

Neurodiversity Coaching Basics

September 2023

Introductions

Kate Arms, JD, CPCC, PCC



Toronto, Canada via US and UK

Harvard Law School
Theatre and Biopsychology

ND: Profoundly Gifted & ???

Mom of neurodivergent kids

Dancer

Tracy Winter, Ph.D., PCC



US: Austin via Chicago

PhD Human Development
MA Human and Organization Systems

ND: Highly+ Gifted & ADHD

Dancer

Designing our alliance: aka housekeeping

This is going to be a high-level overview of neuro-diversity inclusive coaching.

We commit to:

- Delivering as much value as we can during the time we have together
- Doing our best to answer your questions while prioritizing the whole group's learning

Can we get permission to:

- Lecture quite a lot
- Ask for some people to come on mic and camera when it will serve the teaching
- Hold off on answering questions until we ask for questions

We ask that we all:

Give grace around language

Before we get to our agenda and then into the content, a quick meta moment.

What does
designing our alliance
have to do with
neurodiversity-
inclusive coaching?

Today's Agenda

- Introduction to neurodiversity
- The coaching relationship and neurodiversity
- Two coaching competencies and how neurodiversity-inclusive coaching approaches them.
 - Listening with a neurodiversity-inclusive lens.
 - Evoking awareness with a flat mirror, not a biased mirror
- Ethics of neurodiversity coaching
 - Assessing your level of coaching competency
 - Dealing with your growing edges
 - Referring responsibly
- Q&A



Introduction to Neurodiversity

Recognition, definition, and prevalence

Some patterns that neurodivergent clients bring to coaching

Self-exasperated

Not living up to my potential

I do know what to do; I just don't do it.

Confusion

Imposter Syndrome

Lazy or procrastinating

It's not that I don't want to do it.

Shame

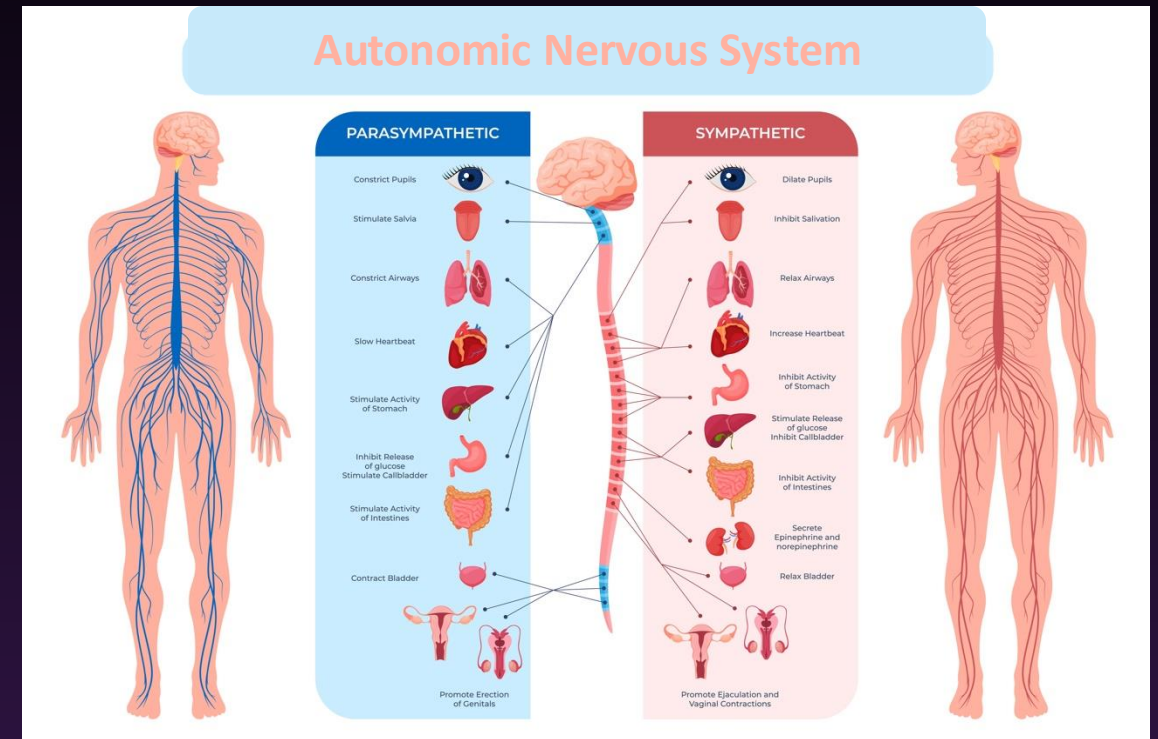
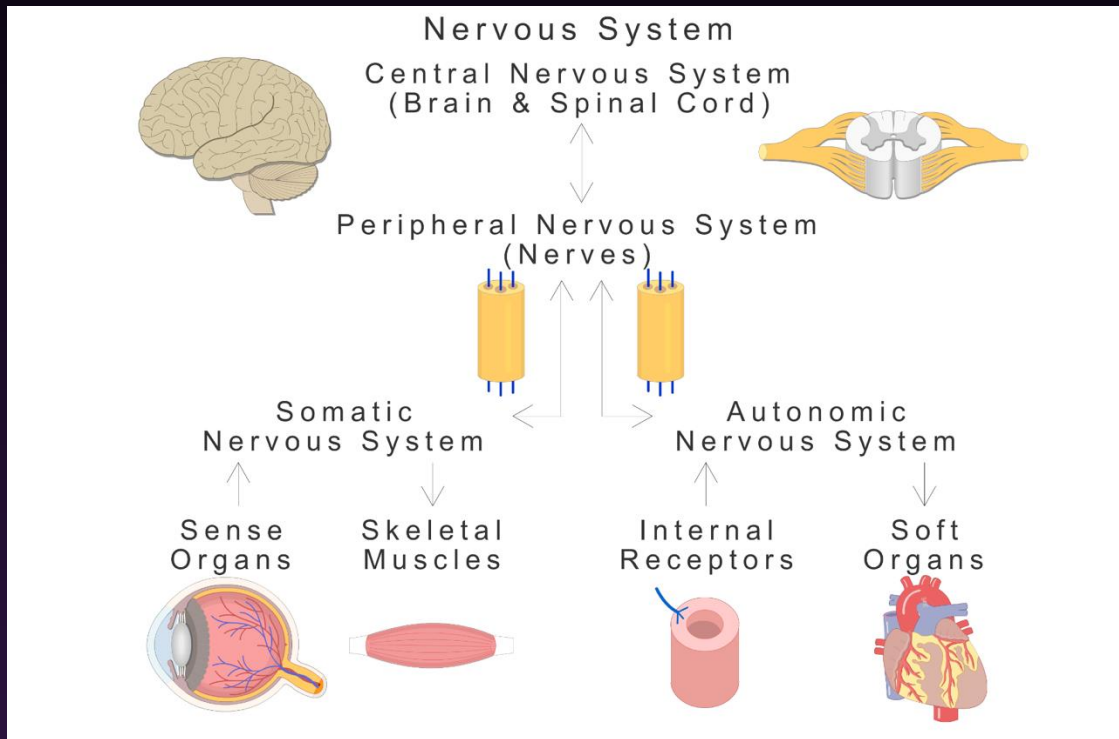
Why is this so hard?

Exhausted

Neurodiversity: Part One of a Definition

There is intrinsic diversity in the physiology of human nervous systems, brain function, and cognition.

Cognition: Embodied



Neurodiversity: Part Two of a Definition

Different is different, not broken.

Certain things currently classified by medical models as mental disorders are differences and disabilities but are not necessarily pathological.

Some Examples of the Range of Neurodiversity through a Subjective Lens

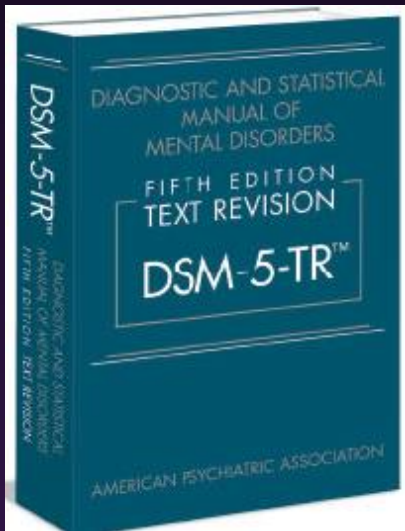
Vocabulary

- **Neurodiversity paradigm:** no “normal” mind
- **Neurodiverse:** describes group with neurodiversity
- **Neurotypical:** society’s assumed “normal”
- **Neurodivergent:**
 - Significantly different from society’s “normal”
 - May be innate or acquired
 - Usually used to describe a single person

Medical v Social Approaches to Difference

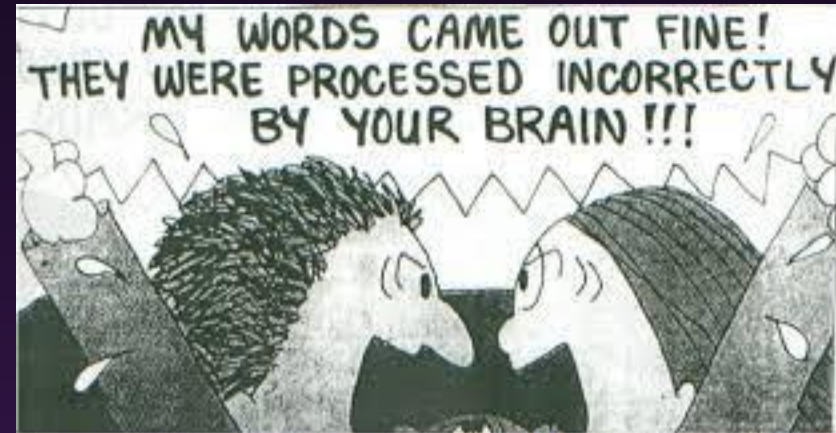
Medical/Behavioural:

Some brains don't work right and we need to fix them.



Social/Subjective:

Social systems aren't easy given the way my brain functions.



Prevalence

We don't actually know

- Different definitions in research
 - Data collection & sample selection
 - Access to assessment/undiagnosed
 - Self-diagnosis
 - Self-identified
- What counts as neurodivergent?



Coaching is Perfect For Neurodivergent Folks!

- Individualized
- Client-led
- Strengths-based
- Problem-solving
- Transformative

Questions so far?



The Coaching Relationship and Neurodiversity

Coaching Challenge

Many neurodivergent adults have used all their hope and courage to talk to you in the first place.

A Coaching-Relationship in which the
client feels
safe enough to be courageous
is an
Interpersonal Dynamic
co-created through
two nervous systems.

Symptoms of Dysregulation

- Lack of Hope
- Learned Helplessness
- Victim Stance
- Rigid Identity
- Stuck in Distrust
- Slow Progress
- Great Rationalization Skills



When the Client is Dysregulated You Can't Coach

- Maintain self-regulation
- Being the regulation for the relationship
- Help them co-regulate from the relationship

Signs of Regulation

- Curious
- Sense of possibility
- Sense of playfulness
- Creativity
- Calm heartbeat
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Grounded
- Sense of Agency/Choice
- Flexibility
- Ease

Being the Regulation for the Relationship

Coaching Activity

- Designed Alliance/
Contracting/
Partnership
- Avoiding the Medical Model
- Trauma-Aware practices
- Gender-Aware practices

Coaching Presence



Help them Co-Regulate from the Relationship

- Maintain coaching presence
- Use coaching skills
- Trust the process

Coaching Skills and Neurodiversity: Two Competencies

Listening and Evoking Awareness

Listening and Neurodiversity

“Listening” for dysregulation before and while listening for coaching.

The neurodiversity paradigm tells us that every communication is a multi- cultural conversation.

Check for understanding (and you're probably at least a little off).

Evoking Awareness with a “Flat Mirror”

Avoid reflecting “norm” assumptions

Normalize their experience

Reflect observable facts not interpretations

Small Group Reflection



Ethics



Assessing your level of coaching competency
Dealing with your growing edges
Referring responsibly

How do I assess my level of competency?

Some knowledge about neurodivergence and how to turn cons into pros without toxic positivity

Trauma-awareness

Can you maintain a coaching presence?

Dealing with your growing edges

Self-reflective practice

Mentoring and Supervision

Attending training on what you need to learn

Learning about others' lived experiences

Referring Responsibly

Signs It's Time to Refer

- Your reflections consistently don't match the client's
- You can't follow the client's train of thought
- You can't hold their agenda
- You feel like you just don't get the client
- You see them as broken
- You get sucked into their point of view

Coaching Range

It's normal to not be able to coach everybody.

Often, the closer your neurotype is to your clients', the easier it is for you to coach them.

Key Takeaways

- Dysregulation and self-exasperation are signs of potential neurodivergence
- Assume you are probably misunderstanding your clients
- Refer when you are struggling to hold up a flat mirror

We know this is a lot, so we've got deeper dives

Coaching Twice-Exceptional Clients: October 2023

Coach Approach to Working with Neurodivergence and Overwhelm: November 2023

Turning Cons of Neurodivergence to Pros Without Toxic Positivity: December 2023

Neurodivergent Reflections: Flat Mirror or Funhouse Mirror?: January 2024

Self-Presentation and Neurodivergent Masking: What's the Difference?: February 2024

Ethical Issues in Neurodiversity-Inclusive Coaching: March 2024

Neurodivergence and Trauma-Awareness For Coaches: April 2024

Coaching for Communication Across Neurotypes: May 2024

Gender and Neurodiversity in Coaching: June 2024

Asynchronous Development in Neurodiversity-Inclusive Coaching: July 2024

Neuroscience of Neurodivergence for Coaches: August 2024

Next Online Neurodiversity Training for Coaches

Coaching Twice-Exceptional Clients

Oct 3 at 8:00 PM ET

Oct 16 at 11:30 AM ET

www.neurodiversitycoachingacademy.com

Interested in our upcoming
Mentoring and Supervision
group programs?

Email us at:

info@neurodiversitycoachingacademy.com

What
Questions
do You
Have?

