

Understanding Neurodivergence: Supporting Executive Function in Students with ADHD and Trauma

Asynchronous Course (Self-Paced)

Instructor: Meredith McNerney

CPD Number: 25-68-03C

Credits: 3 CPD Credits

COURSE DESCRIPTION

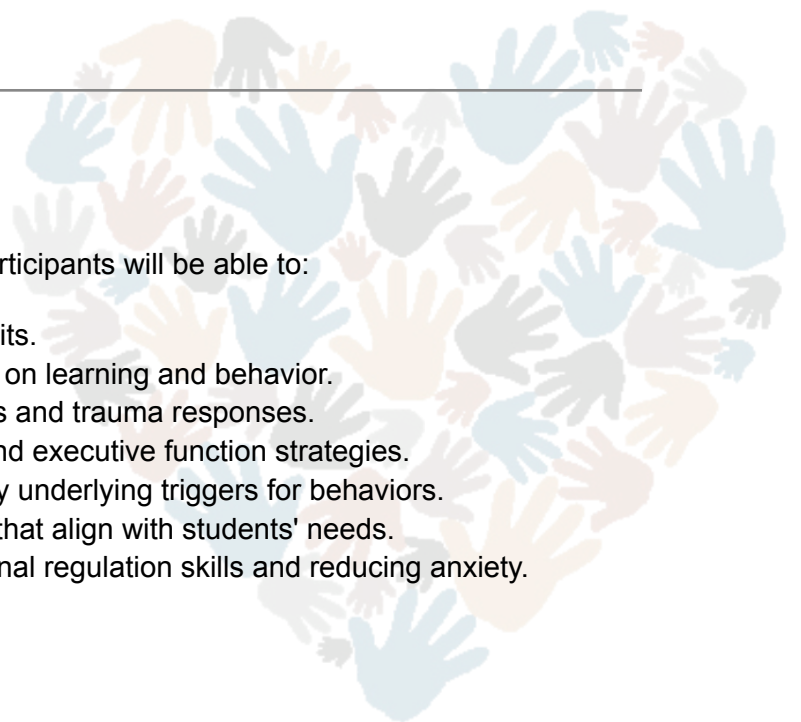
Students experiencing trauma and neurodivergence face significant challenges in the classroom, particularly in areas related to executive functioning, attention regulation, and emotional well-being. Research indicates that trauma affects brain development by impacting key regions such as the hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and amygdala (Cross et al., 2017). Similarly, ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that disrupts executive function skills, making it difficult for students to plan, focus, and regulate impulses.

This course equips educators with the knowledge and strategies needed to support neurodivergent students, particularly those with ADHD and trauma histories. Educators will explore the neurological basis of these conditions, learn to differentiate between ADHD symptoms and trauma responses, and implement interventions to support attention, executive function, and emotional regulation. By applying trauma-informed principles and equity-based approaches, participants will be better prepared to create learning environments that foster success for all students.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Define neurodivergence and its key traits.
- Explain the impact of neurodivergence on learning and behavior.
- Differentiate between ADHD symptoms and trauma responses.
- Implement research-based attention and executive function strategies.
- Conduct root cause analyses to identify underlying triggers for behaviors.
- Design trauma-informed interventions that align with students' needs.
- Support students in developing emotional regulation skills and reducing anxiety.



COURSE STRUCTURE

PART 1: Understanding the Neurodivergent Brain

Learning Outcomes:

- Define neurodivergence and its key traits.
- Explain the impact of neurodivergence on learning and behavior.
- Explain the neurological underpinnings of ADHD.

Completion Requirements:

- Session slide deck activities
 - Assigned readings
 - Reflection questions
 - Quiz
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PART 2: ADHD and Trauma – Overlap and Distinctions

Learning Outcomes:

- Differentiate between ADHD symptoms and trauma responses.
- Explain how trauma may exacerbate ADHD symptoms.
- Develop sensitivity in observing behaviors through a trauma-informed lens.

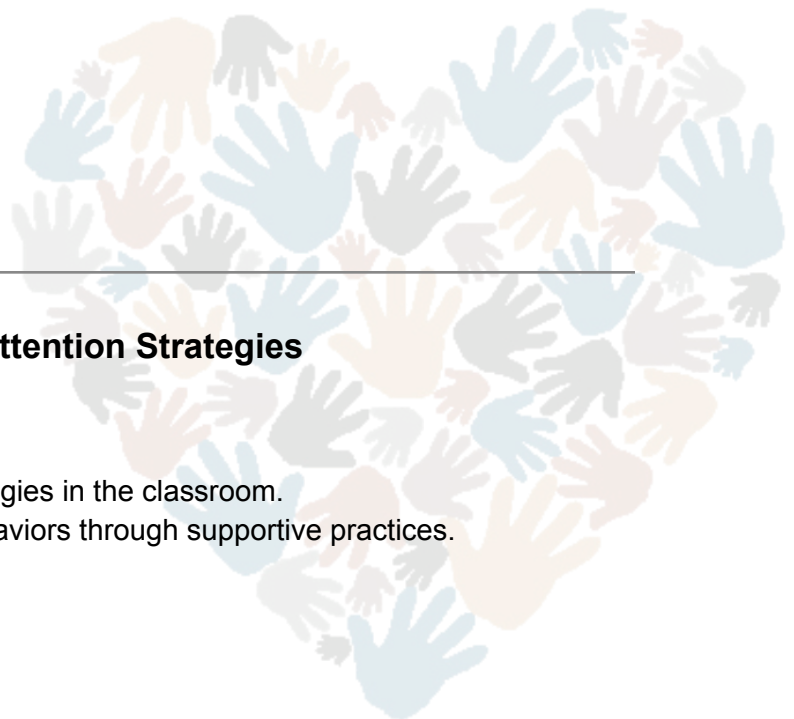
Completion Requirements:

- Session slide deck activities
 - Assigned readings
 - Reflection questions
 - Quiz
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PART 3: Classroom Behaviors and Attention Strategies

Learning Outcomes:

- Implement five effective attention strategies in the classroom.
- Evaluate approaches to managing behaviors through supportive practices.



Completion Requirements:

- Session slide deck activities
 - Assigned readings
 - Reflection questions
 - Quiz
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PART 4: Root Cause Analysis and Tailored Interventions**Learning Outcomes:**

- Conduct root cause analyses to identify underlying triggers for behaviors.
- Develop and match interventions to support the core areas of ADHD.
- Create individualized plans that align with trauma-informed principles.

Completion Requirements:

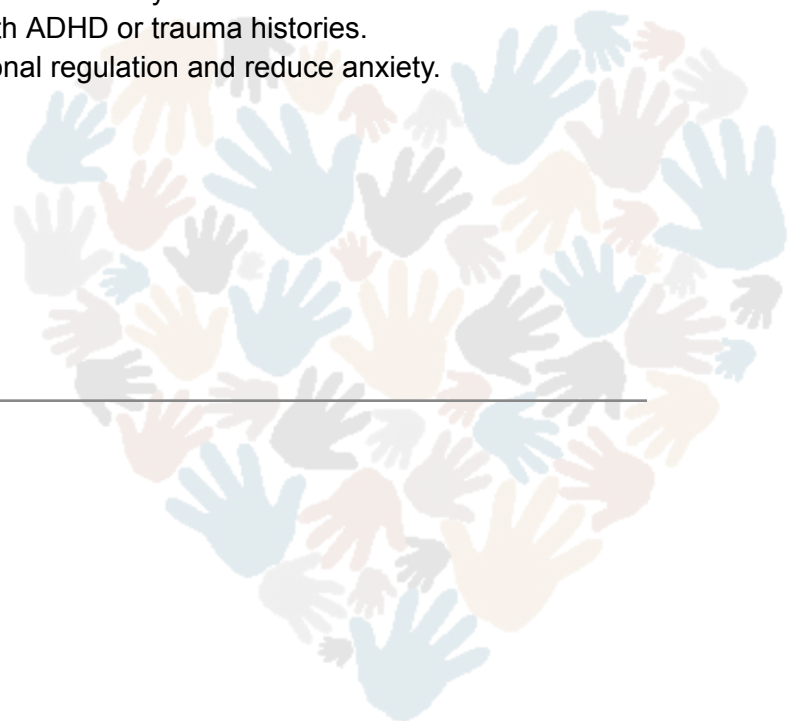
- Session slide deck activities
 - Assigned readings
 - Reflection questions
 - Quiz
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PART 5: ADHD, Anxiety, and the Emotional Impact**Learning Outcomes:**

- Explain the connection between ADHD and anxiety.
- Identify signs of anxiety in students with ADHD or trauma histories.
- Design interventions to support emotional regulation and reduce anxiety.

Completion Requirements:

- Session slide deck activities
 - Assigned readings
 - Reflection questions
 - Quiz
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COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Weekly Course Videos and Articles

- Watch the weekly instructional videos and complete the assigned readings.
- The course consists of five sessions, each focusing on a key aspect of neurodivergence and executive function.

2. Weekly Reflection Questions

- Engage in structured reflections to deepen understanding of course concepts.
- Participants will document insights and growth throughout the course.
- Reflection sheets are not submitted but serve as a tool for personal and professional development.

Criteria & Standards:

- Participants will read assigned materials, identify key learning points, and relate them to their professional experiences.
- Participants will record reflections using the course-provided graphic organizer.

3. Weekly Activities

- Each session includes interactive activities designed to reinforce learning.
- Participants will apply strategies in their professional setting (e.g., classroom, mentoring, coaching).
- If participants are not currently working in a school, they may partner with an educator or test strategies in tutoring, coaching, or volunteering settings.

Criteria & Standards:

- Participants will implement new learning in professional settings and adjust strategies based on real-world applications.
- Modifications and reflections on strategy implementation will be documented.

4. Quizzes

- A quiz follows each session to assess comprehension and mastery of the session's content.

Grading:

- Quizzes are worth **20 points total**.

5. Reflective Practice Project



- Participants will revisit notes, research, course videos, and activities to complete a culminating reflective project.
- This project synthesizes learning by applying course concepts to real-life scenarios and professional practice.

Criteria & Standards:

- Demonstrates growth, reflection, and actionable steps based on course content.
- Provides concrete examples of changes to current practices due to course learning.
- Cites evidence from course videos, research, and readings.

Reflective Practice Project: 80 points

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS (150 Words Each)

1. **How has this course influenced your understanding of neurodivergence and student behavior?**

Reflect on key takeaways and describe how your perspective on neurodivergent students has shifted. Discuss at least one strategy you plan to implement in your classroom or professional setting.

2. **Describe a scenario in which you observed a student struggling with executive function challenges.**

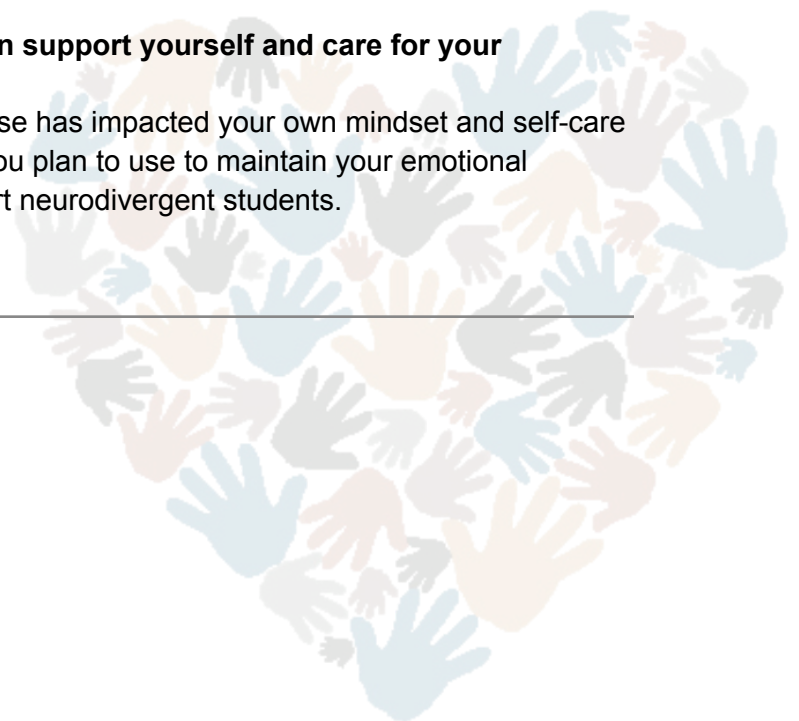
Using insights from the course, propose two specific interventions that align with trauma-informed and ADHD-supportive practices. Explain how these interventions could positively impact the student's ability to engage in learning and self-regulation.

3. **What is one way you, as an adult, can support yourself and care for your well-being as a result of this class?**

Reflect on how the content of this course has impacted your own mindset and self-care practices. Discuss a specific strategy you plan to use to maintain your emotional resilience and well-being as you support neurodivergent students.

GRADING POLICY

Total possible points: **100**



- Quizzes: **20 points**
- Reflective Practice Project: **80 points**
- Must earn **80 points** to pass the course.

Pass/Fail Criteria:

- A passing grade (S) at Shepherd University is equivalent to a **B or better**.
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COURSE POLICIES

- **Communication:** Email will be the primary means of communication. Emails will be answered within **48 hours**.
 - Contact: info@choosecalm.com
 - **Self-Paced Learning:** Participants may complete work at their own pace but must finish all course requirements by the semester deadline.
 - **Transcripts & Certificates:** Upon completion, participants may request their transcript and certificate from Shepherd University at graduate-studies@shepherd.edu.
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FINAL NOTES

This course is designed for **teachers, administrators, school counselors, and mental health professionals** who want to deepen their understanding of ADHD, trauma, and executive function in students. Through this learning experience, participants will develop **research-based strategies** to foster **inclusive, trauma-informed classrooms** that support **all learners**.

Thank you for joining!

Meredith McNerney
Calmer Schools (Powered by The Trauma Trainer)
Education Consultant

