



neurodiversity and autism

The Journey with Your Child

This is a supplemental parent-education module that is designed to provide support to parents or caregivers who have childrearing responsibilities for a child, or children, who are neurodivergent or who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or who may present signs of ASD.

Neurodiversity is a broad concept that is subjectively defined and refers to the differences that exist among individuals based on how an individual's brain functions. The concept of neurodiversity allows us to recognize and respect neurological differences as natural human variations. These variations can provide individuals with a unique identifier that can be similar to the differences that can be seen or felt in race, gender, or ethnicity. The concept of neurodiversity emphasizes the value of all kinds of minds and promotes acceptance and inclusion.

ASDs include a range of neurodevelopmental conditions characterized by social interaction, communication, and behavior challenges. The term "spectrum" is used because the condition manifests uniquely in each individual and has a wide range of symptoms and severity levels. Understanding ASD involves grasping its multifaceted nature—from its clinical definitions to its wide range of characteristics. Whether you have a neurodivergent child, or a child who has been diagnosed with ASD, or you'd like to learn more about the diagnosis, this program can help to expand your knowledge.



This supplemental module builds on information and methods that are discussed in the four universal Thrive parenting programs – *Take Root, Sprout, Grow, Branch Out* – so it is recommended that you participate in the age-appropriate universal Thrive parenting program prior to using this supplemental module.



In this module, you will learn how to do the following:



Celebrate neurodiversity, and identify how it can strengthen individuals, families, and communities.



Value strengths-based strategies to support child development across various domains.



Gain a deep understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Develop communication techniques that are tailored to a child's unique needs.



Facilitate social skills using innovative, interest-based methods.



Compile information on implementing positive behavior supports and interventions.



Build an understanding of medical, educational, and community systems of support.



Advocate for awareness and understanding of neurodiverse differences, and effectively provide appropriate support as necessary.



Build personal- and community-support systems.



Recognize the importance of, and strategies for, parental self-care and resilience.

For more information about this supplemental module, visit:

<https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental>