



Neurodiversity Ally Training

Introduction

- **Knowledge**
 - Build skills and awareness to support ourselves and our community
- **Identity**
 - Recognize neurodiversity as a vital part of people's experiences
- **Community**
 - Foster support that promotes well-being and success

Sonoma State Values and Responsibilities

CORE VALUES

Our core values are an expression of who we are at Sonoma State. We proudly embrace integrity, respect, excellence, and responsibility as part of our Seawolf Commitment. Our core values include:

1. Diversity and social justice
2. Sustainability and environmental inquiry
3. Connectivity and community engagement
4. Adaptability and responsiveness

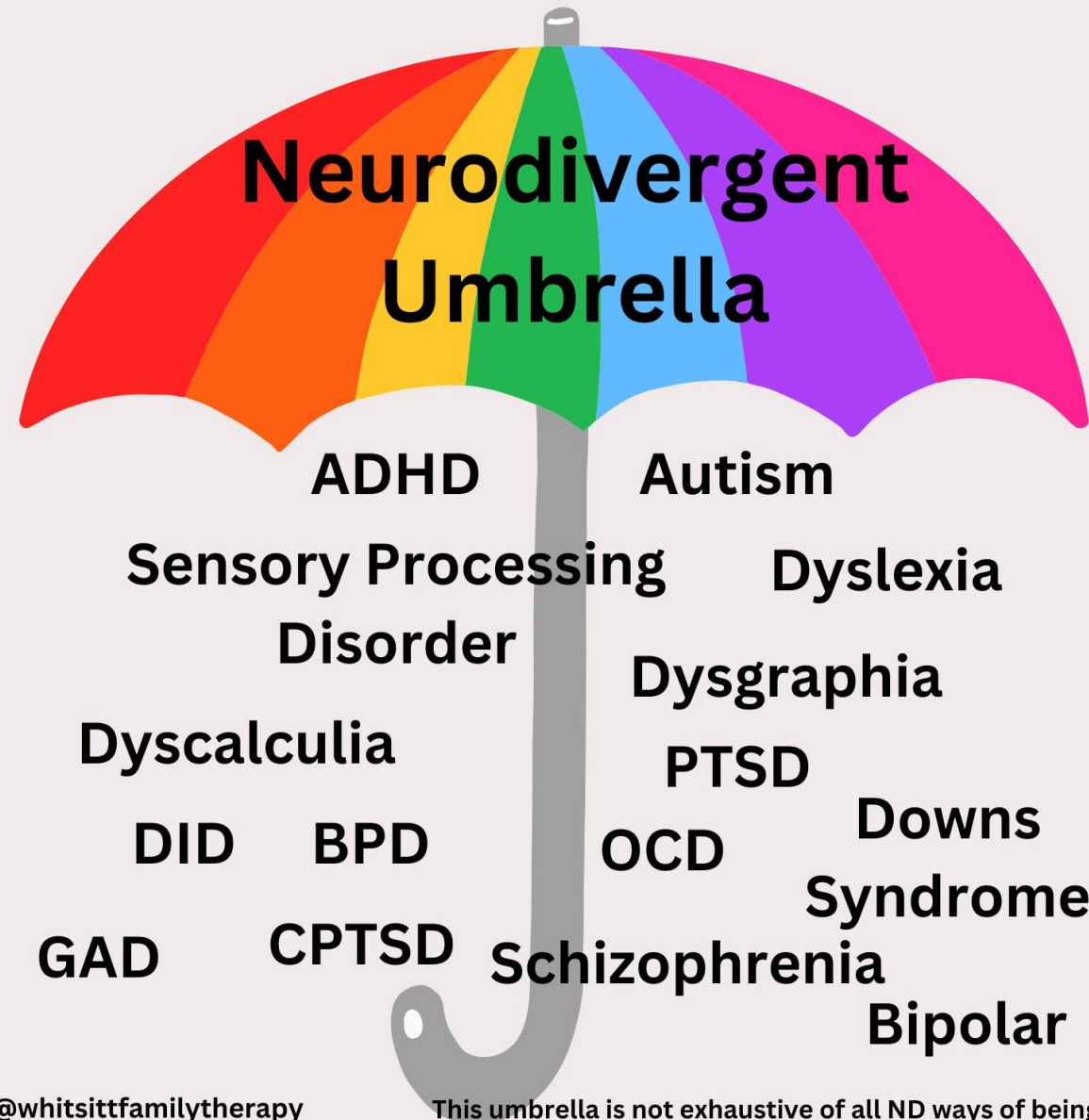
What is Neurodiversity?

The Neuro...



- Every brain is unique, with a wide range of variations.
- People experience different strengths and challenges.
- People may require different accommodations from each other based on their individual needs.

...and the Diversity



@whitsittfamilytherapy

This umbrella is not exhaustive of all ND ways of being.

Whitsitt Family Therapy

Neurodiversity: Misconceptions and Reality

**What people think
neurodiversity is:**

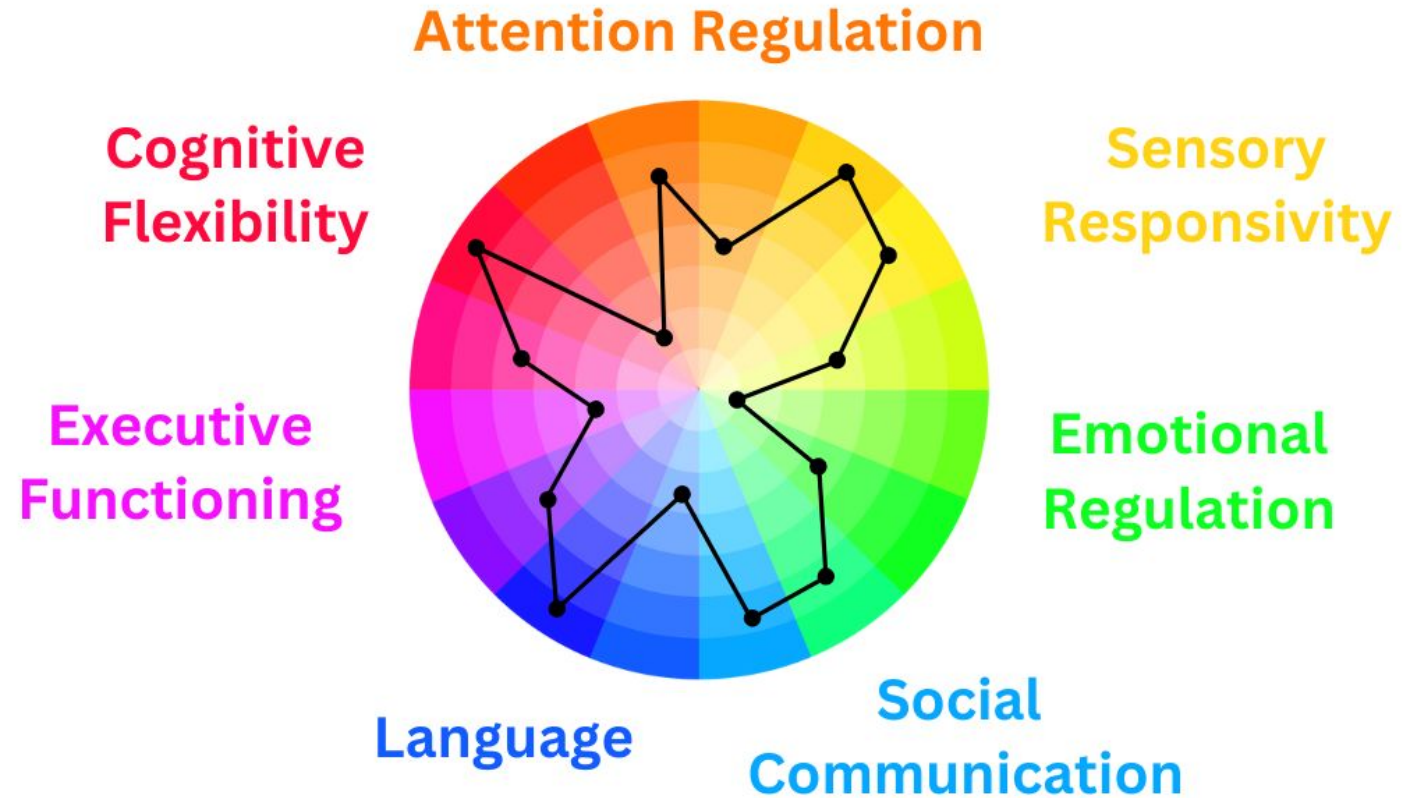
Neuro-
typical



Neuro-
divergent

Neurodiversity: Misconceptions and Reality

A more nuanced view of neurodivergence:





Barriers to Education

- Considering only neurotypical students in structuring education may make it challenging for neurodivergent students.
- Societal stigmas regarding learning may make students feel worse off and may prevent students from seeking help from support programs (Clouder et al. 2020).
- Inclusion initiatives rarely include neurodiversity and invisible disabilities in their dialogue. (Dwyer, et al. 2023)

Existing Support Systems at SSU

- Seawolf Services
- Learning and Academic Resource Center (LARC)
- Disability Services for Students (DSS)
- Neurodiversity Club
- The HUB Center
- Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Human Resources

Seawolf Services



- Located in Salazar Hall
- Financial aid, ID cards, and other general questions about life at SSU.
- Contact Information
 - seawolf.servicecenter@sonoma.edu
 - 707-664-2308

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)



COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Sonoma State University

- CAPS is located in Building 17A, the portable building behind Salazar Hall.
- Offers varied forms of support, such as:
 - Crisis Counseling
 - Fidget to Focus: ADHD Learning Skills
 - Autism Support Group
- Contact Information
 - caps@sonoma.edu
 - 707-664-2153

Learning & Academic Resource Center (LARC)



- Located in the Schulz Information Center
- Free peer academic support with tutors
- Writing Center, Tutorial Program, and Supplemental Instruction Program.
- Contact Information
 - larcdesk@sonoma.edu
 - 707-664-4401

Disability Services for Students (DSS)



- Located in the Schulz Information Center
- Provides accommodations for students requiring them such as:
 - Accommodated Exams
 - Alternate Media Assistive Technology
 - Dietary Accommodation Request
- Contact Information
 - disability.services@sonoma.edu
 - 707-664-3330

Neurodiversity Club



- A space and support network by and for neurodiverse students at SSU
- Hosts fun events about neurodiversity for neurodiverse people
- We welcome staff/faculty participation in club activities

The HUB Center



- Located on the first floor of Schulz.
- Fosters belonging and equity by uniting students, staff, and faculty through community, dialogue, and cultural expression.
- Offers the Core 4 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging training program
- Contact Information
 - thehub@sonoma.edu

Human Resources for Faculty and Staff



- Maintains a list of available resources both on- and off-campus, including
 - Disability Services for Students (DSS)
 - CSU Employment Disability Resources
 - Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
- Contact Information
 - HR@sonoma.edu
 - 707-664-3100

Where Neurodiverse People May Succeed

Neurodiverse students, faculty, or staff may have:

- Deep focus on class subjects relating to areas of intense interest
- Strong ability to work independently with sustained motivation
- Keen attention to detail
- Excellent written communication
- Effective organization of information, objects, or systems
- Strong empathy and a keen sense of justice

Where Neurodiverse People May Struggle

Neurodiverse students, faculty, or staff may have difficulty:

- Interpreting social cues, with excess stress in group interactions
- Understanding letters and numbers
- From sensory sensitivity leading to over- or under-stimulation
- With the 7 pieces of executive functioning
- Having freedom to engage in stress-relieving activities like stimming
- Adapting to changes and transitions
- Conducting fine motor movements

Overview: Neurodiverse Ally Training

Goal: To foster an equitable environment for all neurotypes at SSU

- Problems faced:
 - Traditional disability services may not meet the needs of neurodiverse students
 - Stigma can discourage disclosure and access to support (Gurbuz et al., 2019)
- Potential Solutions:
 - Provide evidence-based practices for the campus community
 - Cost-effective suggestions to build understanding and acceptance

Recommendations by Scholars

- Provide multiple means of accessing learning materials
- Provide personal coaches
- Include participatory events, such as students presenting a seminar
- Establish programs to better facilitate life transitions
- Give clear, precise instructions for class activities and assessments.
 - Avoid figurative language

Recommendations by Students

- Survey held in Fall 2024 for neurodiverse students in three CSU campuses:



**SONOMA
STATE
UNIVERSITY**



Recommendations by Students

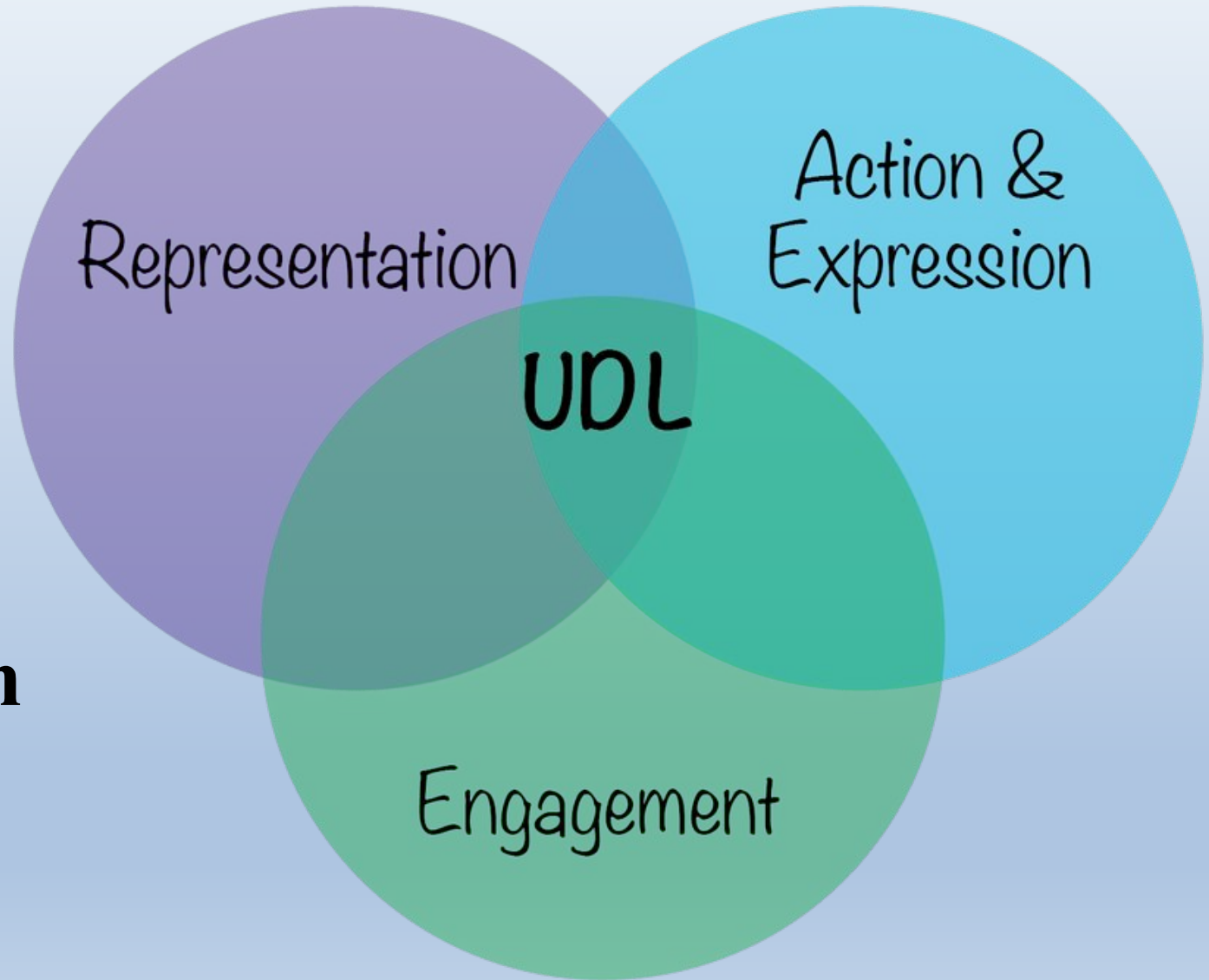
- **Predictability**
 - Record & upload lectures/materials in advance
- **Flexibility**
 - Options for group work, sensory accommodations, due dates, communication modes
- **Accessible Assessments**
 - Clear, ASD-friendly questions with clarifications
- **Additionally**
 - Normalize & educate about ASD
 - Practice patience, empathy, and proactive support

Universal Design for Learning: Principles

1. Engagement

2. Representation

3. Action & Expression



Universal Design for Learning: Potential

- Inform strategies, encourage multiple modalities of teaching and empower diverse ways of learning
- Benefit the entirety of the students.
- Allow faculty to maintain high standards and expectations while maintaining flexibility for individual needs

Future Possibilities

- A few examples:
 - Quiet spaces to allow destressing in a calm environment.
 - Ongoing trainings tailored for each facet of neurodiversity.
 - Ongoing Q&As and submitted feedback with students/staff who identify as neurodiverse to allow for continual iteration.
- What are your ideas?

What is Neurodiversity?



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For More Information:

For feedback & questions:

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Gabe Tsuruta, Neurodiversity Club President: tsurutag@sonoma.edu

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