




# **SOCIAL SKILLS ACROSS NEUROTYPES: SKILLS FOR SUCCESS WHILE STAYING AUTHENTIC**


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# INTRODUCTION

Social skills are a significant predictor of success in life. Individuals with strong social skills have greater independence, job success, and overall emotional well-being, an increased probability of acquiring higher education, confidence with self-taught skills, and maintaining a full-time job.



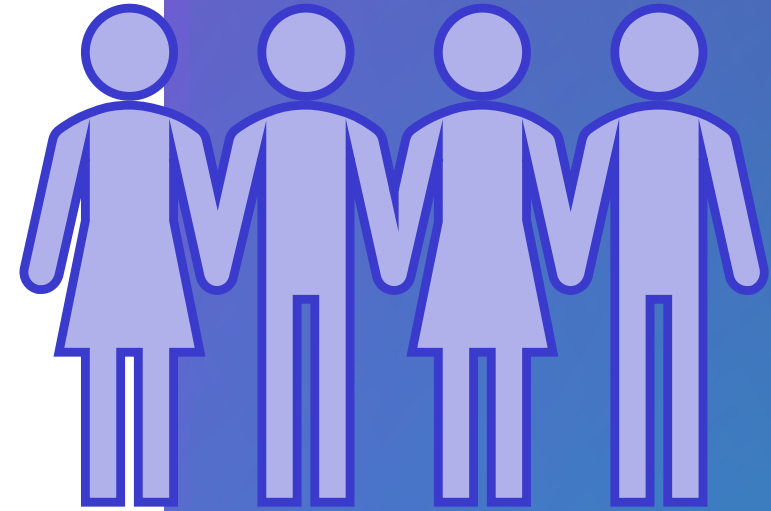
Teaching social skills is not about changing people. It is about providing tools to use if they choose to be in an environment or with people where they will need them if necessary.



Different social norms and expectations held by Autistic and non-Autistic neurotypes may not mean one is right and one is wrong but more so, there is a misalignment in how people with different neurotypes interact.

# INTRODUCTION

- The social goal based on setting and context are essential in deciding what social skills to use to help develop relationships across neurotypes. The person needs to know their objective when determining how to communicate socially.
- The goal is not trying to assimilate or camouflage but learning to understand and interpret the signals.
- Learning new social skills does not mean that you must change who you are as a person. You can be authentic while increasing your awareness of the perspective of those around you to reach your goal!





# FRIENDSHIP POLL

- What is the peak friendship age?
- How long does it take to make a friend?
- How long does it take to move from the casual friend into the deeper category of best friends?

# THE PROBLEM

- Social skills are an important predictor for success in lots of areas of life such as friendships, employment, and romantic relationships.
- The primary barrier to employment and meaningful relationships was some deficit and a difference in their social behavior which .
- Many of the conventional narratives are provided by the medical and deficits model which views social skills as a core impairment of Autism.



S O C I A L  
C H A L L E N G E S  
W I T H  
N E U R O D I V E R S I T Y

- Topic initiation and knowing what to talk about
- Understanding the differences across social landscapes
- How to navigate them based on the situation and changing social expectations
- Difficulty interpreting social cues of others
- Challenges with perspective taking and putting themselves in others' shoes
- Lack of social engagement opportunities
- Those with neuro-typical brain styles learn earlier through experience

# RESEARCH

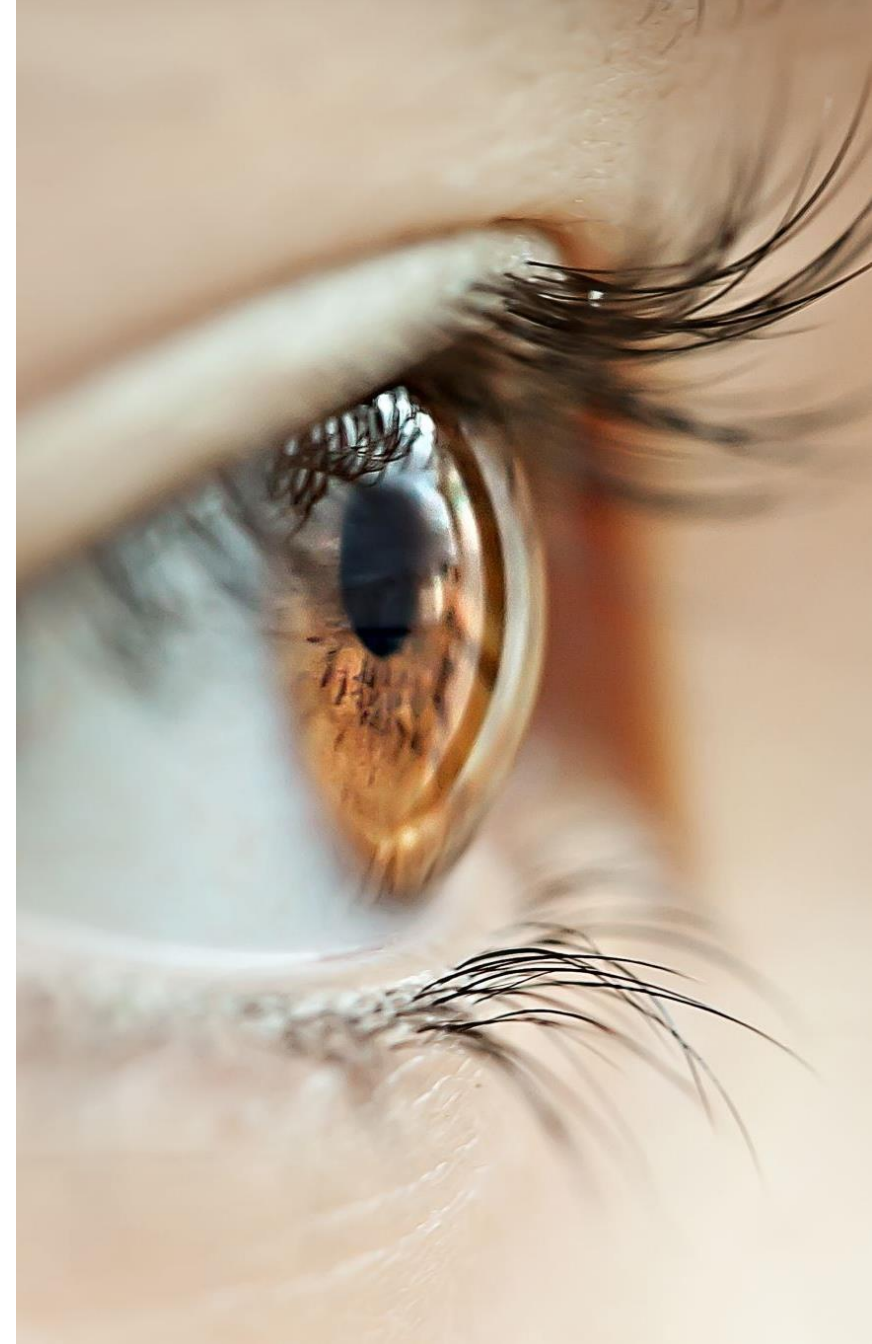
A 2020 STUDY BY CROMPTON & COLLEAGUES FOUND:

- Neurotypicals communicated effectively with other neurotypicals.
- Autistic and neurotypical people had less effective communication and built less rapport
- Autistic people communicated just as effectively with each other as Neurotypicals did with their same neurotype
- Autistics don't have deficits in social communication!
- Both Autistic and neurotypical people have difficulty communicating with different neurotypes from their own.

# WHAT IF THE SITUATION WAS REVERSED?

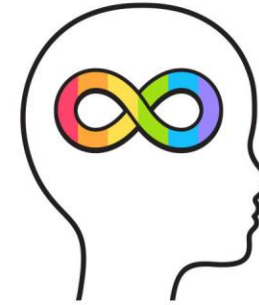
## SOCIAL SKILLS FOR NEUROTYPICALS

- Reduce how much you glare at eyeballs
- Only ask questions if you want full and detailed answers
- SAY WHAT YOU MEAN
- Substantial subject matter is prioritized
- Oversharing is a myth, it doesn't actually exist
- Conversations are to be nonlinear
- There are never enough "random facts" in any interaction
- Show empathy through sharing your own experiences
- Background details and side stories are always relevant all info might be important you never know!





# SOCIAL NORMS VARY



- Social norms vary across neurotypes, geographic areas, and cultures
- Different social norms and expectations held by Autistic and non-Autistic neurotypes
- It is important for the person to know their objective when deciding how to communicate socially
- Focus on assessing the interest of the other person since it can be hard to predict their response until you start talking first
- Allow the space for them to be themselves first and use social tools as needed
- Conversations become beautiful once those who have similar neurotypes gain the skills and confidence to talk to each other in their own ways

COMMON  
ERRORS  
PEOPLE  
MAKE

---

Trying to camouflage or mask their perceived  
Autistic traits

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Think people are interested when they aren't and  
keep talking

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Don't realize people are interested and give short  
repsponses or exit conversations

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Not showing observable signals of interest when  
they are actually interested in the conversation

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Showing self-interest vs social interest

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Social anxiety can impact this so they can seem  
overeager or awkward

# CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL ERRORS

- Awkward or embarrassing miscommunications can discourage future attempts
- Missed opportunities friendships or social experiences
- Misunderstandings about feelings, expectations or intentions
- Develop a bad reputation in social or work-related groups
- Difficulties getting and keeping employment
- Underemployment or missing out on opportunities for promotions
- Social isolation and higher levels of symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Lack of inclusion in their communities and social support systems
- Increased dependence on families

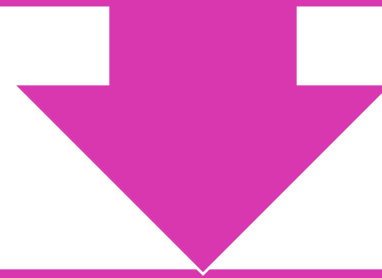
# WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

## Assessing Interest



# ASSESSING INTEREST

How and why do we  
assess interest?



Questions to ask:

Keep it  
simple: Are  
they:

Looking at  
me?

Talking to  
me ?

Facing to  
me?

# HOW TO PROCEED



If the answer is yes to these questions, then YES, they are interested, and you can proceed with the conversation!



If the answer to these questions is no, then they are NOT interested, and you can exit and move on to talk with someone else. No worries it happens to everyone!



# ASSESSING INTEREST IN CONVERSATIONS

## Eye contact:

- Are they looking at you?
  - Interested: making eye contact or looking in your direction
  - Not Interested: Look confused, making faces, rolling eyes, no eye contact

## Body language:

- Are they facing you?
  - Interested: Nodding, smiling, OPEN the circle, turn toward you
  - Not Interested: CLOSE the circle, give the cold shoulder, turn away

## Verbal signs:

- Are they talking to you?
  - Interested: Asking you questions, laughing at your jokes, making affirmative comments
  - Not Interested: Giving short answers, not asking you questions, using an overly nice, sing songy tone of voice

# ASSESSING INTEREST IN GROUPS

Signs You Are Accepted	Signs You Are Not Accepted
They seek you out to do things individually or in the group	They do not seek you out to do things
They talk to you and respond to your attempts to talk	They ignore you and/or do not respond to your attempts to talk
They give you their contact information	They do not give you their contact information
They ask for your contact information	They do not ask for your contact information
They text message, instant message, email, or call you just to talk	They do not accept or return your calls or messages
They invite you to do things	They do not invite you to do things
They accept your invitations to do things	They do not accept your invitations to do things
They add you to their social networking pages	They ignore your friend requests on social networking sites
They say nice things to you and give you compliments	They laugh at or make fun of you

# BODY LANGUAGE

- Observe the other person's behavior for cues
- If they show signs of interest keep going, if not leave the conversation
- Be on the alert for cues they want to wrap things up
  - Glancing at their watch
  - Checking the time on their smartphone
  - A dramatic shortening of their responses
    - “Yes, great point, OK” instead of sharing a more detailed story
  - Tightening of their body, like they're ready to get on the move
  - The positioning of their feet
    - If their feet are pointed away from you, it's a strong sign they want to leave ASAP.



# KEEP CHECKING IN AND ASSESSING INTEREST

- Keep regularly assessing interest as long as you are talking with the person or people
- Keep checking because people often lose interest in the topic and want to change it up
- Some topics naturally come to a dead end
- Over time you will get better at noticing the more subtle cues when people are losing interest which helps it keep from feeling like it is personal or that you are making mistakes



# DON'T GET DISCOURAGED

- If you assess interest and find they are not interested, try not to take it personally
- There are so many reasons you may not be accepted into conversations or groups and it might not be because you made a social mistake
- Guess how many times people are actually accepted into conversations?
- You can try again another time, with a new topic, or just move on to talk to someone new
- If it was going well and they were interested at first, they may just need a break or want to also talk to other people so go with the flow

# SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE SKILLS BETWEEN SIMILAR NEURODIVERGENT NEUROTYPES

- They may be different, but they aren't wrong!
  - **Self-advocacy**- give others more info about how you think and communicate up front to prevent misunderstandings
  - **Conversational overlapping**- It's not interrupting, talking along with and validating the other speaker shows you are engaged with what they are saying
  - **Same Story** - Showing empathy by sharing a similar experience. Why else would you believe I actually understand what you are going through?
  - **Info Dumping**- This is a conversation style that allows someone to talk in detail about a topic or interest that is important to them



# INTROVERTED VS EXTROVERTED

- It is not about being outgoing or extroverted, introverted is also right!
- They are just different and both equally valid and successful
- It is more about recognizing if someone is interested or not interested
- Extroverts are more likely to assume people are interested when in fact, they aren't
- Introverts are more likely to mistakenly think people do not have interest in what they have to say



# CONCLUSION

Social anxiety can cloud our judgement, so you do not have to let it get in the way of learning how to notice and interpret the social cues of others.

This lets you be true to your own authentic personality while learning and using your social skills to navigate based on your social goals and each type of situation.

When you are prepared with the tools then you can be ready to mingle with people with similar and different neurotypes and build confidence!

The most important thing to remember is keep on the lookout for signs they are interested or not interested.



**QUESTIONS?**