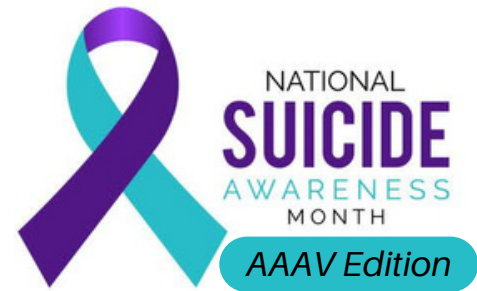


audhd
autism ∞ virtually
adhd

Contact us at: autismvirtually@gmail.com



September 2024 Newsletter

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Wordsmiths: Jennifer Connor (ADHD) and Coriander Rainbeaux (AuDHD)

WORD OF THE MONTH: KINTSUGI

Definition: The Japanese word kintsugi roughly translates to "golden joinery" and is a philosophy that suggests the value of an object is in its imperfections, not its beauty. It's also the name of a Japanese art form that involves repairing broken objects, often ceramics or glass, by joining the shards back together with gold lacquer. The process leaves a gold seam where the cracks were, and the result is a new, more refined look.



Background Information: Kintsugi encourages people to fix things instead of throwing them away, and to celebrate the flaws and missteps of life. It can also be seen as a metaphor for life, reminding us that nothing lasts forever and that we all experience difficulties and setbacks. The idea is that some things are even more beautiful for having been broken, and that challenges can make us stronger and help us rebuild.

Why it Matters: One of Kintsugi's goals is to highlight damage rather than to hide it. The art of Kintsugi is a reminder that we should bring attention to where we are hurting deeply and that by doing so - we not only become stronger for sharing those imperfect moments and parts of us - but that we become more valuable as human beings for having embraced our own imperfections.

MUSIC CORNER

AAV'S SEPTEMBER YOUTUBE PLAYLIST

Description: The playlist put together by neurodivergent folk you didn't know you needed this September. We see you. We love you. The world needs you. Stay.

Click: [YouTube Playlist](#)



IN THE SPOTLIGHT CREATOR OF THE MONTH: TRAUMA GEEK



Trauma Geek - Trauma and Neurodiversity Education

85K followers • 0 following

From their page description: Meet Janae Elizabeth (she/they), who “shares current science, personal insights, and stories from the journey as an autistic survivor.”

I have been a huge fan and avid reader of Janae’s FaceBook Page [Trauma Geek](#) for a couple of years now. As a fellow trauma geek and trauma survivor, I have learned how far reaching the threads of unresolved trauma can be in our lives and how important understanding trauma is to attaining peace and happiness.

In the simplest definition, trauma is what happens to us when we get stuck in our sympathetic nervous system stress response (fight, flight, fawn, freeze). Trauma fast facts: Trauma isn’t just something that happens to us. It is something that happens inside of our bodies and it is something that can change who we are right down to our DNA. Trauma wrecks the balance of our organs, our neurotransmitters, and our nervous systems. Over time, unresolved and repeated traumas can make us sick and chronically feeling unwell. Trauma and memory are closely connected so that just a smell or a thought can put us back into that primary deep trauma response immediately. Trauma is subjective - what is traumatic to one person may not be traumatic to another. And trauma isn’t like a bone that will mend itself over time. It is something that we have to address, process and actively heal ourselves.

As Janae knows and discusses on their page, being autistic brings its own kinds of trauma along. Often, people who are not autistic will just dismiss or not even comprehend what an autistic person’s brain perceives as traumatic. Research shows that autistics are more likely to experience trauma- such as physical, emotional and verbal abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and PTSD for common examples. What isn’t recognized enough is the additional forms neurodivergent trauma can take such as: sensory trauma, social trauma, compliance trauma, neurological trauma, and medical trauma. (Source: Unsafe, Unheard, & Misunderstood: Trauma & Neurodiversity. www.kelly-mahler.com) Janae does a great job sharing relevant and important information via the lens of their own lived experience that reaches so many fellow neurodivergent subscribers and she teaches us through research, facts, and modeling on how we can move forward and address our own traumas and why it is so important for this community more than most to take those steps. Trauma can be powerful but we can empower and heal ourselves. I encourage you to join me in becoming a trauma geek and to follow Janae’s [FaceBook page](#) as a way to learn more about trauma and to work on taking back that control through knowledge, understanding and healing.

Additional resource: AAAV ND Trauma Informed Care Workshop



Click here to access link.



AFFIRMATION:



CORIANDER IN THE SPICE RACK'S RECIPE FOR STAYIN' ALIVE CHILI



Ingredients

1 lb ground meat (usually beef, but can use chicken, turkey, pork, bison, lamb, or any combination)
 1 small onion, chopped
 (optional) 1/2 cup chopped green peppers
 1 teaspoon minced garlic
 1 can (15 oz.) kidney beans
 1 can (15 oz.) black beans
 1 can (15 oz.) cannellini beans
 1 can (14-1/2 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 can tomato paste
 2 cups water
 2 tbsp. chili powder
 Shredded Cheese to top (cheddar is great but any will work)



Instructions

Step 1

Did you drink your water today and take your medicine? Take a moment to do this first.

In a large pan or skillet, brown the meat on medium heat. (If using a meat with less fat like chicken or turkey, you might add some olive oil to the pan, and/or water so the meat doesn't burn.) Add onions, peppers and garlic; cook and stir with a spatula until onions are translucent. (Sometimes I do the onions first, adding some butter and let them caramelize. Then I add the meat, garlic and peppers. You can experiment.) Take 3 deep breaths and exhale slowly. Smell that? You're making dinner! You rock.

Step 2

Repeat after me: "I can do awesome things."

Next, add all remaining ingredients except cheese. (I don't drain or rinse the beans in my chili, but you can if you want.) Mix thoroughly with a large spoon. Cover the skillet with a lid and simmer on low heat for about 30 minutes. Stir every 5 minutes. Between stirring, stretch your arms and legs. Turn your head to the left and right.

Step 3

Serve over rice in a bowl. You can also serve it over a baked potato, sweet potato, or squash for a different treat. Sprinkle cheese over the top. Give yourself a pat on the back; you did it! Way to go. You made dinner!



IN CASE NO ONE HAS TOLD YOU LATELY...

you
(YES, YOU)
 ARE **AMAZING.**

ARE **STRONG.**

ARE **BRAVE.**

ARE **WONDERFUL.**

ARE **KIND.**

ARE **LOVED.**

ARE **WORTHY.**

THERE IS **NO ONE** LIKE YOU.

THE WORLD NEEDS **YOU.**

THE SUICIDE EPIDEMIC NO ONE IS TALKING ABOUT

According to WHO (The World Health Organization), autistic people make up 1% of the world’s population. In a recent study, a team of researchers from the University of Nottingham and the Autism Research Centre at Cambridge initially found in their study of 374 suicides that 10% of those who died by suicide had elevated autistic traits, suggesting that these people were undiagnosed autistics. But after speaking to the families, the researchers found instead that 41% of their control group showed elevated autistic traits. Their study showed that while autistics

represent only 1% of the worlds population, they make up 11% of suicides. Not to be outdone, in a 2020 study in Canada of 21,477 adults (of which 529 had ADHD), those with ADHD attempted suicide at seven times the rate of the general population, one in four of the women with ADHD had attempted suicide, and 60% of the ADHD group who attempted suicide shared histories of anxiety and depressive disorders. In the United States, a study that included all the young people that died by suicide from the first day of the Covid-19 shutdown until the last day

<u>Neurotypical</u>	<u>Neurodivergent</u>
Changes in sleep pattern, more or less.	Often no sleep pattern to change.
Spends less time doing what they love.	Spends more time doing what they love.
Less success at school, work, home.	Doing really well, having success.
Onset of depression, more anxious.	Depression & anxiety aren't new.
Less masking.	More masking.
Can seem more out of control.	Hyperfocused on control.
Takes more risks.	Hyperfocused on safety, planning.



before reopening showed that 25% of young people who died by suicide were autistic and/or had ADHD. When I say young people, let me be very clear. I personally know of autistic and ADHD children as young as five and six making statements about wanting to die and to disappear. We have lost autistic and ADHD children as young as 9 years old to suicide here in the United States. And while these two sub-sets of the neurodivergent population seem to be taking turns at “hold my beer” neurodivergent suicide edition (autistic young people 6 times more likely to die by suicide, ADHD people 2 times more likely to succeed, 66% of autistic adults have considered suicide, 1 in 4 women with ADHD have attempted suicide, and so on), another concerning truth is that these rates continue to grow for the entirety of the neurodivergent population over time instead of decreasing.

I have three questions for the reader. Here is the first: What do suicide within the neurodivergent community and ogres have in common? They are both onions. They have layers. There are a lot of complexities and layers to recognize and sort through in order for these numbers to start making sense and to find a starting point where we can begin problem solving this epidemic and saving people. In this article, we are going to address three of them.

An important first layer to understand is that there are so many undiagnosed autistic and ADHD humans out there all over the world. I am a part of the Lost Generation (1975) in the US where 99 out of 100 autistic children were not diagnosed using WHO’s standard of one in a hundred people in the world being autistic. Even today, 8 out of 10 autistic and ADHD women are not diagnosed by the age of 23. What logically follows is that there are a lot of older autistic and ADHD humans out there we have lost to suicide who may have been recognized as having presented with one of these two diagnoses after the fact (see first research study mentioned) but weren’t recognized as neurodivergent deaths by suicide at the time of their passings. This disconnect masks the heartbreakingly high number of autistic and ADHD humans that we are losing to suicide.

THE SUICIDE EPIDEMIC cont.

Another key layer we need to take into account is the mental health of the neurodivergent community as a whole. For example, 75% of autistics suffer from depression at some point, 66% of ADHD and autistic humans have anxiety disorders, ADHD children hear 20,000 more negative redirections and comments than a neurotypical child by the time they are 18 years old, neurodivergent humans suffer from trauma at a much higher rate than the general population, and so on. Just looking at these few statistics alone, it's easy to imagine why we lose so many who make up this population to suicide.

A third fundamental layer is the lack of understanding and misinformation around Autism and ADHD. As a parent, your kid gets diagnosed but you get no real understanding with that diagnosis from the medical community. There is no folder with "all you need to know" going along with that one piece of paper as you leave the psychiatrist's office. And like much of the world's people, as parents we rarely do the right things for our neurodivergent children, teens, and adults right out of the gate because we don't have the necessary insight or information on board to hit the ground running. The lack of knowledge and understanding creates a world where 85% of autistics are under or unemployed despite being 120% more productive employees, adults with ADHD struggle with long term employment and substance abuse (1 in 4 substance abuse users in the US have ADHD), autistics make up minimally 12% of the homeless population, and all the supports and accommodations for these populations fall away when they age out at 21 years old. While there are many autistic and ADHD advocates and creators making their voices heard out in the world today to share that needed lived experience and understanding, we still have a long way to go to reach the majority of the world's people in order to turn these outcomes and realities around.

Let me ask my two last questions and answer them before I wrap this hard listening topic up: How many layers does an onion have? Honestly, I don't know exactly but I do know it's a lot more than three. And finally, what can we do to unravel this complex problem and save more of our beautiful neurodivergent children, teens, and adults? The answer to this complex question is much like an ogre and an onion. There are too many layers to mention them all but here are a few of our "biggest bang for your buck" suggestions: Neurodiversity-affirming parenting, community care, advocating and messaging (i.e. there is nothing inherently wrong with you), identity-first language. You are worthy of love and space just by being yourself. Loving and accepting your child wholly — I love you just as you are. Recognizing anxiety driven behaviors and symptoms in our young children and mediating through accommodations and interventions. Educating yourself, family, friends, teachers, coaches, church leaders — and everyone who is going to be an important part of your child's life and advocating for them above all others. Reaching out to and listening to autistic and ADHD adults, children, and teens you may come across in your daily life or social media feed; by embracing them, you are embracing your autistic and ADHD loved one who will one day be that autistic or ADHD adult stranger to an entire world. Learning more about how neurodivergent humans present red flags differently when struggling with suicidal thoughts and be brave enough to ask the question, "Are you thinking about suicide?"

One of the most important truths I learned about this subject is that talking about suicide doesn't make another person suicidal. It's not talking about suicide that can be deadly. And with these alarming and growing crisis statistics among autistic, ADHD and other neurodivergent humans, this crisis is likely to hit you much closer to home than you may think.



My wish for you
is that you FIND
HAPPINESS
IN YOURSELF
BEFORE ANYTHING or ANYONE else,
THAT you realise your
WORTH and how
NECESSARY
you are on
this earth.
-emily coxhead

JOKE OF THE MONTH ONLY AN ND COULD LOVE



Two whales walk into a bar. The bartender says, "What can I get you?" The first whale says "[makes loud whale noises for an uncomfortable amount of time]". The second whale turns to the first and says "Go home Frank, you're drunk!"

Anxiety Depression, Trauma and Suicide Through the Lens of Autism.



Anxiety, Depression and Suicide through the Lens of Autism (Suicide)

This valuable resource is available along with others via our YouTube Channel.

Parents: [click here to watch AAV's video](#)

ADVICE COLUMN: DEAR CORIANDER,



(they, them)

Dear Coriander,

I heard that you were starting an "Ask Abby" kind of column for AAV's new monthly newsletter and I have a few questions for you first before I write in with more personal questions and ask you for real life advice. I want to know more about you and I want to know what makes you qualified to answer questions and give other people advice. I also would like to know why you decided that writing an advice column is something you wanted to do.

Sincerely,
Anonymous



Dear Anonymous,

Thank you so much for asking this question and giving me an opportunity to introduce myself. It's a bit scary to start this new column. I'm also excited to hear from you!

I grew up feeling like I was different from everyone else, but didn't know why. While I was a fairly good student, I struggled now and then, and especially in college. In my early 30s, I started to learn about autism and how to maneuver around my struggles. It wasn't until I was 38 that I was diagnosed with ADHD, and started taking medication. For the past 10 years, I've been learning a lot about having self-compassion when I'm faced with a frustration.

I am not a doctor or mental health professional, but I know what it is like to struggle first hand. I am passionate about offering out-of-the-box solutions for everyday issues. I am inquisitive and I love to research things. There are also a lot of wise people in my life that I can turn to when I encounter something that I don't know or understand. I can say, "I don't know."

If you need a fresh perspective, I will listen and try my best. Learning how to advocate for ourselves is a skill that has to be practiced. I look forward to hearing your questions. Ask away!

Have a question for October? Write to me at: dearcoriander@gmail.com

