

NEURODIVERSITY TIMES



APRIL

All content contributions are from neurodivergent authors, writers and artists.

2023

**EMBRACING
AUTHENTICITY**

Neurodiversity Times Magazine

Editor in Cheif

Tas Kronby

Issue #1

04/2023

Embracing Authenticity

TasThoughts llc

The background of the page is a light blue watercolor wash with various shades and textures, including some white and darker blue spots, giving it an artistic, hand-painted appearance.

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Expansive Expressions

Tas is an a neurodivergent writer. They are autistic, disabled, a DID system, a person of color, nonbinary and proud to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. They have a passion for equal access and human rights. They advocate inclusion, equal access, and acceptance of neurodiversity & disability.



Tas Kronby
Editor-in-Chief

Editor's Note

Acceptance, awareness, appreciation...pick your preference for the month of April. It is no shocker that no one agrees on what color, what label and what symbol to use this month. Instead of focusing on division, this issue of Neurodiversity Times Magazine brings forth the talents of the autistic/neurodivergent and disabled community.

April is the month of learning, allyship and recognizing individuals that do not always face equity in creative fields of work.

The aura of the struggling artist is no myth in marginalized communities. It is not a struggle, it is a slaughter. The voices of neurodivergent/autistic and disabled creatives are silenced in the pit of social politics.

Let's change this by giving visibility to talented entrepreneurs, business owners, writers, artists and advocates this month.

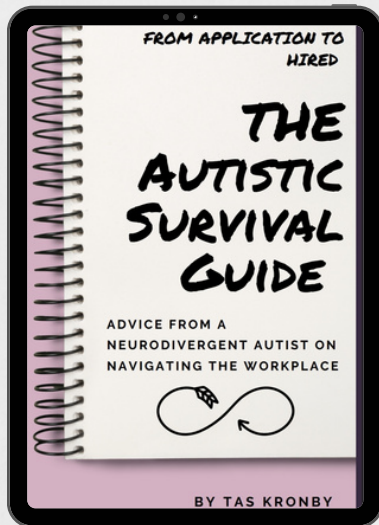
Don't let it stop at the end of April -keep going!

Neurodiversity Times Magazine challenges every company, every ally, and every person to recognize the achievements of autistic/neurodivergent and disabled creatives.

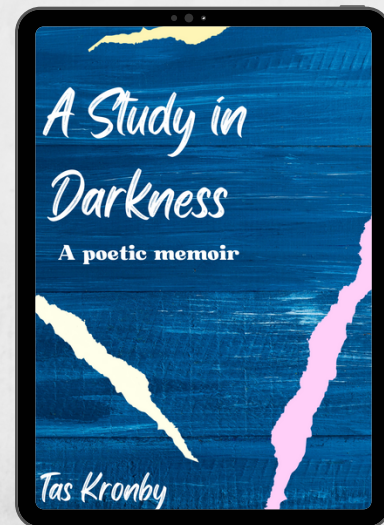
Embracing Authenticity means self-love, self-acceptance and a willingness to face obstacles head on...every person that contributed to this first issue of Neurodiversity Times Magazine is the embodiment of what it means to be authentically yourself.

***Voices are only silent if no
one listens.***

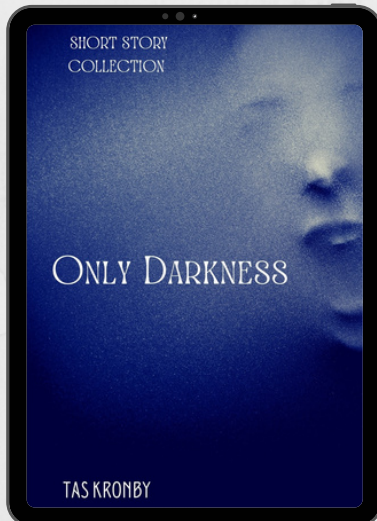
Books by Tas



**The Autistic Survival
Guide
For The Workplace**



**A Study In Darkness: A
Poetic Memoir**



**Only Darkness: A Short
Story Collection**



**Lonly Desert Girl (Kindle
Vella)**

[http:// linktr.ee/tasthoughts](http://linktr.ee/tasthoughts)

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

AUTISM PERSONAL COACH



<http://www.autismpersonalcoach.com>

Image Description: The letter A P C on the shape of a person climbing a mountain while planting a flag at the peak. .

Autism Personal Coach has provided neurodiversity-affirming support by autistics, for autistics. For the last ten years, we have offered customized coaching and community events. We know that every client of ours comes from a unique perspective with different identities. That is why our coaches are a diverse group of humans, many of them being autistic themselves. Our coaches offer support and education to help you achieve what you want, wherever and however that feels best for you



Whether it's your coach helping you to make a plan and stay on track to achieve your desired outcomes, building habits that prioritize embracing your autistic identity, or helping you to develop or improve your existing relationships, you will be thankful for your opportunity to work with us.

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

AUTISM PERSONAL COACH



<http://www.autismpersonalcoach.com>

Image Description: The letter A P C on the shape of a person climbing a mountain while planting a flag at the peak. .

AT AUTISM PERSONAL COACH WE PROVIDE CUSTOMIZED COACHING FOR AUTISTICS.

- All our Coaches are either Autistic or Autistic-selected for their commitment to trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming strategies.
- They deeply understand burnout, sensory needs, executive functioning, and the importance of special interests.



PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

AMANDA HEBERT HUGHES - AMERICAN ARTIST



<http://www.SensoryGatedArt.com>

Discover the new genre of Sensory Gated Art, developed by its autistic founder, Amanda Hebert Hughes – American Artist.

Leveraging color, line, texture, and psychology, she delivers a calming and accessible new genre to the world of art and design. From her famous painting remakes to her Latin collection, Amanda’s style is immediately recognizable.

Amanda Hebert Hughes believes that color is information and her passionate approach to color mixing is nothing short of a “mad scientist”, a label she wears proudly. Her attention to detail in all her line work painted by hand is nothing short of deeply satisfying for viewers.

Her work has been featured in The Edge, a global publication by Cushman and Wakefield as a premier new approach to neuro-friendly design that benefits everyone.

Follow her work, collect original art directly from the artist herself, and join the movement.

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

AMANDA HEBERT HUGHES - AMERICAN ARTIST



An abstract painting in browns, yellows & burnt orange.

Amanda Hebert Hughes - American Artist

Founder of Sensory Gated Art

Author Illustrator of the Why Does Mommy Say children's book series

Autistic. Artist. Author. Advocate.

CONNECT WITH ME

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FACEBOOK [click here](#)

Order my children's book by [clicking here](#)

POETRY

DeNiM's poet statement



Curiosity informs my creativity.

When I dig deep within myself to understand what emotions and thoughts arise, I unlock doors to vivid spaces as yet unknown to me.

I have been an introspective being since childhood, and this urge has only deepened with age and life experiences.

There was a seven-year period when I did not write a single word—and words felt meaningless. Empty, even. My tongue was tied, my eyes filmed, and my fingers would not obey my fractured, depressed mind's unfocused pleas. Words matter profoundly to me. They create connections between ideas as well as between me and other earthlings.

I explain to myself—and others through poetry—how the society I inhabit imposes its rigid rule on my life and my person. I use loosely-joined strings of words to share a glimpse of the filters that help me navigate the world.

I offer a peek into my psyche and my quest for liberation through my poetry. This practice escalated during the Covid-19 pandemic when I truly reckoned with my authentic self and acknowledged the veritable alphabet soup that follows my name. With authenticity came humility and confidence.

I am clear on the being I am and how I want to express this self to society at large.

My current poetic exploration has to do with how human society has imposed race, ethnicity, gender, and heteronormativity on my person and disabled me from birth.



The trauma and diagnoses that followed and revealed themselves during the pandemic built on top of those imposed disabilities.

When I choose to move through the world as my authentic aracial, agender, queer self, I risk houselessness, loneliness, and violence. However, this anthropocentric, white, cisgender, binary, allistic society is not palatable in any way, shape, or form.

I no longer tolerate my rational, reasonable, logical responses to the abuse and trauma inflicted by this society to be pathologized by said society.

ADHD, quiet borderline personality disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder are my coping mechanisms and I shall lean on them for as long as humanity insists on compliance and conformity while punishing those like me who choose different paths.

And my poetry is my outlet. It is the trumpet I sound to point a—not THE—way out of many possibilities.

I'm done begging for accommodation. I accommodate myself as best I can. This is MY privilege.

I'm here.

There's nothing wrong with me; society has disabled me.

WORDS
by DeNiM

They didn't have the language

They didn't have the words

They didn't know what they were doing

Don't judge them too harshly

You mean the words that you and I

Have strung together

To connect

To reflect

To share

One to another

To tell new tales

New hopes

New futures

You mean the language

You and I created between our selves

To nurture and nourish

Our fledgling multiverse

They knew

And they know

WORDS
by DeNiM

Exactly what they're doing

When they use words

With blunt abandon

Playing whack-a-deviant-of-the-era

Judging and condemning

You, me, and every one

Who diverges

From the straight and narrow

Who fails to conform

And comply

And colour within their lines

J'accuse

And I judge

And have found wanting

Your selective hearing

Your filtered perception

Your miscomprehension

Your willful oblivion

WORDS
by DeNiM

In the face of our divergent multitudes

Forgiveness is an empty word

In a meaningless world

Of double-entendres

And sous-entendus

I'm burning bridges

You best find the words

Quick quick

Or risk the darkness of ages

The abyss of tyranny

UNDERSTAND THIS
by DeNiM

Understand this

When you request

Nay, demand

Time to get used to me

And how I express myself

You require I put

My existence on hold

Until you are

Comfortable enough

To let go

Of your unquestioned assumptions

Were I so inclined

Let's be clear

I am not

Were I so inclined

It would still be

Impossible

To hide and contain

What I liberated

UNDERSTAND THIS
by DeNiM

Expands

Beyond your borders

Your constructs

Your limits

Founded on lies

And bad faith

The world moves

Planets turn

Stars explode

Nothing is on hold

Except fossils

And memories become myths

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT



LYRIC RIVERA

Workplace NeuroDiversity Rising, named “trend for 2023” and praised inForbes as “an excellent ‘how to manual’ based on lived experience and professional competence”.

Image of Lyric in a blue denim jacket sitting and leaning towards the camera.

<http://www.neurodivergentrebel.com>

**WORKPLACE
NEURODIVERSITY RISING
CLICK HERE**

Lyric Rivera, Educator, Consultant, and Author of the best-selling business ethic’s book, Workplace Neurodiversity Rising. Lyric also is the owner of NeuroDivergent Consulting, and runs the internationally recognized NeuroDivergent Rebel blog.

This book was written, specifically for organizations that want to be more inclusive of NeuroDivergent People, but I've tried to write this guide in a way that it will be universally applicable to many scenarios. Workplace NeuroDiversity Rising is intended to be a tool that can help ANYONE who wants to make the world, or the spaces around them more inclusive for NeuroDivergent (and all) People, in organizations, communities, schools, and beyond.

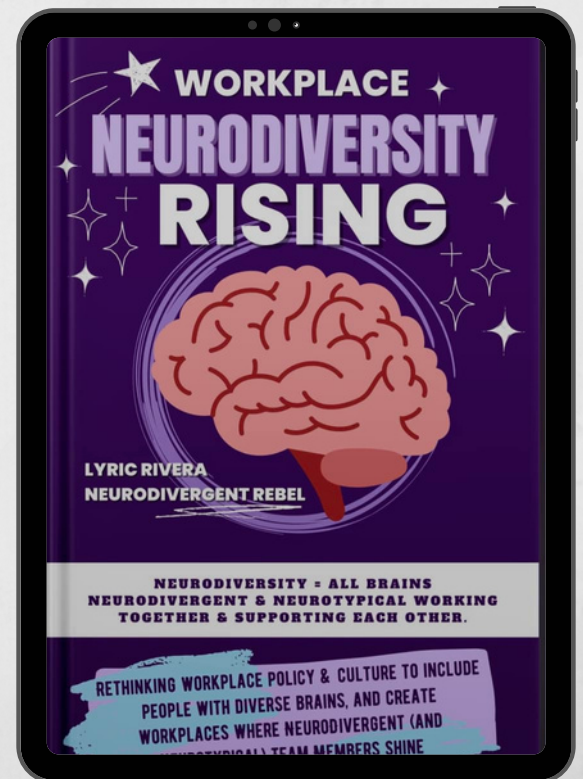


Image of the book, it has a brain on the cover with a purple background.

close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel

“why can’t you just close the cabinets?”
i’ve heard this too many times
but each time, my heart sinks a little
“i’m sorry; i forgot”
doesn’t quite cover it
but i’m telling the truth
i really didn’t mean to

“i have adhd”
is also not a crowd favorite
they think it’s an excuse
what i wish they understood
was that my mind was already 7 steps ahead
that finishing the task to completion
was a thought that disappeared from my awareness
i wish it didn’t disappear

“turn the lights off when you leave the room”
“just place your keys in the same spot”
“write it down so you don’t forget”
“pay attention”
“watch what you’re doing”
i feel that sting multiple times a day
and it really adds up



Image of: A person in a red sweater holding a black and white dog.

**close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel**

i know i'm a competent person
my brain just works differently
functioning doesn't come easy for me
tasks don't have a beginning middle and end for me
it blurs together
to be present and focused in the moment
requires all of my energy most days
it's exhausting

when i think about my social life
it's where my adhd does the most damage
to be walking away from an interaction
and realizing that i didn't respond to someone's question
because in the middle of a conversation, i initiated with someone else
i disengaged with them
by accident
i tell myself i'll be a better conversation partner
but i can't just will it away

at work i blurt statements out
before they're done talking
especially in meetings
i'm not trying to be rude
i do care what they're saying
it's just if i don't get my thought out RIGHT NOW
it will be gone forever
and i want to contribute
but i can't just stow away the point i want to make
and come back to it later
it disappears again
into this floaty cloud above my head
it's a mess up there

**close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel**

then we have the texts
oh, the texts
cue the sinking feeling
i want to maintain friendships
but it sure doesn't seem that way
when it takes me weeks or months to respond
or never respond at all
i tell them i care about them
but my adhd makes it really hard
to make that known
i promise it's not a lack of effort
it's all the effort
at any given moment
dozens of unread texts
sitting in purgatory
they pile up so quickly
it's overwhelming
it's disappointing for me
as much as it is for them

if i sat down and addressed things as they came up
it would lead me down a rabbit hole
and that rabbit hole down another rabbit hole
and before i know it it's 1 a.m. and i'm writing
what i think is a poem
about adhd
instead of responding to those damn texts
it's actually really stressful

**close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel**

when it comes to school, i thrive
i would love to go back to school
because the structure is already there
laid out plainly
do this by this date
if you don't do it, you fail
this is a language i can understand
i actually like deadlines
there's no nuance
can i get a syllabus for life?
i'd maybe follow that

adhd hyperfocus -
that coveted flow state
to be very frank
it doesn't happen to me often
the meds help create that for me
thankful for the meds
but i just go at my own pace
doing things i enjoy
if i don't enjoy, i avoid
until procrastination leads to panic
and suddenly only then i can do it
funny how that works

as i get older
the floaty cloud above my head gets bigger
it's filled with memories i can't access
appointments i missed
books i half-read
art i never finished

**close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel**

incomplete email drafts
missed payments
lost keys
misplaced items
planners i stopped writing in
futile reminders on my phone
that i can look at but not notice

people say we're quirky
or tell me everyone has adhd
or that it means i'm fun and hyper
when really it means
i have to convince myself
to execute daily tasks of living
with great care and detail
which often looks like
overwhelm and laying in bed
because it involves too many steps
decision paralysis -
a battle i face regularly

it also means
large spans of my childhood
are just lost
i can't remember
i wasn't paying attention
even if it is my favorite show or movie
that i've seen over and over
i can't really have a discussion about it
because the plot and characters
get totally lost up there
even though in my heart
i know i loved it

**close the cabinets: a poem about my
ADHD
by dani rodwel**

so instead of the details
i connect with the feeling
and the overall vibes
and remember the experience
this is often all i have
to hold on to
or reference

feelings are my guide
i can reminisce
but not remember
typically

i wish i didn't have adhd
i'd probably be in a much different place
but it is what it is
and the people that stuck by me
love me for who i am
even with my open cabinets

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

RAYNE VIRTUAL ADMIN



<http://www.raynevirtualadmin.com>



Image Description: V and A in gold and white letters next to a photo of Kondwa.

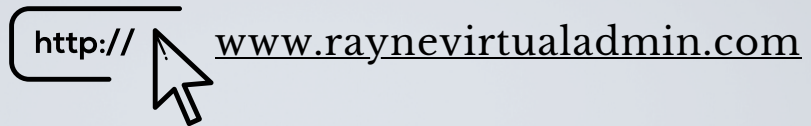
- Are you a Neurodiverse Business owner who is ready to reclaim your time?
- Do you wish you could focus on running your business instead of having your business run you?
- Are you spending too much time catching up with admin and behind the scenes tasks, and not enough time focusing on growing your business?

I can fix that!

I help brilliant, struggling Neurodiverse business owners (e.g. ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia etc.) take back control of their time and energy, combat overwhelm and get back on track doing what they love.

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

RAYNE VIRTUAL ADMIN



- I manage client Emails, staying on top of client communication and automating mail to streamline admin systems. I manage Calendar scheduling, helping clients keep track of their appointments. I also take over travel arrangements and itinerary planning.
- I conduct research for clients for anything from marketing to content creation, tutorials and information collation, fact verification and even brainstorming ideas.
- I polish and proofread content, optimising it for different platforms; I also create simple content and professional presentations using Canva.

With over 5 years of administrative experience, I've helped individuals get on top of their admin, take their email inboxes down to #inboxzero and allocate their resources more efficiently to maximise productivity. Ready to stop feeling burnt out and finally free up some time? Contact me today.

LINKEDIN [click here](#)

INSTAGRAM [click here](#)

Masked Mona Lisa by Ben VanHook

I'm sorry I didn't want to go trick or treating with you after dark.

I just... I just didn't have the courage. I couldn't muster up the desire.

I didn't have the spoons to play third fiddle... nor to put on yet another mask and play my second fictional character of the evening. I didn't have the energy to express artificial feelings tonight, from the over exaggerated "boo", to that high pitched, "trick-or-treat", when you so gracefully opened your door to strangers.

I also didn't want to get lost in the woods, or, the long, bustling, winding roads, streets, and cul de sacs... as I so often do... I don't want to find myself lost, again, on the Highway of Hell, unable to find my way home, as I begin to lose myself in my thoughts, anxieties, and fears...

But... Halloween, in itself, isn't scary. The masks don't spook me. They overwhelm me. Getting lost doesn't scare me. Rather, it gives me anxiety.

No.

What scares me the most on Halloween... is YOU. I dread your luminous presence as all I had ever felt was the eternal dark. I am afraid of your kindness, as all I had known is cruelty. I am skeptical of your guidance on these unknown trails, as I had only ever been abandoned in times of need. I am afraid of your security, as detachment is all I've ever felt.

But, the worst part is, that I feel as if I, MYSELF, am the ghost that YOU are afraid of. Just... a ghost. Or... maybe a madman... or... a maniac who could snap at any second. A shadow of what you wanted in a friend. A tarnished hope, a dying ember. A lost love. I am that wilting rose you wish would grow...

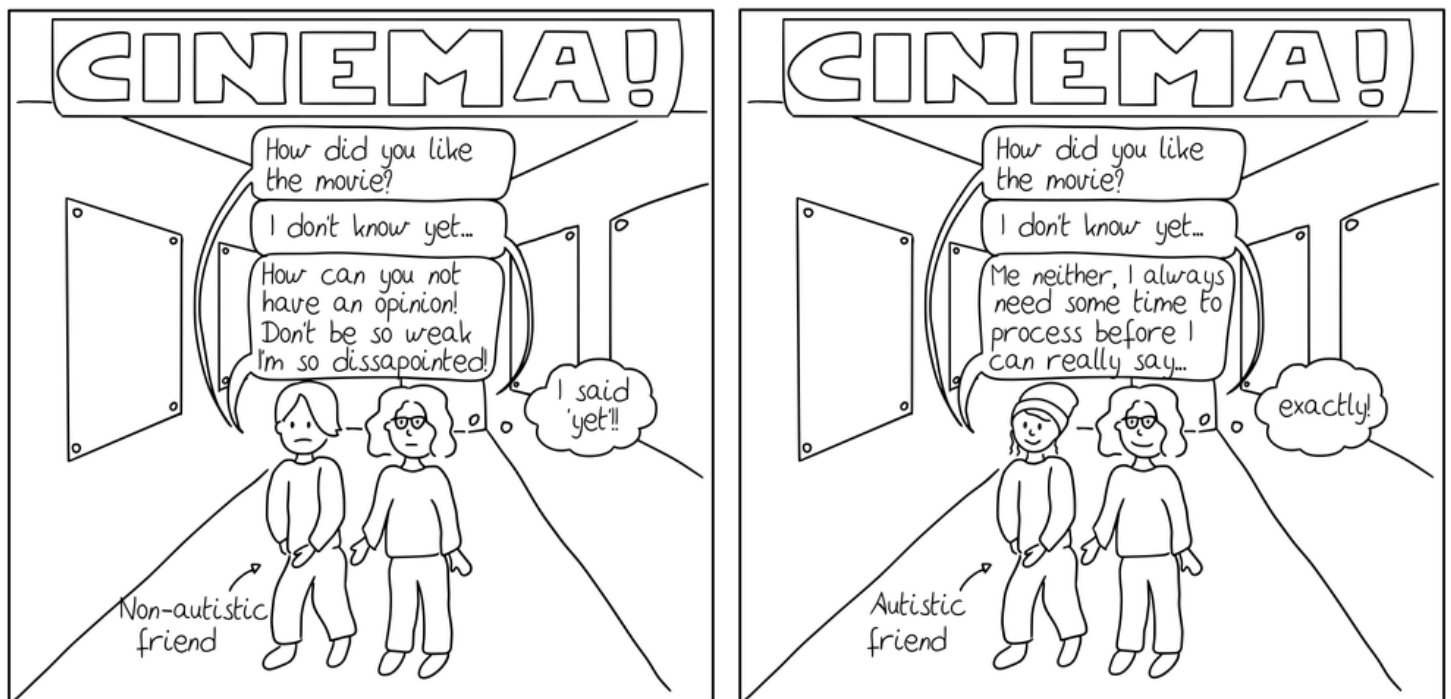
Masked Mona Lisa by Ben VanHook

I am the person you wish would “just sit still” and “be normal”. The person you wish “wouldn’t have been so honest”. My honesty does indeed scare, or, at the very least, humiliate you whilst with friends... I’m the person you wish would have “grown-up interests and hobbies”. The person you wish would “stop acting like a child”. I am the person you really, really wish “wouldn’t have asked that question in front of EVERYONE”. That person you want to “talk about this later” with. Whilst I am Medusa’s greatest fear, I am your greatest shame. Then... you ghost me... once you realise how “high maintenance” I might truly be.

What scares you the most IS NOT my mask, but, rather, my actual face. My true nature. My unmasked self.

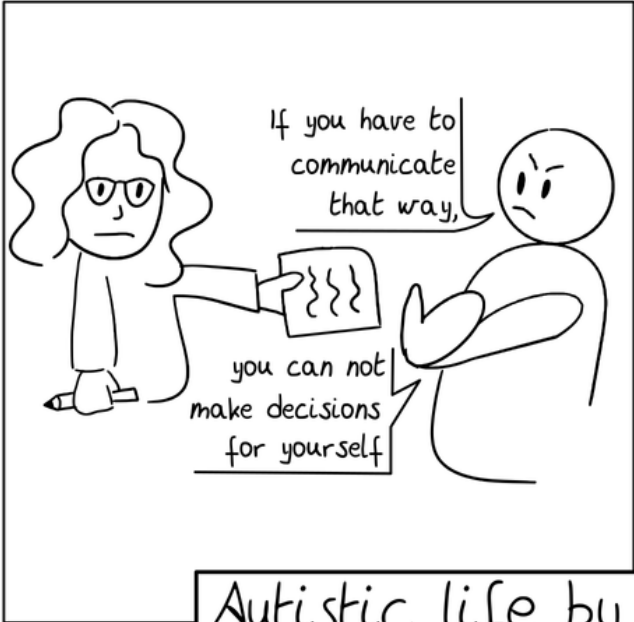
I am sorry, but I cannot go trick or treating with you tonight, nor ever. Some items in my chamber of secrets are worth protecting. Sometimes I keep my mask on because of the ghastly consequences that may arise should I fail to do so. Sometimes I keep my mask on to protect others. Sometimes I keep my mask on because every angel is a devil in disguise waiting to strike in my most vulnerable moment... when I am lost in the woods alone.

Delayed processing



Autistic life by @sketchnotesara

Non-verbal



Autistic life by @sketchnotesara

Wish



Autistic life by @sketchnotesara



M.L. Sokol

Rainbow Road : Celebrations to Behold

The clay earth
here
cuts like
last-minute
store-bought
frozen cake,
hastily
prepared
birthday party
no guests
to celebrate
no room
to break
through
tightly woven
cliques
clumps
of knit
inedible
fucking
grass
roots

Mask Pack

package it
up
with a
pretty face
it will always
be weird
always
be strange
put a smile
on it
make it
sexy
everybody
likes to
dance with
pretty ladies
eternal sacred
mother in motion
whirling dervishes
of sacred blessing

M.L. Sokol

**I Was Made For To Be
Myself, Wholly So**

I am
so done
with all these
broken
pieces
parts
of a life
lived
unmatched
chaos
everything
always
scattered
to the winds.
My mother
used to bring
broken finds
to my gate
because
despite my words
screams
emails
texts
threats
pleading
a big beg
opposite
she thought
it was my hobby
and passion
to fix.

M.L. Sokol

**I Was Made For To Be
Myself, Wholly So**

No,
this is
just
how
they want
me to
exist
for
them.

M.L. Sokol

**Heartbreak Hotel
Breakfast Buffet**

I am
still
slowly
learning
how
to offer
my heart
on a buffet
without
being hurt
when they
take
as
they
want
wish
need
then
satiated,
walk away

I am
always
too much
for one mouthful
too much
to digest
in just one sitting

M.L. Sokol

Cleveland Contessa

I am
the homegrown
poet
barefoot
wandering
wondering
muddled clouds
dissipate
from the brightness
my mindset
brings

Hello city
Did you
sense
I had
returned,
Did you
feel
the vibration
of my stroll
when I descended
from those higher
elevations?

The woman at the park
kept saying
how beautiful
I was
even though
it was her
I thought
most beautiful
outside -in
inside -out

M.L. Sokol

Cleveland Contessa

The man
in the Target
parking lot
politely pulled up
reserved quiet
catcall, gentleman style
to declare
me
myself
the most beautiful
woman in the city

what

Where was this
response
when I was
here
stuck
lotus blooming
from the muck
forever counting
the minutes
to get out

Trust

by Freya Pinney, The Process
Repository

Trust

I felt safe
Open to my needs
Kept me at the edge
Strong boundaries created a good
container
Conducive to what I was feeling in my
body
Experiencing with your body language
Mirroring resonating sensations
Honesty
Questions conveyed genuine curiosity
Hold me there with your words and
gestures
In service of me
Energetically
Respectful
Share
Guided
Permission
I felt very safe
Without hierarchy
Ask me what I need
Asked me questions
Noticed small details - Type of language I
used
Noticed small details - How I used my
hands
Asking me about my somatic
experiencing
Experiencing being heard and acceptance

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT



Grey sitting at the base of a tree holding flowers that can be seen in the reflection of the mirror.

@mirrorlikemagic is a disabled and neurodivergent artist, community witch, and educator. Their magic is based in relationship with ancestors, land, and spirit. Much of their magical work is in identifying thought patterns and co-creating rituals and personal mythology in support of each person's values and talents in the world. May their work be in service to collective liberation.

@MIRRORLIKEMAGIC

<http://www.mirrorlikemagic.com>

Substack: @mirrorlikemagic

insta: @mirrorlikemagic

YOUR BODY IS MAGIC: a seasonal workshop on building relationship with your body and its intelligence through a disability and magical lens.

You can book 1:1 zoom astrological readings and custom spells with them (cordcuttings, curse unraveling, self love spells, re-mything personal stories)

Or joining them in their workshops:

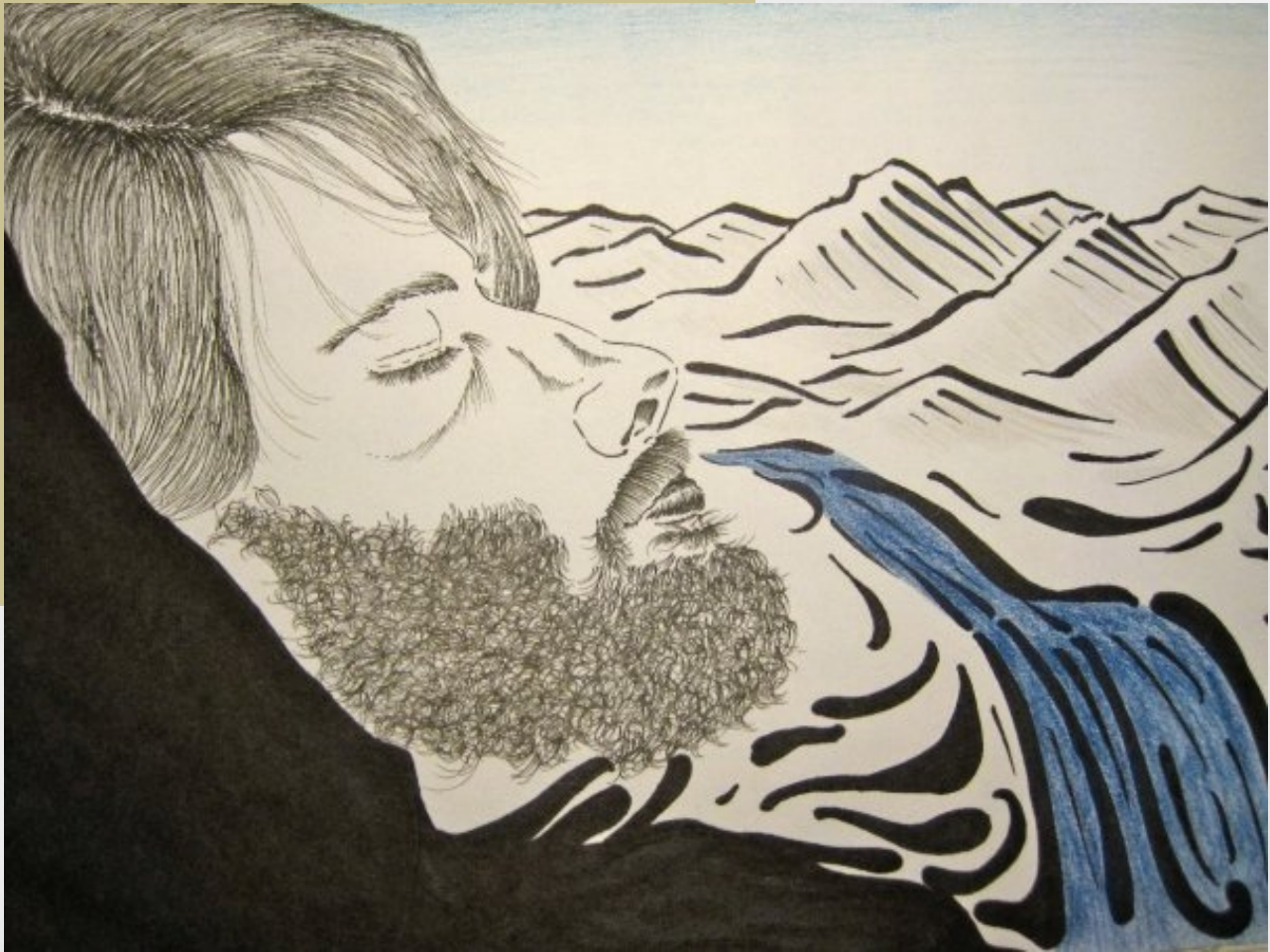
RITUAL PLAY: a 7 week play-based online workshop with cofacilitator @nonbinarybynature, talk astrology, self mythology, and creativity through play exercises.

VISUAL ARTS

The Violin by Lesya Lasota

Image description: A monochromatic piece of an individual playing the violin strands of hair in the shape of musical notes. Music notes are floating around the person showing the music playing.





Dreaming by Lesya Lasota

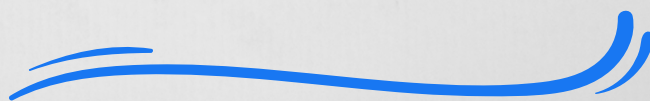
Image description: A masculine face laying on a black fluid structure with eyes closed. A mountain side in the background with a blue river flowing through it.





Reading Peter
Rabbit by Lesya
Lasota

Image description: A feminine person lying on their side with a blue skirt and pink top reading a book.



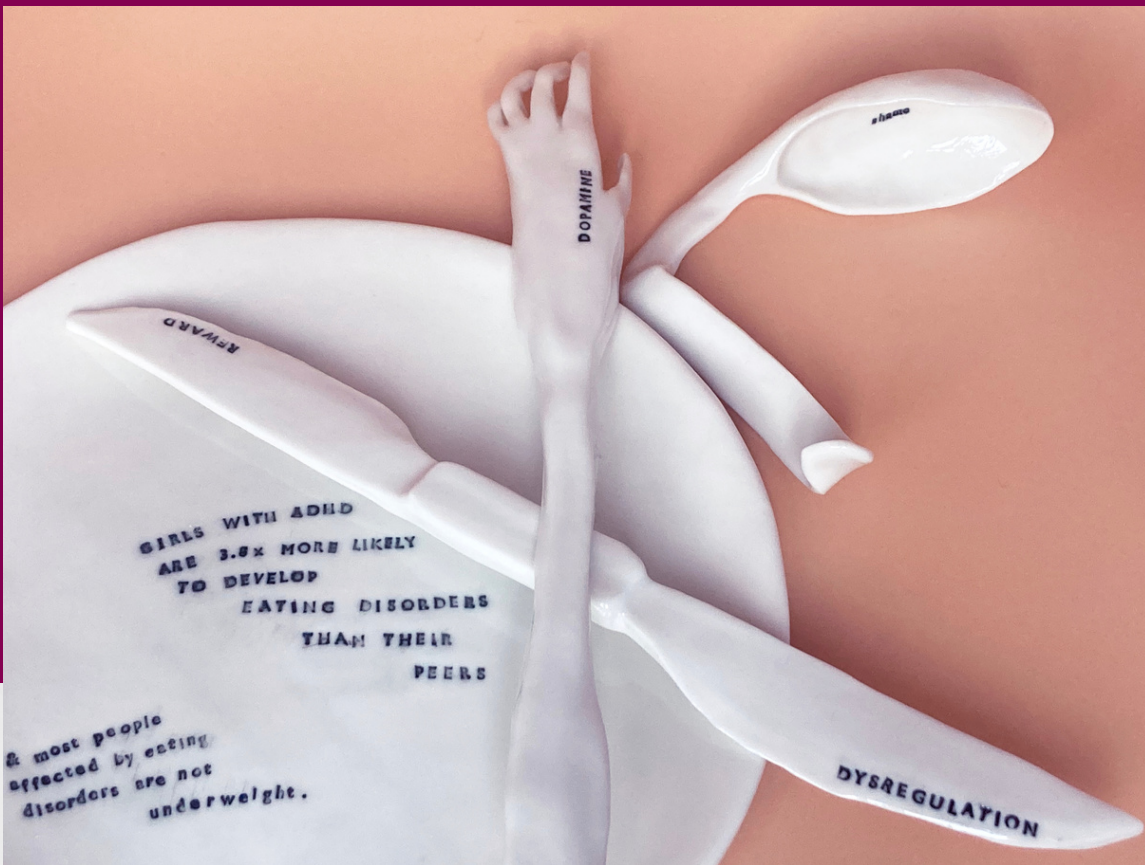


Image description: Ceramic plate with cutlery. One handle is broken. Words are etched in to the items.

ADHD & Dopamine

by Beverley Irving-Edwards



Image description: A fork in the shape of an elongated hand with the word dopamine etched on the top.

Daniel Rothenberg



Never Full

Image of: an abstract face of a person with facial hair and glasses. In white and green hues.



The Hidden Monster

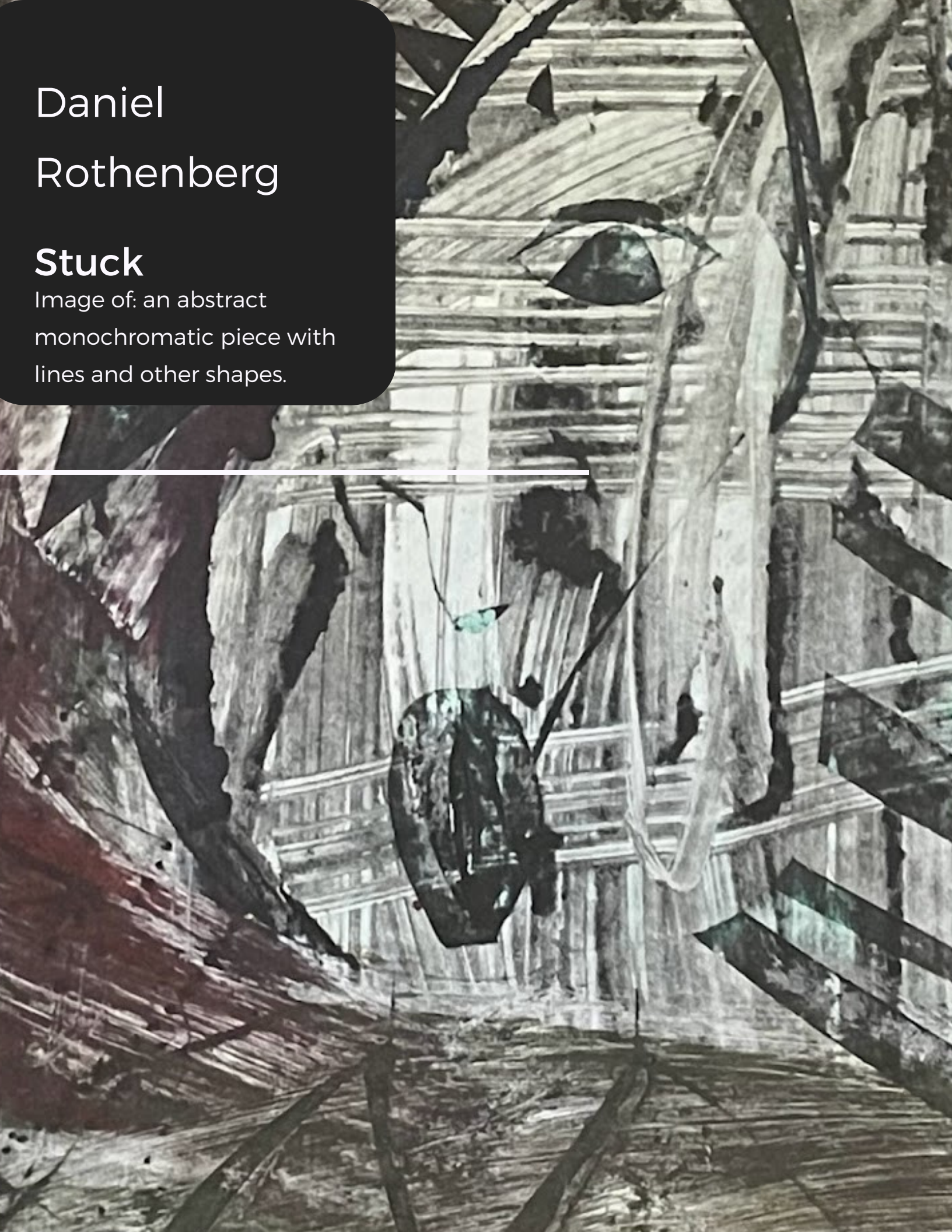
Image of: a masculine person with facial hair and glasses with a super imposed image of the same person above. The image monochromatic.

Daniel

Rothenberg

Stuck

Image of: an abstract
monochromatic piece with
lines and other shapes.





John "Wiley"

Johnson, Jr.

Burning

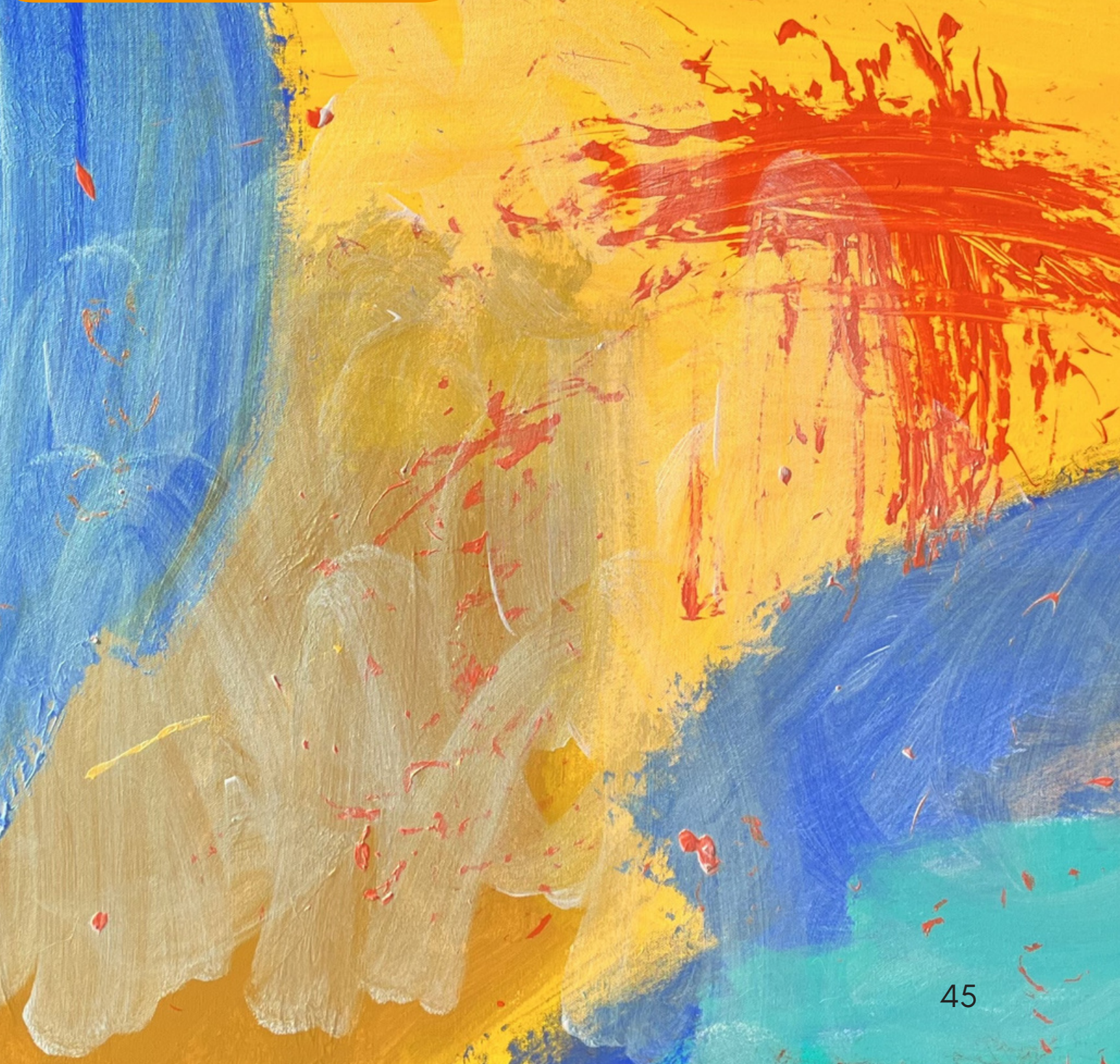
Image of: many types of lines on the page in orange, green, blue and purple hues. It is abstract.


John "Wiley"

Johnson, Jr.

The World Inside Me

Image of: an abstract image on yellow, orange and blue hues.



An abstract painting featuring a complex interplay of colors and textures. The composition is dominated by vibrant purple and blue tones, with bold, expressive brushstrokes in red and teal. The background is a mix of light gray and off-white, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is dynamic and energetic, with a focus on color and form rather than recognizable objects.

John "Wiley"
Johnson, Jr.

Dream

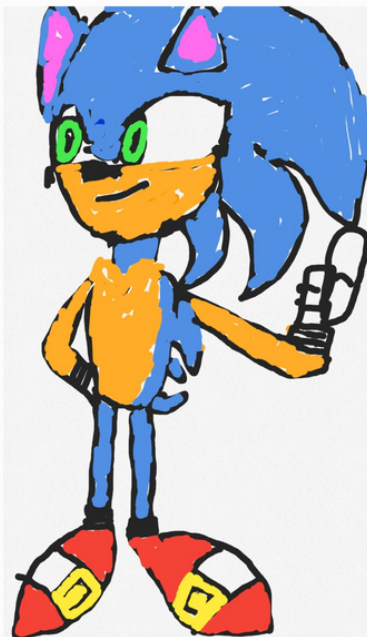
Image of: an abstract work
in purple, gray, red and
blue hues.

Maleny Cintron

FanArt



**Sadness from
Inside Out**



**Sonic
The Hedgehog**

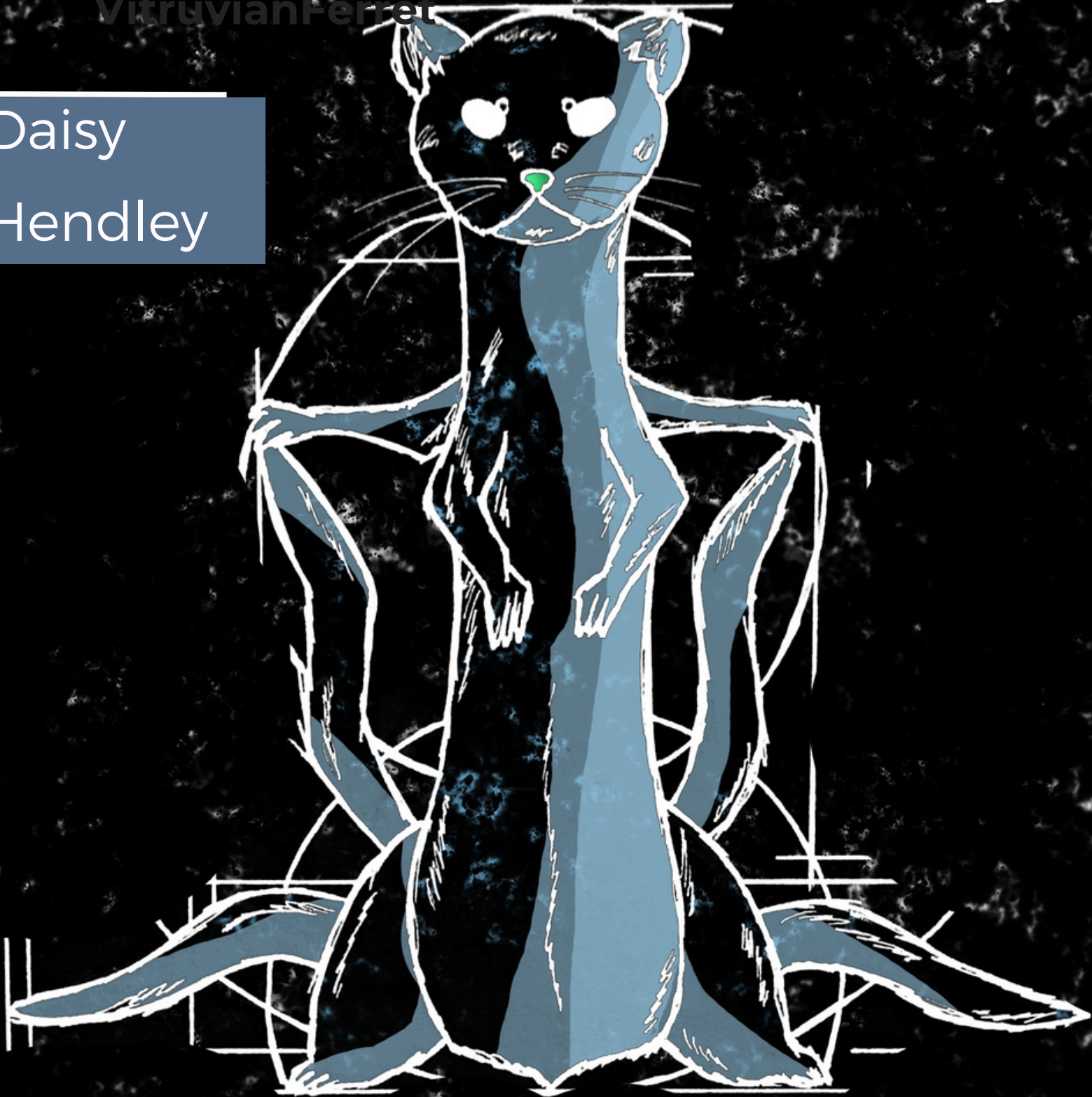
**Jiggly Puff
From
Pokemon**



It isn't the darkness that scares me,
It's the shadows that lurk in the light

Vitruvian Ferret

Daisy
Hendley



Daisy Hendley



A True Heart

Image of: a drawing in the form of a negative photographic image of a bat.

Born Different

Image of: a drawing in the form of a negative photographic image of a dog like animal with bat wings.



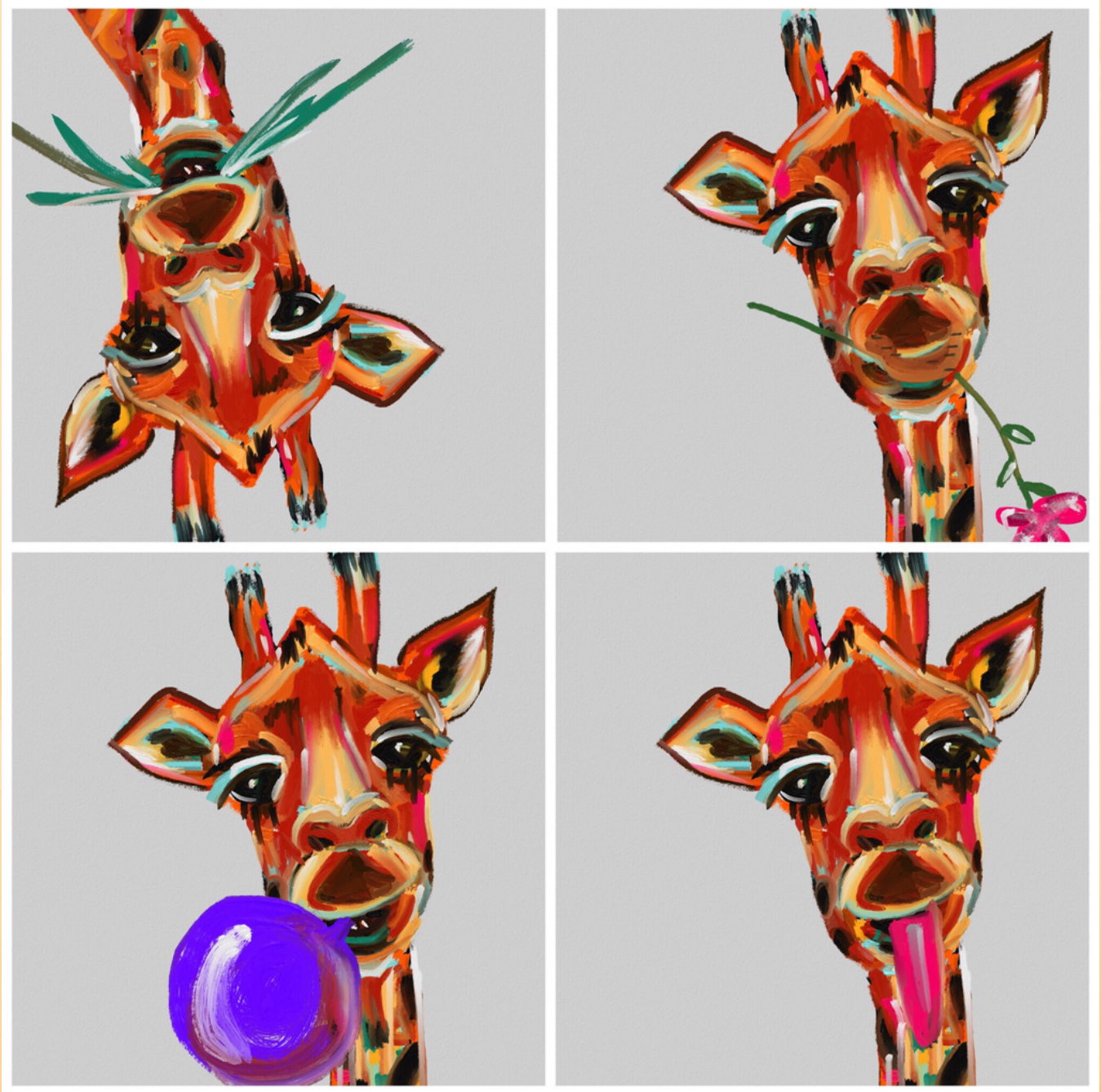
Clare O'Connor

Image of: an abstract mountain range in blue, yellow, gray, green and pink hues.



Clare O'Connor

Image of: a giraffe eating grass, another holding a flower in its mouth, one playfully blowing a bubble and one sticking out its tongue.



Clare O'Connor

Image of: a bird in brown,
blue and pink hues.



PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

BECCA LORY HECTOR

<http://BECCALORY.COM>

I am an openly Autistic Professional on a mission to close the disability gap in leadership by working with companies to attract and retain disabled talent. My focus is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging (DEIB) in the workplace because, as a female, disabled person, I have been in search of Belonging as an employee my entire working life. Since I was never able to find it, I decided to partner with companies and organizations to help them create their workplaces.



Image of Becca sitting on a velvet green chair alongside a medium-sized tan, black and white dog.

I was diagnosed on the autism spectrum as an adult and have since become a dedicated autism and neurodiversity advocate, researcher, consultant, speaker, and author. My work includes neurodiversity and disability consulting, autistic quality of life research, as well as teaching my course, Self Defined Living: A Path to a Quality Autistic Life.

I have published multiple articles and books about life on the autism spectrum with the goal of spreading acceptance, building understanding, and encouraging self-advocacy. I am an animal lover with a special affinity for cats and spend most of my “free” time with my many animals, my husband Antonio, and my Emotional Support Animal (ESA), Sir Walter Underfoot.

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Though we are still in the early stages of integrating DEIB into our company cultures, thus far, most DEI initiatives have forgotten one of the largest marginalized groups on our planet: disabled folks. Attention has been paid to race, religion, gender and sexuality, but repeatedly, disability has been left out of the conversation.

As we are beginning to make headway in this area, I created Truly Inclusive Leadership, to help companies and organizations build well-rounded DEIB initiatives that include ALL disabilities, visible and invisible, and focus on creating a sense of belonging in the workplace. Your company's DEIB initiatives should be apparent in every department and at every level of your organization, beginning with leadership. If you are ready to make your company or organization truly inclusive, I share how I can help you by [clicking here](#).



Image of Becca in front of the disability pride flag holding a gray cat.

CLICK THE ICON



Shop the Self
Defined Living Store
[click here](#)

[Support Becca!](#)

ARTICLES

Self-Acceptance in the face of all odds.

by Michelle Markman

Growing up I always saw myself as a leader. I felt most alive when out of doors and had an aversion to shoes. I rarely wore shoes for any amount of time until I went to high school. I was a barefoot goddess, and I was deeply connected to Mother Earth. I was mostly peaceful and happy in my own world. I had a few select friends and I felt a deep sense of belonging on Mother Earth and a deep connection to nature, animals, and natural spaces. I had the luxury of growing up unschooled for most of my education. In 2nd-8th grade, I had no idea how good I had it.

That all changed when I started High School. I had seen way too many high school-themed movies and I thought well, high school will be fun! I had been doing ballet, modern, and jazz dance for close to 10 years by then so I figured I would go to an art high school and dance, and it would be like Fame or Footloose or some other High School themed movie, but it ended up way worse than even Mean Girls. It ended up with me feeling like I was less than human. It ended up with me walking up to my peers and watching them turn their backs to my face one after another. I was ostracized, rejected, broken, and wrong. I was too loud, too vibrant, and didn't know where one person's space ended and mine began. I interjected into conversations that I was not a part of, and over the year pretty quickly informed me that there was something deeply wrong with me.

Self-Acceptance in the face of all odds.

by Michelle Markman

My whole being was an affront to a high school full of rejects (we were all artists, and each auditioned to obtain entrance into the school. If artists aren't social rejects, I don't know who are. I was the reject of the rejects. I was the Queen Reject. I was unlikeable and unlovable and not worth even looking at. What was wrong with me? I had no idea at the time that I was autistic. I grew up knowing that my brother was autistic. He was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD at a young age, but I slid under the radar myself and my family was somewhat label and formal intervention averse. I broke my back shortly after the rejections started in a high school of 500 students. I think 499 turned their backs on me. The one hold-out was a friend of mine... Also, in hindsight neurodivergent...

Others were also likely neurodivergent at the school, looking back and putting the pieces together, but no one was willing to risk being my friend after I proved I was a pariah. I did have one person who mimicked everything I did. It was weird. She did her hair the same way, wore the same clothes and mimicked my mannerisms, she talked like me and walked like me, she was an artist. I should have befriended her but she was "weird"... So I guess I wasn't the weirdest? But I regret not making another weird friend. If you are reading this you probably know who you are. Find me, I want to be friends now. Sorry I was just like everyone else.

I decided that instead of transferring into theater when I broke my back I would switch schools. I couldn't bear to be seen as a cockroach anymore and I wanted a fresh start, so I moved and transferred to high schools. It was a fresh start, and I had a small group of friends, mostly foreign students, and other "rejects" that I hung out with at lunch.

Self-Acceptance in the face of all odds.

by Michelle Markman

I was still bullied but it was much less noticeable, and I turned all my energy into masking and hiding who I truly was. My vibrance died and my soul became like a giant black hole. The depression became mind-numbing and exhausting and I saw no meaning or purpose in life much of the time. This was the beginning of a severe depression that led to my attempt to “unalive myself” by way of various illicit drugs as alcohol was not something I enjoyed. I spiraled out of control and to the brink of death in 3 years and around age 23 I decided I was either getting clean or giving up.

I couldn't live the way I was anymore. I was being used, abused, and abused myself. I was not any semblance of the person I had once been, and I knew it was time to change. I went to see a psychiatrist and got landed with the diagnosis of Bipolar II. Over the next 5 years, I believed I had that condition. The mood swings so common to autistic individuals that are so rarely discussed were heightened by my drug addiction and trauma response. I was so traumatized by that point that I was crying every single day. I cried rivers, I have cried so many tears I have dry eyes now... I hope the humor is seen in that comment.

Throughout this time, I attended Junior college mostly part-time on and off. At 27 I got into a major University and was ecstatic! I was finally going to finish school and get a BA! Something my high school guidance counselor said was impossible for me. She said, I should choose a trade because I was not suited for higher education. (She said, you're dumb with her facial expression and body language, she said you are wasting my time you stupid child). She thought I didn't know what her condescending expression meant but I did, and I do.

Self-Acceptance in the face of all odds.

by Michelle Markman

I carried that with me always and have always been the person to do exactly what I am told I cannot do. I can't graduate college, ok well here's my diploma, I can't travel the world solo, well here are my ticket stubs, I can't climb the world's tallest freestanding mountain. Ok well here's my summit picture and my story of the journey. I can't drive a stick shift? Ride a motorcycle, lead an outdoor trip? Ha, watch me! I can't have an upper management-level career. I can't be a neurodivergent relationship coach and advocate for other late-diagnosed autistics? I can't live a full and vibrant life as a disabled individual? I call Bullshit!! **autocorrect just told me that might be offensive to my readers** Thanks autocorrect. If you are offended, you are probably reading the wrong publication right now...

Being underestimated your whole life makes you inspiration porn, it's lame and cool at the same time. Really what it is, is a complete lack of understanding or how neurodiversity affects growth and development. I hit my milestones; it just took me longer. Now, I can only speak for myself, but I firmly believe that we have to expect way more than we are told to expect from our children for them to reach their potential (by the way potential is the worst word ever, except organic... not in terms of food, I heard it way too much at the art high school but I digress) ...

I want everyone who is suffering to know that there is an end to suffering, that there is a life of meaning, purpose, and joy on the other side of suffering, that everyone can and should have every relationship they desire and there are tools out there for them to find, form and nurture those relationships.

Self-Acceptance in the face of all odds.

by Michelle Markman

Life is all about relationships from our families to our work, our communities, and our culture; everything revolves around relationships. We all deserve to belong in this world, and we all deserve community.

Today I am a wife, mother, relationship coach, and self-actualizing human. I love and accept myself for who I am, and I am still working to rediscover the wild and wonderful person I am. I see her often and I welcome her into my life with open arms. My truest self is the self that I share with my clients and in turn, we uncover their truest selves.

I find it ironic that we all come into this world wild, wonderful, confident, and complete only to be beaten down into swallowable pills by society, and we must take it upon ourselves to rediscover the wild and wonderful humans we are.

I challenge you to take some time today to be the wild and wonderful you, who is that?

What does the wild and wonderful you do?

Say?

Wear?

How does wild and wonderful you move?

I encourage you to play and rediscover your inner child because they are in your heart, and they are magical.

Michelle Markman

**<http://www.michellemarkman.com>
michelle@michellemarkman.com**

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

TODAY'S AUTISTIC MOMENT HOSTED BY PHILLIP KING-LOWE



<http://www.todaysautisticmoment.com/>

Today's Autistic Moment gives Autistic Adults access to important information, to learn about our barriers to discover the strengths and tools we already have to use for the work of self-advocacy.

Two new episodes are published every month and features guests who join Philip to talk about topics such as Black Autistic Adults. Autistic Adults and ADHD. Internet Safety. The Strengths and Achievements of Autistic Adults. The Successes of Autistic Women and so much more.

Today's Autistic Moment: A Podcast for Autistic Adults by An Autistic Adult.

Philip King-Lowe is the owner, producer, and host.

Today's Autistic Moment is a free podcast and safe space for Autistic Adults to use their voices to talk about the topics that affect us, without being silenced or spoken over.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/todaysautisticmoment

Twitter: @AutisticToday

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/todaysautisticmoment/

Instagram: @philipautisticmn'

YouTube Channel: @todaysautisticmoment

“What being an (autistic) parent carer has cost me...”

By David Crisp

Nothing prepares anyone for the changes in their working life, pressures on family ties, impact on your own lifestyle and wellbeing when caring for a family member. I have been caring for one family member or another for the best part of half a century, when my late father had to retire from work on ill health grounds, leaving my late mother to go out to work full time to support the family.

Later, my mother developed vascular dementia, and as the youngest child, and the only one without a family of my own at the time, I became my parents' main carer. When my mother went into residential care, I was able to devote a little more time to develop other relationships. I met, and married, my wife while still being primary carer for my father. When both of my parents died within 3 months of each other, I was finally able to put my energies into my career and my young family.

However, any respite from caring was to be short-lived, as my children began to show signs of having significant special needs and signs of autism. As a devoted family man, I was prepared for the commitment, but I wasn't prepared for the long-term effect on my life. The lack of money, the health issues and the lack of understanding from family and friends.

Lack of support from friends and family, led to my becoming increasingly socially isolated. Although I was able to continue in employment, with my wife being the main carer, the pressures of being a carer and fighting for support, caused my health to deteriorate and I was forced to retire from my job as a civil servant on health grounds.

**“What being an (autistic) parent carer has
cost me...”**

By David Crisp

After I received my autism diagnosis, I returned to my first love of working in care to better understand myself and my children. Despite the stress I faced at work with supporting adults with challenging behaviours, work has remained my respite. However, as other health issues began to surface for my daughter, I had to change employment to be closer to home.

Ultimately, this has led to my becoming a freelance autism speaker and trainer.

The State continues to take unpaid carers for granted and by withholding support in work they add to our depression, isolation and sense of helplessness, instead of recognising our worth. We carers are responsible adults who have made hard choices in which we put our own well-being second.

Battling for services is a major problem, as is the constant anxiety over the amount and quality of care available. Many unpaid carers, get little help, and many like my wife and I, haven't had a holiday, a day off, a day out or a lie in for quite a few years. This leaves us exhausted most of the time, mentally and physically, and struggling to cope financially.

As a young man, I had no idea of the impact that caring would have in my life, particularly on my ability to have a social life of my own, follow my own interests, have holidays, and be able to look after my health.

However, I take comfort in the knowledge that my wife and I are not alone and that caring for a family member is the most rewarding career of all, despite the hardships.

**“What being an (autistic) parent carer has
cost me...”**

By David Crisp

Being a carer has cost me a great deal, but now I am able to support and help others through public speaking, training, my writing and advocacy, whilst being here for my family.

David Crisp

Freelance autistic speaker, trainer & autism needs assessor
PGCert Incl (Autism Adults)PT DL (University of
Birmingham)

<https://wired4autism.co.uk>
+447572 433801

I am a National Autistic Society-trained independent autistic speaker, trainer, writer, advocate, blogger and autism needs assessor, trading as Wired4 Autism. I have 15 years' professional experience in health and social care in the UK.

My mission is to improve the lives of autistics and their families through promoting acceptance and advocacy and being the voice of those who continue to face social inequality and injustice due to autism.

I present talks and provide bespoke training, listening and support services to parents, carers, community groups, health, education and social care providers. I am also an external training contractor for a number of leading organisations in the UK and beyond.

I have delivered numerous presentations to national and international conferences and bespoke autism presentations in the UK and abroad. I have also completed autism needs assessments and 1:1 autism coaching support in the UK, Eire and the USA.

PROFESSIONAL SPOTLIGHT

BERNARD GRANT **OF WRITERLY NOURISHMENT**

<http://www.bernardgrant.com/>


BY BERNARD GRANT



Good writing is memorable, leaves an impact. Quality prose, quality content. That's what I offer. From short- and long-form copy for all types of media and channels to valuable editorial feedback and publishing guidance for prose writers, whether fiction or nonfiction.

Whether you want to polish your work or start a new project from scratch, I have the expertise to help you succeed. I can also teach you how to create neuroinclusive spaces that enable neurominorities. Visit WriterlyNourishment.com to learn how.



Mark Bailey

When David Chambers, more commonly known by his pseudonym Blindboy Boatclub - prolific podcaster and one half of the Limerick duo The Rubberbandits, shared his diagnosis of Autism on Instagram in April last year, his precis in the comments was flawless: 'I haven't received any bad news. I've just been given a new word to describe how I've been my whole life'.

Four absentminded months after the Irish satirist's announcement, I received a diagnosis of ADHD, and another five abstracted months thereafter I began treatment with a psychiatrist: a blend of Methylphenidate and my own concerted efforts of daily self-reflection, mindfulness, and CBT.

And so, as Blindboy so adeptly concluded in his Instagram comment with regards to Autism, my diagnosis and subsequent treatment for ADHD empowered me to begin confronting years and years of debilitating thoughts and behavioural & emotional responses. Responses that for over 25 years of my life I knew inherently couldn't be rational, but never had a true understanding of, nor the confidence to challenge. Responses that would later contribute to a worsening dependence on alcohol as a form of self-medication in alleviating galloping thoughts, crippling low self-esteem and emotional inner-turbulence.

Mark Bailey

And responses that would put such tension on my relationships having taken every last chance there was nowhere left to run. It was inevitable that the cat would come out the proverbial bag. Life had become exhausting. Overwhelming. Chaotic. Miserable. Meaningless. (Insert negative synonyms here etc). Subsequently, I; and those I loved most suffered, and things had to give.

Treating and understanding my ADHD and its impact (coupled with ongoing therapy, healing, and sobriety) has changed my life so prodigiously it is difficult to recognize the person I was even 3 months ago. I now have more understanding that my fluctuations of mood, restlessness and irritability can be attributed to Emotional Dysregulation. The emotional pain when facing rejection or failure throughout my life is associated with Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria. And I now truly comprehend and appreciate the importance of Cognitive Restructuring and Self-regulation - not just in relation to managing ADHD, but in rewriting my narrative holistically and healthily as I begin to navigate a better future.

Arguably the most instrumental benefit of receiving my diagnosis and subsequent treatment is centred around self-discovery as I embark on a journey in recognising and implementing my true authentic self. Letting the mask slip is empowering; enabling me to feel comfortable in expressing myself naturally and with newfound confidence. As I was sat on an early morning Northern Line train to Manchester recently, I had a euphoric moment; what I'd imagine an epiphany feels like. I am me, and I won't apologise for it anymore.

The passions I have carried with me (writing, photography, music, art etc.) but never had the confidence to declare openly, are beginning to stream out, and it's an overwhelmingly powerful experience. And while it possibly seems trivial to those who do not live with ADHD or Autism, no longer being bound, or restricted by the fear of being me is a beautiful feeling: uplifting, enriching, and strikingly pure.

Mark Bailey

As a result, I am much closer to a more peaceful mind. Living authentically permits me to embrace my vulnerabilities, nurture my humility, recognise the importance of balance, re-learn my inner dialogue, and begin rewriting narratives toward a better future. Onwards and upwards.

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

AUTIQUEST

<http://www.autiquest.com>



AutiQuest

A blue planet with arrows pointing up. The word Autiquest in pink letters

- [LinkedIn click here](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [IOS](#)
- [Android](#)

AutiQuest's passion is to support autistic individuals with the real world challenges that they face, particularly supporting them to get jobs. We made an app to support them to get over the dreaded job interview hurdle (available on the App Store and Google Play). We train companies on how to interview autistic individuals and how to support them at work. We also have job coaches available who can support autistic workers and their employers so that autistic workers can be their best self at work. Autistic individuals fully contribute to developing our products and services and we support businesses run by autistic individuals.



It's ok to build it differently!

by Stephanie Hetu

I still remember how miserable I was when I was employed, before I decided to become an entrepreneur, 20 years ago. I had to follow a strict schedule, a forced slow working pace when my mind was going a thousand miles an hour, attend tons of meetings with too many conversations to follow and go to fixed bathroom breaks... it was just not working for me.

So one day, I decided to create my own working environment. Since then, it's been a fascinating journey, to say the least. Some years have been hard, others were great.

What has been the best thing is that I have been able to integrate my special interests in my daily work, even before I found out I was autistic! So basically, I get paid to learn and teach what I'm passionate about, on my own terms. I get to choose my clients, write every day, connect with people from all over the world, while being in my own environment, at home.

Yes, I had to learn to pace myself. To take breaks. To slow down sometimes. And to move faster some days I was not really feeling like it. Yes, I invested in great coaches along the way to help me improve my business and see my blind spots.

I have stopped projects that were far ahead in the making. I have stopped partnerships that were not aligned with who I was. I think it's totally fine to build a business that is totally aligned with who you are as a neurodivergent entrepreneur. And it can be fun !

It's ok to build it differently!

by Stephanie Hetu

For the neurodivergent looking to start their own business, here are a few things I would recommend:

- Find your tribe. Don't go at it alone. Find other entrepreneurs you can talk to, brainstorm, exchange ideas, and get motivation. It can be lonely sometimes, even for those of us who love being alone!
- Keep it simple. Don't try to launch 25 things at the same time. Start small, with one project at a time.
- Do what you are passionate about, and the money will follow. Don't pick a business because you think it will make you "good money". It's very important to choose something that will allow you to evolve in the same ways your interests evolves.
- Invest strategically. No need for a complex, fancy, expensive website to get started. Start with a lean structure, build your audience, test your offer or product, and re-invest along the way in tools and help. This reduces stress by not starting out with huge debts.
- Remember to have fun! Some days it will be a lot of fun... while other days will be tough. Always ask yourself "How can I make this more fun? How can I simplify?". This will create a habit of keeping your business aligned with YOU and your own specific needs.

And remember, not everyone wants a large business with a huge team. You might be totally happy with a 1-person business, selling whatever you feel totally passionate about, while staying home with your cat, wearing your most comfortable clothes.

I know I do. And I love it.

Person-Centered Vocational Rehabilitation

by NICOLE LEBLANC

Every October is National Disability Employment awareness month. A month to focus on the value of hiring people with disabilities in competitive integrated employment. Vocational Rehabilitation is a major funder of employment services for people with disabilities. While Vocational Rehabilitation has been around since the 1920s, before the Great Depression era, progress in ending employment barriers and increasing the number of people with disabilities with jobs remains a challenge.

This is especially true for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and autism, who even 32 years after ADA Americans with Disabilities Act passed and 49 years after the passage of the Rehab Act of 1973 who still face major hurdles in achieving real jobs for real pay in our society. Even with the help of VR, according to a report more people still had unsuccessful outcomes even after getting VR services. In addition, people with autism tend to be under-served in VR system.

In the area of employment outcomes people with autism had the highest rate of unsuccessful case closures according to a 97 report by George Washington University and Council of State VR agencies in 32nd institute of rehabilitation research. One of the causes of this is the lack of extended services or long term job support that often times comes from a Medicaid waiver packages. State waitlist and strict eligibility criteria often pose barriers to adult with autism like me who do not have Intellectual Disability but have significant deficits in adaptive functioning.

Person-Centered Vocational Rehabilitation

by NICOLE LEBLANC

In area of job development VR needs to become more person-centered by supporting adults with disabilities in the following ways:

- Do not insist that people with disabilities choose career goals based on what's written in Occupational outlook books or briefs on what jobs are fastest growing over the next 10 years.
- Focus on supporting people with disabilities to explore jobs and careers beyond 4 F's of disability employment. (Food, Filth, Flowers, Filing)
- Focus on meaningful careers not just jobs.
- Restructure your ways of doing business so that people with disabilities who do not get HCBS supports can have easy access to long term job coaching even if they do not have I/DD, as in the case of many folks with autism.
- Train VR staff on how to get creative and encourage the people they serve take advantage of and use work incentives to support people with disabilities in attending college, starting their own businesses, and having careers not just jobs.
- Develop programs on self-employment, gig economy.
- Train VR staff on customer focused job development.
- Require all Vocational Rehab counselors to be trained on Person centered practices
- Invest in peer mentoring
- Launch national campaigns on ending ableism and disability stigma
- All VR staff should be trained on presuming competence, having high expectations and teach us and our families how to dream big on employment goals.
- Move away from the Place and Train model of service that sticks people with disabilities in any job.

Person-Centered Vocational Rehabilitation

by NICOLE LEBLANC

- Give \$ to Self-Advocacy organizations to facilitate peer run job clubs, and Hire Up programs that support people with disabilities who are unemployed or under-employed in overcoming
- Change the name of state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to Hireability to better reflect what they do, which is supporting people with disabilities to get jobs and increase economic independence.

Work Cited

<https://ncapps.acl.gov/>

https://www.crisoregon.org/cms/lib/OR01928264/Centricity/Domain/45/Documents/32IRI_autism.pdf

<https://www.hireabilityvt.com/>

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

PINKGOLD



Image of a logo that is pastel pink with abstract lines.

<http://www.pinkgold.uk>

- Facebook: PinkGold Ltd
- Insta: Pinkgold_ltd
- Twitter: @Pinkgold_ltd
- LinkedIn: pinkgold-ltd

PinkGold believes there is a need for powerful new ways to bring together people with different types of knowledge and different ways of knowing and making sense of the world.

In this rapidly changing world, diverse forms of knowledge have more value than ever.

PinkGold helps make this happen by getting existing knowledge out to people who need it and, where there are knowledge gaps, designing co-creation of new knowledge.

Here is How it Works!



COMPANY SPOTLIGHT



PINKGOLD



<http://www.pinkgold.uk>

Image of a logo that is pastel pink with abstract lines.

We offer a free 15 minute call to see if what we have matches what you need. If it doesn't, we can usually suggest someone else with the skills you need. To book a call, visit our [website](http://www.pinkgold.uk).

If you know something and you want to get it out to new audiences, we help you understand how to re-present that information in a way that will make sense to your target audience.

Mobilising existing knowledge and making it accessible to those who need it is a crucial aspect of knowledge management. Training and educational programs can help to increase these skills.

Sometimes we can see a need for knowledge, but it does not seem to exist. That is when we require creative and inclusive ways to co-create new knowledge. This could mean research, consultation or public involvement. We specialise in designing processes of collaboration and sharing of ideas among a diverse group of individuals, each bringing their unique perspectives and experiences.

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

NEUDICE - A PLACE FOR NEURODIVERGENCY TO SHINE

<http://www.neudice.org/>

- **Facebook: Neudice | Facebook**
- **Insta: neu_dice**
- **Twitter**
- **LinkedIn**



Image of logo with purple and yellow dots.

Launching on 17 April 2023, NeuDICE is a neurodivergent and inclusive community of entrepreneurs based in the UK, with an increasing global reach. NeuDICE provides a community, Living Lab and infrastructure support by and for neurodivergent entrepreneurs.

Community Join our facebook group for free, or contact us for what's on offer for the paid membership community.

The Living Lab There's a huge gap in knowledge about what works for us. The NeuDICE Living Lab is addressing this knowledge gap by bringing together community members and academics in a series of real time research projects. Feedback from the community is used to improve understanding. The first research programme involves Ed the Executive Duck. Ed is, in fact, a bath toy duck. All NeuDICE members receive Ed along with guidance on how other community members have been using Ed to assist with executive function challenges.

Infrastructure support Watch this space...

Come and join us!

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

EXPANSIVE EXPRESSIONS

http://



www.expansiveexpressions.com/

- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok



I am a retired licensed complex trauma therapist of 15 years and now provide premium coaching and consulting on business and mindset matters. I specialize in supporting other late-identified Autistic and ADHD founders, executives, and professionals. I am a queer, fat, gender expansive, Autistic-ADHD, dynamically disabled person experiencing the world in a white body.

I provide skilled assessments of systems and organizational design; I coach clients through mindset barriers via my Liberate Your Mindset framework; I offer business consultation through the expertise of my own neurodivergent lived-experience.

I offer 1:1 Expansive VIP Weeks, high touch group coaching through the NeuroDefiant Collective, and hold a container for community building through monthly social circle and online social space.

My business and vision are rooted in anti-racism and liberation.



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