



*Challenging Ableism:
Amplifying Autistic
Perspectives and
Building Understanding*

*Making Autism Acceptance a Habit:
Small Actions for Big Change*

*Newsletter
April 2023*

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF AUTISM ACCEPTANCE AND CHALLENGING ABLEISM

Did you know that Autistic and neurodivergent individuals face discrimination, bias and prejudice on a daily basis? This bias, prejudice and discrimination is called "ableism". Ableism creates a huge barrier for acceptance of neurological differences. It is a serious problem that affects the experiences and opportunities of many Autistics and otherwise neurodivergent individuals. It is a form of oppression that fosters the stigma associated with disabilities.

But ableism is not all that simple. It is tricky. Not all ableism is ill intentioned. The effect may be negative, but a person can be ableist without even recognizing that they are being ableist.

Even us, as disabled people can internalize ableism due to past trauma and lack of acceptance. Ableism has been accepted in the form of sympathy, bias, prejudice and discrimination since ages. It is not an easy feat to eliminate ableism however it starts with unlearning - generational unlearning, personal unlearning and societal unlearning.

Education is the key to help people identify ableist behaviors and language. Education about Autism through Autistic Voices can help reduce ableism and break down the barriers that hinder Autism Acceptance. So, how can we educate ourselves and others? Accept the way Autistic individuals experience the world. Accept how we communicate. Accept us the way we are. Ask yourself if your own attitude, communication and behavior can unintentionally contribute to the discrimination we face?

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

(You can send your answers to Kind Theory at talktous@kindtheory.org).

- What are some of the stereotypes or misconceptions you have heard about autism? How can we challenge these misconceptions and promote understanding?
- Have you ever witnessed or experienced ableism towards someone with a disability, including autism? How did you respond?
- What steps can we take to challenge ableism, & promote inclusion as well as acceptance of autism and other disabilities in our daily lives?

April is known globally as the World Autism Month. April 2nd is known globally as the World Autism Day. This month lays heavy on a lot of us because so many organizations and people come forward to speak about us, without us. Without considering our voices. Without taking into account what we need. This month can somehow highlight how undervalued we actually are.

So, we reached out to the autistic voices on our team and decided to amplify our own voices. We decided this month should be about challenging ableism this year. If you are autistic and are reading this, please reach out and let us know how you think ableism can be challenged. If you are not autistic and are reading this, please support us and help us amplify our voices.

Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to work towards creating a more equitable and accepting world for everyone. Together, we can challenge ableism and promote autism acceptance.

WHATS NEW?	PG
Introduction.....	2
Tales of sorrow, pain and injustice.....	3
Upcoming Programs.....	4
March Highlights.....	5-9



Tales of Pain, Sorrow and Injustice



Ali Bilal (Aka Zillay Shah), was an autistic young man killed by Law enforcement in Pakistan.



On the way to his special needs school located within the Old City of Jerusalem, 31-year-old Eyad al-Halaq., who was Autistic, fatally shot by Israeli police on May 30, 2020.



Autistic teen Eric Parsa (13 year old) died after police chokehold outside Louisiana laser tag center, Jan 19, 2020



Elijah McClain: A 23 years old Autistic Man Killed by Law Enforcement in 2019 (Aurora, Colorado - United States)

The loss of countless lives demands that law enforcement be properly trained for interaction with neurodivergent individuals. Doing so will help save lives and prevent tragedies like these. It is time for us to take action and ensure that every life is valued and protected.

Upcoming Programs

BSSC - SAFETY



Our new Building Safe and Supportive Communities (BSSC) Safety programs will have a focus on Law Enforcement. We will use virtual and hybrid training to make interactions with Law Enforcement Officers safer for Autistic people and people with ADHD.

Our training is led by neurodivergent (Autistic or ADHD) experts themselves along with experienced & licensed law enforcement trainers.

BSSC Safety is a two-part program. The first part of our program is equipping the neurodivergent youth and adults with the resources, education and information on how to stay safe and avoid escalation in a police encounter. The second part of our program provides neurodiversity affirmative training to the law enforcement officers paired with a resource to help understand neurodivergent communication and behavior. Most existing programs aim at training police. We believe it is equally important to equip the neurodiverse community with the resources to help them with their safety. But we CANNOT do it without YOUR help.

Call for Sponsors

We are now open to sponsorships, donations, and other funding opportunities for our BSSC Safety Program. As a non-profit organization we have limited resources. Your support will not only help with program development and implementation but will also provide employment opportunities for neurodivergent people. For enquiries about how you can support please reach out to our Executive Director - Samar Waqar at: swaqar@kindtheory.org



KIND
THEORY

March Highlights

EXCERPTS FROM FEATURED ARTICLES



Neurodiversity in Medical Education and Training by Amy Burden

Without meaningful interactions with neurodivergent patients in training, doctors and nurses may inadvertently treat their neurodivergent patients inappropriately when they begin their practice. Issues with communication and a lack of understanding of the patient's needs can cause problems to be overlooked, which results in poor outcomes for the patient.

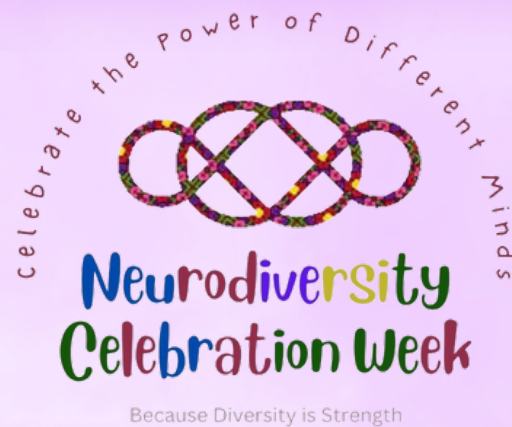


What Support May Look Like for BFRBs (Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors) by Brittney Geary

Like many neurodivergent conditions, society is generally ignorant to the ways BFRBs, or Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors, impact our day-to-day living. Due to a host of health issues that can and do occur as a result of engaging in BFRBs (pain, spreading of germs, illness, infection, scarring, balding, etc.), BFRBs are highly stigmatized, which can make living with them feel extremely isolating and can contribute to feelings of guilt and shame that often further complicates accessing support.

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Neurodiversity Celebration Week 13 to 19th March



13 - 19 March

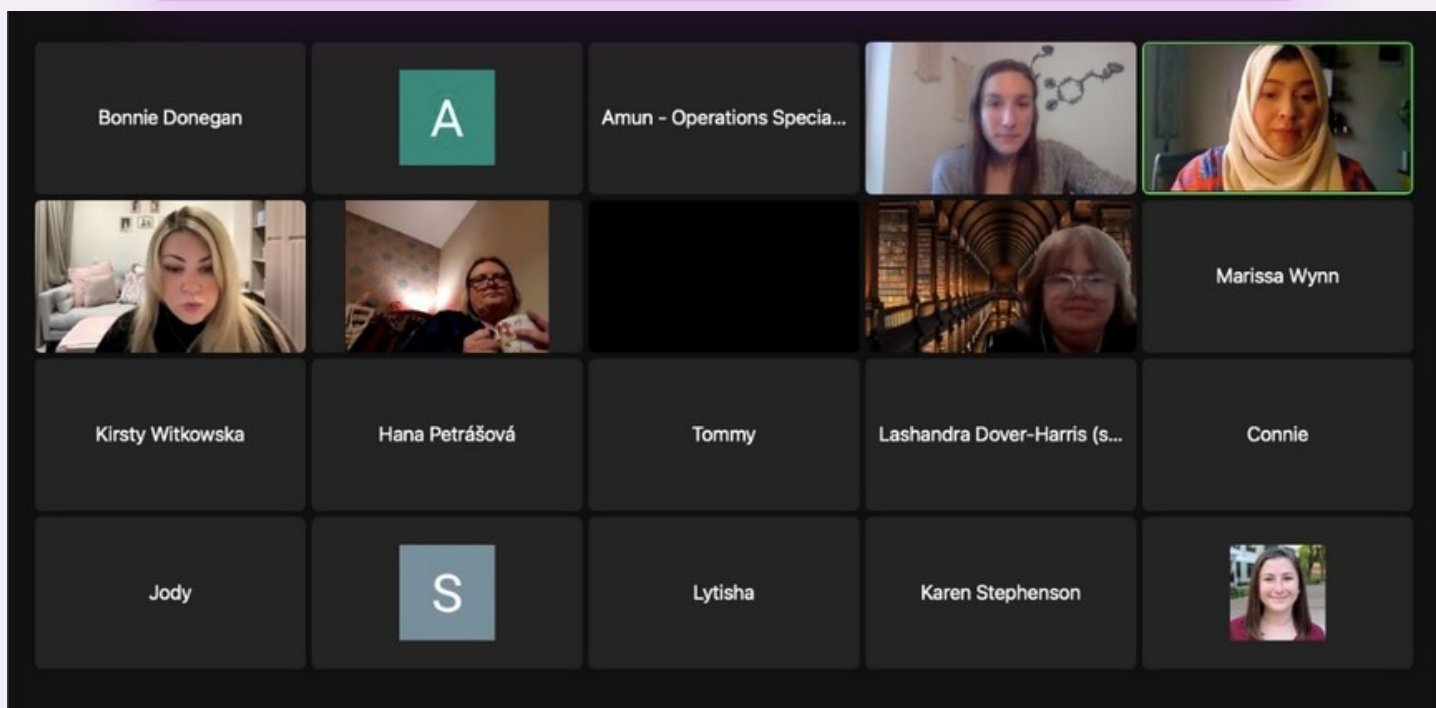
Imagine a world that recognizes and appreciates the unique strengths and perspectives of every individual. How beautiful would that world be?

When we celebrate neurodiversity, we challenge the narrow definitions of intelligence and success that have traditionally excluded those who think and learn differently. By embracing neurodiversity, we create a more inclusive and accepting society where everyone's differences are recognized and valued.

Celebrating neurodiversity can inspire innovation and creativity. Neurodivergent workforce is still an untapped resource. By creating an environment that fosters neurodiversity we can create a world where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Nourish Diversity – Session 1



Nourish Diversity - Our very first Nutrition Based Program launched on the 19th of March 2023! We were so excited to see Global Participation!

With the expert guidance of Rebecca King, Session 1 was focused on the connection between food and emotions.

- How does thinking about our feelings impact the way we eat?
- How do our emotions affect our food choices?
- What role do our senses play in our eating experience?

The discussions were insightful and thought-provoking, and we're excited to keep the conversation going at our next session in April. We welcome everyone to join us as we continue to explore new ideas and perspectives about nourishing ourselves - body & mind.

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Kind Theory joins IL Texas Garland High School's inspiring service expos

We participated in IL Texas Garland High School's Community and Service Expo for the school. It was a great opportunity to showcase our work, recruit potential volunteers, and connect with like-minded organizations. We appreciate IL Texas Garland High School's recognition of our efforts and commitment to creating a positive impact in the community. Thank you for organizing these inspiring service expos that brought together individuals and organizations committed to making a positive difference.



DAY 1 - School Service Expo



DAY 2 - Community Service Expo

Jamie Shields

Accessibility Consultant

Kind Theory



The medical model of Disability would have us believe that our impairments and our lived experience is the problem that needs to be fixed. Yet the social model of Disability argues society is not designed for those with lived experience and therefore it's society that needs fixing. Whilst both have their own merits, I personally believe that the experiences and challenges we face are because of a society that's not designed for Disabled People. It's not designed for the 1.8 billion people with diverse lived experiences. Diversity is difference. Disability is diverse. We're all diverse, yet society is neurotypical and often looks at those who think, learn, work or do things differently as less than. This can have profound effects on Disabled people and it can foster internalised Ableism. It's in these moments where we give into that internalised ableism that we in fact can, and will disable ourselves.