

# Neurodiversity Ally Training



By members of the

[Neurodiversity and Disability Faculty and Staff Association](#)

[ndtaskforce@csuchico.edu](mailto:ndtaskforce@csuchico.edu)

Check-in  
Pre-survey

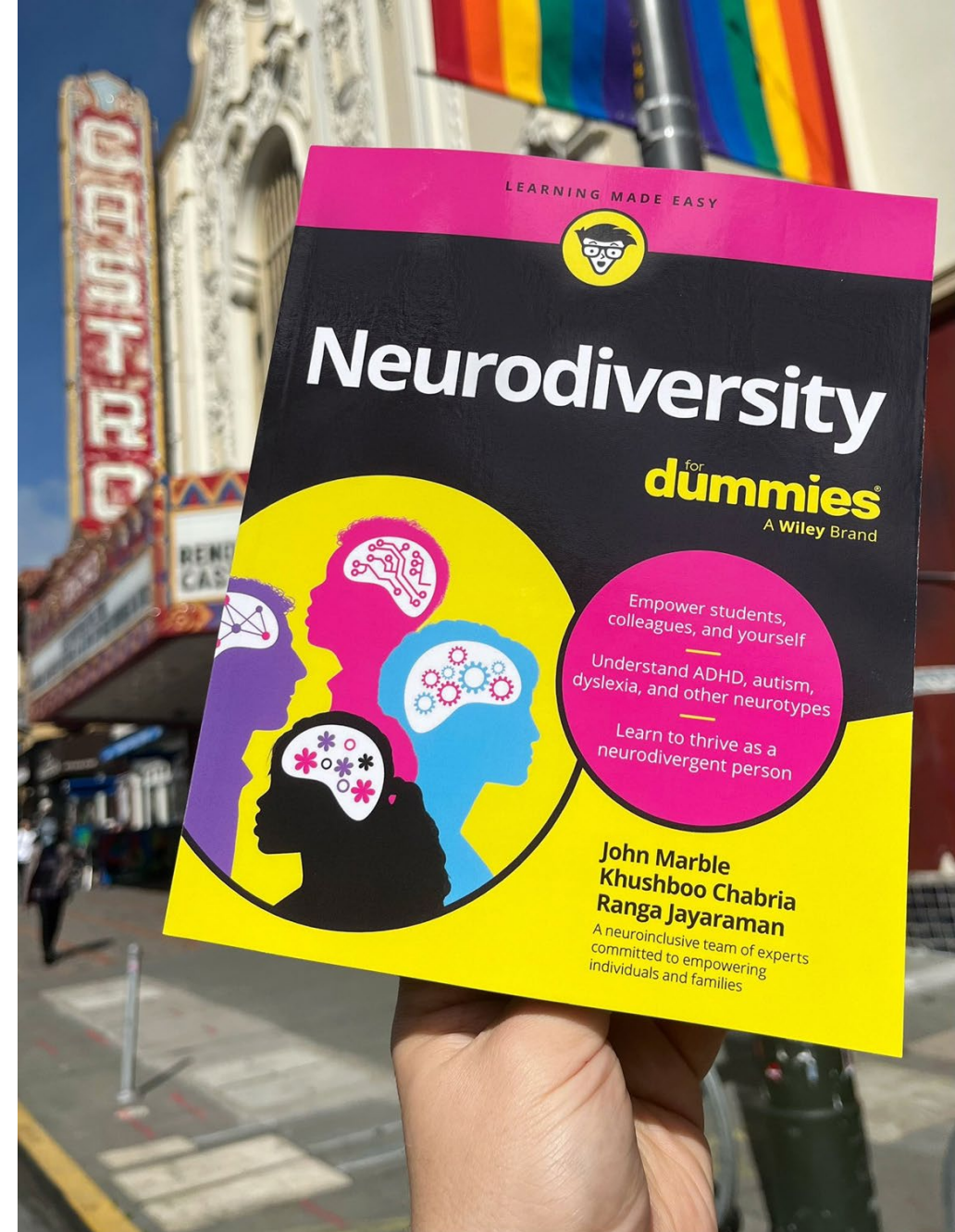


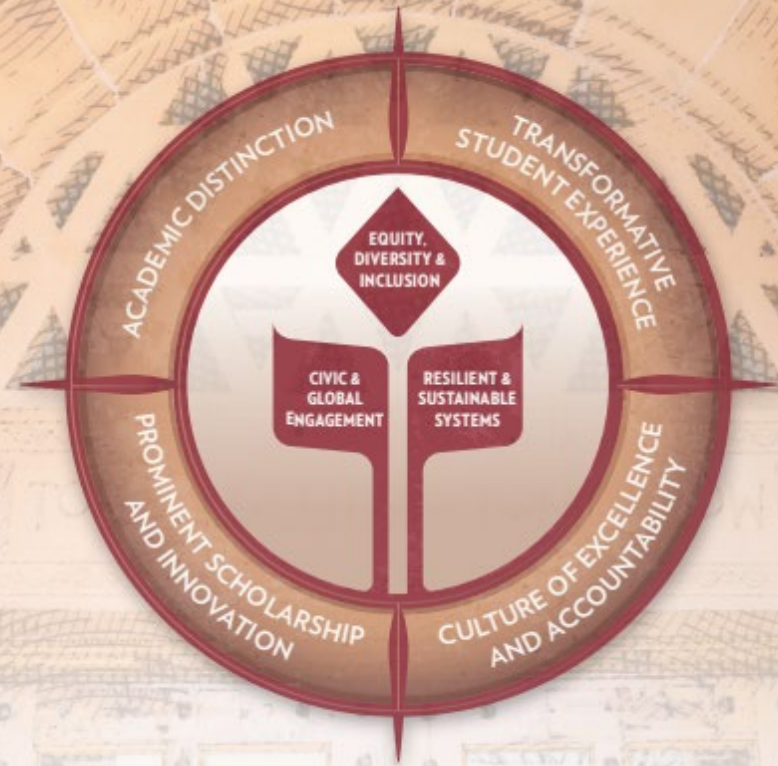
Today's presenters:

- Ildi Grey (they/them)
- Grace Harrison (she/her)
- Charley Turner (he/him)

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Pretest
- Context: language matters
  - Person-first language vs. identity first
  - History/definitions/statistics
  - Intersectionality
  - Strengths and Challenges
- Approaches to Neurodiversity at Chico State
  - Barriers
  - What might we see?
  - What do people experience?
  - Supporting Students
  - Supporting co-workers
- Future Possibilities





**MISSION**

Chico State is the comprehensive university of the North State with a global reach. Through excellence of inquiry, innovation, and experiential learning, we develop students who are critical thinkers, responsible citizens, diverse leaders, and inspired stewards of environmental, social, and economic resources.

**VISION**

Chico State will be known as a preeminent university solving the unprecedented challenges of the 21st century.

# Introduction

Thanks for joining us! First off, why a Neurodiversity Ally Training?

1. It is part of our campus values and responsibilities

[Campus values](#)

[Disability rights](#)

[Strategic plan \(Playbook\)](#)

2. Neurodiversity on college campuses will continue to grow



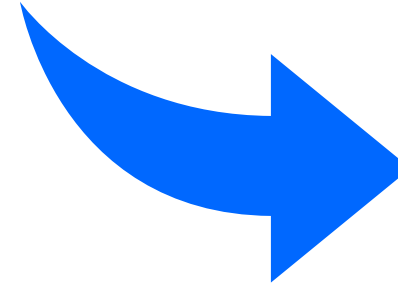
# Thus...Neurodiversity Ally Training!

- Inform the campus community with evidence-based practices
- Increase understanding and acceptance of their neurodivergent peers
- Why this is needed: “stigmatization and discriminatory practices on campus could prevent students with [neurodivergence] from disclosing their diagnosis and subsequently seeking support” (Gurbuz et al. 2019).
- **Goal:** equitable environment for all



# Pretest

1. How do you define Neurodiversity?
2. What are two things you know about neurodiversity?
3. What are two things you wish you knew about neurodiversity?
4. What conditions or ways of being are indicated by the terms “neurodiversity” or “neurodivergent”?
5. About what percentage of today’s college students are neurodivergent?



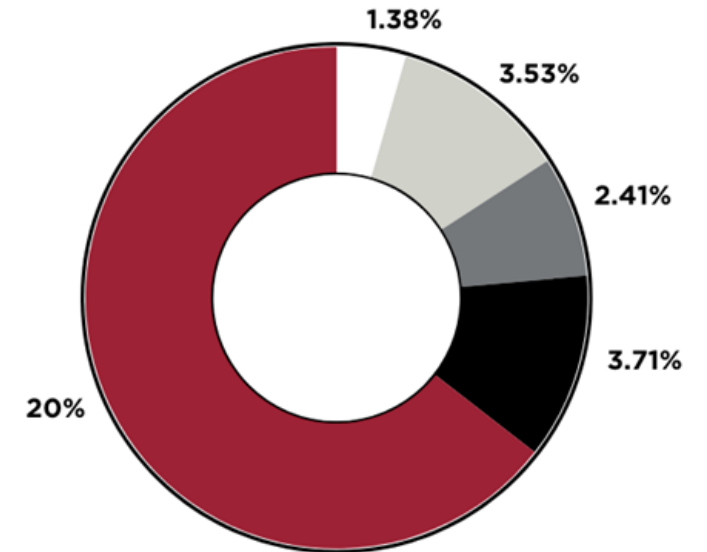
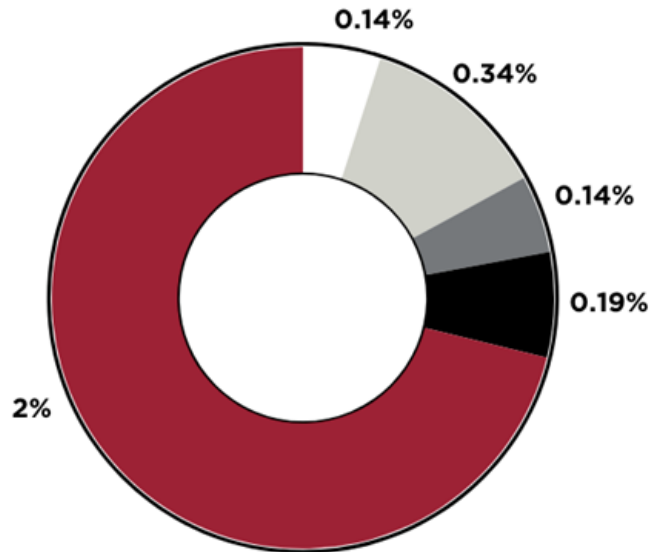
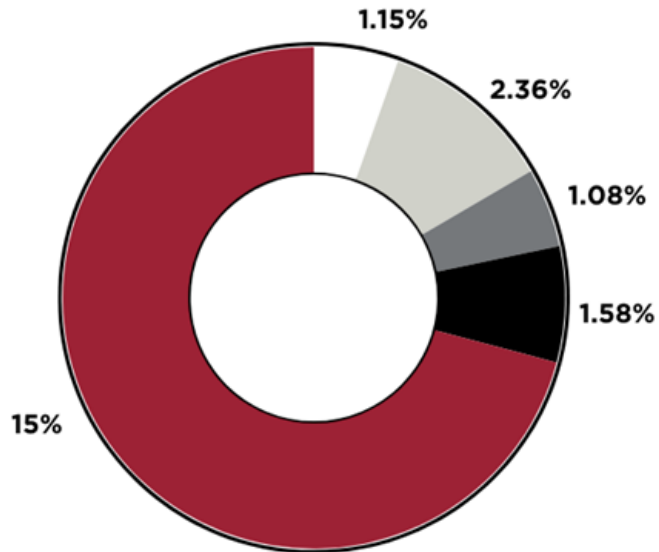
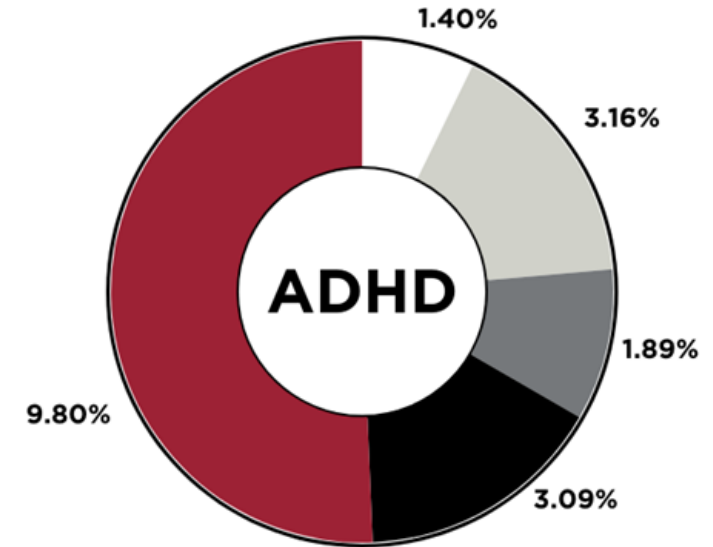
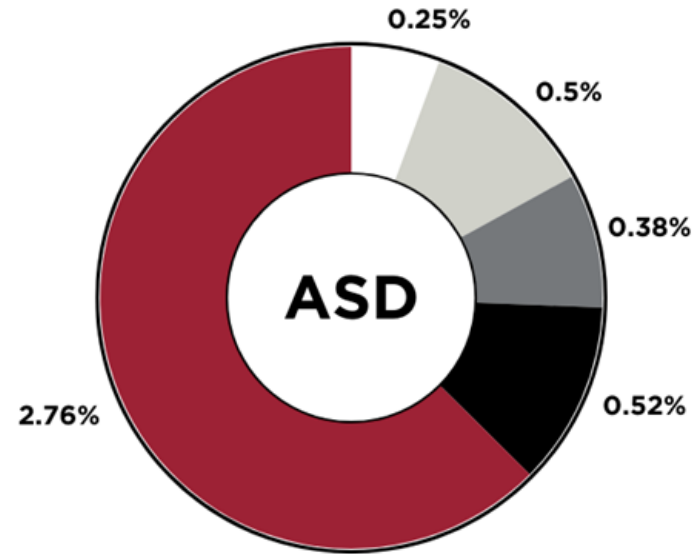
# Pretest—answers!

1. How do you define Neurodiversity?
  - **Your ideas!**
2. What conditions or ways of being are indicated by the terms “neurodiversity” or “neurodivergent”?
  - **Autism (ASD), ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, Tourette Syndrome, and more...**
3. About what percentage of today’s college students are neurodivergent?
  - **5-7% (about 830 students and about 120 staff and faculty at Chico State)**
4. What are two things you know about neurodiversity?
  - **Your ideas!**
5. What are two things you wish you knew about neurodiversity?
  - **Your questions!**



# Neurodiversity at Chico State

- Chico State ARC Fall 2020 (AY20/21)
- Chico State ARC Fall 2021 (AY 21/22)
- Chico State ARC Fall 2022 (AY 22/23)
- Chico State ARC Fall 2023 (AY 23/24)
- National Stats

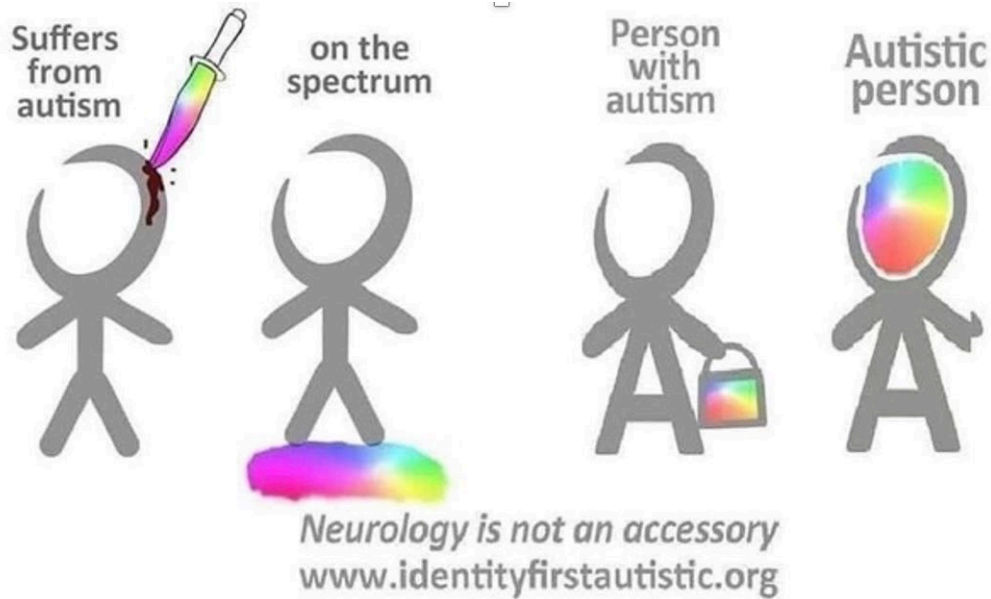


**Learning Disability**  
(dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia)

**Acquired Brain Injury**

**Psychological**

# Language Matters



## Person-First vs. Identity-First Language

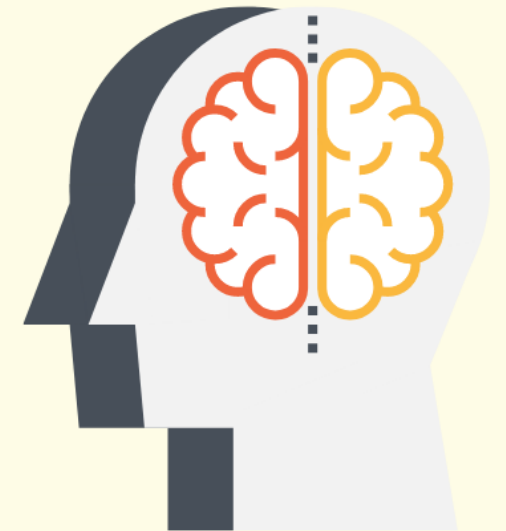


### PERSON

People-first language emphasizes the individuality, equality and dignity of people, rather than defining people primarily by their disability

### IDENTITY

Identity-first language puts the disability first and is viewed as part of who they are, not something that's happened to them



# History and Definitions

## Neurodiversity

- Term first coined by Judy Singer in 1998 to describe variations in mental function that may make it difficult to learn or interact under **traditional expectations**.

## Policy efforts have tended to focus on legal obligations

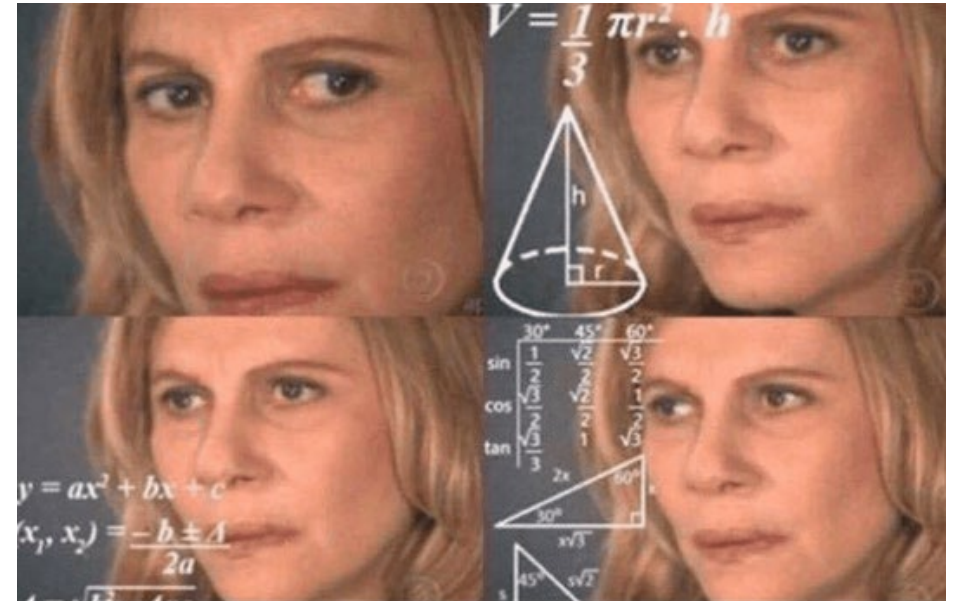
- “The public sector has merely met the legal obligation of providing accommodation to neurodivergent individuals” (Dwyer et al, 2022).
- “The policymakers of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 thinking of “visible” and “physical” disabilities” (Pitney, 2016).



# What is “Autism Spectrum Disorder”?

According to DSM-V:

- A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction.
- B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities (includes sensory sensitivities).
- C. Symptoms are present in early development
- D. Clinically significant impairment in important areas of current functioning



# But I have questions...

Where did all this ND come from?

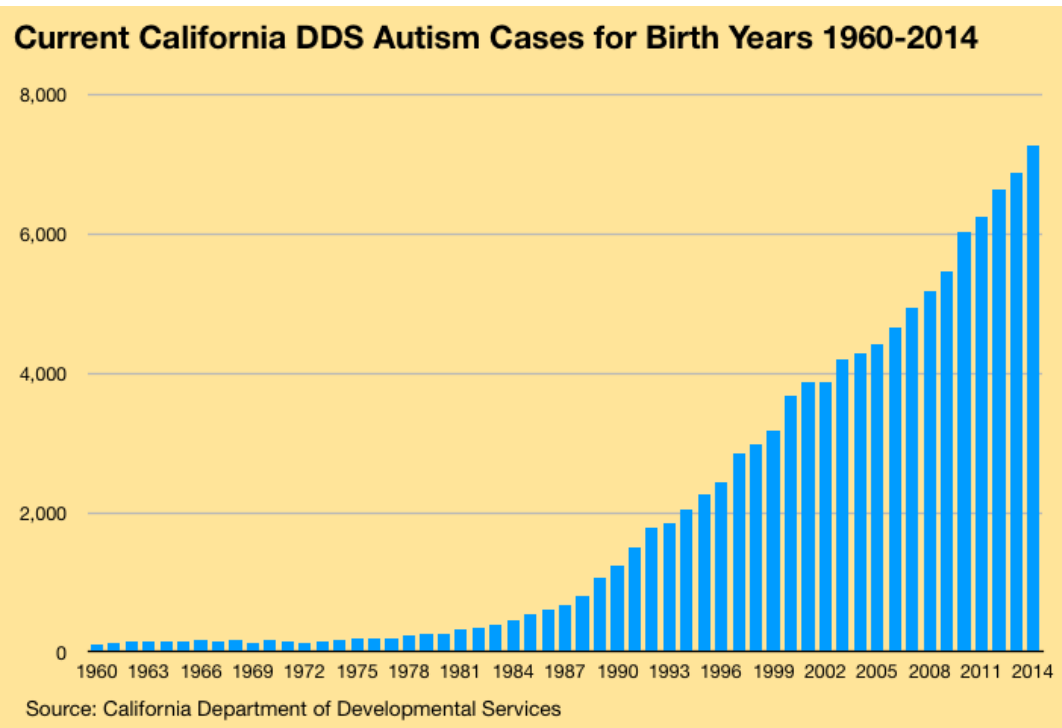


'Show Me Where You Make Autism!' Shouts RFK Jr., Storming Sour Patch Kids Factory

the ONION

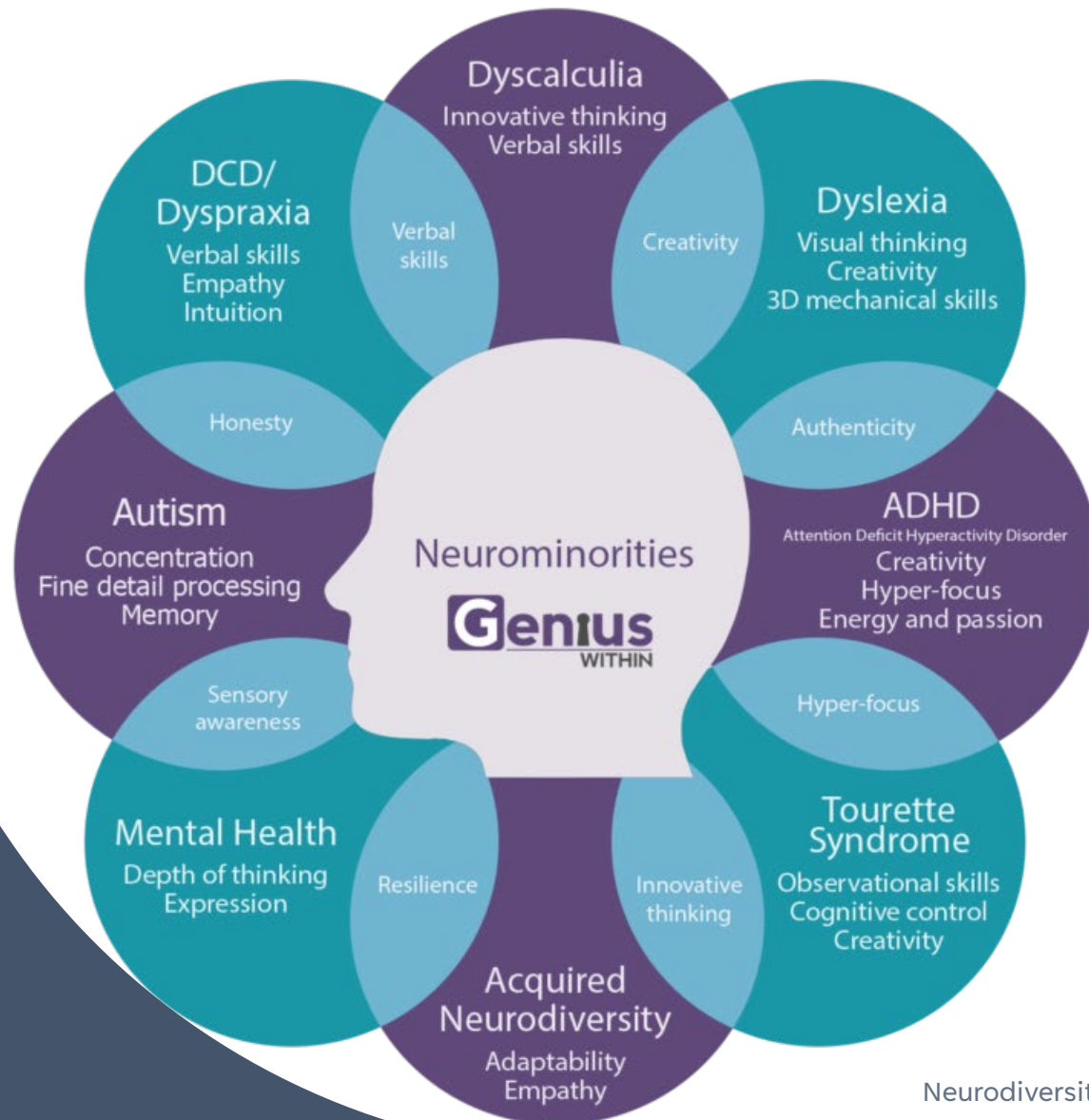
## Why haven't I noticed it?

- **Masking:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpFQBiYQeno> (not showing autistic traits to avoid criticism)
- **Ableism:** “many feel pressure to downplay their disability, even as their ethnicity or sexuality may be celebrated.” (Quinn O’Connor, student activist)
- **Practice:** “It’s easy to forget that as people get older, they often learn to manage their disabilities better.” (Temple Grandin)



# Intersectionality

Multiple neurodiversities, Multiple diverse identities



## According to [Genius Within](#):

- **90%** of disabilities are invisible
- **5%** of the population have **ADHD**
- **1-2%** of the population is **Autistic**
- **10%** of the population are **dyslexic**
- **5%** of the population are **dyspraxic**
- **1-2%** of the population have **Tourette Syndrome**
- **14%** of the population have **mental health needs**
- **5%** of the population have an **acquired brain injury**

# Other Common Issues (comorbidities)

## Autism Spectrum Disorder

### Sleep Disorders

(insomnia 28%;  
circadian sleep  
problem 44%)

Attention Deficit  
Hyperactivity  
Disorder

(11%)



Obsessive  
Compulsive Disorder

(8%)

### Anxiety

(lifetime 42%;  
current 27%)

Depression  
(lifetime 37%;  
current 23%)





# Autism: the positives



Understanding, embracing and celebrating different ways of thinking and doing can release the true power of the autistic mind. Here we look at the positive features of autism.



### Attention to detail

- Thoroughness
- Accuracy



### Methodical approach

- Analytical
- Spotting patterns, repetition



### Deep focus

- Concentration
- Freedom from distraction



### Novel approaches

- Unique thought processes
- Innovative solutions



### Observational skills

- Listen, look, learn approach
- Fact finding



### Creativity

- Distinctive imagination
- Expression of ideas



### Absorb and retain facts

- Excellent long term memory
- Superior recall



### Tenacity and resilience

- Determination
- Challenge opinions



### Visual skills

- Visual learning and recall
- Detail-focussed



### Accepting of difference

- Less likely to judge others
- May question norms



### Expertise

- In-depth knowledge
- High level of skills



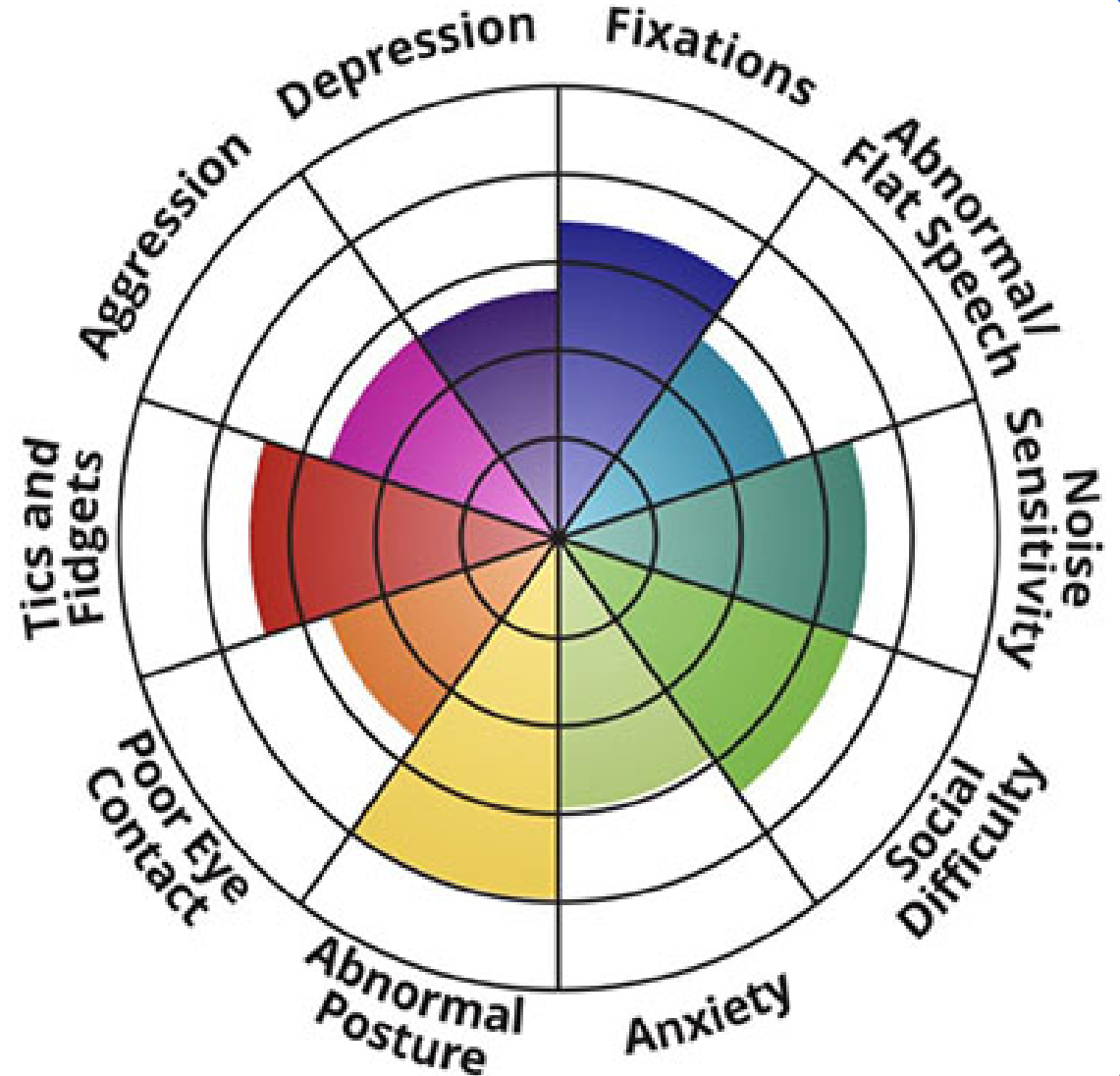
### Integrity

- Honesty, loyalty
- Commitment

## Remember

Every experience of autism is unique. No one person will identify with every positive feature of autism. We all have individual skills, attributes and characteristics that are as unique as our personalities – this is the power of neurodiversity.

# Strengths and Challenges of ASD





# Barriers to Education

- Neurodivergence itself may make learning geared towards Neurotypical students difficult to process
- Societal stigmas regarding learning may make students feel worse off than they are (Clouder et al.)
- These stigmas may also prevent students from seeking help from support programs (Clouder et al.)
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives rarely include neurodiversity and invisible disabilities in their dialogue beyond modifications to physical space such as ramps, classroom seating, and or instructional modifications (Dwyer, et al. 2023)



# What else might neurodiversity look like at Chico State?

## Students, faculty, or staff:

- May misread social cues or facial expressions
- May appear inattentive or bored
- Social interactions/group work may be stressful
- Stress-relieving activities may make others uncomfortable (stimming)
- Sensory perceptions can interfere with learning/working (sound, light)
- Nebulous sense of time (can impact multi-tasking)
- Difficulty with changes and transitions
- Unexpected emotion when stressed
- Difficulty with organization



# Chico State Experiences

(Quintero 2024)

A lack of accommodation, support, and understanding of needs	Students (31), Staff (15), Faculty (6)
Challenges with communication, social cues, and clarity	Students (15), Staff (13), Faculty (8)
Issues related to workload and pay	Students (19), Staff (9), Faculty (3)
Intersectional challenges	Students (12), Staff (1), Faculty (1)
Lack of empathy, knowledge, and acceptance by others	Students (7), Staff (16), Faculty (5)
Lack of community	Students (33), Staff (5), Faculty (1)



# Strategies for supporting students

“What can I do to best accommodate your needs?”

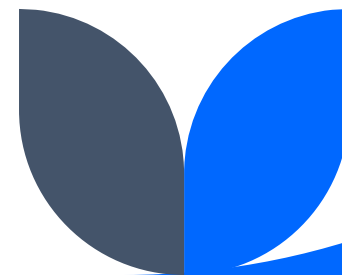
## Universal Design for Learning

- Universal Design (UD) for staff and faculty can inform strategies, encourage multiple modalities of teaching and ultimately empowering diverse ways of learning
- “Neurotypical” and nondisabled students can also reap advantages from a UD implementation
- a UD doesn't necessitate instructors to lower their standards

## UD Strategies

- Provide multiple means of accessing learning materials
- Provide multiple modes of evaluation

What else can we think of?



# Pros and Cons of Diagnosis

A student may confide to you that they're interested in pursuing a diagnosis, or may express to you that they don't want to. Or, you might want to recommend that they look into receiving an official diagnosis. Either option is valid and an important personal choice. Whichever they choose, these are a few common reasons for both decisions:

Pros	Cons
Can request official accommodations	Expensive and lengthy process
Potentially qualify for Disability	Inaccessible providers and/or testing facilities
A label for your experience; clarity and understanding	Potential for misdiagnosis, especially in women and people of color
Easier to begin unmasking and advocating for your needs	Negative impact to emotional state; can cause confusion, shock, shame, or grief

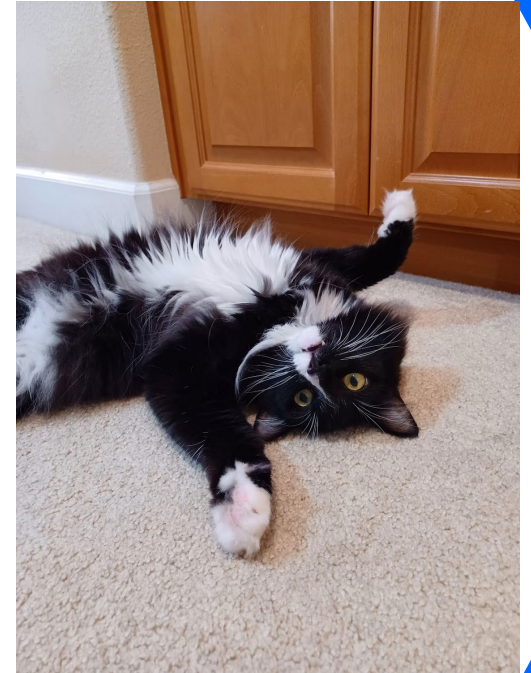
# Strategies for Supporting Fellow Employees

- “What can I do to best accommodate your needs?”
- Making choices about assessment tasks; some activities or group work can be stressful. It may be better to limit the options and clearly structure the requirements
- It may be useful to set regular meeting times to check on progress
- Provide clear instructions for assignments and assessments. Autistic individuals often interpret words literally



# More Tips and Tools for Accommodating Neurodiversity

- Flexible workspaces
- Allowing for movement
- Maximizing individual control over one's environment (lighting, temperature, sound, seating, etc.)
- Flexible deadlines
- Choice among topics
- Subtitles/closed captioning
- Attention to learning styles
- Encouragement of self-advocacy
- Scaffolding of assignments/tasks (breaking large jobs into smaller chunks)
- Positive reinforcement
- Acceptance of self-diagnosis
- Encouraging the use of ARC
- Flexibility in how learning/tasks can be achieved



# Future Possibilities

## *Establish a Disability Cultural Center*

- This represents another step oriented toward Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- Differs from postsecondary disability offices primarily concentrating on legal accommodations (ARC)
- Neurodivergent students do not come in contact with their accessibility resource centers because of perceived barriers and stigmas (Toor, Hanley, Hebron, 2016)
- Cultivates positive disability identities by fostering a sense of community, and celebrating disability culture
- A safe place for a marginalized group, and intersectional identities across campus for staff, students, and faculty
- Physical space near the office of ARC could encourage collaborative intersectional initiatives (Elmore, Thomson, 2021)
- A variety of workshops, services, and resources, as well as a collaborative space for advocates



# More Future Possibilities

- A “Well” for Employees?
- Help for student seeking diagnosis?
- Academic degree programs:
  - [UCLA—Disability Studies major](#)
- Professional training for advocates:
  - [Landmark College—Certificate in Learning Differences and Neurodiversity](#)
- Your ideas?



# Summary

## Definitions & History:

The term "neurodiversity," coined by Judy Singer in 1998, refers to natural variations in brain function, including conditions like Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and more.

## Challenges & Stigma:

Neurodivergent individuals often face institutional barriers, societal stigma, and difficulties in traditional learning environments.

## Campus Considerations:

The need for accessible education and workplace accommodations, avoiding discrimination, and fostering inclusivity.

## Support Strategies:

Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL), flexible workspaces, clear communication, and accommodating diverse learning and working styles.

## Future Possibilities:

Proposals for a Disability Cultural Center, professional training programs, and increased support for students seeking diagnoses.

# Thank you!

- Your questions?
- Please provide feedback on how we can improve this ally training:  
[ndtaskforce@csuchico.edu](mailto:ndtaskforce@csuchico.edu)
- Please fill out the survey!

## Sources of additional support and information



### [Accessibility Resource Center](#)

- can facilitate accommodation for students

### [Neurodiversity Club](#)

- (Instagram): @chicostateneurodiverseclub

### [Neurodiversity and Disability Faculty and Staff Association:](#)

- Email: [NDTaskforce@csuchico.edu](mailto:NDTaskforce@csuchico.edu)

### [WellCat Counseling Center](#)

- support Chico State students with their mental health needs.



# Works Cited

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