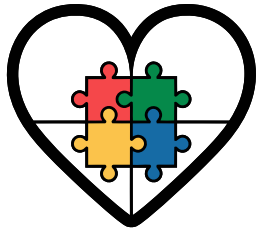


COURSE SYLLABUS



Neurodivergent Joy
PSY-AU101
Autism

INSTRUCTOR

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SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY – AUTISM & NEURODIVERGENCE SPECIALIZATION MAY 2025- JUNE 2025

Delivery Format: Online (Live/Asynchronous)

Credit Hours: 1.5 (non-degree enrichment)

Duration: 8 Weeks

Certificate Eligible: Yes

Course Description

This introductory course invites learners to explore autism through the radical lens of neurodivergent joy. Combining lived experience, evidence-based strategies, and tools from The Digital Advocacy Binder, students will gain a foundational understanding of autism, neurodivergent identity, and effective school-based advocacy for autistic children and their families. Emphasis will be placed on inclusive practices, culturally responsive communication, and equity in education.

Using a family-centered lens and grounded in culturally responsive practice, students will engage with the core tools of advocacy, including individualized education planning (IEPs), behavior documentation, and school communication strategies. Drawing from the instructor's original eBook, The Digital Advocacy Binder, students will gain hands-on skills to support children with autism in both professional and personal capacities.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define autism and neurodivergence through a strengths-based, identity-affirming framework.
2. Identify key components of educational advocacy, including IEPs, 504 Plans, and communication strategies.
3. Use digital tools to track behavior, monitor academic progress, and prepare for school meetings.
4. Understand and challenge ableism, cultural bias, and marginalization in educational spaces.
5. Apply advocacy strategies to real-life case studies involving school-home collaboration.
6. Cultivate and celebrate neurodivergent joy in educational and familial environments.

Target Audience

- Undergraduate students studying psychology, education, or social work
- Parents, caregivers, and guardians of neurodivergent children
- Educators, paraprofessionals, and school staff
- Advocates and service providers seeking foundational training in autism advocacy

Course Materials

Required Text:

- The Digital Advocacy Binder: Empowering Neurodivergent Families in Schools (included with enrollment)

Required Tech:

- Laptop, desktop, or smartphone
- Email account (school or personal)
- Access to course portal (provided upon registration)

Optional Resources:

- Podcast: Neurodivergent Voices
- Article: "Disability as Culture: A Parent's Perspective"
- Video: "What Is Neurodivergent Joy?" (Week 1 watch)



Chapter Summaries: Autism: Neurodivergent Joy

Introduction: Why This Book Matters

This opening chapter frames the heart of the book: embracing neurodivergent children not just with understanding, but with joy. Through personal reflection and current trends in diagnoses, readers are guided toward a strengths-based mindset and introduced to the power of proactive, informed advocacy.

Chapter 1: Understanding Neurodivergence

This foundational chapter defines key terms like autism, ADHD, and sensory processing disorders. It dispels common myths and misconceptions, while introducing the concept of neurodiversity as a natural variation in the human brain—one that offers unique strengths and perspectives.

Chapter 2: Building a Support Network

Families cannot do it alone. This chapter walks readers through forming a reliable support system—including how to navigate school-based supports like IEPs and 504 Plans, find trustworthy therapists and specialists, and connect with local or online advocacy groups and allies.

Chapter 3: Strategies for Everyday Success

Success begins at home. This chapter offers actionable, family-friendly strategies for managing daily life with a neurodivergent child—such as creating visual schedules, implementing sensory supports, and communicating clearly in a way that honors the child's needs and autonomy.

Chapter 4: Self-Care for Parents

Caregivers need care, too. This chapter is a compassionate deep-dive into burnout prevention, therapy, peer support, and balancing identity and personal goals while raising a neurodivergent child. It emphasizes that joyful parenting starts with a well-resourced parent.

Chapter 5: Addressing Unique Challenges

From sensory overload to sudden transitions, this chapter equips caregivers with tools to address meltdowns, emotional regulation, and social development. It also includes tips for navigating developmental milestones like puberty and school changes with clarity and compassion.

Chapter 6: Celebrating Wins

This chapter encourages families to notice and celebrate the small and big wins alike. Whether it's a new word, a calm transition, or a new friendship, celebrating neurodivergent joy helps shift the narrative from "fixing" to flourishing—building hope for the future.

Chapter 7: Navigating Systems and Institutions

Families often find themselves navigating not one, but many systems—education, healthcare, and social services. This chapter demystifies those systems, offering templates and checklists to help families advocate confidently across professional settings, without feeling overwhelmed or dismissed.

Chapter 8: Advocacy in Action – Raising Awareness & Community Impact

In the final chapter, families are empowered to share their journeys, lead in their communities, and become agents of change. From speaking at school boards to creating safe spaces online, this chapter equips advocates with the tools to raise awareness and amplify neurodivergent voices—starting with their own.

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Updated 8-Week Course Flow:

Week	Chapter	Core Focus
Week 1	Introduction + Chapter 1	Foundations of Neurodivergence
Week 2	Chapter 2	Building Your Support Ecosystem
Week 3	Chapter 3	Tools for Everyday Success
Week 4	Chapter 4	Self-Care & Resilience for Caregivers
Week 5	Chapter 5	Facing and Navigating Unique Challenges
Week 6	Chapter 6	Celebrating Strengths & Milestones
Week 7	Chapter 7	Navigating Systems & Coordinated Advocacy
Week 8	Chapter 8	Advocacy in Action: Storytelling & Community Impact

Target Audience

- Undergraduate students studying psychology, education, or social work
- Parents, caregivers, and guardians of neurodivergent children
- Educators, paraprofessionals, and school staff
- Advocates and service providers seeking foundational training in autism advocacy

Instructor Notes

"I believe this course will transform not only how you see neurodivergence—but how you show up in the lives of neurodivergent youth. Let's build a future where joy, equity, and advocacy are the norm, not the exception."