

AUTISM & TRAUMA

The importance of accurate diagnosis

Christina
Keeble



1

Contact Me



Email

info@christinakeeble.com



Websites

christinakeeble.com



FB & Insta

[@christinakeebleconsulting](https://www.facebook.com/christinakeebleconsulting)



LinkedIn

[linkedin.com/in/christina-keeble/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/christina-keeble/)

2

Trigger Warning

- Possible mentions of
 - Suicide
 - Domestic violence
 - Self-harm
 - Alcoholism
 - Addiction
- Emergency - 000
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue - 1300 224 636
- Suicide Call Back Number - 1300 659 467

3

Christina Keeble

- Who am I?
 - Mum of 2, teacher, speaker & consultant, diagnosed at 37, founder of Christina Keeble Consulting & co-founder of National PEKE Centre
- Pieces of Paper
 - BS Psychology, BA Hons Psychology, PGDipEd Early Childhood & Primary Teaching, Masters in Special Education
 - Been in Spec Ed/Disability since 2002: ECE - High School

© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

4



© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

5

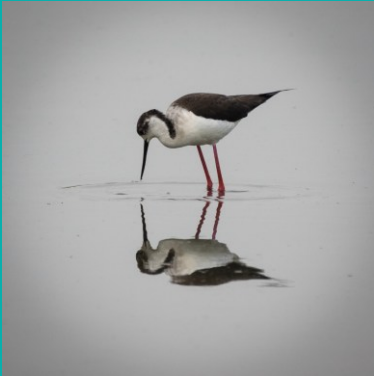
The Social Model of Disability



© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

6

Pause & Reflect...



What are my biases?

What are my stigmas associated with Autism & ADHD?

Do I hold ableist beliefs?

What barriers do I create for my clients?

Why do I think this?
Where has it come from?

7

Labels

- Labels help us organise, understand, and make sense of our world

8

Labelling

- What do you do for a living?
- Where are you from?
- What is your ethnicity?
- Do you wear glasses or contact lenses?
- How would you describe your hair?
- Are you a parent?
- Are you a partner?
- Are you a pet owner?
- Are you an artist?
- Are you an athlete?

9

When I got diagnosed, I rang my mom.

I learned some of my labels.

10

My new labels led me to finally understand...

- Autism
- ADHD
- CPTSD

- I'm not a broken adult (thank goodness).
- That is why I struggled with xyz!
- I'm a survivor!
- I AM different.
- I have been too hard on myself.
- I forgive me.
- I love me.
- I will look after me – *learning how*
- I will help my children see how amazing and beautiful their brains are & how to navigate the world safely.



11

Diagnoses

- Accurate diagnoses
 - Can be empowering
 - Can be an explanation
 - Can lead to better understanding of self
 - Can lead to better mental health
 - Can provide signposts on how to support the child
- Inaccurate diagnoses
 - Can lead feeling like you never fit in or belong anywhere
 - Can lead to misunderstanding behaviours leading to the child being labelled a behaviour problem
 - Can lead to incorrect medications
 - Can lead to inappropriate interventions
 - Can lead to poorer mental health outcomes

12

Autistic Culture

It exists. It can be a powerful and profound experience to discover it.

© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

13

Let's Talk About Language

In the context of Autistic Culture

14

Person First Language

A person with autism

A person on the spectrum

Derived from the Medical Model of Disability

Christina Keeble

Identity First Language

An autistic person

If you are unsure... ASK!

Christina Keeble

15

Christina Keeble

A Summary Guide to Neurodiversity Affirming Language		
Word	What it Means	Extra Info...
Neurodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes every neurotypeEveryoneNeurodiversity acknowledges neurology is a spectrum and that there are natural variations of neurocognitive functioning within our species	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neurodiversity is represented by the rainbow infinity symbol
Neurotypical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Someone whose neurotype allows them to benefit and work within the society they live in.	
Neurodivergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Someone whose neurotype diverges from the one that benefits from the society they live in.Their neurotype does not allow them to benefit and work within their society's expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neurodivergence extends beyond being Autistic or an ADHDerThe umbrella of neurodivergence includes all neurotypes which are not neurotypical.
Neuroqueer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A verb first, then adjectiveTo embrace someone's neurodivergence and queer the neuro-normative, CIS gendered, patriarchy"You're neuroqueer if you neuroqueer." - Nick Walker	Coined by Dr. Nick Walker, 2008

christinakeebble.com

Christina Keeble

Neurodiversity Affirming Language		
Instead of...	Say this...	More Info...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">ASD or ASCAutism Spectrum Disorder or ConditionOn the Autism SpectrumOn the SpectrumAsperger'sAspie	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Autistic<ul style="list-style-type: none">As in they are an autistic personAutistic neurotypeAutism<ul style="list-style-type: none">As in autism is one of their SPiNs or autism is hereditary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Unless the individual or family expresses their preference of person first language, if they do, you respect their preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This comes at the request of non-speaking adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Time blindnessAny other phrase with blindness as a descriptor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Time agnosiaUse agnosia in place of the word blindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This comes at the request of the blind community
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Deficits or problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Differences, neuro-differences, or challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I.e., Sensory processing differencesI.e., Challenges with regulation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Narrow, restricted, repetitive interests or special interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">SPiNs, passions, hobbies, interests, intense interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The autistic community has reclaimed the term 'special interests' and now refers to them as SPiNs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Challenging behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describe the specific challengesAn increase in specific support needs during dysregulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I.e., They struggled today with the layers and amount of noise in the shopping centre. This led them to experience dysregulation and they experienced a meltdown.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Specific support needs	

christinakeebble.com

16

Statistics

- McCrossin R. (2022). Finding the True Number of Females with Autistic Spectrum Disorder by Estimating the Biases in Initial Recognition and Clinical Diagnosis. *Children* (Basel, Switzerland), 9(2), 272. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children9020272>
- Newell et al., *A systematic review and meta-analysis of suicidality in autistic and possibly autistic people without co-occurring intellectual disability*, *Molecular Autism* (2023) 14:12 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13023-023-01044-2>
- Cazalis F, Reyes E, Leduc S and Gourion D (2022) Evidence That Nine Autistic Women Out of Ten Have Been Victims of Sexual Violence. *Front. Behav. Neurosci.* 16:852203. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2022.852203>
- Gibbs, V., Hudson, J. & Pellicano, E. The Extent and Nature of Autistic People's Violence Experiences During Adulthood: A Cross-sectional Study of Victimization. *J Autism Dev Disord* 53, 3509–3524 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-022-00642-3>
- Hartley, G., Sirois, F., Purrington, J., & Rabey, Y. (2023). Adverse Childhood Experiences and Autism: A Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(3), 2297–2315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153480231413519> (Original work published 2024)

- Autistic individuals are at increased risk of ACEs compared with non-autistic individuals and the odds of an autistic person experiencing at least one ACE is more than twice as likely than a non-autistic person.
- 80% of autistic females remain undiagnosed at age 18
- Autistic Women
 - 9-in-10 have experienced sexual violence (sexual assault or rape)
 - Victims were young and revictimization was high
 - About 43% per cent have experienced physical violence.
- Non-speaking autistic people who are abused is believed to be even higher, but it is rarely reported
- Increased PTSD in the Autistic community (32-45%) vs general population (4-4.5%)

17

What can we do? (large scale)

Basile, K., DeGue, S., Jones, K., Freire, K., Dills, J., Smith, S., et al. (2016). STOP SV: A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/ncipc/sv-prevention-resource_308.pdf

- Education, health, and social care professionals need to be aware of the increased risk of autistic individuals' experiencing ACEs
- Assessment of ACEs in people diagnosed with Autism should be embedded into practice to ensure the individuals and families receive the correct support
- Understanding Neurodivergent experiences (including Autism) from the lived experience and neuro-affirming practices is important to supporting the Autistic community
- Further research into Autistic's people's experiences of trauma (led by Autistic researchers or authentic co-design)
- Prevention by promoting profound cultural changes such as recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO):
 - Sexual violence is at the root of gender inequality
 - STOP-SV – program by CDC
 - RESPECT – WHO's framework

18

What can we do? (smaller scale)

- Educate families and professionals about the risk of sexual victimisation of Autistic girls, and the increased risk of ACES for Autistic children
- Empower families to understand Neurodiversity
- Support the family and child(ren) to
 - Develop a positive neurodivergent identity
 - Support them to understand differences in the sociality, communication, play, and behavioural differences of others
 - Not to change them, rather to facilitate understanding
 - Support the development of self advocacy skills
 - Then next steps if the first attempt is shut down

19

Relationships & Risks

- Keeping in mind we are not victim blaming or expecting the person with a disability who struggles with social and communication situations to be able to do this
- This is to minimise risk

Support with friendship challenges

- Discuss situations, support to understand different perspectives & how to self advocate

Explicitly teach sexual safety education & protective behaviours

- Not understanding unspoken social rules
- Need to please -vulnerability
- Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD)
- Silence or no answer can imply a yes
- Line in the sand
- What is/is not ok
- It's ok to change your mind
- It's ok to not be in a relationship
- When, where, and how to get help (role play, plan, and practice)

20

Positive Neurodivergent Identity

A different lens, how we help them frame it

© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

21

Neurodiversity Model

- Represents *all* neurotypes
- Inclusive
- Recognises that neurodivergence is a natural variation within our species
- Difference is not negative, it's just different



© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

22

Neurodiversity

iPHONE vs Android




Different Not Less

Christina Keeble

The diagram illustrates the relationship between iPhone and Android ecosystems. At the top, the 'App Store' and 'TikTok' logos are shown in black ovals, with curved arrows indicating interaction between them. Below these, an iPhone and an Android phone are shown. Arrows point from the App Store to the iPhone and from TikTok to the Android phone. Additionally, curved arrows point from the iPhone to the Android phone and from the Android phone back to the App Store, suggesting a cross-platform or interoperable relationship.


Neurodivergent



- Autistic
- ADHD
- Tourettes
- Learning Differences
 - Dyslexia
 - Dyscalculia
 - Dysgraphia
- And more +

Christina Keeble

Neurotypical



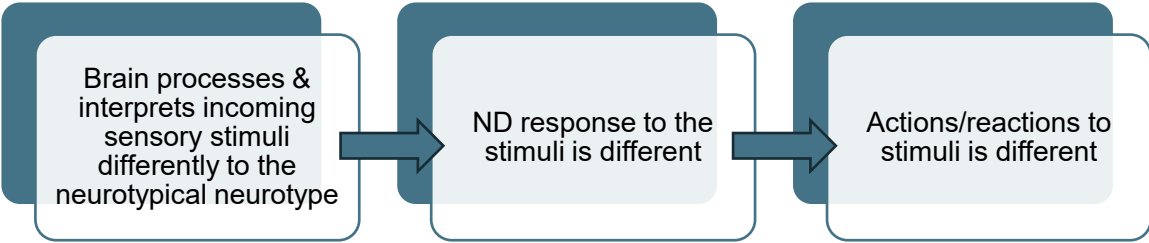
Not Neurodivergent

Christina Keeble

© 2015-2025 Christina Jennifer Keeble, all rights reserved.

23

Neurodivergence



24

When we understand our children's strengths & challenges, we can support them to learn to advocate for themselves and navigate the world safely.

We then have a chance to reduce the rate of trauma and increase the quality of life for neurodivergent people.

25

Support them to understand their unique brain & other neurotypes

- Their strengths
- Their challenges
- What comes easy to them will be challenging for others and vice versa
- What they need to feel ok and regulated
- Look at everyone's brains in the house
 - Make it visual
 - Draw it!
 - Discuss it
 - Problem solve together, how can we be a good team and make sure we all get what we need?

26

My children's diagnoses

- "Oh, that's why I'm different." – 6 yo
- "Is my brain like yours or dad's?.... OK, can I go back to playing now?" – 4yo



27

Reflection

- What frame does you put around neuro-differences in your practice?
 - When you are out (and not at work)?
- What language do you use when talking to clients about Autism, ADHD, and other neurodivergences?
 - To families?
 - To co-workers & other professionals?
 - To family and friends?
 - Primarily strengths based or deficits based?
- How do you speak to yourself or others about your challenges? Your kids' challenges?

28



Thank you for your time!