

neurodiversity and autism

The Journey with Your Child

Parent Workbook and Syllabus

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension

This is an extension of a hybrid implementation of one of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs that should be delivered to an existing group.



Summary of Training

Use this summary to help you track your completion times for sessions and meeting dates, times, and location(s).

Thrive Initiative Course Registration

Due Date	
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Introduction Meeting *(Meeting: 20 min/Homework)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Sessions 1, 2, and 3
Due Date	

Supplemental Module Meeting 1: Discussion of Sessions 1, 2, and 3 *(Meeting: 60 minutes/Homework)*

Date	
Time	
Homework	Complete Sessions 4, 5, 6,7, and the Wrap-Up
Due Date	

Supplemental Module Meeting 2: Discussion of Sessions 4, 5, 6,7, and the Module's Wrap-Up *(Meeting: 60 minutes)*

Date	
Time	
Homework (optional)	Visit the Thrive Initiative's website for additional parenting resources: https://thrive.psu.edu

Supplemental Module Registration

Complete these steps prior to delivery of the Supplemental Module Introduction (added to the last universal parenting program meeting).

Access Course in Your Thrive Initiative Account

- Use this link to access the Thrive Initiative’s website: <https://thrive.psu.edu/>.
- Navigate to and select “Modules.”
- Select “Supplemental Modules” in the drop-down menu.
- Identify the module on ***Neurodiversity and Autism: The Journey with Your Child***, and select the “Learn More” button.
- A new web page will open. Select the blue button that reads “Get this course.”
- A pop-up box will ask you to Login or Sign up. Since you have an existing account, select the “Login” button.
- Enter your username or email, and select the blue “Login” button.
- You will be directed to the supplemental module on ***Neurodiversity and Autism: The Journey with Your Child***. Select the blue “Go to Course” button to start the online supplemental module.

If you have any difficulty accessing the Thrive Initiative supplemental module, we would be happy to assist you!



The Thrive Initiative Team can be emailed at thrive@psu.edu.



Phone inquiries can be directed to **1.877.382.9185**.

Introduction Meeting



Introduction Meeting *20 minutes*
Homework

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

- Review the supplemental module welcome materials provided by your facilitator.
- At the first meeting, your facilitator will provide an overview of the program and ensure you have access to the Thrive Initiative website and supplemental module.

Step 2: Complete Homework [For Supplemental Module Meeting 1]

Please complete the following activities in preparation for the next meeting:

- _____ Complete Session One: Introduction
- _____ Complete Session Two: What is Neurodiversity?
- _____ Complete Session Three: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- _____ Download and review the materials mentioned from the Parent Toolkit resources in the supplemental module.
- _____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Sessions 1, 2, and 3 during the next meeting by answering the questions in *Step 3: Prepare Community-Building Activities/Discussion Questions*. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 4.

Step 3: Prepare Community-Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Write your responses in the blue boxes on the next few pages as you prepare for the *next meeting*. During the *Supplemental Module Meeting 1* group discussion, record your notes in the magenta boxes.

As you complete the questions and activities, recognize that understanding and implementing the information we are learning will not happen immediately. You will need to use the strategies and skills you have learned throughout **Neurodiversity and Autism: The Journey with Your Child** consistently and make them part of your everyday life in order to see desired changes in your child's or your reactions or behaviors. Keep practicing what you have learned!

Each time you meet with the other program participants as a group, share and celebrate the small, short-term, positive changes you see in your interactions with your child. Also, consider what the long-term benefits may be for your family as you continue to use the skills and strategies you have learned and are learning in the **Neurodiversity and Autism: The Journey with Your Child** module.



Session One: Introduction Interaction and Discussion Questions

- A. What challenges or successes are you currently experiencing while you are parenting a child with neurodivergence or ASD or a child who is exhibiting signs of ASD?
- B. What is one goal you hope to achieve by completing this supplemental module?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Session Two: What is Neurodiversity?

What is Neurodiversity?: Interaction and Discussion Questions

Session 2 defined neurodivergence and described the importance of identifying strengths and embracing the differences of those who are neurodivergent.

- A. In what ways have you embraced your child's neurodivergence?
- B. What aspects of your child's neurodivergence are you struggling to accept or understand?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Strengths-Based Support: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module discussed how using strengths-based tools to support children who are neurodivergent promotes positive outcomes. The reflection activity encouraged you to complete one of two strengths-based assessment tools for your child and again with your child.

- A. What tool did you use to complete the assessment? What did you learn about your child?
- B. If you were able to complete the assessment with your child, what did your child learn about himself or herself?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Understanding Neurodiverse Strengths: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module outlined 10 benefits of embracing and understanding neurodivergence, such as having diverse perspectives, enhanced creativity and attention to detail, and specialized skills and interests. In the reflection, you were encouraged to think about your child's individual traits.

- A. What makes your child unique?
- B. In what ways does your child use his or her unique traits to contribute to others and/or the community?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Session Three: Autism Spectrum Disorder Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module defined ASD and explained how the condition exists on a spectrum. The module also discussed how pediatricians use specific tools and assessments to screen for ASD.

A. What has been your family's experience with screenings and evaluations for your child?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



ASD Terminology and Concepts: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module broke down some of the broader terminology and concepts that can be part of or associated with autism, such as Sensory Processing Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities, and Hyperlexia.

- A. What concepts and terms shared in the module do you recognize in your child? For example, do you notice your child experiencing restricted patterns of interest in certain subjects or activities or your child having difficulty communicating thoughts, needs, or emotions?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



? ASD Myths and Misconceptions: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module dispelled 10 myths and misconceptions related to ASD.

- A. Prior to your child's diagnosis, what ASD-related myths or misconceptions did you believe to be true?
- B. What ASD-related myths or misconceptions do you encounter with others in your life or your child's life?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Challenges and Sensory Sensitivities: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module discussed some of the challenges that can impact the daily life of a child diagnosed with ASD. In the reflection, you were encouraged to write down a skill or task that your child needs support with or has not mastered. Then, you were asked to rewrite that same sentence and add the word “yet” to the end of the sentence.

- A. What skill or task did you write down?
- B. How did you feel after adding the word “yet” to the sentence?

Reflection:

Group discussion notes



Embrace a Growth Mindset: Interaction and Discussion Questions

Modeling growth mindset behaviors and encouraging a growth mindset in your child can help your child alter his or her approach to tasks and situations from, “I can’t do it” to “I can’t do it yet.” In the module, you were introduced to strategies you can use to help your child develop a growth mindset.

- A. What strategies have you tried with your child to help your child develop a growth mindset?
- B. How did your child respond to the strategy?
- C. Parents are models for their children. What strategies have you tried, or would you like to try, for yourself to foster your own growth mindset?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Interventions: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module described some of the interventions that are commonly used to support children with ASD, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), Positive Behavior Support (PBS), and social-skills training.


- A. What interventions have you used with your child? What has that experience been like for you and your child?
- B. Are there other interventions—examples shared in the module—that you would like to try to use with your child?

Reflection:

Group discussion notes



Step 4: Prepare Additional Questions for Supplemental Module Meeting 1

 Note any additional questions you may have for the group or the facilitator.

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*

Supplemental Module Meeting 1



Discussion of Sessions 1, 2, and 3 *60 minutes*

Homework

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Return to Introduction Meeting, *Step 3: Prepare Community-Building Activities/Discussion Questions* to discuss the activities and questions on the previous pages as a group. If new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting, note them in the magenta boxes under your prior homework responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after the Introduction Meeting.

Step 2: Complete Homework [For Supplemental Module Meeting 2]

Please complete the following activities in preparation for the next meeting:

- _____ Complete Session Four: Parenting a Neurodivergent Child
- _____ Complete Session Five: Building a Supportive Community
- _____ Complete Session Six: Prioritizing Your Well-Being
- _____ Complete Session Seven: Conclusion
- _____ Download and review materials from the Parent Toolkit resources in the supplemental module.
- _____ Prepare to discuss the topics addressed in Sessions 4, 5, 6,7, and the Wrap-Up during the next meeting by answering the questions in *Step 3: Prepare Community- Building Activities/Discussion Questions*. If you have any questions you would like to ask during the discussion, note them in Step 4.

Step 3: Prepare Community-Building Activities/Discussion Questions

Write your responses in the blue boxes on the next few pages as you prepare for the *next meeting*. During the *Supplemental Module Meeting 2* group discussion, record your notes in the magenta boxes.



Session Four: Parenting a Neurodivergent Child **Balanced Parenting: Interaction and Discussion Questions**

This session discussed the parenting style, balanced parenting, which is also referred to as authoritative parenting, as a form of parenting that is extremely beneficial for children who have been diagnosed with ASD. The module also described some of the ways in which parents can demonstrate balanced parenting in their interactions with their children.

- A. What balanced parenting approaches are you currently using in your interactions with your child?
- B. What balanced parenting approaches do you want to try to use, or try to use more often, in your interactions with your child?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Connecting with Your Child: Interaction and Discussion Questions

This session outlined eight steps to help you discover your child's interests and skills and foster a more meaningful connection. Further, there are two resources, *Developing a Family Media Plan and Morning and Bedtime Routine Chart*, in the Parent Toolkit Resource that parents may find helpful to use with their child.

- A. Which of the steps outlined in the module do you feel are easiest for you to incorporate into your interactions with your child?
- B. Which of the steps do you find more challenging and why?
- C. Review one, or both, of the resources in the Parent Toolkit and try using one of the resources with your child. Use the space below to reflect on your experience using the resource with your child.

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



? Neurodivergence and Communication: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module introduced a concept called Theory of Mind (i.e., the ability to understand that others have different thoughts, feelings, and beliefs) and explained two critical points to help parents better understand their child's behavior.

- A. How has your understanding of the concept of Theory of Mind helped you better understand your child's behavior?
- B. With this understanding, how have you adjusted, or can you adjust, how you provide guidance or instruction to your child?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Communication Challenges for Children with Social Thinking Differences & Supporting Social Communication in Neurodivergent Children: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module listed some of the common communication-related challenges that children with ASD experience and shared communication-boosting strategies, such as interacting with other children and adults, parental modeling, role-playing, video-modeling, and reading social stories.

- A. What communication-related challenges have you seen your child experience?
- B. How do those challenges affect your child?
- C. What kinds of strategies have you used to practice communication skills with your child?
- D. Are there new strategies you learned in the module that you would like to try with your child? How do you think your child will respond?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Programs for Social-Skill Development: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module described and listed numerous resources, such as websites, apps, and books, that can provide social-skill development support to parents and their children. In the reflection, you were encouraged to explore one or more of the resources shared in the module and develop a plan to try an activity with your child.

- A. What activities did you find interesting and would you like to try with your child?
- B. If you were able to try an activity with your child, describe that experience in the space below.

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*




? Talking to Your Child about His or Her Neurodivergence: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module provided tips to help you begin or continue to have conversations with your child about his or her neurodivergence.

- A. What conversations have you had, or do you plan to have, with your child about his or her neurodivergence?
- B. Which tips have you found beneficial in helping you talk about neurodivergence with your child?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Session Five: Building a Supportive Community **Promoting Support in Your Community: Interaction and Discussion Questions**

Promoting a supportive community means ensuring everyone feels welcome and comfortable regardless of their neurological differences. The module shared strategies to help you promote a supportive community.

- A. In what ways do you/your child feel included, accepted, and involved in your community?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



? Supportive Environments: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module provided examples of initiatives communities have implemented to help develop a more autism-friendly atmosphere. In the reflection activity, you were encouraged to think about how you, or the other adults in your child's life, can recognize and promote your child's strengths within your child's environment.

A. What ideas did you come up with?

You were also encouraged to reflect on an example in which you saw your child, or someone with neurodiversity, excel and consider how his or her strengths were highlighted.

B. What did you observe about the child in that example?

C. What did you observe about the child's environment?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:



Advocating for Your Child: Interaction and Discussion Questions

The module lists steps parents can take to advocate for and help their child receive necessary support and resources. In addition, a resource, *Advocating for Your Child* (available in the Parent Toolkit), outlines a helpful mnemonic—HEART—to help you remember the important steps for advocating for your child.

- A. In what ways have you advocated for your child?
- B. Are there areas of your child's life where you plan to use the strategies and steps outlined in this module to advocate for your child? What do you plan to use?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



? Session Six: Prioritizing Your Well-Being
Strategies for Managing Stress and Promoting Well-Being: Interaction and Discussion Questions

When parents and caregivers take care of themselves, these actions can have a positive effect on their children and family. The module lists several effective strategies for managing stress and promoting well-being. The module's Parent Toolkit provided additional resources you can use to help you prioritize and find ideas to support your well-being.

The reflection activity in the module encouraged you to select one self-care activity that you enjoy doing and commit to engaging in that activity for the week. You also had the opportunity to participate in a visualization technique and a breathing technique as part of the module.

A. How did these activities make you feel?

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:




? Developing a Supportive Network: Interaction and Discussion Questions

You can grow and foster your supportive network by connecting with others and building relationships through activities you enjoy, such as hobbies, sports, or volunteering. In the reflection activity, you were encouraged to think about an activity you enjoy and one that you could ask others to join you in doing, such as walking or scrapbooking. You were also encouraged to think about an activity you would like to try that may offer opportunities for you to connect with others.

- A. What activity, or activities, did you brainstorm?
- B. Have you tried a new activity, or has anyone tried an activity that involves asking someone to join in that activity? If so, how was that experience?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Creating Family Traditions and Rituals: Interaction and Discussion Questions

Family traditions and rituals, such as holiday celebrations, weekly movie nights, or Sunday dinners, help strengthen bonds, create a sense of belonging, and build lasting memories.

- A. What family traditions or rituals does your family currently participate in, or what new family traditions or rituals do you want to establish for your family?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Wrap-Up: Module Discussion Summary Questions

- A. Which topic discussed in the supplemental module was the most beneficial to you as a parent? Why?
- B. What strategies or skills did you learn in the supplemental module that will help you achieve the goals you have for you, your child, and/or your family?
- C. What has changed in your interactions with your child or family since before completing the supplemental module?
- D. Have you noticed a difference in the way your child responds to your parenting?

Reflection:

 *Group discussion notes:*



Step 4: Prepare Additional Questions for Supplemental Module Meeting 2



Note any additional questions you may have for the group or the facilitator.

Reflection:



Group discussion notes:

Supplemental Module Meeting 2



**Discussion of Sessions 4, 5, 6, 7, and
Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing**

60 minutes

Homework

None

Date	
Time	
Link/Location	



Step 1: Attend Meeting

Return to Supplemental Meeting 1, *Step 3: Prepare Community-Building Activities/Discussion Questions*, to discuss the activities and questions on the previous pages as a group. If new ideas are mentioned during the group meeting, note them in the magenta boxes under your prior homework responses.



To engage in discussion, go back to the homework you completed after Supplemental Module Meeting 1.

Step 2: Complete Homework [optional]

Consider registering for additional Thrive Initiative universal parenting programs or supplemental modules.

- Information about the Thrive Initiative universal parenting programs can be accessed at <https://thrive.psu.edu/>.
- Supplemental modules can be accessed at <https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental/>.

Visit the Thrive Initiative website at <https://thrive.psu.edu> to access additional resources and materials.

