

YOUR PATHWAY

Programme Overview

Your Pathway is a fun and neuro-affirming six-session programme which enables children and young people to

- explore their autistic identity
- develop a better understanding of themselves, their needs, and how to thrive

Your Pathway

- is available via six on-demand sessions which children/teenagers can access with a parent/carer or trusted adult at a time which suits them or
- can be purchased by schools/groups who wish to deliver it themselves

Each session includes activities and opportunities for discussion. Children receive an activity pack with all resources needed, including an electric circuit kit, sensory aids, a hot chocolate sachet, a mask, colouring pens, character cards, and various paper resources.

Your Pathway

- is suitable for parents/carers to use with their child/teenager at home
- is suitable for schools/groups to use in a 1:1 or group setting
- is suitable for children aged around 7-15

"a brilliant course"

"very strength not deficit focused"

"well-paced, engaging and really informative"

"a great, neuro-affirming resource!"

"it gave my child permission to acknowledge feelings and behaviours"

"a nice mixture of activities to break the sessions up"

"One of the things that came out of the EHCP discussion is how far (he) has come, he no longer has a need to develop a positive autistic identity, (Your Pathway) helped him massively, he is proud of his autistic brain and wouldn't want to be without it!"

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Session 1: Understanding Neurodiversity

Aim:

- To understand autism as a valuable part of human neurodiversity.

Session outline:

- We use the electric circuit activity to introduce the term neurodiversity. Children discover that a circuit can be successfully wired in various different ways. We relate that to neurodiversity, explaining that brains can be wired in various different ways; no way is better or worse, they are just different.

In sessions 2, 3 and 4 we explore the autism diagnostic criteria to help understand more about what it really means to be autistic. We have re-phrased the diagnostic criteria rather more simply as 'Differences in Sensory Processing', 'Differences in Communication and Interaction', and 'Differences in Thinking, Doing and Learning'.

Session 2: Sensory Processing

Aim:

- To understand how sensory processing differences can affect us.

Session outline:

- We explain sensory processing differences.
- We introduce the proprioceptive, vestibular and interoceptive senses.
- We invite children to think about any sensory issues they experience.
- We think about how sensory aids can help (including testing some).
- We discuss stimming.

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Session 3: Communication

Aim:

- To understand how autistic and neurotypical communication and social interaction can differ; neither is better or worse, but it helps to be aware of the differences.

Session outline:

- We explain what is meant by 'communication' and 'social interaction'.
- We look at some common differences in how autistic and neurotypical individuals can approach communication. We do this largely by giving examples of various social interactions and considering different interpretations.
- We explain the double empathy problem.

Session 4: Thinking, doing and learning

Aim:

- To understand some of the common differences in thinking, doing and learning between autistic and neurotypical individuals.

Session outline:

- We consider some of the common differences in thinking, doing and learning between autistic and neurotypical individuals.
- We explain executive functioning.
- We introduce the theory of monotropism.

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Session 5: The coke bottle effect

Aim:

- To use the understanding we gained in previous sessions to consider some of the challenges an autistic child may encounter during a typical day and how they could be helped (with reasonable adjustments).
- To understand meltdowns, shutdowns learning to regulate.

Session outline:

- We follow Ava (our autistic character) through the school day. We shake a bottle of fizzy drink each time something stressful happens to her. We take the lid off at the end of the day...
- We then follow Ava through the same day again, this time considering any reasonable adjustments which would help her.
- We discuss meltdowns and shutdowns.
- We introduce the idea of learning to regulate using the 5 point scale.

Additional Notes:

We recognise that not all children are in school; as we follow Ava through the school day we invite non-school educated children to relate the examples to something within their experience.

We explain that learning to regulate takes time. We suggest that parents/carers may find it helpful to encourage their child to recognise how they are feeling, recognise the things which make them become dysregulated and the things which help them to regulate. We discuss how supporting interoceptive awareness can be very helpful with this.

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Session 6: Masking

Aim:

- To understand the negative impact of masking and encourage children to be their authentic autistic selves.

Session outline:

- We consider what masking is and think about the importance of being our authentic, autistic selves.
- We learn about spoon theory and consider how it may be helpful for us.
- We review our learning over the sessions.

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About Us

We are part of a neurodivergent family



Sarah is a registered social worker with over 20 years' experience.

She has a DipSW, BA Hons in Psychology (BPS accredited), a Diploma in Counselling and a Certificate in Youth and Children's Counselling.

She brings extensive experience of supporting autistic children and has worked with children and parents/carers in a range of settings.

Dave is a primary school teacher and tutor.

He has a BSC Hons, Diploma in Youth Counselling and QTS. He brings extensive experience of working with autistic children. He has taught in primary and secondary schools and worked in specialist and mainstream settings as well as supporting home educated and EOTAS learners.