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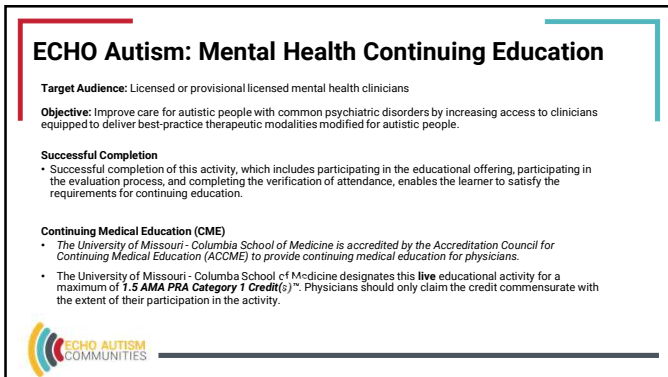
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### ECHO Autism: Mental Health Speaker Disclosure

**Relevant Financial Disclosures**

Current ACCME (Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education) rules state that participants in CE activities should be made aware of any relevant affiliation or financial interest in the previous 24 months that may affect the planning of an educational activity or a speaker's presentation(s).

Each planning committee member and speaker has been requested to complete a financial relationship reporting form for the *ECHO Autism Mental Health Series – Cohort 4*.


**Speaker Disclosures:**

Kristin Sohl, MD,FAAP receives support:

- Cognoa Behavior Health – research support
- Quadrant Biosciences – medical science collaborator

*All relevant financial relationships for the presenter have been mitigated.*

No other speaker or planning committee member has relevant financial interest



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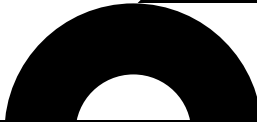
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- A welcoming and supportive office space can help improve the experience of clients who face unique challenges in communication, sensory sensitivities, and social cues.
- Mental health professionals have a responsibility to provide inclusive and accessible services to all clients, and creating an environment that is welcoming and supportive for autistic clients demonstrates this commitment.
- Research shows that a positive and supportive environment can have a significant impact on treatment outcomes for autistic clients. By creating a space that is comfortable and accommodating, mental health professionals can help to build trust with their clients and create a safe space for them to explore their mental health concerns.



**WHY IS THIS TOPIC RELEVANT?**

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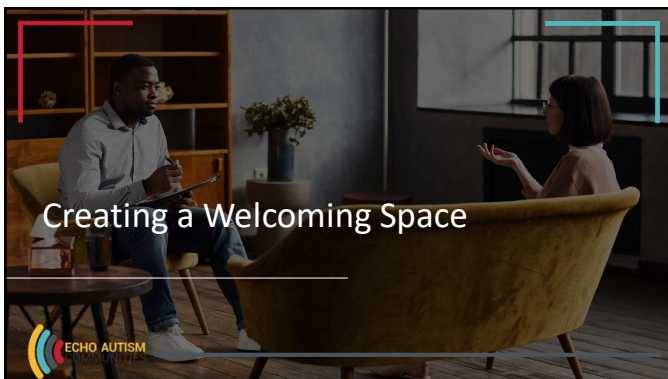
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**Creating a Welcoming Space**



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**TIPS FOR CREATING A WELCOMING SPACE**

- Provide a quiet and comfortable environment, considering sensory sensitivities.
- Minimize distractions by keeping the space clutter-free and neutralizing strong scents.
- Offer a variety of seating options to meet individual preferences and needs.
- Avoid operating loud appliances.
- Consider soundproofing solutions.
- Consider providing a weighted blanket or fill a basket with sensory toys.
- Consult with your agency about installing light shields and/or a tropical fish tank in the waiting area.



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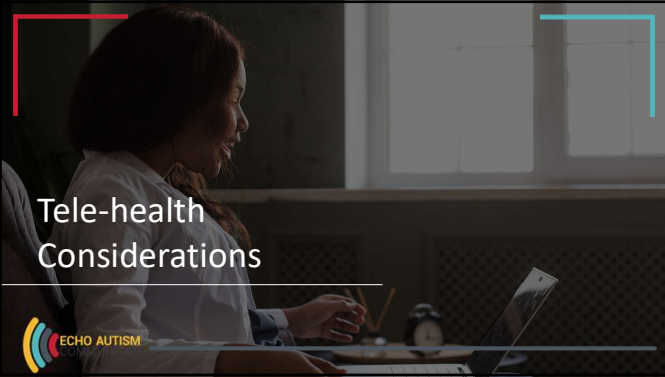

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**Tele-health Considerations**

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- Choose a quiet, well-lit space for virtual sessions.
- Declutter your space.
- Use a background with solid colors and simple artwork.
- Position yourself for proper lighting and placement.
- Preview the camera.
- Pay attention to your body language
- Be aware of your surroundings (blinking/flickering lights, moving objects, etc.)

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**TECHNOLOGY**

## Understanding and Privacy

- Consider whether or not a client needs additional tech understanding/training before continuing sessions.
- Assess clients' tech proficiency and address any potential concerns regarding technology.
- Encourage clients to use secure networks and password-protected devices when connecting to tele-health sessions.
- Respect the client's choice to have their camera on or off.
- Be aware of accessibility issues and make sure that the technology is accessible to all clients.



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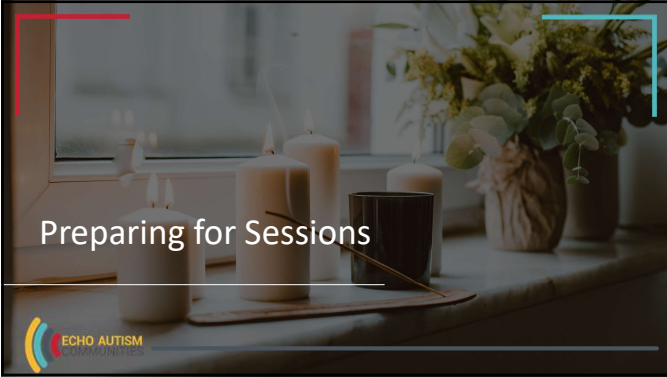
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## Preparing for Sessions



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**PREPARING FOR SESSIONS**

## Setting Expectations and Preparing Clients



- Inform clients about the structure of the session.
- Explain the purpose of the session and potential outcomes.
- Be clear and concise in your instructions.

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**PREPARING FOR SESSIONS**  
Addressing Technical Hiccups



- Offer troubleshooting tips for login issues.
- Provide a backup plan (alternative communication methods) in case of tech problems.
- Turn off notifications on your devices.

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**PREPARING FOR SESSIONS**  
Keeping Up Appearances



- Prior to the first session:
  - Share a few photos of your office.
  - Share a headshot.
- Avoid clothing with too many patterns.
- Avoid wearing strong fragrances and perfumes (if doing in-person sessions).
- Give your clients a head's up about any significant appearance changes (e.g., clinician haircut, hair color, new piercings and tattoos).

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**HONORING A CLIENT'S**  
Space and Support

Encourage clients to <b>PERSONALIZE THEIR SPACE</b> for the therapy session.	Remind clients to <b>KEEP DEVICES STABLE</b> during the therapy session.	Allow clients to <b>BRING COMFORT ITEMS</b> like a fidget toy or weighted blanket.	Encourage clients to <b>ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES</b> and request accommodations as needed.
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Navigating Communication

ECHO AUTISM

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NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION

Keeping it "Natural"

- Speak in a calm and nonthreatening tone.
- Reduce vocal volume.
- Reduce the complexity of sentences you use.
- Make each statement short and clear.
- Avoid double-barreled statements or questions where two ideas are asked at once.
- Reduce the demand for eye contact.
- Use open body language, such as leaning forward and uncrossing your arms.

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES

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NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION

Keeping Yourself in Check

- Manage your own self-regulation, avoid tensing, and remain in a calm, emotion-neutral state during interactions.
- Recognize that autistics may mirror your own anxiety or nervousness so be aware of your own intensity.
- Avoid distractions, such as checking your phone or looking at your computer screen, during the session.

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES

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**NAVIGATING COMMUNICATION**

## Keeping Attuned

- Watch for cues that signal discomfort; they can be subtle.
  - Increasing or changing motor activity (e.g. shaking foot, then moving whole leg, then rocking)
  - Scripted phrases
  - Moving the entire body away (more than just no eye contact... no eye contact is fine)
  - Change in vocal intensity— either increase in volume or shutting down
  - Change in vocal patterns— using echolalia or repeating words or phrases
- If they have alexithymia, they may struggle with knowing how they feel. Assist them by labeling emotions, e.g. "You look unhappy. Is something bothering you?"
- Be aware of camouflaging and masking.



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**COMMUNICATION REMINDERS**

- Presume competence.
- Do not make assumptions about silence.
- Practice active listening and show empathy.
- Foster understanding.
- Embrace opportunities for learning from autistic clients.



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If you desire to make progress,  
you have to meet us where we are.



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