

# Unmasked:

## *Identifying Autistic Traits in Kinky Clients*

by Dr. Kade Sharp, PhD, LICSW, RPT-S, CMHS





# ◆ ——— **Table of contents** ——— ◆

**01**

## **Introduction**

Who, why, and what.

**02**

## **Screening**

From intake and moving forward.

**03**

## **Diagnosing**

Strengths-based criteria (The 5 S Framework.)

**04**

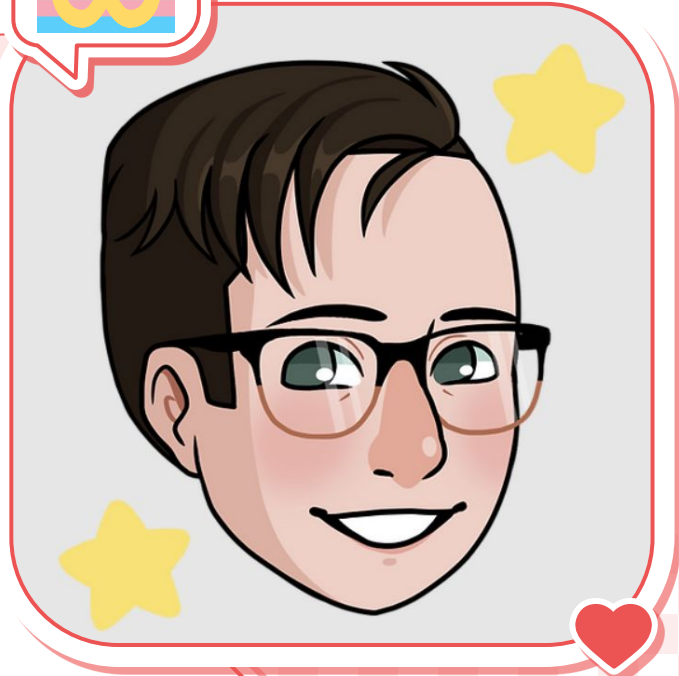
## **Resources**

Assessments, tools, my dissertation, etc.

**05**

## **Q&A**

How can I support you?



## Who am I?

- White fat autistic trans/genderqueer queer/demi poly person
  - Primarily left of the slash
  - Diagnosed later in life
- PhD in Clinical Sexology
- Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (WA)
  - Supervisor credential
- Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor™
- Child Mental Health Specialist
- Practicing virtually & in Richland, WA



**1 in 36**

children in the United States are autistic...



# Screening

## Mental health

- ADHD
- Depression
  - Prenatal
- Anxiety
- OCD
- Disordered eating
- Learning challenges
- Substance use



## Physical health

- Sleep
- Gastric challenges
- Hypermobility
  - hEDS
- Circulation
  - POTS, blood pressure
- Allergies

# Kink & Sex Stats

## Autistic folks...

- were the majority in a puppy play community
- are more likely to be into S&M
- are more likely to be exhibitionists or enjoy public play
- are more interested in sex when it's interest-driven
- are more likely to enjoy "defeat to victory" scenarios in kink
- are more likely to be asexual
- tend to masturbate more often than allistic people





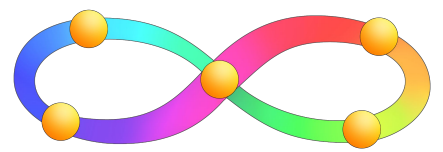
# The 5 S Framework

**01.**

**Social\***

**Sensory**

**02.**



**03.**

**Stimming**

**04.**

**Special Interests**

**05.**

**Structure**

# Social

- *Atypical communication preferences*
- *Echolalia and references*
- *Literal and/or direct language*
- Non-linear conversational path
- *"Info-dumping"*
- Gestalt learning style
- *"Scripting"*
- *Differences in body language*
- *Differences in play (parallel play)*
- *Challenges with maintaining relationships*
- *"Masking"*
- Hyperlexia

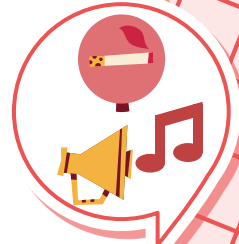




# Stimming

- *Repetitive movements (self, objects or others)*
- Repetitive thoughts
- *Repetitive speech, sounds, tones, etc.*
- *Organizing things and lining up objects*

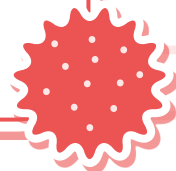
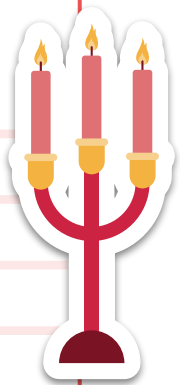
- ★ Stimming promotes autistic well-being, as it's a way to regulate, cope, express emotions, and connect!



# Sensory



- *Hypersensitivities*
    - Often leads to avoiding certain sensations
  - *Hyposensitivities*
    - Often leads to seeking certain sensations
  - From the DSM-5: “apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement.”
- ★ It can be very difficult to regulate mood and behaviors if sensory needs aren't being met



# Sensory Processing Checklists can help!



## Sensory Checklist for Identification & Referral Only

### Signs of Proprioceptive Dysfunction:

**Proprioceptive Sense:** input from the muscles and joints about body position, weight, pressure, stretch, movement, and changes in position in space.

#### **1. Sensory Seeking Behaviors:**

- seeks out jumping, bumping, and crashing activities
- kicks his/her feet on floor or chair while sitting at desk/table
- bites or sucks on fingers and/or frequently cracks his/her knuckles
- prefers clothes (and belts, hoods, shoelaces) to be as tight as possible
- loves/seekes out "squishing" activities
- enjoys bear hugs; loves to be wrapped in many or weighted blankets
- excessive banging on/with toys and objects
- loves "roughhousing" and tackling/wrestling games

# Sensory Processing Checklists can help!



## SENSORY-MOTOR PREFERENCE CHECKLIST (FOR ADULTS)

Directions: This checklist was developed to help adults recognize what strategies their own nervous systems employ to attain appropriate state of alertness. Mark the items below that you use to increase (↑) or to decrease (↓) your state of alertness. You might mark both (↑↓) on some items. Others you might not use at all.

### SOMETHING IN YOUR MOUTH (ORAL MOTOR INPUT)

- drink a milk shake
- suck on hard candy
- crunch or suck on ice pieces
- tongue on cheek movements
- “chew” on pencil / pen
- chew on coffee swizzle sticks
- take slow deep breaths
- suck, lick, bite on your lips or the inside of your cheeks
- drink carbonated drink
- eat a cold popsicle
- eat a rattle
- chew gum
- crunch on nuts / pretzels / chips
- bite on nails / cuticle
- eat popcorn / cut up vegetables
- eat chips and a spicy dip
- smoke cigarettes
- chew on buttons, sweatshirt strings or collars
- whistle while you work
- drink coffee / tea (caffeinated)
- drink hot cocoa or warm milk
- other:

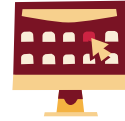
# Structure



- Appreciates *routine* (particularly self-appointed)
- Expectation sensitivity
- *Consistent “sameness” and predictability*
- Challenges with transitioning between activities/locations/etc.
  
- ★ Reduces feelings of anxiety (and chaos) which reduces dysregulation
- ★ Allows for trust to be built and they aren't in a hypervigilant state due to the unknown

# Special Interests

- *Intensely focused interest* on certain topics
  - Can change over time or be lifelong
  - Collections relating to the interest are common
- *Affect often changes* when engaging in or talking about these interests
- ★ Special interests can lead to “flow states” and be meditative
- ★ Interests are part of autistic identity, well-being, and autistic culture!
- ★ 75-95% of autistic people have special interests



# Assessment Tools



## RAADS-R

Total score of 65 or higher is the clinical threshold.

[LINK](#)



## CAT-Q

The higher the score, the more possible distress from masking.

[LINK](#)



## AQ-10

Quick 10 question screener. (Doesn't find everyone!)

[LINK](#)



# Resources

- [A Kink in the Spectrum & slides](#)
- [Neurokink](#)
- Bex Talks Sex [Yes/No/Maybe checklist](#)
- [Dr Faith G Harper's](#) publications on sex, kink, mental health, etc.
- [Dr Emily Nagoski's](#) publications on sex
- [Dr Katie Munday's](#) research and advocacy
- Riley Morgan's [late dx autistic resources](#)
- [The Autistic Culture Podcast](#)



# Thanks!

*Do you have any questions?*

[hello@kadesharp.com](mailto:hello@kadesharp.com)

[kadesharp.com](http://kadesharp.com)

[neurokink.org](http://neurokink.org)

[@kadesharp](#) on Venmo

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo, including icons by Flaticon and infographics & images by Freepik

