My Internship with Neurodiversity at Work

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About Me

- M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology at Univ. of Maryland
- From Jacksonville, FL
- DMA Singing Voice Pedagogy
- Neurodiversity Intersectionality
  - Parent of 2 neurodiverse children
  - Neurodiverse
  - Speech-language pathologist
Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)

- Autism Assessment
- Life Skills groups for teens
- Jump Start/first diagnosis speech-language therapy

Neurodiversity at Work

Community Connections

- Project SEARCH
- Daily Professional Development Sessions
- In-person, on the job coaching
- Development of enhanced employee visual supports
CLINICAL

RESEARCH

KENNEDY KRIEGER INSTITUTE INTERNSHIP
CLINICAL

Neurodiverse Employment
- Pre-employment preparation
- Self-advocacy

RESEARCH

Double Empathy Problem (Milton, 2013)
"Thin Slice Judgements" (Sasson, Morrison, etc.)
This is Me

• User-friendly story creation app
• In their own words/with their own voice
  ○ About me
  ○ How to Talk to Me
  ○ How I Talk to You
  ○ How I Interact
  ○ Speaking Up for myself
  ○ Tools to help me remember

• Designed for IDD
  ○ Potentially applicable for other neurotypes
This is Me! sample video
My Interview with Parth Patel

- **Education**: Kennedy Krieger High School graduate
- **Project SEARCH** alumnus
- **CORE Foundations** community member
- **Current employment**: Meals on Wheels
- **Dream job**: Data entry at *Lockheed Martin*
- **Favorite restaurant**: Olive Garden
- **Talent**: Telling jokes
- **Pet peeve**: people who are impatient when he is communicating
- **Best experience at Kennedy Krieger**: being in the community, socializing with other members
My Interview with Ben Brazel

- **Education**: Howard High School
- **Current Project SEARCH Intern**
- **Current employment**: Special Olympics, Security Office, Nutrition
- **Dream job**: Forest Ranger (educate people & protect animals)
- **Fun fact**: Loves to talk to a diverse range of people
- **Pet peeve**: people who think false things about him and ignore him because he communicates differently

**Impact of Project SEARCH**
- Community integration
- Confidence, fulfillment, self-worth
- Anxiety reduction, helped him trust people again
- Security staff encouraged him to keep going, how to cope with stress, realize that people have a good side
My Interview with Susan Brazel

- **Parent** of current Project SEARCH Intern
- Family has received services with Kennedy Krieger Institute for almost 2 decades
- **Project SEARCH** has been "life-changing"
  - Difficult times during COVID
  - Project SEARCH gave their son a "sense of belonging"
  - Staff is always available to the interns, not only work-related matters
  - Staff accepting everyone where they are and for who they are (individualized support)
What I have learned

• It is never too soon to begin focusing on building pre-employment skills in neurodiverse individuals
  ○ Self-determinism
  ○ Fading support (K-12 education)
  ○ Self-advocacy
  ○ Age-appropriate chores, problem-solving
  ○ Anxiety-reduction strategies
What I have learned

- Neurodiverse young adults are eager to work and engage with their communities.
- **Meaningful Community Services** is meeting many needs of neurodiverse young adults.
The Neurodiversity at Work team

meaningful employment

communities connections