

# 2023 Wisconsin Autism Conference

## Virtual Bonus Content Sessions



## Wisconsin Sessions

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### 1. **The Key to Successfully Supporting Autism in our Schools – Acknowledgement, Acceptance, Celebration & Expansion**

#### **Gail Wilke**

Schools have been working for years to improve practices surrounding the support of students with autism. How are schools changing their programming to embrace the wealth of knowledge that autistic individuals have now shared with us? The focus of this session will be on how districts can create schools and classrooms that are not only welcoming of neurodiverse students, but also truly effective in meeting their needs. To do this a systematic approach & commitment is needed. This session will examine how reallocating resources to designated resource teams, re-focusing on evidence-based practices, developing school spaces where students with autism feel accepted, partnering with families during student-led IEPs, and expanding staff development are key components to success with autism in our schools. This session will address these ideas from educator, parent and student perspectives with real life examples which the presenter has seen work and not work over her years in the field and as a parent of an autistic child.

### 2. **Intersections of Self: Autistic and LGBTQIA+**

#### **Lydia Rhoads**

Autistic individuals are more likely to also be members of the LGBTQIA+ community than those who are not autistic. This is especially true for those who fall under the T (transgender, GNC, non-binary, gender expansive, etc.)” umbrella. How can parents and caregivers best advocate for their children in spaces that are cisgender, heterosexual, and neurotypically coded, such as school and medical settings? In this breakout session we will cover strategies to ensure your child is embraced for and supported in their whole self.

### **3. Creating a Sense of Belonging in a Neurodiverse Classroom through Peer Education**

**Chelsea Budde, Denise Schamens**

While the interventions for students on the autism spectrum are numerous, how can interventions with neuromajority peers help prevent bullying? Children with disabilities including autism are far more likely than their typically-developing peers to be subjected to bullying. By using peer education to create a culture of acceptance, schools can prevent disability harassment, which is a violation of three federal laws. Teaching neuromajority classmates about autism and fostering connection can lead to healthy social-emotional environments that provide a sense of belonging for all learners.

### **4. Bereavement As A Spectrum: Supporting Autistics Through Grief & Loss**

**Colleen E McCluskey**

Dealing with the complex emotions of loss can be tricky, even more so when one's grieving process runs counter to the neurotypical response. The autistic experience of bereavement often fundamentally differs from that of people without autism. This presentation offers an inside look at what loss is like for people on the autism spectrum and how those who care about them can help them through times of grief. In addition to drawing from the personal experiences of autistic individuals, this lecture will also provide a survey of contemporary literature on the topics of grief support and neurodiversity.

### **5. Building the Foundation: The Role of Regulation in Managing Mental Health and Independence**

**Michaela Faretta, Trish Layde**

The foundation for building independence skills and mental health is regulation. This presentation will underline the importance of establishing baseline regulatory supports, in home and community environments, that allow individuals the opportunity to be successful and confident in their everyday activities.

### **6. Looking Ahead: Financial Planning for The Future**

**Bob Johnston, Paul Brokenshire**

What will happen to your child when you are no longer around to take care of them? How does the ABLE Act of 2014 impact their future? This workshop is designed to help families plan for the financial future of their child(ren), or other dependents, with special needs. Learn about eligibility for government benefits while helping to meet the needs for lifetime of care and quality of life issues. This presentation will cover estate planning, guardianship, will and trusts and Letter of Intent.

# Minnesota Sessions

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## 7. Plain Language Writing: What It Is and Why It Matters

### Donnie Denome

Plain language is a way of writing that makes your material more accessible to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. People with disabilities, including people with IDD, deserve equal access to information, just like everyone else. While all writing should be written at a level that everyone can understand, plain language is especially important when writing about topics related to disability. Writing in plain language is part of making your writing accessible and fulfilling the promise of “nothing about us without us.”

## 8. Neurodivergence, Sex, and Sensory Processing

### Sarah Hernandez

Neurodivergent people are sexual beings, so why are we not talking more about neurodivergent needs for sex? There are many reasons, but most are rooted in ableism and shame surrounding sex. It's time to shed the stigma and start the conversation! Participants of this presentation will:

- Be informed on Dunn's Sensory Processing model, including thresholds (low/high) and sensory strategies (active vs. passive) and how it relates back to sexuality and intimacy
- Explore the intersectionalities between neurodivergence, sexuality and intimacy
- Explore the barriers experienced by neurodivergent individuals to occupational engagement with regard to sexuality and general health.

## 9. Are You Self-Critical? Why Self-compassion Matters with Autism

### Ann Duevel

Research has shown that being self-compassionate is inversely correlated with common mental health concerns, such as depression and anxiety. However, studies have also shown that autistic individuals report higher-than-average levels of self-criticism--which is the opposite of self-compassion. This presentation will discuss what self-compassion is and will explore how the practice of self-compassion can be used to improve the mental health, motivation, and self-confidence of autistic individuals. Time will also be spent examining how the skill of self-compassion can be used to benefit the caregivers of autistic children and teens, as well.

## **10. Trauma, Special Needs and Interventions**

### **Tamera Pulver**

Developmental Trauma is where trauma meets attachment. The study of trauma is new - within the last 30 years. The research has discovered multiple ways we can all recover from trauma and live more joyful lives. Further, the effects and symptoms of trauma, mimic ASD and other mental health conditions. Learn what the experts are finding in research-based interventions in therapy, everyday living, and classroom practices to regulate ourselves and co-regulate with others for a more peaceful and joyful life.

## **11. When the Frontal Lobe Does Not Cooperate**

### **Sara Swan**

The frontal lobe is the motherboard of the brain. A person's executive functioning occurs in this area and at times the frontal lobe does not function as it should. During this breakout session we will explore what is executive functioning and how to use the tools in your life toolbox to adapt to your environment so you can be a productive member of society.

## **12. Supporting Individuals with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities (PIMD)**

### **Eric Ringgenberg**

Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities (PIMD) is a term used in Europe to reference individuals with significant support needs that are intensive, unique, and required for their care and quality of life. These individuals live in our communities, and providing support across settings is possible. Join this session to learn more about these topics, as well as discuss options to better include these individuals in our communities.

## **13. Centering the Margins: Intersectionality, Power and Radical Solidarity**

### **Ashley Oolman**

This workshop uncovers the complex relationship with multilayered identities, power, and solidarity. A facilitator will lead a dialogical session intended to dig into the nuance of carrying marginalized identity and holding space. Participants will be challenged to confront their own power, and identify ways to actively challenge the status quo. Together we will build skills in disrupting social norms and centering marginalized voices, leaving with collective ideation mapping for healing and liberation.