

Gender Diversity and Autism

Understanding the Connection

anya gwynne and Stephanie Moeser

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AutismONTARIO



Disclaimers & Statements

General Disclaimer

- Opinions are of the presenters
- Make informed decisions

Language

- Identity-first (e.g., autistic person)
- Person-first (e.g., person with autism)

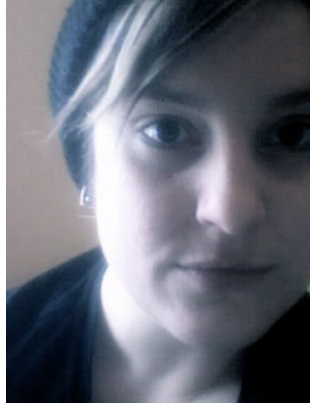
Professional Disclaimer

- Specific questions
- Additional Resources

Welcome and land acknowledgement



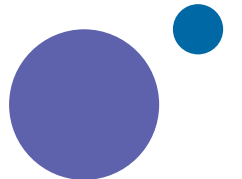
A bit about us...



- Over the last 15 years, anya (they/them) has worked with youth, service providers, educators, and the community to build inclusive spaces and provide affirming services for 2SLGBTQIA people.



- Stephanie (she/her) has worked as a clinician for 20 years supporting autistic adults, youth, and their families and educating the community about autism.



Our Focus Today...

Gender Identity and Expression

- we will use language and terminology that may be new to parents and caregivers
- we will also be using identity-first language

Masking

- we will discuss 'autistic masking' and how this may also pertain to gender identity

Support

- we will be discussing emotions that may come up for parents and families



What do we know?

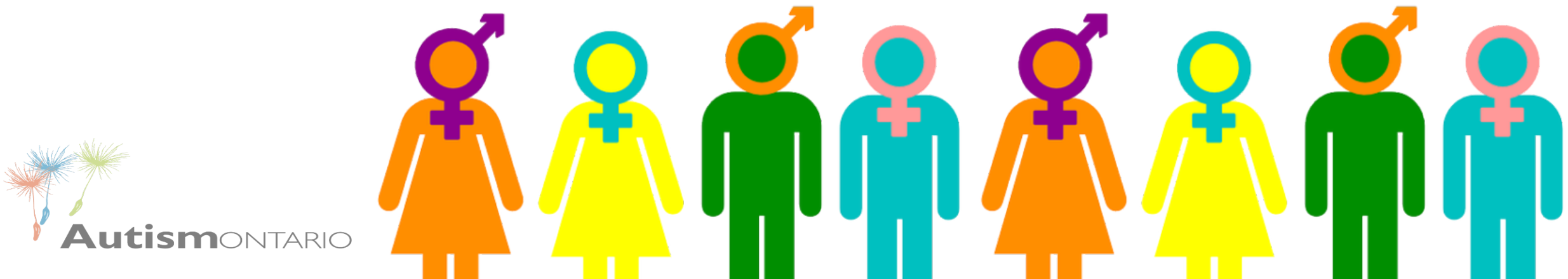
- People who don't identify as the sex they were assigned at birth are 3-6 times more likely to be autistic than cisgender people are (Warrier et., al, 2020).
- Gender-diverse folks are more likely to be autistic than cisgender people (Strang et al, 2018).

Understanding Gender

- Gender is different from Assigned Sex.
- Gender is a social construct that is politically informed and can change over time.
- Acceptance and affirmation are more important than understanding terms.
- Autism intersects with gender identity in different ways, and both can present in a variety of ways.

A person's Gender is the complex relationship between three things:

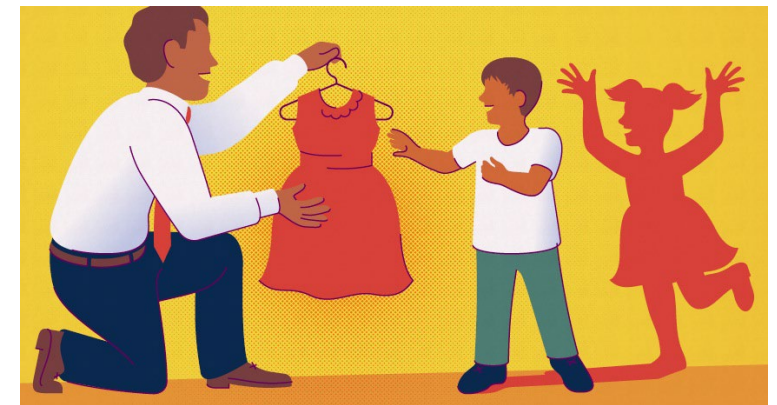
- **Gender Identity:** A person's internal sense of feeling of being a man, a woman, neither or both along a continuum. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.
- **Gender Expression:** The ways we choose to signal our gender to others.
- **Body:** Our experience with our own body, how society genders bodies, and how others interact with us based on our body.



Gender Dysphoria: The fundamental unease and dissatisfaction with one's assigned sex at birth, which can result in anxiety, restlessness, and other symptoms.



Gender Euphoria: A feeling or state of intense excitement and/or happiness regarding one's gender. This may include being gendered correctly, wearing clothes that make you feel great, etc.



Connection and Support

- How do I support my child and respect their authentic self?
- How do I cope with my own worries and find support?
- What if I make a mistake?
- What if this is a phase?
- Should I tell others?

Contact Us

Phone: 416-246-9592

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Feedback Survey

- Please answer each question in the survey
- The questions include items with:
 - A Likert scale (i.e., a 5-point scale with a range of responses)



- Selecting only one answer (single answer)
- Selecting all answers that might apply (multiple selections)
- Text boxes where you type your answer

Resources

- [Families in Transition, Central Toronto Youth Services](#)
- [Sherbourne Health Centre](#)

