



UCLA  
ALL BRAINS

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## NEURODIVERSITY

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Providing an Inclusive  
Space for Students with  
Autism, ADHD, & Other  
Neurological Differences.

# Introductions

- Your name
- Your role (student, staff, faculty, other)
- Your experience supporting students or family with disability
- Learning goals

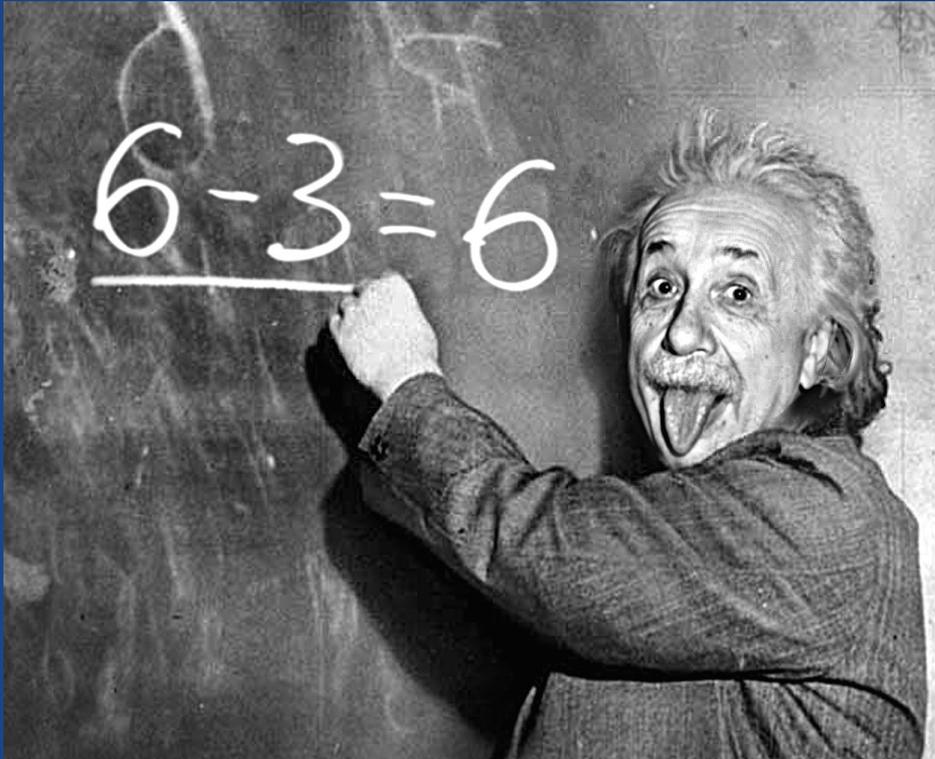
# Introductions

- Alberto was from a modest family. At the age of 3, Alberto's parents noted that he was not speaking like other children. Worried about his language development and potential cognitive disability, his parents consulted with their pediatrician. Alberto's language slowly improved as he got older. At times, however, he would repeat sentences which made it difficult for others to follow his train of thought. In elementary school, teachers noted that Alberto did not have any significant friends and spent much of his time alone and seemed aloof. When Alberto was 6 years old, his father provided him with a compass. His father recalls Alberto spending a large percentage of time gazing at the compass and fixating on the compass needle. His mother, stated that Alberto enjoyed music and was very interested in playing the violin. As an adolescent, Alberto frequently was in trouble in class, his teachers stated that he had a bad attitude and was often non-compliant with the structure of the class. He was often daydreaming, thinking in pictures and often thinking about waves. Given the frequent behavioral difficulties, Alberto finally dropped out of high school

# Introductions

1. What do you think might be occurring in Alberto's case?
2. How would you intervene? What interventions would you use?
3. What do you think Alberto's trajectory might be? Will he be able to attend college? Get a job? Form relationships?

# Introductions



1. Nobel Prize 1921 & future Nobel influences
2. Groundbreaking theories that have shaped physics & our understanding of the universe
3. Most famous equation in science  $E=MC^2$

“A fish will appear as having a disability if required to climb a tree”

“Imagination is more important than knowledge”

“Two things infinite; human stupidity and the universe....”

# Introductions

- Neurodiversity: Biological reality of infinite variation in human neurocognitive functioning and behavior.
- Neurodiversity Movement: No “typical” mental capacity—no “normal” brain to which all other brains are compared. Autism should be seen in terms of strengths. Apply positive attitudes and beliefs about biodiversity and culture and apply them to differences among human brains. Differences accepted & valued.
- Why should society care about neurodiversity?



# Societal Impact

1. **80% unemployment** among those with ASD. Only slightly better (1%) if college educated (US Dept of Labor 2018). High school graduation rates 60% compared to 80% in NT.
2. Children with disabilities are nearly **3x more likely be abused**. Sullivan & Knutson (2000). WHO reports adults with disabilities are **1.5x** more likely to be a victim of violence (2012)
3. Disability rate among prisoners is nearly **3-4x times** the rate of the general population. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011–12)
4. Increasing rates of neurodevelopmental disorders (ASD 1 in 59, 1 in 5 have attention and learning challenges).

# Case Example

- Mary is sophomore at a UC. She comes to your office stating that she is having a difficult time with several of her classes. Mary states she has done well with school prior to college but has had challenge with her current course work. Mary states that she often avoids her assignments and class related tasks until the last minute. She especially avoids assignments that are group oriented. She has had difficulty approaching professors and TA's despite several suggestions that she do so. During her visit with you she makes little to no eye contact and speaks in a monotone voice. Mary's grooming and clothes appear unkempt and overly casual. When asked about her personal life at college, she states she does not have many friends and does not get along with her roommate. She has some friends back home which she is close to. Mary states she often stays up late group chatting on social media with her friends back home. When speaking about her interests, Mary becomes very animated and speaks quickly and very detailed about video games she likes to play. Mary has aspirations of being a game designer but worries about how she will make it in the world if she is not able to function in college.



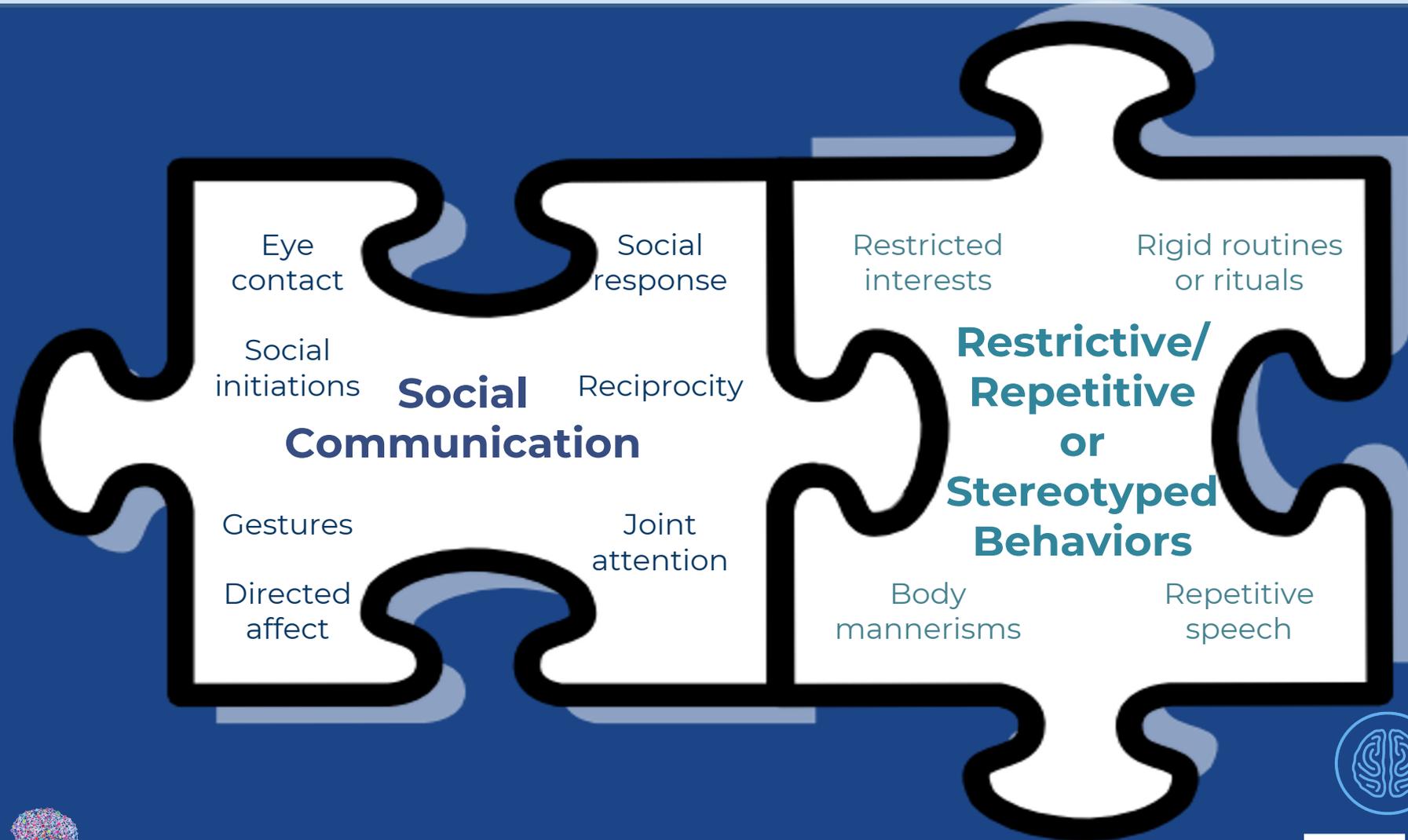
# Case Example

1. What do you think might be occurring in Mary's case?
2. What do you think Mary's trajectory might be? Will she be able to successfully complete college? Get an internship and job? Form healthy relationships?
3. How would you approach student? What interventions or resources would you use?

# What is a Neurodevelopmental disorder?

- Group of disorders that effect brain development and nervous system.
- ASD
- ADHD/ADD
- Other learning disabilities

# What Is Autism?



# Why Is This Important?

- Rising prevalence rates, estimated 0.7 – 1.9% of college students with ASD
  - more prevalent in boys than girls, diagnosed later in minorities
- **College students with autism experience high rates of dropout for multiple reasons (i.e., social, academic, etc.)**
- 70% of adults with ASD have at least one additional disorder
  - social anxiety, ADHD, oppositional disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, Tourette's syndrome, insomnia, depression



# ASD in College

- Lack of staff and faculty awareness of ASD
- roommate conflicts
- Navigating campus systems
- Planning ahead of time
- Managing stress
- Controlling behavior/impulses
- Daily living skills, personal hygiene, and independence
- Making and maintaining peer networks
- Communicating with professors
- Working collaboratively in groups
- Self-advocacy and disclosure



# Common Misconceptions

- “I am able to recognize anyone with ASD”
- ID vs ASD
- Social interest
- High Functioning?

# Supporting Students with ASD

- Be clear, concrete, and explicit (e.g. roommate contracts, event details, class rules and expectations)
- Allow delivery of communication in different formats, such as electronically
- Have sensory materials available for students (e.g. stress ball, play doh, noise cancelling headphones)
- List of clubs and student organizations centered around common interest
- Assist students in connecting with supports



# Case Example

Juan comes to your office and states that he has been feeling overwhelmed as of late. Juan reports that he often has difficulty finishing his assignments on time and often procrastinates. He has attempted to create to-do lists but often gets overwhelmed by them and avoids many of his responsibilities. Juan states that his roommates have been upset at him given that he has failed to adhere to the cleaning schedule and often leaves his objects and food out. He feels ashamed about his laziness and feels he does not deserve to be in college. He says he also feels ashamed that he has been smoking increasing amounts of marijuana to deal with his stress levels.

# Case Example

1. What do you think might be occurring in Juan's case?
2. What do you think Juan's trajectory might be? Will he be able to successfully complete college? Get an internship and job?
3. How would you approach student? What interventions or resources would you use?

# What is ADHD/ADD?

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
  - Symptoms: hyperactivity, disorganization, impulsivity
- 1. ADHD – Inattention (ADD)
  - Principally sustained inattention or task persistence
- 1. ADHD – Hyperactivity
  - Principally poor inhibitory control
    - Lack of impulse control, moving/fidgeting/talking excessively, restless



# Common Misconceptions

- Can't focus on any tasks
- Constant fidgeting all the time
- People grow out of it
- Students with ADHD have poor grades
- Medication & diet myths

# ADHD/ADD in College

- Common for college students to not recognize that they might have ADHD/ADD
- Have difficulties with:
  - sustaining attention (e.g. paying attention in lecture)
  - following through on instructions (e.g. not completing homework on time)
  - engaging in tasks that require sustained mental effort
  - listening when spoken to directly
- Need help with:
  - organization & focusing
  - breaking down tasks into smaller parts



# College Success?

- What might be some essential skills to learn for college students?

# Major Skills Needed by College Students

## Classroom Preparation

- Study habits and other academic skills
- Prepared for class, timeliness
- Organized, Planning
- Understanding classroom norms and rules

## Social Skills

- Interacting appropriately (teachers, staff, students)
- Interacting in social situations
- Dealing with feedback with papers & exams
- Dealing with social pressure (drinking, dating, drugs)

## Independant Living Skills:

- ADLs
- Medical needs
- Managing unstructured time



# Challenge - Daily Living Skills

- Sarah was in her 2nd year of college and was living with several roommates
- S experienced social and academic challenges
- S's parents supported her through scheduling classes but her roommates found their involvement "odd"
- S had difficulties with self care and would avoid bathing, brushing her teeth, and eating
- S's roommate's took on the role of "parents" as they began to worry about her
- S was constantly worried about offending people

# Factors for College Success

1. Resilience
2. Social Communication
3. Executive Function
4. Self Regulation
5. Academic Ability

(Brown 2013)



# How to build Resilience

1. Recognize both strengths and areas of growth.
2. Teach problem solving
3. What can mistakes teach us
4. Helping manage emotions
5. Modeling resiliency and positive learning experiences



# Interventions

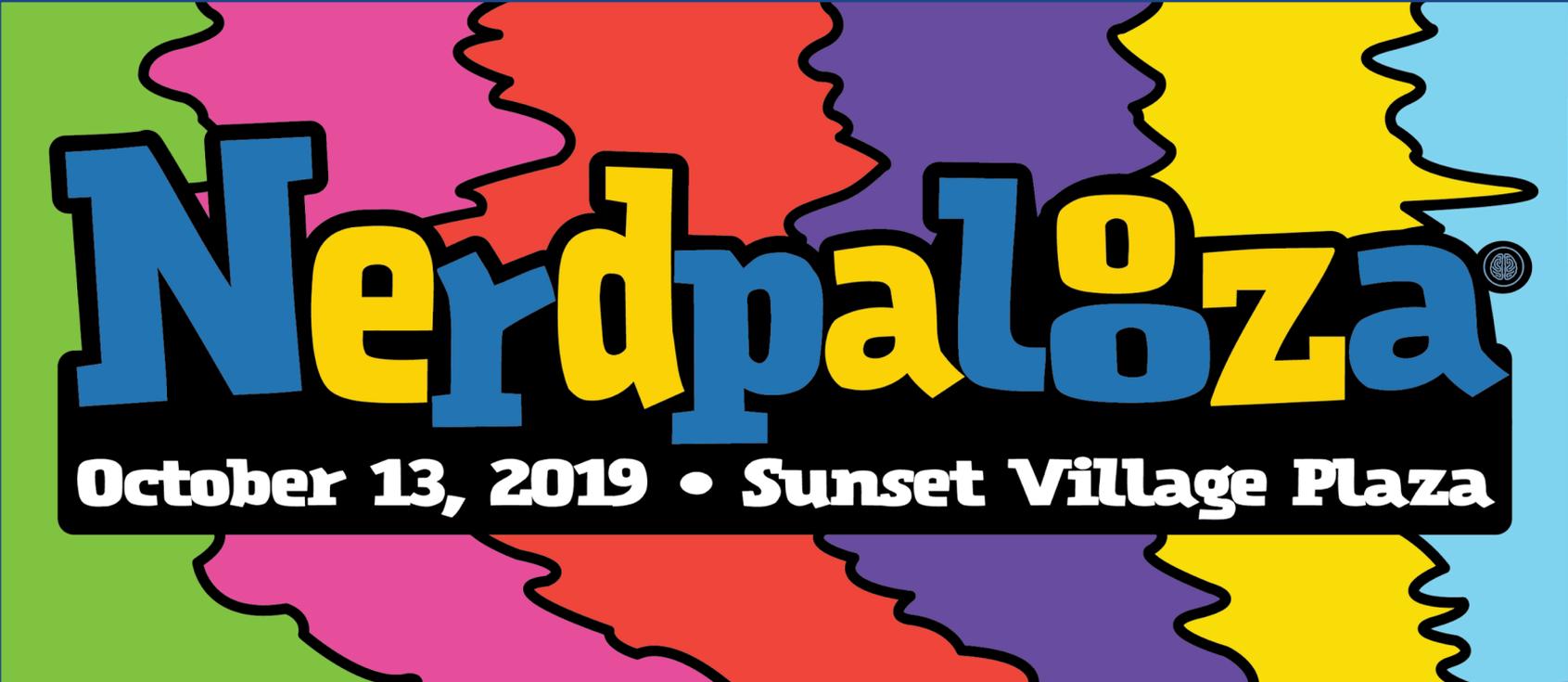
How are we able to provide further support?



# All Brains

- Socials!
  - Game Nights, Powerpoint party, Movie Nights
- Peer Mentoring Program
  - 1:1 mentoring with peer trained volunteers
- Workshops
  - How to go to Office Hours
- Trainings
  - training UCLA staff/faculty
  - increasing awareness for neurodiversity



The logo features the word "Nerdpalooza" in a bold, bubbly font. The letters are colored in a sequence: 'N' is blue, 'e' is yellow, 'r' is blue, 'd' is yellow, 'p' is blue, 'a' is yellow, 'l' is blue, 'o' is yellow, 'o' is blue, and 'z' is yellow. The 'a' and 'o's have a unique shape with a small loop at the top. The text is set against a background of five vertical, wavy-edged color bands: green, pink, red, purple, and yellow. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the right of the 'a'.

# Nerdpalooza®

**October 13, 2019 • Sunset Village Plaza**

# UCLA Resources

- **UCLA All Brains:** encompasses different orgs committed to improving the college experience for neurodiverse individuals. Peer mentor programs, game nights, and other social activities. (<https://www.uclaallbrains.org/>)
- **UC-LEND Clinic:** provide training with primary care providers offering ADHD, autism, and other neurodevelopmental evaluations in addition to linking patients with a care team that helps families. 2x a month, Wednesdays 9-12pm  
(<http://www.uc-lend.org/lend-clinic/>)
- **UCLA Health for Bruins:** healthcare services for students from UCLA Health physicians, ranging from primary care to mental health care (@ 100 Med Plaza)  
(<https://www.uclahealth.org/medicine/bruin-health>)



***THANK YOU!***

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