometimes), Canada (sometimes), Saudi Arabia (gender interactional related).**

Demanding eye-contact from Autistic people puts them into a fight or flight response (activation of the amygdala).

Hadjikhani, N., Åsberg Johnels, J., Zürcher, N.R. et al. Look me in the eyes: constraining gaze in the eye-region provokes abnormally high subcortical activation in autism. Sci Rep 7, 3163 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-03378-5

Many (Autistic people) say that looking others in the eye is uncomfortable or stressful for them -- some will even say that "it burns" -- all of which points to a neurological cause.

Massachusetts General Hospital. "Why do those with autism avoid eye contact? Imaging studies reveal overactivation of subcortical brain structures in response to direct gaze." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 15 June 2017. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/06/170615213252.htm

In addition, variation in eye fixation within autistic individuals was strongly and positively associated with amygdala activation across both studies, suggesting a heightened emotional response associated with gaze fixation in autism.

Dalton KM, Nacewicz BM, Johnstone T, Schaefer HS, Gernsbacher MA, Goldsmith HH, Alexander AL, Davidson RJ. Gaze fixation and the neural circuitry of face processing in autism. Nat Neurosci. 2005 Apr;8(4):519-26. doi: 10.1038/nn1421. Epub 2005 Mar 6. PMID: 15750588; PMCID: PMC4337787.

Therapists - Eye contact goals are for the benefit of neurotypical communication partners, not Autistic people. Neurodivergent listening skills are different. #DiversityInSocialIntelligence

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