



# AUTISM in CONTEXT

from neurodiversity to neuroharmony

## Autism and happiness: from neurodiversity to neuroharmony

Peter Vermeulen, PhD

Autism in Context

### Course outline:

Accepting neurodiversity is fine, but it emphasizes the differences between people. While it is a big step towards more acceptance of autism as one of the many ways a brain can operate, it is only the first step in our commitment to a better world and more well-being for people with autism. We should also focus on what connects people with autism with the rest of the human species: the pursuit of happiness.

Happiness has received little attention in the field of autism spectrum disorders. Outcome and effect studies, for instance, rarely take emotional well-being as a desired outcome. And when the focus is on well-being, it is often from a negative perspective, namely the lack of well-being and quality of life in autism. It is time to take a U-turn in our approach and change from an exclusive focus on what makes autism so different and from a negative, clinical and medical approach of happiness in people with autism towards a shared and positive focus (we all want to be happy). In other words: let's move from neurodiversity to neuroharmony.

### Short overview:

- Measuring outcomes in autism: objective and subjective criteria
- What is happiness? A pleasant life and a good life.
- How can we increase the well-being of autistic people
- Assessing well-being in autism: tools and practical tips
- How does the autistic thinking (predictive brain) affect well-being in autism?
- Intolerance of uncertainty leading to confusion, misunderstanding and sensory overload
- Promoting positive feelings in autism: concrete strategies
- Promoting life satisfaction and contentment in autism: strategies towards neuroharmony

**Who can benefit:**

This course is suitable for anyone working or living with children or adults on the autism spectrum. It will be of interest to parents, teachers / educators, teaching assistants / aids, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists.