



The Massachusetts Psychological Association
2023 Annual Conference

Raising the Next Generation: Innovation to Address the Evolving Needs of Youth and the Profession

Saturday, November 4th, 2023
Norwood, MA

Double Empathy Problem & Building Rapport with Autistic Young People (1.5CE)

Presented by Meghan Wilson Duff, PsyD

Self-diagnosis or identifying oneself as autistic (or AuDHD) is quite common these days because of social media, online communities, and wider representation of autistic characters and creators in the media. While young people are finding social support in peers who understand, there is a desire for neurodiversity-informed therapists, and more specifically, ones who understand and value autistic experience and culture. This session includes ways in which clinicians might be trying to establish rapport and instead signal disconnection that prompts distrust in autistic young people. We will also cover ways to signal that you're comfortable with autistic experience and that it is safe to disclose. A very brief overview of Neurodiversity as a framework and social movement will be presented and Milton's Double Empathy Problem provide context for thinking about challenges to rapport and how to address them.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to signal, in their environment and also their communication and attention, that they neurodiversity informed and autistic affirming;
- Participants will use common language and concepts that are more part of current autistic communities and wider neurodiversity informed spaces than mainstream professional mental health services or education systems;
- Participants will recognize and avoid common ways that typical gestures of reassurance may feel invalidating for autistic young people.

Meghan Wilson Duff (they/them) is an associate professor of psychology in the Psychology and Community Studies Program at University of Maine at Machias. They coordinate and teach courses for the Mental Health and Rehabilitation Minor at University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias. *How Are You, Verity?* illustrated by Taylor Barron and released by Magination/APA in August 2023 is their first picture book. It features a neurodivergent main character (autistic/AuDHD/ADHD coded) figuring out the question "how are you?" gets used in quite a few ways.