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Register your interest in leading or joining an MHPN Autism Network

The Mental Health Professionals' Network (MHPN) is working to establish new interdisciplinary networks for mental health professionals who share an interest in the relationship between mental health and Autism.



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ALL TOGETHER BETTER: Collaborative mental health care in a changing world
28 - 30 March

Attend to engage and collaborate with experts and peers in topics spanning mental health and climate change, social isolation and loneliness, family violence, eating disorders and much more.



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MHPN WEBINAR

Monday 27th February 2023

Mental health and wellbeing in autistic youth and young adults during transitions

Tonight's panel



Dr. Claire Pickett
General Practitioner with
a Lived Experience



Jasmine Deakin
Social Worker with a
Lived Experience



Prof. Tony Attwood
Clinical Psychologist



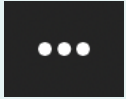
Prof. Julian Trollor
Neuropsychiatrist



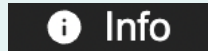
Facilitator:
Nicola Palfrey
Clinical Psychologist

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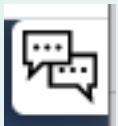
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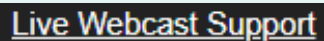
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Learning outcomes

Through an exploration of mental health challenges that autistic youth and young adults may experience during transitional periods of their life, the webinar will provide participants with the opportunity to:

- Identify tips and strategies that can assist practitioners to provide support to autistic youth and young adults during transitions at school, university, work, and in their relationships.
- Discuss acceptance around the autistic identity and the use of appropriate language to prevent negative narratives, stereotypes and stigma for autistic youth and young adults.
- Outline the benefits of using a multidisciplinary approach when assessing, treating and supporting the mental health of autistic youth and young adults.

A GP's Perspective

Severe autistic burnout

- Jesse has sadly reached autistic burnout.
- This was a certainty, not an accident, given the antecedent circumstances.
- It is preventable and indeed should have been prevented.
- The impact of this burnout will have a serious effect upon her self esteem and will cause her to doubt her own ability to cope with adult life.
- Where did it all start to go wrong?



Dr. Claire Pickett

A GP's Perspective

Embracing autistic identity

- Jesse was diagnosed at 15. Many girls, women and those AFAB are missed! Let's not waste this opportunity!
- This is a good time to start the process of understanding herself and her neurotype and essentially to learn how her brain works.
- You have learnt the DSM-V definition of autism. This is deficit based. This reflects what's needed for an assessment NOT what is needed to live and thrive as an autistic person.
- The autistic brain is unique and beautiful. It arises from ancient genetics; it has been here since the beginning. Autistic people are needed and are meant to be here. We want Jesse to feel pride. Learn about the achievements of autistic people in history and in our current world this helps us to help Jesse feel strong.



Dr. Claire Pickett

A GP's Perspective

List of essentials she needs to learn (how to drive her brain)

Neurotypical people learn to manage their brain by modelling and following the neuromajority in society. (TV, teachers, peers.) Not so for autistic people.

- Autistic energy accounting (see Maja Toudal's work).
- Autistic overload (recognize it early to prevent meltdown/shutdown).
- Predict situations that will likely lead to overload and mitigate, minimize or avoid them.
- Autistic burnout.
- Personal safety. Healthy boundaries, body autonomy.
- Camouflaging/masking 'Speaking neurotypical' Situations when to use it, when can we let it go?
- Know her sensory profile.
- Autism toolkit to be kept handy (earbuds, peaked hat, sunglasses, soft hoodie etc).
- Interoception and looking after her body (signals to eat and drink etc).
- Feel free to be free and not suppress her stims! It's good for her and healthy for her brain.



Dr. Claire Pickett

A GP's Perspective

The trajectory of an autistic life is not the same as the trajectory of a neurotypical life

- We must not “shoehorn” autistic people into a neurotypical life pathway.
- Take a gap year! A decent recovery from year 12 will help her succeed.
- Autistic people can only very rarely manage part-time work and attend full time university (certainly not in a job which causes instant sensory overload). Cooking, washing clothes, self-care will generally fall by the wayside.
- Let's not set autistic people up for failure. If living away from home, live with others who are quiet and respectful and fun. University residences are a good option if food is provided.
- Only engage in casual work if it is a pleasure (caring for horses, work for a local nursery etc).
- Think about part-time university. Why do we need to rush through our learning?



Dr. Claire Pickett

A GP's Perspective

Where to from here?

- Jesse is now in crisis. (She may shutdown when you try to talk to her about it).
- Validation, validation, validation. How brave you've been to last this long in such circumstances. You will succeed, we need to create the right environment for you to be able to happily shine. This environment was and is not right for you.
- Stop all non-essential energy depleters.
- Stop her job, come home to her loved ones and her beloved shed, GP for special consideration to delay assessments. Regular food, gentle exercise, daydream, chill. Parents may need a carers medical certificate from GP.
- Might be able to salvage the remaining university subjects for the year or may have to have a withdraw with medical certificate so the subjects are not counted as failures.
- Breathe, take stock, re-group. Re-launch in a gentler way but not just yet....
- Educate parents, Jesse herself and her brother in the essential tools of an autistic life. This will take time but it will change the way they think and manage their lives as a family. It will help Mum and Dad too as Dad is also clearly autistic.
- Autistic people deserve to enjoy their young adult years just as their neurotypical peers do. Recruit your clients' loved ones, GP and tertiary educators (EAP etc) to allow this duckling to become the swan she was meant to be.
- See resources and recommended youtube channels for Jesse and her family to follow.



Dr. Claire Pickett

A Social Worker's Perspective

Navigating a world that isn't designed for your brain

The world is full of rules, expectations, standards, laws and "norms".

These 'rules' are often:

Expected: but not always explicitly taught

Value-based: everyone has different 'rules'

Inconsistent: different 'rules' for different situations and contexts



Perceptions of **value, inclusion and compliance** are often tied to performance

And for autistic people it can sometimes feel like everyone has the 'guidebook' but us!



Jasmine Deakin

A Social Worker's Perspective

Authentically Autistic: Identity doesn't develop overnight

Where there are negative connotations around being autistic, negative reflections and avoidance are likely to follow

To promote a positive identity, we must:

ACKNOWLEDGE	SUPPORT	DEVELOP
Loss of known identity	Whole-person identity	Authentic identity
A 'life sentence'	Autistic Joy	Opportunity
Loneliness / Misunderstood	Community	Connection
Imposter Syndrome	Unpack Masking	Self Compassion
Overwhelm	Supports	Optimisation
Feeling Incurable	Education	Perspective



Jasmine Deakin

A Social Worker's Perspective

Neuro-affirming practice: A new lens



- **View** neurodiversity as including the “neurotypical”
- **Affirm** the diversity of regulation/expression
- **Adjust** to provide predictability, accessibility and safety
- **Reflect** on the Social Model of Disability
- **Consider** “capacity vs. capability”
- **Support** is not always rejecting independence
- **Tune** into masking and burnout
- **Learn** about intersectionality and diversity
- **Learn** from lived-experience experts/community



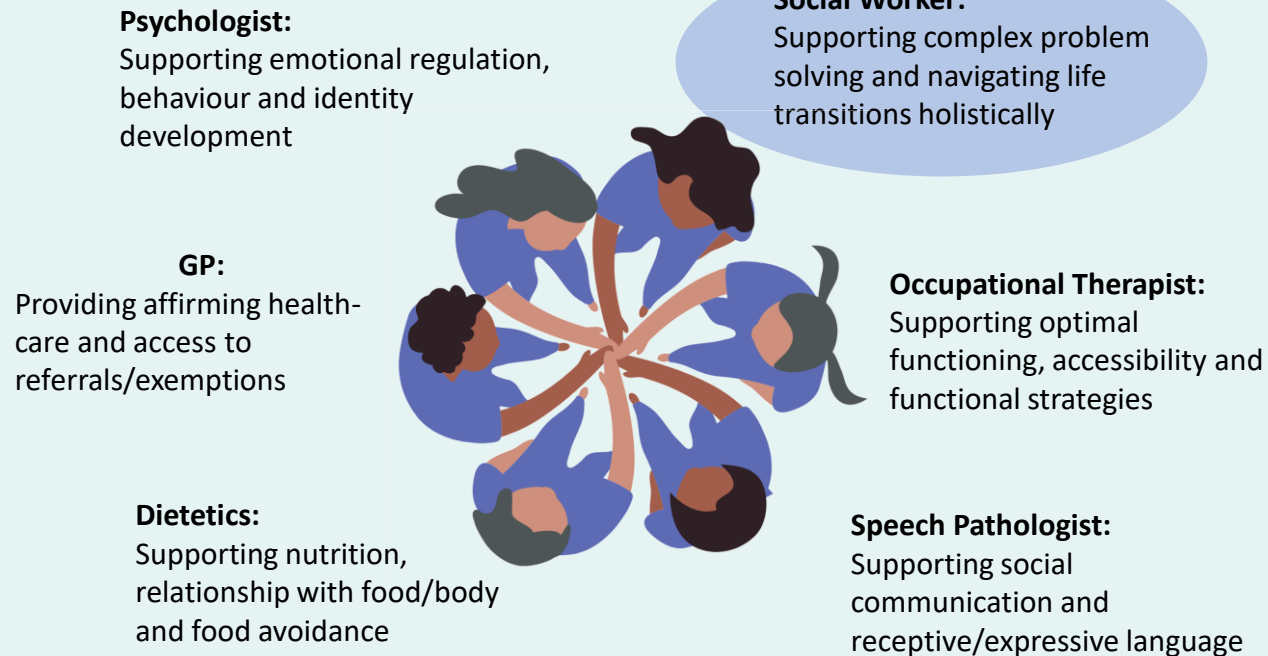
Jasmine Deakin

A Social Worker's Perspective

A multi-disciplinary team: We all have a part to play

A tailored team of professionals can provide diverse perspectives and supports that match the diverse presentations of Autism

AN EXAMPLE FOR JESSE:



Jasmine Deakin

A Clinical Psychologist's perspective

Screening for Dual Diagnosis and Key Issues

- There are signs of **ADHD** and issues with executive functioning, and the possibility of the development of an **eating disorder** and self-isolation
- There needs to be an exploration of her concept of autism and **concept of self**
- Guidance in creating a **friendship network** and romantic relationships
- Guidance in **stress management** (Energy accounting)



Prof. Tony Attwood

A Clinical Psychologist's perspective

University or Part-time Employment

- **Literature** on autistic university students for the student and university staff published by www.jkp.com
- The university **Neurodiversity Hub** for social, emotional and practical help
- Literature on autism and **employment** – *Autism Working* by Michelle Garnett and Tony Attwood



Prof. Tony Attwood

A Clinical Psychologist's perspective

Social Issues

- Development of abilities and confidence in **social skills** (The PEERS programme and Code Blue for Autism).
- Joining **group activities** for fellow university students, such as Dungeons and Dragons, a choir, a drama group or hiking.



Prof. Tony Attwood

A Clinical Psychologist's perspective

Exploration of the concept of self

- Focus on **qualities in personality and abilities** which may be attributable to autism.
- Discovery of the **authentic self**.
- **Connection** with other autistic young adults at university and the Internet.
- Exploring **how to explain her autistic characteristics** to students in the share house (how they can understand and help her), other students and prospective friends, and her partner Dean.
- Support and guidance in a **romantic relationship**.



Prof. Tony Attwood

A Neuropsychiatrist's perspective

Young person, family-level and initial situation



Age and stage

- identity
- vulnerability to further mental health issues



Supports related to
diagnosis and disclosure



Complex care needs



Transition from school to
university; dislocation from
supports



Prof. Julian Trollor

A Neuropsychiatrist's perspective

Jesse at University



Reengaging with supports:

- Health
- Educational



Friends, intimacy and informal support networks



Re-evaluating self management strategies

- self regulation
- eating and sleep



Navigating adjustments



Pressures of living, work

- \$
- Environmental triggers



Dealing with emerging crises



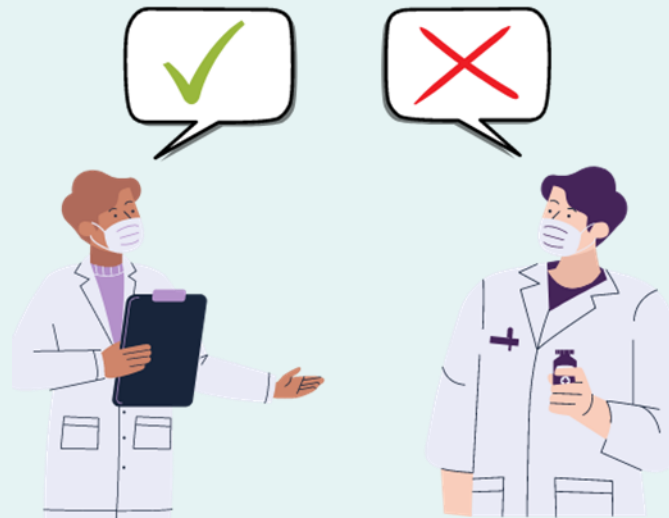
Prof. Julian Trollor

A Neuropsychiatrist's perspective

Health Care Provider Issues



Adult providers' lack of
knowledge and confidence
Care pathways ill defined or
unknown



Miscommunication between
providers (in transitions or when
multiple involved)



Inadequate preparation and
support of clients



Prof. Julian Trollor

A Neuropsychiatrist's perspective

System-level



Lack of coordination
between services



Cost of services and
insurance/funding



Administrative
constraints



Lack of clinicians with
appropriate expertise



Inadequate infrastructure
and training



Prof. Julian Trollor

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All providers of mental health care and ASD-related services are welcome to join these networks to access free support and education.

Register your interest via the QR code



Q & A



Dr. Claire Pickett
General Practitioner with
a Lived Experience



Jasmine Deakin
Social Worker with a
Lived Experience



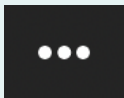
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- Responding to childhood bullying

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