

Neurodiversity

What is Neurotypical

Neurotypical is a term to describe those with typical neurological development or functioning. Neurotypical people are the majority.

Neurodiversity and the Neurodiversity Movement

Judith Singer is responsible for this term and wrote about it in her thesis and later in a chapter entitled "Why Can't You be Normal for Once in Your Life?" published in the "Disability Discourse" in 1999.

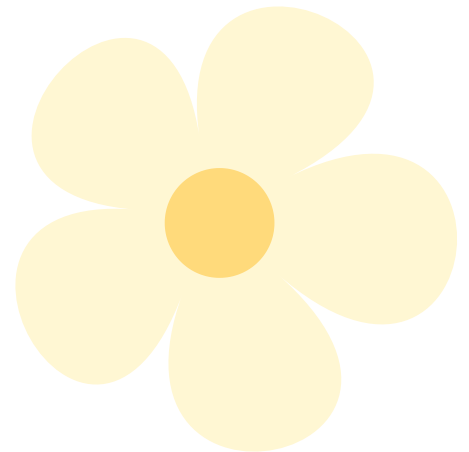
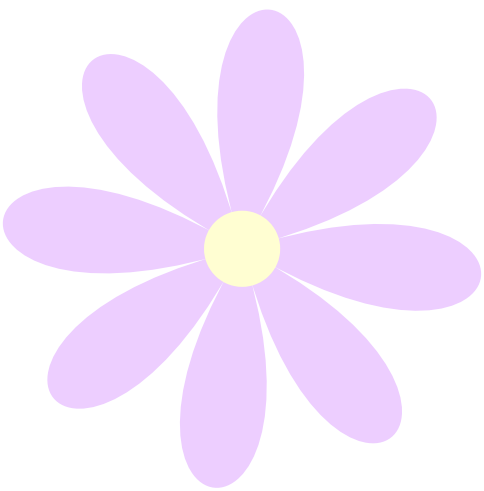
Singer recognized that people with different kinds of minds were oppressed and needed a movement of their own that advocated for their rights.

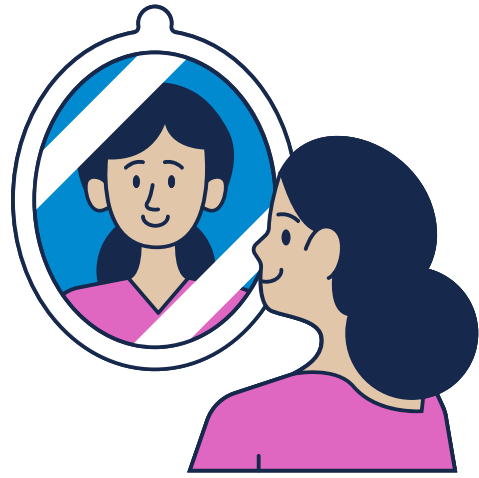


Neurodiversity

"Instead of pretending there is hidden away in a vault somewhere a normal brain to which all other brains must be compared we need to admit there is no standard brain just as there is no standard flower. or standard cultural or racial group, and that in fact diversity among brains is just as wonderfully enriching as biodiversity and the diversity among cultures and races"

Thomas Armstrong





**Reflection Question What is it like
to think of your brain in this way?**



**Is it possible for you to think of your differences as
enriching ?**

Stigma and Self Stigma

STIGMA

The word stigma comes from the Greco-Roman period. Members of society at this time who were slaves, criminals, or traitors were branded with a mark into their skin that was known as a stigma which signaled their low status.

Stigma refers to the devaluation of specific individuals based on some characteristic they possess related to membership in a group that society doesn't value.

People who are neurodivergent or belong to most different groups face some stigma. ADHD women face a unique and particular stigma because they don't meet the idea of the " GOLD STANDARD WOMEN."



Neurodiversity

The neurodiversity movement also focuses on the strengths of the neurodiverse mind and how society focusing on labeling them as defective is what effectively disables them. Instead, we should celebrate their unique minds and accommodate them.

Kinds of neurodivergence

Examples of neurodivergent neurology include Autism, ADHD, Bipolar, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Tourette's, and Dyslexia.

People who are "Neurodivergent" have brains that process, learn and behave differently from what is considered typical. The concept of neurodiversity frames differences as acceptable rather than people as broken or wrong just because other people do things differently.

ADHD is a neurodiversity

One of if not the main ways that people with ADHD are different from those who are neurotypical is that they have different executive functioning. There are aspects of ADHD that are undoubtedly disabling (because of our world) , but our focus is on supporting and accommodating these aspects.

equality

Stigma and Self Stigma

Stereotyping and discrimination often result from stigma.

Stigmatized individuals are likely to have experienced harsh judgments from society about how they don't measure up.

How stigma can lead to shame

Individuals who share this are likely to internalize these toxic messages. This is how self-stigma is created.

Many ADHD women have shame that frequently comes from self-stigma caused by these experiences. As well as other more direct experiences from their childhood and interactions with the world.



Stigma and Self Stigma

Stigma is a negative stereotype or perception about certain characteristics, often based on misinformation or misunderstanding. It can lead to harmful consequences.

Here are some examples of misinformation about ADHD:

- It isn't a real disorder.
- ADHD only affects children and not adults.
- ADHD only affects boys or isn't as severe in girls and women.
- ADHD is diagnosed too often.
- Bad parenting leads to ADHD.
- People with ADHD are over-medicated
- Stigma leads to Discrimination.
- This is why it is so important to combat it.

What are Executive Functions?

The cognitive processes that enable you to manage your lives more efficiently in a neurotypical-dominated world.

These processes help you make decisions by strategizing, organizing, paying attention in a certain way to details, starting tasks, and finishing them.

Emotional Regulation and self-awareness are also considered parts of executive functioning.

Having trouble with ef in a neurotypical world can lead to specific difficulties when that world doesn't consider people who might function differently.

You might get overwhelmed and paralyzed by too much information.

You might be good with big ideas, better than others but need help figuring out the plan or small steps to get there.

What are Executive Functions?

You might need help making decisions, remembering, organizing time, staying focused, and completing stopping and starting tasks. You may need help staying alert or motivated when tasks are tedious. Coordinating is difficult!

When you start to notice these things, if you are an ADHD woman, you might conclude something's wrong with you, ESPECIALLY if you haven't been taught to recognize your strengths.

We will work on EF in this group to help strengthen them.

However, this will also be a neurodivergent-affirming group.

Neurodiversity affirming. It's the idea that individuals have differences in their abilities and how they interact with the world around them – differences which are not considered to be deficits that need to be corrected or fixed.

You are as worthy and valuable as someone who is neurotypical. You shouldn't be treated as less than.

Masking

What is Masking?

Masking is a survival tool to fit in in a neurotypical world. Many ADHD or autistic children are taught, forced to mask, or rewarded for it. Often it becomes unconscious.

It's a standard way that many neurodivergent people (and other oppressed groups) survive, fit in, become more successful, make friends, try to belong, or prevent being judged or bullied. It often consists of hiding who you are to fit in.



Masking

Here are examples of masking.

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- Engaging in small talk
- Forcing eye contact
- Smiling and laughing even though you don't want to
- Pretending to understand even though you don't
- Imitating others when you are confused
- Forcing yourself through uncomfortable sensory discomfort
- Hiding stimming or things you do to comfort yourself

Masking can be exhausting; it can cause stress, anxiety, and physical illness and can cause burnout.

It's okay that you do these things. It's perfectly normal, but as an adult, you may be able to choose to be around people, and in certain situations, you don't need to do this.



Masking

Masking isn't unique to neurodivergent people.

The renowned scholar and civil rights activist W.E.B. Dubois discussed the idea of code-switching more than a hundred years ago in his famous book *The Souls of Black Folk*. In it, he discussed how African Americans had to juggle their African American and American identities while facing the reality of a white-dominated society.

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

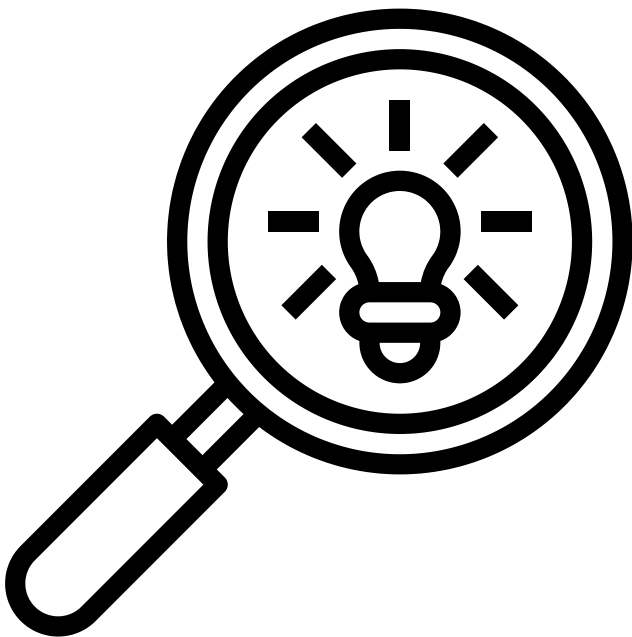
W.E.B. Dubois

Exploring the Messages that lead to stigma

According to Sari Solden, there are four main ways that women with ADHD internalize stigma that leads to shame and masking behaviors.

"You messages", "She messages", "Duh messages," and "Societal messages."

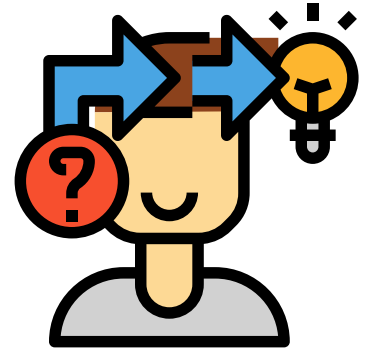
Knowing and exploring these messages is our first step in this group. These messages are a part of your critical self-talk. These messages are based on a lie.



Exploring the Messages that lead to stigma

Let's define these messages.

You Messages:



Direct attacks about the difficulties and differences you heard from people in your life.

These messages "result from misunderstanding, misinterpreting or conflicting your character with the behavior resulting from your unique brain wiring.

She Messages:

Comments that people make about women who have similar challenges and differences as you have.



Exploring the Messages that lead to stigma

Duh! Messages:



Advice that undermines your experience or differences does more harm than good. It can make you feel belittled, invalidated, or like someone lacks an understanding of the complexities of ADHD. It implies you are lazy or stupid for not figuring out the "simple" solution yourself.

Absorbed Messages:

Messages from school, work, media, and society say what a girl or woman "should" do, and you compare yourself unfavorably to others, making your ADHD worse.

We will take some time to consider the messages that've shaped your self-talk and beliefs about yourself and what you can and cannot do in our group.



Group Exercise



These are direct messages that conflate your character with your brain wiring.

Often these result from people not understanding adhd, and even when you get a diagnosis, you can have a hard time getting rid of these entrenched ideas.

- You're just being lazy
- You're not trying hard enough
- You're such a mess
- You could be successful if you would try hard enough
- You're irresponsible
- You're too emotional
- You're inconsiderate
- Your friends won't want to hang out with you unless you do x
- You have so much potential if you would only do X

Are any of these familiar to you?

Can you think of any of your own?

How do they impact you?

Group Exercise



Duh messages:

We learn negative beliefs about ourselves through Duh messages

Gee why didnt I think of that!

- "Have you thought about making a list? "
- "Have you tried setting an alarm?"
- "Have you tried thinking more positively?"

These ideas fail to capture the complexity of what an adhd women experiences feels dismissive and belittling. You may feel like no one gets you or what you struggle with adding to you feeling alone in the world and your struggles.

They are oversimplified and contribute to what's been called "emotional distress syndrome." A chronic state of emotional stress.

1. What are some duh messages you have received over the years?
2. How do you respond to those moments? Versus how you would like to respond?
3. How have these messages impacted your self your relationship with your adhd brain and your relationships with others?