



Welcome! 

We'll get started soon. If you'd like, type in the chat:

- From where are you joining the Zoom?
- What's your current EI role? How long have you worked in this role?
- What are you looking forward to doing in the warmer weather?



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"UNSEEN BUT IN NEED"
IDENTIFYING GIRLS WITH AUTISM IN EI



Presented by:
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Subarna Dharia, MD FAAP
"special interest in development and behavior of young children with an early diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder"

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How often are you seeing ASD in **boys**?
How often in **girls**?

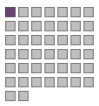
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

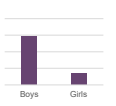
- Prevalence of ASD in young children
- How is ASD diagnosed in boys/girls and what are the consequences?
- How do young girls present with ASD? How is it different than boys?
- What is "masking"?
- Genetics and Neuroanatomy of ASD in girls
- Gender dysphoria
- Summary

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ASD



1 in 44 people are diagnosed with ASD (CDC)



1 in 34 boys are diagnosed with ASD
1 in 144 girls are diagnosed with ASD

4:1 ASD is predominantly diagnosed in boys compared to girls, but girls are more likely to be underdiagnosed or diagnosed later

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"Girls tend to be overlooked unless they have significant behavior difficulties, cognitive deficits, or have other conditions that may be disruptive to their environment"

"Girls are less demanding of attention and not aggressive"

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What characteristics of ASD make you concerned?

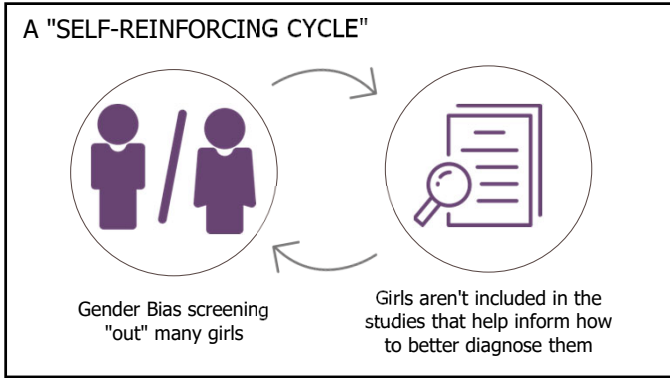
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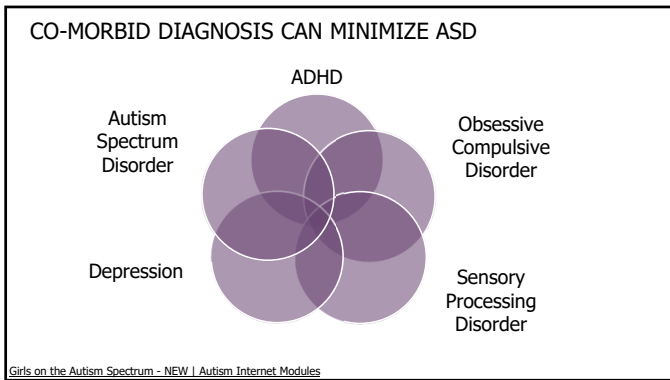
What is most helpful to you?



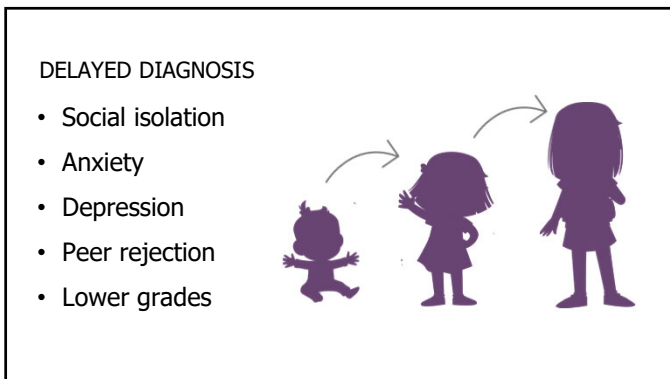
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Which is a repetitive interest that you may see in girls with ASD?

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COMPARED TO BOYS, MORE ABLE GIRLS HAVE:


- Better language/communication
- "superficial social skills"
- lower restrictive interests
- hyperactivity



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ROLE OF COGNITIVE ABILITY

"no significant overall mean differences in symptom levels" ...for those cognitively impaired individuals"



So why aren't THESE girls being diagnosed?

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What are some questions to determine if a child might need evaluation for ASD?

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TRICKY DIAGNOSIS?

"Female Autism Phenotype"?(Lai et al, 2020)

- Narrow interests
- High social/language
- Interaction
- Ability to mask




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WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SHOW IN TODDLERS?

-  Greater motor deficits
-  More Social Communication deficit to be referred for evaluation
-  Imitation used to engage socially
-  "Externalising behaviour" reason to refer
-  Obsessional interests with toys or seemingly random objects

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What is Masking?
How does it apply to girls
with ASD?

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Camouflaging

Girls can often "fly
under the radar."



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Neurodiversity Movement




Embrace all people without asking
them to change to fit a "normal" way!

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GENETICS


Female Protective Effect (FPE)
Genetics evaluation important but not complete answer!



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BRAINS OF GIRLS WITH ASD


- Larger brain size but earlier pathology?
- Gray Matter!
- More Myelination?



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GIRL'S SOCIAL BRAINS

- Typical boys tie with girls who have Autism
- Girls intellectualize social interactions that would be intuitive for typical girls.



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What do you find most interesting about the genetic and brain research for girls with ASD?

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Gender Dysphoria is


Over 7x

more likely for those with ASD than the general population


And higher rates of co-occurring mental health and other health conditions

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TO SUMMARIZE...



Girls present differently and are often not diagnosed until late

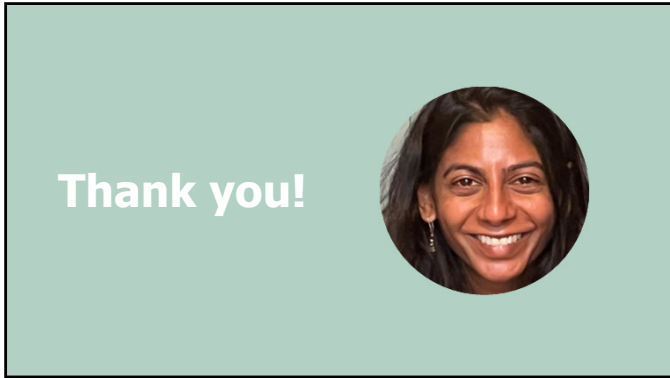


Genetics and Neuroanatomy is unique in girls compared with boys

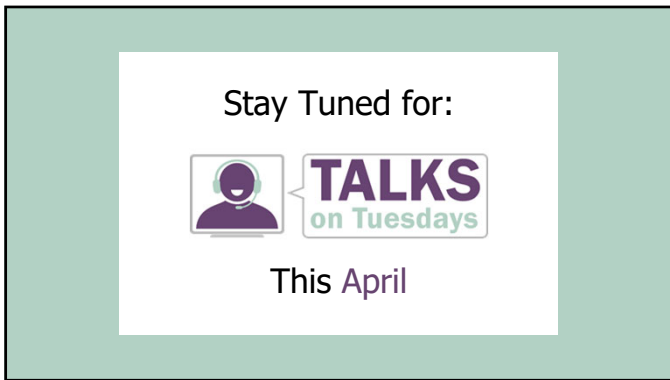


Gender Identity Disorder is more common in those with ASD

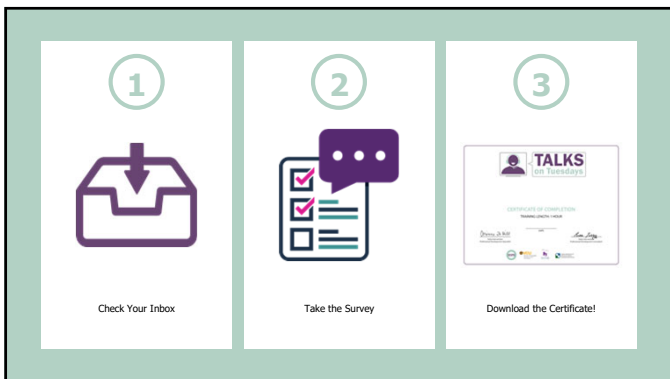
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