Pathology Model

Autism "refers to a group of complex neurodevelopment disorders characterized by repetitive & characteristic patterns of behavior & difficulties with social communication & interaction. The symptoms are present from early childhood & affect daily functioning."

NIH - https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Fact-Sheets/Autism-Spectrum-Disorder-Fact-Sheet

There is no cure for autism & therapists should not provide therapy with the intent to "cure" autism.

Neurodiversity Model

ASAN (Autistic Self Advocacy Network):
"Autism is a developmental disability that affects how we experience the world around us. Autistic people are an important part of the world. Autism is a normal part of life, & makes us who we are. ASAN (& TNDC) believe that instead of trying to change disabled people, we should work to make sure people with disabilities can access what we need."

Autistic People

- Think differently
- Process senses differently
- Move differently
- Communicate differently
- Socialize differently
- May need help with activities of daily living

Autism Intervention looks like

ABA/Behavior Modification ("shaping behavior, rewards/punishment)
Positive Reinforcement
Training compliance for neurotypical social skills, & teaching masking & camouflaging to "hide" autism
Insisting on spoken communication/Verbal Behavior*
Whole Body Listening, eye-contact
Restricting access to AAC, using a PECS ® (ABA) approach
Therapy goals for sensory tolerance or extinguishment
Denying access to supports, accommodations & modifications, or using them as rewards
Extinguishing echolalia, monotropism, monologuing, stimming, or Autistic "quirks"

Empathetic & Respectful Therapy with Autistic people looks like this

Understanding that behavior is often communication of a need or a problem (sensory, inability to communicate, physical or emotional need)
Unrestricted AAC access with core language & modeling
Improving communication abilities in the client’s preferred mode
Teaching self-advocacy, respecting personal agency
Providing support, accommodations & modifications at all times, in all situations
Equitable inclusion
Perspective-taking for ALL problem-solving, empowerment
Using a trauma-informed approach

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