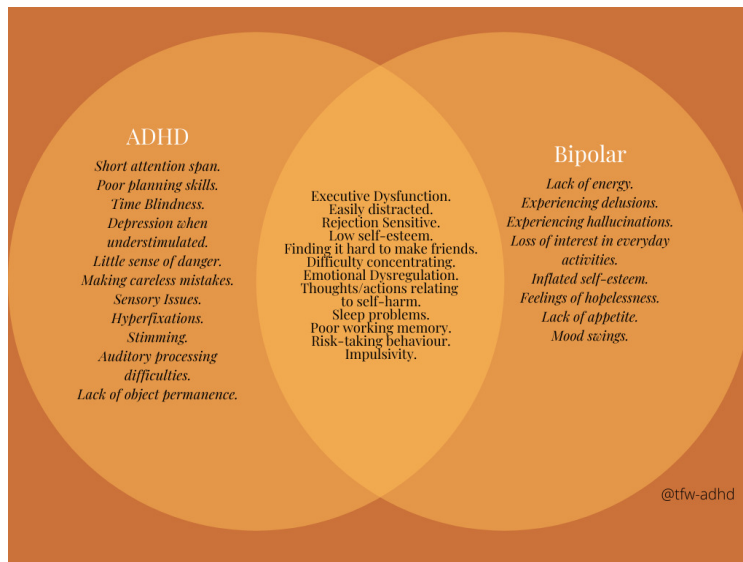
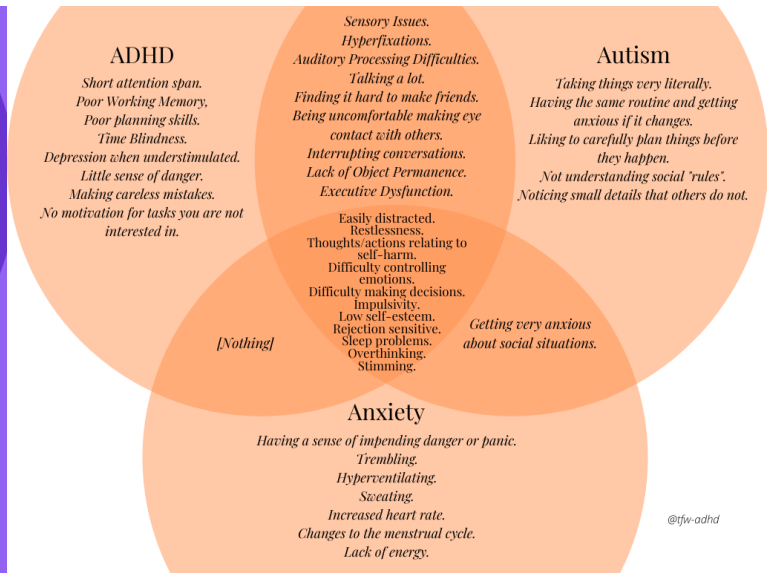
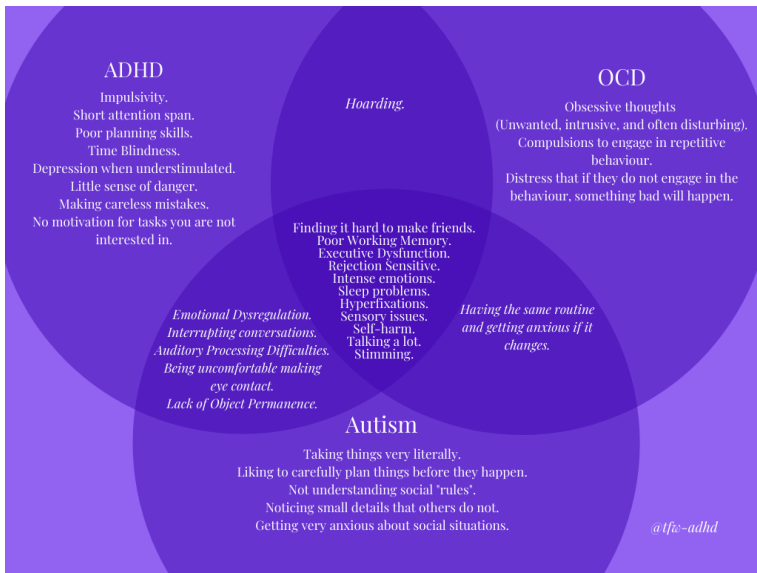
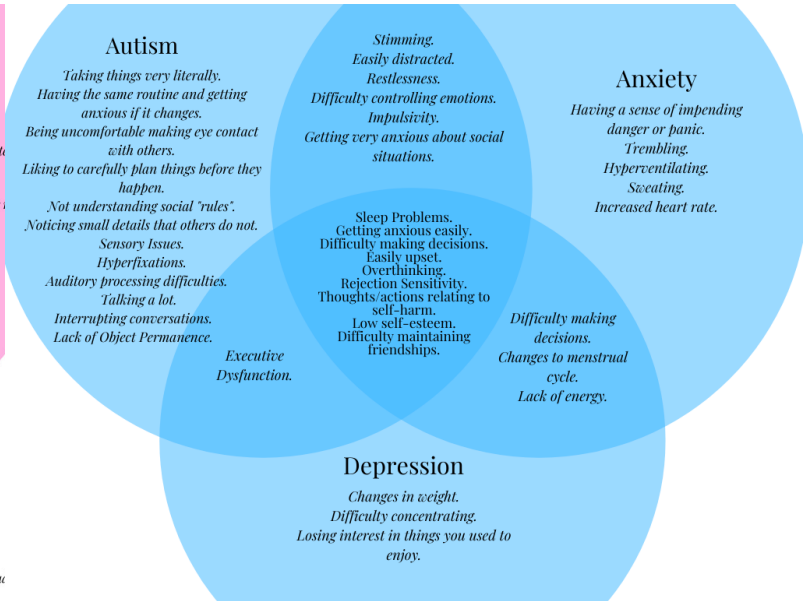
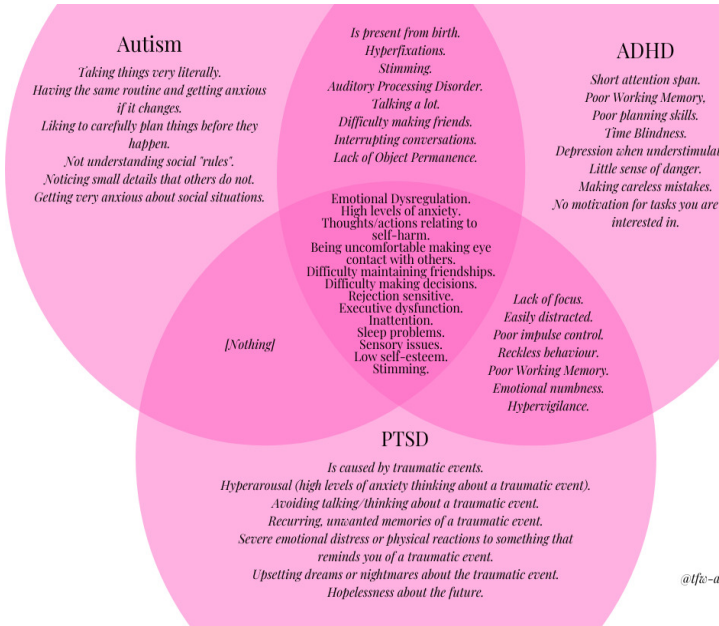


Neurodiverse Mental Health Support

Autism/Neurodivergence Diagnosis VERSUS Mental Health Diagnosis

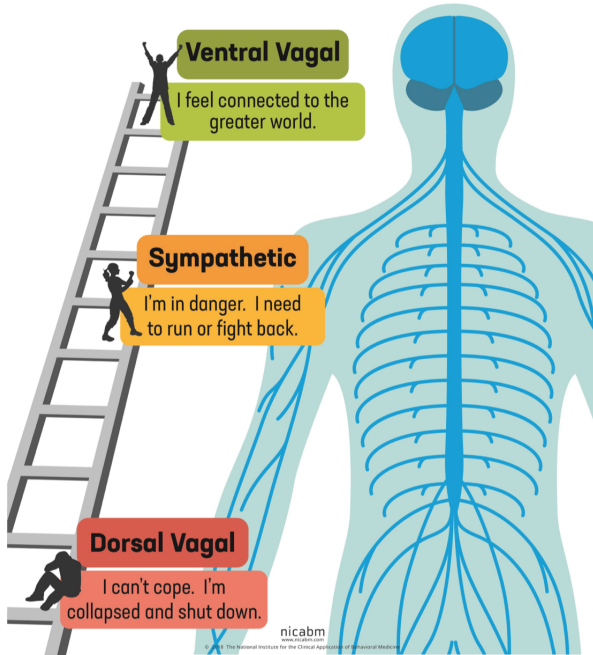


Neurodiverse Mental Health Support

Understanding Our Bodies and Nervous Systems:

- We can better understand diagnosis and their corresponding symptoms by understanding our autonomic nervous systems and how they respond to the world around us! (PVT Resource: [Stuck, Not Broken Podcast](#))

Polyvagal Theory: The Autonomic Ladder
 Understanding the Nervous System
 Adapted from Deb Dana, LCSW



Ventral Vagal = Safe, Social, Open, Compassion, Curious, Playful

Sympathetic =Anxiety, Fear, Hurry, Movement, Anger

Dorsal = Depression, Collapsed, Shut Down, Empty, "Gone"

Neurodiverse Mental Health Supports

- Knowledge is Power!
 - Guide the individual to map out how they experience each NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE through pictures, songs, words, symbols, toys, items, etc! Get creative 😊
 - Guide the individual to identify their 8 SENSORY SYSTEMS and if they are hypo or hyper sensitive:
 - Visual, Touch, Auditory, Smell, Taste, Proprioceptive, Vestibular, Interoceptive
 - Know about MASKING! When a neurodivergent individual is in the neurotypical community, especially for extended periods of time, it's important to recognize they may be masking.
 - 1) Knowing their sensory and nervous system states will help to know what that individual will need to unwind and have a calming routine that works.
 - 2) Recognizing and validating masking and burnout is very important. Talk about it and validate it.
 - 3) Give them time with their special interests (SPINs)

Neurodiverse Mental Health Support

Practical Strategies

- Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT):
 - Tap on 8 meridian points, starting with talking through what feels hard (validating those feelings) and then the truth you want to move forward into. It's important to not rush the first part before you move to the second!
 - You can talk through physical sensations, situations that happened, what you're thinking, or feeling.
 - You can tap on someone else's points. You can also press or rub them. The person receiving the tapping can say it aloud or in their mind. If you tap along with someone, you can also receive their benefits as well!
 - [EFTUniverse](#) and [The Tapping Solution](#)
- Strategies to navigate the stressors
 - Nervous System Strategies: [YouTube Playlist@sukibaxter](#), [YouTube Playlist@tuneupfitness](#)
 - a. Breathwork (longer exhale than inhale); add in vocalization or sigh; also humming/ singing
 - b. Press on the side of your thumb, then on the top/bottom, each for 30 seconds. (You can press on other tops/bottoms of nails as there are meridian points there additionally).
 - c. Rub or tap under your collarbone (again, you are massaging the vagus nerve)
 - d. Hand massage with lotion (use scents if you can!)
 - e. Rub or pressure under the arm acupuncture point (or "Serratus Anterior Superior Hold", you can do both for a further grounding affect while bringing in your elbows)
 - f. Under the knee hold (or, "Iliotibial Tract Hold")
- Make sure to plan for time to co-regulate with others
 - We can connect energetically to people, animals, and nature. Additionally, within these three, we need to have safety (physical and emotional, resonance (bio-electric rhythm matching via heart-brain magnetic field), and mirroring (activation of mirror neurons)
 - People: find people who will listen, understand, and not just try to "fix" the situation. You can even co-regulate with people's voices through Podcasts and YouTube channels!
 - Nature: just looking at a picture of nature for 10 minutes can calm your nervous system and increase your feelings of joy and peace.
 - Animals: we can emotionally connect with animals through sound, touch, and presence just like people, and sometimes it's easier to do!

Caregiver Support

- TRUTH: We are not designed as humans to manage stress by ourselves, we *need* the support of others to move through stressors as well as we can!
- Online groups: Robyn Gobbel, "The Club": <https://robbygobbel.com/theclub/> and Brian King, "Empower": <https://brianraymondking.com/empower/>
- Finding a *healing practice* to do with connection (see above) can be very supportive!
- Finding a *therapist* who you can connect with and feel seen, heard, validated, and safe with can help give you so much more focus and energy!
- Ideas for connection: _____

- (mostly) Free Resources: [My Brain Is Autistic](#), [PVT and Emotion Worksheets](#), [Show Us Your Brain](#), [Autistic-Centered Therapy](#), [Teaching Social Skills to Neurotypicals](#), [Autistic Communication Differences](#), [Bridges Social Skills](#) and [Autistic Masking and Burnout](#)