



Lost in Translation: What's Missing in the Strengths-Based Approach for Autistic Individuals

A presentation by Angela (AJ) Locashio on September 21, 2023

0:01

Thank you so much. I am excited to be here today. That was a beautiful introduction. Thank you all for joining me today to talk about the missing components of most strengths-based approaches in the workplace.

0:14

I am AJ Locashio, a gender queer woman, with straight, medium length, black hair with a gray streak in front. I am wearing a nose ring in my

0:25

Left nostril. Glasses that are blue on top of the frame and black on the bottom and a charcoal gray cowl neck sleeveless shirt. I have tattoos across my chest and on both arms.

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Before I go further, I do want to say you didn't really mess up the name. That happened because whenever I tell somebody how to pronounce my name, I say Locashio, like pistachio. So AJ Pistachio, works just fine. Before we get started, I would like to note that everything we discuss today is in reference to autistics in the workplace.

1:04

And also, much of this applies to everyone that you interact with in a variety of settings. When you put practices in place that support autistic workers' success, you will see that these same practices generally facilitate the success of your non-autistic staff, as well.

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Also, you can approach this webinar from a variety of spaces, whether you are autistic or not, and whether you are an employer, an employee, a caregiver, or identify in some other manner. What we discuss today can be applied to many areas of your life, both personally and professionally.

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So, for those of you who process, as time goes along, please feel free to use the chat to do so. For those who get distracted, by an active chat, please feel free to ignore the chat and engage in the Q&A that we will have at the end. And throughout the webinar, go ahead and use sticky notes, or notebooks, or whatever other method of processing information that you have found to work best for you.

2:11

So I know that Kat gave a wonderful introduction to me. I am going to expand on that just a little bit.

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Can I have control of the slides? It is not moving along for me.

2:27

You haven't, you just need to click your mouse. So click the mouse once. Yep.

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I am clicking. It's not bringing up the thing at the bottom. That tells me that I can advance. Hang on one second. I'll take it away and then I'll give it back to you again.

2:48

Let's try it again.

2:53

Nope, it is not doing it, and my mouse is working because I'm able to click on everything else. Do you mind if I advance your slides for you. Yep. Advance my slides. That's awesome.

3:05

So next slide, please, OK.

3:21

one second, AJ ...

3:25

No worries, this happens, y'all sometimes.

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We're working with technology, and technology sometimes works, and sometimes we have little glitches and we just roll with it. You try it again, OK, it looks like I still don't have the thing, oh, maybe, here we go.

3:46

Thank you all for your patience with us as we work out these little issues here, perfect. gorgeous. OK, so, here's our agenda for today. We are doing the introduction now. I will briefly go over autism and intersectionality to make sure that we are understanding those from a variety of perspectives. And then we will get into what the strengths-based approach is the benefits of that approach. What's missing? What people have forgotten is actually part of that. And then, what that really looks like. Some practical application, to put that in there, the Q and A, and then the closing.

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And, so, again, a little bit about me here.

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I am your ha, let's see, late, diagnosed, autistic person, I was not diagnosed with that until my forties. So although I had my ADHD diagnosis 25 years ago, I did not get my autism diagnosis until more recently as in the last 5 to 10 years, people have started to understand autism differently.

5:04

So although I, myself have 25 years plus experience in health care education and leadership. My own understanding of autism has changed over time, and I implore you to please keep your mind open as we talk about this today as well. Because there may be some changes that you were unaware of that you can share with others and there may be something that you want to add and put into the question section yourself to help other people understand as well for other folks who are joining who have information as well.

5:42

So you see in yellow there, there are multiple intersections that I put, and I'm going to address those a little bit later, that I am neuro divergent, white gender, queer, queer, fat, nerd, gamer, military spouse, mom, college educated, and entrepreneur. I'm going to come more into these a little bit later, but the point is, as we go through here to remember that these intersections and these different identities that I hold, they matter and they affect my experience in every environment, including this one today and that you also have intersections that affect you and your experience in every environment as well, including this one today.

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So let's go ahead and look at some definitions. While most of you are familiar with autism, it is possible that some of you are not. And it is also possible that some of you have misinformation about autism, so I want to start us off with a working definition.

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And, um, then add to it a little bit to facilitate understanding from multiple perspectives. So, medically autism is a neurological condition. It to be formally diagnosed autistic one needs to meet certain criteria based on psychological assessment, done by a professional who has been trained in these assessments.

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And I will say that these assessments, these assessments inherently do include bias as well and are changing over time as we're gaining new understanding.

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These assessments also differ between countries, but generally include how we interact, communicate, learn, and behave. Let's take a really quick look at Duke University's short video on autism.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control, Autism affects an estimated one in fifty-four children in the United States. You've probably heard a lot of thoughts and ideas about autism, but here's an overview of what we know. Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD, is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects a person's social and communication abilities. Persons with ASD also have areas of strong interest and sometimes have repetitive behavior and sensory sensitivities. Autism is sometimes associated with strengths in the areas of visual memory, music, art, math, and science. But each person with ASD is unique. Autism is a spectrum disorder and varies significantly from person to person.

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Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and some live entirely independently. Changes in brain development associated with autism begin during the prenatal period. These changes are associated with differences in genetics. It is possible to diagnose ASD when a child is between 18 and 24 months of age. Early behavioral intervention helps children with

autism learn to communicate and socially interact, and has a significant impact on long term outcome. Support for learning social and communication skills can be helpful throughout adolescence and adulthood. People with autism sometimes have other conditions, such as higher rates of sleep disorders, ADHD, anxiety, depression, and gastrointestinal issues. Treating these co-occurring conditions can make a big difference. As adults, people on the autism spectrum can become employed and contribute in important ways to society. The world is a better place if the qualities of people who are neurodiverse are accepted and valued.

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All right, so, um, looking at that, notice that they said autism spectrum disorder.

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Now, this has, this is one of those changes that has happened. Not everybody still uses the term disorder. A lot of us use autism spectrum condition.

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Or, as you noted in the, as you may have noted in the video, it said autism, and it just left it at that, and did not put the term disorder or condition in there, at all.

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I am, again, not able to access the arrows at the bottom, or to advance the slides.

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While we're getting that fixed up, I'm gonna go ahead and move forward. Autism is more than a medical diagnosis condition or a problem that needs to be fixed. It is important to remember, while some of us have symptoms that we would happily get rid of, and we may even take medication or work with specialists to minimize effects of some of the symptoms. Many autistics, including myself are proud of who we are. And, we hold our identity close. We like ourselves, and we want to be accepted for who we are.

11:21

Um, and to better understand this, let's look at autism from a different perspective. Oftentimes, we look at it through this linear spectrum. Like you see here on the screen, where it's just a line, and it's different colors, and we have what is considered mild or a term that we, we do not like the term mild, we do not necessarily like the term high functioning.

11:48

A lot of people would say that, and it is still regularly used, but not by the autistic community. And then on the other side of the line, you would have your, what used to be referred to as low functioning, or severe autism. We have moved away from that. We really want to get away from that linear thinking.

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And think about this more as a, as a round, as a, as a circle, if you will.

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So we have all different levels of things that human beings in general need, have different skills with and need different levels of support.

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So rather than saying that somebody has mild autism or severe autism, or is high functioning or low functioning, we'd like to look at it from a space of support needs.

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And if you look on this chart, you notice that we have different spokes of a wheel. And our support needs are based on the spoke on that wheel and what is happening at any given time, in the environment that we are in, and it can change.

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So, for example, communication is something that I may not need a lot of support with most of the time.

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However, in certain contexts, perhaps I am feeling very disregulated, or I'm upset, or something has happened. I may actually go nonspeaking and need somebody to support me in that and perhaps have to go to using texting or writing because I am not able to say or verbalize what I need.

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I may even use only signals to help somebody in my environment understand what I need.

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So, again, we need to move away from that linear thinking and start thinking more in this as a wheel and as support needs and as context specific.

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So this is really one of those things that we look at and we care about intersectionality, and that's where the intersectionality piece is going to come in. I mentioned, if I am feeling very upset about something, then my communication support needs may change.

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So I am a fat, queer, gender queer person.

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Let's say that somebody in my environment makes a joke about my appearance and they call me a name. Or they make some kind of a reference that diminishes who I am as a human being.

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That may upset me. And I may need some support in regulating some emotions.

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I may even become nonspeaking in that aspect.

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So this is why intersectionality is important and why we're taking a look at that today. And remembering that that is a huge part of this strengths-based approach that we're looking at.

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So let's look at intersectionality and what that actually means.

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Intersectionality, we all have these different things that make us who we are, right, things like gender, skin color, how much money we make, where we work, the language we speak.

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All of these different parts come together to make a whole person, so that's what we're talking about when we say intersectionality, and we look at how each of those individual parts gives us privilege or takes away from us, takes access to certain resources, or oppresses us because of one of those one or more of those identities.

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So Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term Intersectionality, and she said Intersectionality is a lens through which we can see where power comes and halides.

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It is where it interlocks and intersects.

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It's not simply that there's a race problem, a gender problem, a class, or queer problem.

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Many times, that framework, thinking of it in each of those individualized aspects, instead of being intersected aspects of who we are, that tends to erase somebody who is subject to multiple of these intersections. Let's take a quick visual look at what intersectionality is.

16:41

Intersectionality is a term we often hear, but what does it mean? Kimberly Crenshaw who coined the term in 1989, explains it with a metaphor: "Consider an intersection made up of many roads. The roads are the structures of race, gender, gender, identity, class, sexuality, disability. And the traffic running through those roads are the practices and policies that discriminate against people. Now, if an accident happens, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions, and sometimes from all of them. So if a black women is harmed, because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from discrimination from any or all directions."

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All right, so the strengths-based approach is "supposed" to take all of that into consideration.

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However, often, it misses out. The strengths based approach,

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Looks like this: We look at a person and someone's strengths rather than just looking at tasks or skills that they are good at because they've done the "Clifton Strengths Assessment" or the "Bias Strengths Finder", or one of those many other assessments that says, "Let's see what your personality is and, and what you're good at, and what you need support with". Oftentimes, it stops there, which is that circle here, in the middle, that says, "the individual", how we think, skills, and knowledge, and maybe networks that we're in.

18:26

But it goes further than that.

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Our strengths and the challenges that we face are based on internal things, like our age, our ethnicity, physical or mental abilities. External, such as social status, the level of education that we have had access to, our interests and appearance, where we are located.

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Organizational: which is, what field are we in? How long have we been there? What department do we work in, and what title do we hold? And the era in which we live: what events have happened historically, and what is happening now? Culturally, politically,

19:08

And in the world around us. When we look at the strengths based approach, it's important that organizations rethink to embrace intersectionality at the organizational, as well as research level, so that the systemic structural and policy processes are responsive and inclusive to all people involved in the organization, whether they are employers, employees, clients, or the surrounding community.

19:41

So, we're gonna go back, I told you I would come back to these specific intersections that are mine. I'm neurodivergent because I am ADHD, I am autistic, I have complex PTSD, and I have migraines. All of those play into who I am and how I experience the world around me.

20:03

I'm also white, I am a gender queer woman.

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I'm queer, fat, a nerd, a gamer, a USMC military spouse, a divorced single parent mom who has been re-married to become this military spouse. The first in my family to be college educated, I am an entrepreneur.

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Previously, I have been homeless, previously I have been an addict, all of these come into play

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When I am looking at myself, my community and any organization in which I'm involved.

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Do I know what my intersections are?

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How about you?

20:45

Do you know what your intersections are?

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I ask, " am I able to advocate for myself from this viewpoint? Am I able to look at my intersections and use those to advocate for me?"

21:04

Do I pay attention and care about these intersections when I'm interacting with other people?

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Do I consider what intersections they may experience?

21:16

How about my family, my school, or other organizations that I belong to? Do they pay attention and care about those, when it comes to me?

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So when I hear a strengths-based approach, I expect that all of this is considered when working with me.

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Whether I'm the employer, the employee, a parent, a caregiver, a client, or a community member.

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I ask, "am I sustainably", which means always from day one to the last day,

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"Am I sustainably able to engage safely, meaningfully, and purposefully in this community space, as this whole person, or is only a part of me welcome."

22:04

A true strength-based approach welcomes me as a whole person, not just a piece of that person.

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So, when we're looking at the strengths-based approach, Hammond in 2010 wrote "Principles of strengths based Practice", and he said "A strengths-based approach offers a genuine basis for people to take control of their own lives in meaningful and sustainable ways".

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He said that that means that we are focusing on trusting and workable relationships.

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We are empowering people to take a lead in their own care processes.

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We are working in collaborative ways on mutually agreed upon goals.

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We are drawing upon the personal resources of motivation and hope.

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And we are creating sustainable change through learning and experiential growth.

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A strengths approach is a method of working with and resolving problems experienced by a person.

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It doesn't attempt to ignore their challenges or difficulties.

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Rather, it attempts to identify what resources they have already and what resources they need access to and that they need.

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That is where intersectionality comes in because, remember, intersectionality tells us that because of our identities, we have access to some things.

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But access to other things may be taken away.

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So let's look at these nine principles.

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Kansas University, I really like this from them. They say “the strengths and resources of people, communities, and their environments are at the center of the helping process.”

When we're looking at an organization and we're wanting to create positive change,

24:10

It is important that we are paying attention to the strengths and resources of people, which means that we are acknowledging what they need access to, their communities, and their environments. What resources are accessible within the community, and what resources need to become accessible in that community or in a person's environment, for them to be able to work with all of their strengths.

24:44

So, these are the nine principles, and I'm going to go over each one of them individually, but at the very top, we have ‘everyone has value’, and then we are saying that “assets beat deficits”, “language is reality”,

24:59

“Change happens”,

25:01

“Acceptance facilitates change”,

25:04

(Our) “individual perspectives matter”, (we) “start where you (we) are”, “capacity building is a process”, and (we) “value differences and collaborate”. So, let's take just a moment to look at each of these individually.

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“Every person has value”:

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As we're looking at these, I want you to think about yourself, your beliefs.

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Think about your community, your community's beliefs, and think about your organization that you're with or that you would like to be with, and its beliefs.

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So when we say that everyone has value, not only do you acknowledge the strengths, but believe that the person is able to design goals and meet those goals to achieve success as they define it.

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Not as you define it, but as they define it. When we have that belief in people, we truly value them.

26:00

They feel that. And then they act toward positive change.

26:06

The second principle, what we focus on becomes our reality.

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That means that “assets beat deficits”.

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When we look at something as an asset, we focus on strengths.

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But when we look at weakness, if we define weakness as something negative, we will not be able to grow from that.

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However, if we look at a weakness as a challenge that provides a growth opportunity, we are able to grow and build and move forward from that.

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A strengths-based approach also knows that “language is reality”.

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The language that we use creates the reality that we are in. Positive language for one trait can be overshadowed by negative language regarding another.

27:02

So you can talk all day about the positive things of working with an individual who has a learning disability, and you can talk about their learning and the way they do things and the “superpowers”, for anybody who can't see what I'm doing I'm air quoting here, when I say “superpowers”, these “superpowers” that they have.

27:26

But if other language that you're using negates a part of their identity as who they are... Remember earlier when I said, if somebody makes a fat joke next to me

27:38

That might hurt me and invalidate me as a person. Then that negative language can become my reality.

27:46

And therefore, the strengths that you're wanting me to work to kind of go off to the side because I see that I'm not valued as a whole person here, only that part of me is accepted.

28:01

A strength-based approach knows that “change happens”. It believes that change is inevitable. We embrace curiosity and encourage meaningful engagement, defining success for ourselves, and creating possibilities to experience that success.

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So, again, understanding where people are coming from, their intersections, their many identities that they have, embracing that and having curiosity and allowing them to explore as a whole person, not just an autistic person. Allows them to grow and creates the positive change that we're looking for in organizations.

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Strengths-based approaches that take that intersectional, that have an intersectional lens, the true strengths-based approach, the way that it was meant to be, understands that meaningful and authentic relationships are important. You don't have to be friends, but you need to care.

29:02

Relationships are transactional and if you're trying to fix someone, you're not gonna get the change that you want.

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So, if you want change to be facilitated, we have to allow for capacity building.

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We have to create authentic relationships, accepting the person for who they are, as they are.

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The strengths-based approach also understands that people's experiences matter. A person's perspective, their story, their lived experience, is always going to win over expertise every single time.

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If you want positive change in an organization, you have to understand that the person's story matters more than the expert.

30:01

A strengths-based approach understands that starting where we are acknowledges that everyone is in a different space of knowledge and experience.

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This isn't an excuse.

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And excuses are not to be accepted.

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But it is an understanding that knowing where somebody is today helps us, and them move to where they want to be tomorrow.

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A true strengths based approach understands that change is dynamic. It's something that happens over time. And it's not a one-time process to be done once, to be talked about once

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And then forgotten.

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It's not a single step. It is not a leap from the ground floor to the top of the building.

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There is a ramp that allows us to move forward. Think about when you take a road trip. It's like a journey. We're taking a road trip, and there are rest stops along the way.

31:08

Maybe we change drivers. Maybe we change who's reading the map, depending on where we are and what we're doing and how they're feeling.

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We do the same thing when we go through a change process, or we're looking at any kind of change in any kind of organization, including at home, right? It's not going to happen overnight.

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It's something that's going to be a process, and a strengths-based approach knows that collaboration is necessary.

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And this doesn't just mean, hey, you guys have to work together. This means that it's important to be aware of people's intersections, of people's identities, and their personal experiences, and using that information to allow you to support collaboration in a way that works for the all, rather than a few.

32:12

So, I would like to take a moment to remind you of the puzzle piece. The puzzle piece is associated with autism.

32:22

Some people appreciate it and use it and have integrated that. And other people have pushed that away and said, I'm not a missing piece, there's not something missing. So, I would like to use that puzzle piece for just a moment and maybe reframe the analogy.

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Autistic people are not a mysterious puzzle.

32:45

There is a puzzle, but it's a little more than that.

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Actually, there's this network of flawed systems, and here you see a puzzle, but it's a puzzle of a labyrinth. And there are pieces taken out and that are missing, and if you think about that, if you think about a labyrinth,

33:07

and if there are certain pieces of that labyrinth that are removed for certain individuals based on their identity, and they never have access to that, they will never be able to move through the labyrinth

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in a way, they might not be able to move through it at all.

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Or they may have to take such a divergent way that it takes much longer for them to get where they want to go.

33:36

Um, there are so many pieces of the puzzle.

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Many of them have been hidden by those who want to protect their own interests.

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A true strength-based approach understands that and understands that in doing that, we erase the individuals.

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So, when we take a strength-based approach, the way that it is meant to be done through an intersectional lens, understanding those multiple, often marginalized identities that people have. We understand that that prevents the erasure of individuals who are facing those multiple forms of discrimination.

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We have to have an intersectional perspective.

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So, a true strengths-based approach is more than a strengths assessment.

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The assessment is one tiny component that supports the whole person.

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It's not just a day, a week, or a month.

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And it's okay to ask for help if this is something that you, that is not one of your strengths, if this is something that you are not aware of, or you need support, it's okay to ask for help for that.

34:59

Let's take a quick look here at this, Superwoman.

35:16

She's a Superwoman. Yea Rajith, the client meeting is at 3 o'clock. Have you uploaded the data? Okay bye! She manages the office and also runs the household. She niether forgets her presentation nor her relatives' birthday presents. It's her 52nd birthday! No no, not the 24 pack-the 12 pack. She manages to fit in 30 hours of work in just one day, every day! Everyone does it! She puts everyone's needs before her own- always. Shh!

35:56

Sorry. She never stops, she never tires. She just does...everything! And shines while doing it. I mean, she's like a...Come on, give me a break! But why? Can I breathe for a second? But...you're a superwoman. I'm also human. Madam, we've reached. I stop too. Tanu- you came back? Yes. I lose too.

36:56

I'm human.

37:22

Okay, so earlier, I put superpowers in quotation marks. That's because often times um

37:34

that's what is focused on, is those superpowers. And the rest of the human gets forgotten.

37:40

So, at the end of this, it asks: is Superwoman, a compliment, or an expectation?

37:49

I would say that it's an expectation.

37:52

And often times, when we look at this strengths-based approach, we have expectations of someone, but we forget the humanity involved.

38:05

So thinking about that, I want you to think about your company, or your organization, your school, your family, whatever you are in.

38:19

Ask yourself:

38:21

How is the company doing?

38:25

During these poll questions that we have here, we are going to give you about 30 seconds um because we have multiple of these that we're going to go through. So, if you would take just a second here to answer this poll question, how is the company doing?

38:43

Then we will, we will quickly move on. So we are collecting responses. I get to watch them roll in. This is exciting.

38:52

I love seeing this and seeing if it's meeting the expectations that I have for that.

38:59

Right now, we are at about 50%, okay. Some of you are doing excellent!

39:06

And there are some that say, there we need some change.

39:13

Awesome.

39:18

Alright, so look, there we go, we've got about 60% that are okay, they're trying, but could do better. That's great. That's a, that's a great starting place.

39:30

So, let's move on to the next one. How is the company doing over all of those nine principles? Let's take your poll on that one.

39:43

How are they doing on those nine principles?

39:52

Alright, we've got this coming in.

39:55

The results are kind of similar, they're bouncing around a little bit.

40:01

I like watching these come in.

40:03

Right now, we're at about 56% okay, 28% excellent, 17% poorly, and are coming to the end.

40:16

Alright, there we go.

40:18

Similar to the other, we've got about 57, 27, 16 there, alright.

40:27

How is the company doing

40:30

with this first one, everyone has value.

40:35

How are they doing with that one?

40:43

This is where it gets really interesting.

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I'm seeing like up at 50% people are saying they're doing excellent with value.

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The poorly is kind of staying the same. But the okay and the excellent is having a little bit different results here. We've got people feeling that their company or organization is doing a little better in that overall value aspect. Fun.

41:12

There we go, 45% doing excellent with valuing their people.

41:21

Alright, let's look at the second principle,

41:25

assets beat deficits. Okay, on this one remember, this is, looking at the challenges as something that is positive and a growth opportunity rather than a weakness that is a deficit. How are they doing?

41:49

This is fun to watch. This is really fun to watch!

41:53

This time, we've got over 20% so far.

41:57

Some places are really struggling with seeing those challenges as deficits. Oh, that's changing a little bit.

42:01

We've got 50% that are doing excellent. 34% that are doing okay.

42:08

Alright.

42:11

And, closing out, okay, so here we go. Excellent, they're a model for others, about 47%. About 38% are doing okay and can do better. And about 15%, that needs some significant change.

42:27

Alright. Let's go to the next one.

42:30

How are they doing with being aware and intentional of their language, and all aspects of people's identities, rather than just one focus piece?

42:45

How are they doing?

42:47

The poll is open.

42:54

Alright. We're seeing some very similar results here.

43:00

With we've got about 46% okay, 40% excellent, about 14% poorly.

43:10

It looks like that's kind of evening out and staying the same.

43:16

Alright.

43:23

And the next one.

43:30

I know these are going kind of fast, Um this one is um, I lost where we were on this one.

43:39

Um this one is believing that change is inevitable, embracing curiosity, and encouraging engagement.

43:51

Embracing curiosity and encouraging engagement.

43:57

So we've got, the results on these are right around the same.

44:02

Um, we've got, they are a model for others about 39%, about 47% okay, and about 15% poorly.

44:12

So, moving on to the next one, which is, um I am going to, it looks like somehow the slides went backwards, let's see if we can get this back

44:27

where we need to be.

44:29

So, this should be, um, there we go, acceptance facilitates change.

44:40

So, that means that we are really creating authentic relationships, and accepting folks for who they are as a whole, not just pieces and bits of them.

44:53

Are we creating authentic relationships?

44:59

It's nice to see that we regularly have about 50%, anywhere between 40 and 50%, that are doing okay. They're trying, they can do better.

45:12

What that tells me is when we have that people who are trying and can do better. These are people who, if they continue on that track, and they continue working forward, they will be into that excellent range, and they will be able to start modeling and working with other organizations who are struggling in that poor area. And, that's how we really start working together as a community, That's fantastic.

45:39

So, now, let's look at, Um, we just did that one.

45:46

We want to do the next one, There we go. This is our perspective, and our stories matter.

45:52

How's your company doing on that?

45:55

Your story matters.

45:59

75% excellent there for a minute on that one.

46:07

Yep, we're getting about the same. We're getting a little bit higher on this one about stories. So, people seeing and understanding that storytelling matters is great. And on the other hand, we're seeing quite high, 17, 18, up to 20% in the poorly. So.

46:27

A lot of places, they're either doing well on that, or they're not.

46:32

And that seems to be kind of how society is going, with that storytelling piece there. It ended up evening out and being quite similar to the others.

46:45

Let's go on to the next one. We're almost done with these.

46:48

Starting where you are. Is your company understanding that people need to start where they are, that there are differences in our knowledge and our experience, and not taking excuses, but having that understanding.

47:12

Oh, there we are, again on this one. Up at that, like 60 some percent.

47:17

Now, we're starting to even out again. This one has the least number so far on the poorly.

47:23

So it seems like that's and that is a narrative that started a long time ago. So, that's not surprising to see that.

47:31

We've got about 42% excellent, 48% okay, and 10% poorly.

47:38

All right. Moving on.

47:41

Capacity building is a process. We don't jump from the bottom to the top floor. It's something that we need to take. We need to go up a ramp for that one.

47:50

How is your company doing on that?

47:53

Oh, we were 50/50 there, good and excellent and poor for just a moment.

47:58

Um, now we're at 63% okay, 68%, 71% okay.

48:09

Alrgiht, 75% okay on that one, 4% poorly.

48:16

So, that seems to be a pretty, a pretty good when people are understanding that. And putting processes in place, so that we can go through the journey rather than it happening just one time and never being discussed again.

48:29

Awesome.

48:31

And, finally, this last one, valuing differences and collaborating. Is your company creating a space where collaboration is facilitated for all people?

48:44

Or is it only facilitated and geared towards a few people?

48:52

And here we're seeing about the same with the 42, 47, and the excellent and Okay, and 15% or so in the poorly.

49:12

Very interesting.

49:14

I like doing polls like this, where we're looking at those individual pieces, in order to see, and I think it would be interesting to, to take this and use this specific question. These questions as tools in our organization, to see how we're doing with the strengths-based approach. So, let's do this again, after looking at all of them.

49:38

How is the company doing overall, with all of the nine?

49:50

I'm going to see if this is kind of matching what it said before.

49:57

We've got a lot of, few

49:59

Few less excellent.

50:02

Oh, a few more excellent this time.

50:05

And a few more okay this time.

50:08

Or a few less okay this time. But about the same percent poorly.

50:14

So some people, it seems moved into that excellent space. It was about 27% or so before, and it looks like a few people. Yeah, moved out of okay and into excellent.

50:29

Um, that's a positive that's, that's a nice way to go. Now let's look at this one.

50:36

How are they doing on these five areas of focusing on trusting and work and workable relationships?

50:46

Empowering people to take a lead in their own care process, working in collaborative ways on mutually agreed upon goals, drawing upon the personal resources, and creating sustainable change through learning and growth. How are they doing there?

51:03

And this is the final poll question.

51:17

All right, again, we had a few people move up into that excellent category from before. It was in the 20%, and now it's about 30%.

51:27

50%, 56%, okay it says, and about 15% poorly.

51:36

Awesome.

51:38

We're almost done y'all. We're getting up on the hour. We're almost done. I hope we have some, some questions in there for, for people to ask. You will see, if you printed this out, that to have a strength-based approach we have five questions here that we asked, that are some great questions that you can use. For those assessments, are they accessible to everyone? If not, are there things in place to help them become accessible? Is there coaching and mentoring that's happening after the assessment, so that they can be used later on as we're deciding tasks and collaborative roles?

52:20

Is there support in place for those who are not self-aware to be able to answer those questions so that they can become self-aware and answer them and advocate better? And are you and are the people who you're talking to, comfortable talking about the different intersections?

52:38

Or, that second piece, we definitely are looking at and making sure that we want to have these pieces in place.

52:46

I know, I'm going a little fast. That's because I want to make sure we don't go over.

52:51

We're looking at the DEI as actually integrated into where we are.

52:57

The training is focused on everyone, it's not about fixing autistics. It's about allowing everyone opportunity to learn and grow.

53:05

Employee resource groups are funded, they're encouraged, they're utilized, and their information is actually being put into practice.

53:16

Everyone has the opportunity to climb the ladder, where supporting transitions, the community is involved, and we're involved with the community.

53:25

And let's move away from accommodations, and start looking at it as adjustments.

53:30

Adjustments are normal.

53:32

They happen.

53:34

It's inevitable.

53:37

And finally, we're looking at making sure that we're spending our resources where it counts.

53:4

People have the opportunity to ask questions and to grow personally and professionally.

53:48

All right, Questions?

53:54

Alright, that was fantastic. Let me open up my questions pane here. So, do you have a couple of minutes to go over today so we can get some questions in?

54:03

You bet. I'm the one who made us go over. So, yeah. Fantastic, okay. So here's a great one for you. And, as a reminder everyone, you can still submit your questions in the questions pane right now. We're going to, time is limited, but we're gonna get to as many as we can. So, let's see here.

54:21

AJ, thank you for a wonderful presentation.

54:24

My question is, how expensive is it typically, for organizations, or educators to use those strengths-based approach? Are there any significant costs? It seems like much of It is free, acceptance, validation, collaboration, and changing to rule.

54:41

I love that question. Oftentimes, we think that it has to be super expensive to implement change. And as someone who worked in public school administration, I know that you're constantly talking about budget. And you're constantly talking about bringing in professionals.

54:58

I would encourage people to look within their organization at who has these skills. Because 9 times out of 10, you already have people there who have the skills, and you don't need to hire expensive outside consultants. You can pay the people who are working there to do this. You can promote them. You can implement different programs where they are using their strengths and feeling valued and not being exploited, because they're being paid to do this.

55:31

And that can save a lot of money. So, I'm glad that you recognize that it doesn't have to be expensive and that a lot of this is free. It really is more a time and effort expenditure than it necessarily is a financial expenditure.

55:51

So, getting creative with that, and looking at societal expectations and biases on how we should spend our time and effort is really the way to go, rather than looking at it from a capitalist point of view and solely from money.

56:09

Alright, our next question is, what role does self-advocacy play in an intersectional approach to supporting autistic individuals?

56:21

I love this question. Self-advocacy is something that I am absolutely passionate about, and self-advocacy is everything, right? We're looking at a human being.

56:31

You heard me say multiple times in their success as they define it. There at the end, you heard me say, "Are you helping them become self-aware if they're not self-aware?"

56:42

Um, this is hugely important.

56:48

A self-advocate is able to say what they want and what they need. And when they are collaborating and listening, and being listened to, this is where the real positive change happens. Self-advocates are able to advocate not only for themselves but also for their communities. They're also able to say, "Whoa, wait a minute. I can't do this. I need X support," and they can tell you directly what they need, instead of having somebody guess. So, when we can put things in place to help people become really self-aware, and we encourage and facilitate self-advocacy, that's really where the win happens. And that really is what the strengths-based approach is about. When you look at it, you know, this was not something that was created for the workplace.

57:42

This was something that was created for, and by social workers, to work in their communities, so that the community members could be self-advocates, and their care.

57:55

So, it's the number one most important piece.

58:03

Wonderful, okay, so let's see. How can we ensure that our strengths based approach doesn't overlook the unique experiences of individuals from marginalized communities within the autism spectrum?

58:18

Ask them, and value their time.

58:21

Don't ask them and expect them to stay late.

58:26

Fill out inaccessible questionnaires.

58:30

Sit in meetings that are not accessible to them. Um, make sure that you're having communication with them. And having this conversation in a way that is the most comfortable for them. If they are uncomfortable in one-on-one conversations, then don't have that. If they prefer one-on-one conversations, then do it that way. Don't expect every one of your people to communicate and want to do this in exactly the same way. Um, allow for asynchronous meetings where they can get together and have these conversations and allow time where they're being paid to do this.

59:13

It's not something that they're doing in addition to their job, it's part of their job. That they get paid for, and appreciated for, and valued for.

59:26

Alright, so being respectful of time, I'm going to go ahead and just ask one more question for the day. So, can you provide examples of how different intersecting identities impact the strengths and challenges of autistic individuals?

59:40

Absolutely.

59:42

So, think about this. You have a, you have an assessment that you're doing. And one of the questions on there is, like, the response is "entrepreneurial" and another response is "caregiver". And you have a first generation American. Her family came from Mexico.

1:00:05

And she is, she designed, created, and did this entire daycare center that she developed and did all of the business. Got it started, did the money, did all of that.

1:00:23

One of the questions on there.

1:00:25

Those those two questions that I said, one is about entrepreneurship, and one is about caretaker.

1:00:31

She answers high on the caretaker side, but answers low on the entrepreneur side. Um, because she's been told by society and all of the things that people say, that as a Mexican-American woman who maybe doesn't have a college degree.

1:00:54

She can't be a businesswoman, but she can be a good caretaker. That's a lot to carry with you when you are going to something else. And if we can facilitate her seeing, wow, you have these other strengths that maybe you weren't aware of, or if we can get rid of our own biases and look at her as a businesswoman, instead of "only" a caretaker, only in quotation marks. Then we can really be working on those strengths.

1:01:28

That's just one quick example.

1:01:35

Okay, is there anything you'd like to say before we wrap up here?

1:01:39

Just thank you very much. Feel free to message me at a AJLocashio@UmbrellaAllianceUS.Org. I am happy to answer any questions that anybody might have regarding what I talked about today.

1:01:55

Fantastic, thank you so much, AJ. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. If you found today's event helpful, we encourage you to register at OAR's next webinar event, The Transition from Higher Education to the Workplace for Autistic Students on September 28th from 11 AM to 12 PM Eastern Time. Once you close out today's event, you will receive an exit survey, and we would appreciate it if you would complete that and provide your feedback. Everyone will receive a follow-up e-mail today with their Certificate of attendance. On behalf of the Organization for Autism Research, thank you for joining us and have a great rest of your day.

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