

Cothú Handout 1.0 – Welcome to Parents

Welcome to Cothú - The Neuro-affirming course for parents of Autistic children.

This course was designed by Autistic people with the context of parenting in Ireland today in mind.

It is founded on a quarter-century of insights from the Autistic community, the latest Autistic-led research studies, and our many years of experience training parents like you, in Ireland and internationally. Oh, and on our own experience parenting Autistic children!

What to expect over the next 5 weeks

- **Week 1 - Introduction to Neurodiversity**

This week you will learn about Neurodiversity and ways of understanding your Autistic child outside of a very narrow and negative model. There *are* better ways!

We also look at the myths that surround Autistic people, myths and theories which are often damaging to us and the relationship others have with us.

Looking at the world through an Autistic lens can be invaluable and so we lead you from a new understanding to recognising and letting go of neuro-conformative expectations

- **Week 2 - What it feels like to be Autistic**

This week we look at what it really means to be Autistic. As we are highly sensitive people with deep emotions we concentrate on explaining what it can feel like to be Autistic.

We look at how Autistics sense and learn. We look at how we play and create and communicate.

We also look at what life looks like for Autistic children who are understood and living in an Autistic-informed environment and how environment influences well being and “behaviours.”

- **Week 3 - Family Life**

This week we look at what living as a family means - on a basic level it means getting on with each other, understanding each other and making accommodations for each other. Everyone makes accommodations and accommodations are made for us- it's just that Autistic needs are not as often met as others are.

And so we look at sensory needs and understanding that everyone has sensory needs.

Family life can be stressful at times and organisational skills are something most of us need help with. We've included some ideas and strategies to share ideas on how best to organise your home life and making accommodations around meal times as well.

Organising also means making time for yourself and so we've included that in this section because as parents we might leave our own needs til last, often meaning that they are never met.

To be part of a family means that we also have to communicate with everyone else in our family and so we provide activities to help you and your family to communicate effectively with each other.

- **Week 4 - Parenting Autistically**

Parenting Autistically may be a new phrase for you. It's a way to parent that fits in with having Autistic children. The ideas we cover this week follow on from earlier content on letting go of neuro-conformative demands.

We also look at the importance of support and self care because as parents we cannot fill from an empty cup.

- **Week 5 - Raising a happy, authentic, Autistic child**

This week we focus on "Happy Parent = Happy Child" and look at Autistic Pride and what it means to raise an authentic, Autistic child. Often it means reframing your thinking and letting go of the narrow, negative medical way your child has been perceived by others. Your child is perfect as they are.

We know we cannot cover everything you might need as a parent in this course so we've compiled an "explore more" handout so that you know where to go for more information that is Autistic-informed and Neuro-affirming. You can also find out more on www.ausometraining.com