

Rethinking Autism:

New visions, new possibilities

TRAINING SUMMARY:

While the autism diagnosis is becoming more common and more publicized, the nature of this developmental difference continues to be the subject of debate and confusion. It is helpful to put the diagnostic process itself into perspective, understand that it continues to evolve rather than being “carved in stone,” and recognize the wide range and variability of people on the autism spectrum. People with autism labels have many strengths, and with appropriate accommodations can demonstrate their capacity to learn, relate, and live the lives they choose. However, they may be done an injustice when tested and evaluated by means of typical methods and tools that are not suited to their speech and movement challenges. Learning more about the sensorimotor and other neurological differences experienced by people with autism is a productive way to reinterpret and explore the ways in which they communicate and adapt, and to build the empathy and awareness that are needed to work *with*, not *on*, children and adults on the spectrum.

TRAINING GOAL:

The goal of this training is for parents, professionals, and community members to take a fresh look at autism, to demystify the subject by exploring possible explanations of the “traits” and “behaviors” associated with the diagnosis, to become aware of the universality of sensorimotor differences and of basic emotional and developmental needs, and to understand the vital importance of reciprocity and relationships in the lives of people on the autism spectrum.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the training are for the participants to:

1. Review the history of the changing concept of “autism”
2. Understand some of the challenges and strengths that people with this label may share
3. Consider the limitations of testing, in particular intelligence testing
4. Recognize and demystify familiar neurological differences often found among people labeled with autism
5. Recognize key developmental needs that are common to ALL people, so we can move beyond a “puzzle piece” approach to people with autism

METHODS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES:

Training content can be delivered via webinar incorporating lecture and discussion (app. 1½ hours). This training also can be delivered in person in a traditional training or classroom setting incorporating lecture, videos, discussion, and interactive group exercises (2-3 hours).