Neurodivergent Programming As a Superpower

Véronique Côté
Director, Florida Atlantic University Galleries

Meredith Tekin
President, IBCCES (International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards)
1: INTRODUCTION + DEFINITIONS
Hi! I'm Véronique autistic & artistic.

Véronique Côté
University Galleries Director

MA, Museum Studies, Harvard University
MFA, Visual Studies, University at Buffalo

University Galleries Director, FAU, Boca Raton
Executive Director & Chief Curator, CEPA Gallery, Buffalo
Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami
Meredith Tekin
President, IBCCES
(she/her)
“Neurotypical” + sensory sensitivities

ABOUT IBCCES

● Founded in 2001

● Mission to provide multi-disciplinary, position and industry specific training and certification to professionals to improve experience and outcomes of neurodivergent individuals

● Certification programs for healthcare, education, hospitality and entertainment, public safety and corporate organizations

● Based in US, certificants in more than 90+ countries worldwide
Definitions

- Invisible Disabilities
- Neurodiversity
- DEIA
- Autism

Internal Audience

External Audience
What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a recognition that not all brains think or feel the same way.

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term representing over 15% of the world population (maybe even closer to 20%).

These are autistic people, individuals with Attention Deficit & Hyperactive Disorder, OCD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Tourette and many other neurological and sensory processing differences.

This presentation favors identity-first language (“autistic person”) because I don’t think of autism as a disability but as a trait; but person-first language (“person with autism”) is OK too.

Always ask.
Impact

1 in 6 people have a sensory need

Multi-generational neurodiversity

Millions of Adults are on the spectrum

Sensory seeking, sensory sensitive, or in-between - everyone still wants to have fun

$29 BILLION spent annually by travelers with disabilities (on their own travel, not including companions)

1 in 36 children diagnosed with autism
This is Frank
Agent F.
Service Dog, Comic Relief

Art by Patrick Moser @ FAU
Creating Safe Spaces

Frank’s story.
What would you do?

Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.
2: VISITOR PERSPECTIVE
What Can You Do?

- Everyone has different needs – but there are some commonalities
- Communication, communication, communication
  - Long-term plans and programs – you don’t need to be perfect, but don’t want lip service (credibility)
  - Options and flexibility – they know their own needs best
  - Inclusivity ALL the time
Areas to Consider

- **Communication**
  - Roll out the welcome mat – make it easy
  - This helps EVERYONE not just a “special” group
  - Videos, photos, and written content - direct line to contact
  - Menus, re-entry, guides, partnerships

- **Entry points**
  - Check in/ticketing process

- **Sensory needs**
  - Low sensory or quiet areas

- **Staff!**
  - Staff knowledge and supports
Remember:

• It’s a journey!
• Not a “one + done” initiative - This is part of your DNA
• Make sure you implement/have access to: Continued Support, Ongoing Learning Opportunities
• Tangible Resources
• Be open to feedback and learning
Examples of Questions to Ask

These are just a few questions to ask when designing programs, exhibits and work spaces:

- Could I use an icon or image?
- Is my typeface/font “friendly”? (dyslexia/visually impaired)
- Are my lines of sight and sound open or closed?
- How many senses do I engage?
- Can I make a touchable version?
- Did we try this from all angles?
3: INTERNAL PERSPECTIVE
→ Universal design
→ Consider communication styles and preferences
→ Most accommodations for neurodistinct teammates are free or low-cost
→ Can benefit MANY staff
→ Don’t wait for disclosure
Check Your Assumptions

Check your assumptions, again.

Different brains work differently

Communicate unambiguously.
Examples of Adjustments

Ensure your hiring practices are inclusive.

Take a strength-based approach to task assignment and challenge your own point of view.

Manage communication and schedules with productivity tools

Take step to provide stress and anxiety outlets for your employees, including transparent communication.
Joseph Poloncarz

Joseph Poloncarz is a film photographer, and teaching artist in Buffalo, NY. He first came to CEPA in 2012 for a photography program through Autism Services. He became an assistant teacher and quickly was teaching his own classes to his Alma Mater, Autism Services Inc. Joseph was diagnosed with autism at the age of 3 and suffered depression since high school. Photography helped him battle his mental health issues.

In 2021, he was hired as a Grant Coordinator by CEPA Gallery.

www.cepagallery.org
CONCLUSION
IMPACTS

Employee Morale

Differentiation + Visibility

Management Effectiveness

Community Engagement

Visitor Experience
Véronique Côté
215-779-4371
hello@veroniquecote.com
vcote@fau.edu
https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/galleries

Meredith Tekin
IBCCES
meredith@ibcces.org
904.508.0135

RESOURCES:
AutismTravel.com
Implicit.harvard.edu
MacAccess.org