

ClearMinds



Issue 1

MAGAZINE

MAY 2025

Peek Inside



Sliding Scale & Free Consultations



Did You Know - Crows Can Be Quite Machiavelic



Authoritative Parenting



Are Freudian Slips Accidents or Unconscious Desires?



Neurodivergence? Where to start ?



What Have We Been Up To?

ClearMinds Center is excited to offer the **Hold Me Tight**® workshop for couples who are looking to strengthen their connection and deepen their emotional bond. Based on the groundbreaking, evidence-based work of Dr. Sue Johnson, this workshop is designed to help partners improve communication, rebuild trust, and create a more secure and loving relationship.

Through guided exercises, meaningful conversations, and expert support, couples will gain valuable insights into their patterns and learn how to foster greater intimacy and understanding.

Whether you're looking to reconnect, heal, or simply enhance your relationship, this workshop provides a safe and supportive space to grow together.

The workshop will be led by our couples therapist, Moni, who specializes in Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and the Gottman Method. The workshop will work with a maximum of four couples. It will be held online on a span of four weeks.

ONLINE Workshop Dates

Saturdays from 11AM to 3PM

(with breaks)

May 3, 2025

May 10, 2025

May 17, 2025

May 24, 2025

HOLD ME TIGHT Workshop with Moni Elramlawi, MA



Contact us to learn more and reserve your spot.

SLIDING SCALE Session Fees

ClearMinds Center is committed to making quality mental health care accessible to everyone, regardless of financial circumstances. To support this mission, we offer sliding scale fees for individuals who qualify based on income and financial need. This means that eligible clients can receive services at a reduced rate, ensuring they get the support they need without the added stress of financial burden.

If you think you might qualify, please reach out to us for more details and to fill out our Financial Hardship form.

Please note, slots for sliding scale fees are limited. They are given on a first-come-first-serve basis. If slots are unavailable, you can be placed on a waitlist.



FREE 30-MINUTE CONSULTATIONS with Sara Caroppo, MSc

Sara, our wonderful Counseling Psychologist, is happy to offer free 30-minute consultation sessions to gain an initial understanding of the issues that would like to be addressed, how therapy can help, the processes/interventions involved, and the expected time frame.

These one-time only consultation sessions are for parents and teenagers (online or face-to-face), and young children (face-to-face only).



At ClearMinds, we believe that everyone deserves a safe space to heal, grow, and feel seen.



Did you know - that crows can be quite machiavelic ?

By Yassine Tayie, MSc

What's up with one of Dubai's iconic birds?



Crows have become quite the residents in Dubai's landscape. Although first spotted around 1990, they've since made themselves comfortable, with about 3,000 to 5,000 crows now calling the city home.

Elsewhere in the world, they're infamous for stealing cigarettes, dunking food into coffee, or even sampling beer. But here in Dubai, they've also carved out their own mischievous reputation—occasionally nicking food, raiding nests for eggs, and even bothering cats and dogs.

In fact, several Reddit pages feature frustrated "Dubaiotes" sharing their crow encounters:

"Walking with my wife in the Marina, they swooped down and smacked the back of my head—one tried three times! My wife jokingly calls me a bird magnet now."

"My poor cat can't catch a break. Every time she steps outside they dive at her until she darts back inside meowing. It's hilarious."

"I was literally targeted by crows for an entire year after I tried rescuing a dead one."

We usually think dogs are pretty clever, learning and responding to up to 200 commands. But crows? They're on a whole other level! Imagine being smarter than a seven-year-old human—not just because they don't wear nappies until age two, recognize their reflection, or effortlessly mimic multiple human languages from French to German (though, admittedly, these feats are impressive).

It's their extraordinary problem-solving skills and advanced cognitive abilities that really set them apart. Professor John Marzluff explains that crows are intensely curious and highly observant. Sharing your space with crows is like having nosy neighbors constantly watching everything happening around them—animals, humans, you name it! They copy behaviors, gather intel, and adapt their actions based on what they've seen.

In one intriguing study at the University of Washington, researchers wore distinctive masks while capturing crows.

Afterwards, anyone sporting that same mask was aggressively swooped at by crows whose brains' amygdala would activate. Astonishingly, eight years later, crows on campus were still hostile to the mask—even though the original crows involved had already passed away.

Closer to home, in Ras Al Khaimah, one man found himself relentlessly harassed by crows for a year after trying to help a dead crow at his workplace.

Perhaps the most amusing discovery is that crows also use their intelligence just for fun! Their brains share similar functions and neurochemicals with humans, including those linked to pleasure. Crows have been spotted mimicking other birds' calls for fun, giving false predator alerts, or casually hanging out with their mates.

A domestic crow in Missoula, Montana, even grabbed headlines after he began visiting local homes, calling out, "Come on, boy, let's go, let's go!" and leading a pack of confused dogs straight to the university campus before cheerfully flying away.



Next time you're out enjoying a stroll in JLT, wandering through the Marina, or sipping coffee at the beach, keep an eye out for crows—you might just witness these cheeky birds having some clever fun.

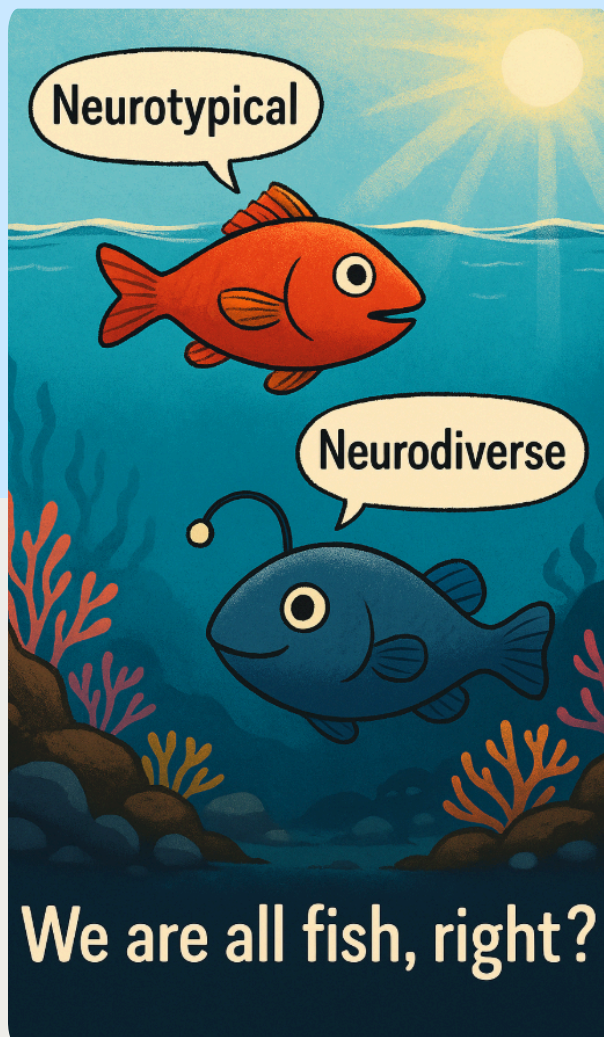
At the very least, stay on their good side—after all, who wants a flying monkey with an elephant's memory holding a grudge?



Rethinking Neurodiversity and Autism

By Nardus Saayman, Ph.D

This article begins a series of articles that will follow in the ClearMinds newsletter over the coming months, with the aim of providing a clearer sense of what we actually mean when we refer to neurodiversity or autism.



I want to explore autism beyond outdated concepts of deficits and limitations. In the newsletter issues that follow, I will illustrate how psychological ideas can be used to better understand and appreciate the unique experiences of autistic individuals. The goal is to clarify misunderstandings and improve the connections between autistic/neurodiverse individuals and the various social spaces that they have to navigate, by genuinely considering the autistic or neurodiverse individual's experiences.

Today, more than ever, we are beginning to understand neurodiversity via exciting new discoveries in brain science. These discoveries offer hope that we can better explain the experiences that patients and their loved ones regularly navigate. Autism, in particular, is receiving significant attention, helping us appreciate the unique ways autistic individuals experience the world

"Neurodiversity" simply means recognizing that there are individuals whose brains work differently compared to 'neurotypical' individuals. We're all unique, but some people's brains operate in ways that significantly differ from what is typically considered 'normal'. These individuals are described as 'neurodivergent'. Autism is one example of neurodivergence, characterized by differences in communication, social interactions, sensory experiences, interests, and the need for structure or novelty in their daily lives.

Recent studies led by autistic people themselves encourage us to rethink traditional ways of understanding autism. Rather than seeing autism as a set of problems to fix, we are learning to approach autism with openness, curiosity, and respect. This shift invites us to move away from outdated views that only focus on what autistic people supposedly 'lack'. Instead, it calls us to genuinely understand and support the unique ways autistic people experience their world. However, saying that a neurodiverse individual's brain works differently compared to the brain of a neurotypical individual (the majority), does not really give us much to go on. It is an accepted and common way of explaining the situation, but many neurodiverse individuals as well as the people close to them feel that this is an empty explanation.

Historically, psychology and psychoanalysis have struggled to fully understand autism. Early theories often tried to pinpoint what went "wrong" during development, but many believe these theories missed the essence of what autism truly is. Autism challenges us to rethink our psychological models—models traditionally based on "typical" brain functioning—and asks how these models might look if we accounted for brains that operate differently.

Ultimately, autism isn't just about behaviors or limitations—it's about understanding people whose brains are wired differently and whose experiences of the world are just as meaningful, complex, and valuable as anyone else's.

To fully grasp what it means to be autistic, it's crucial to listen directly to the voices and experiences of autistic individuals. They frequently describe the world as overwhelming or intensely vivid due to heightened sensory experiences. Sounds, sights, smells, and sensations can be much more powerful or distracting, making everyday environments feel challenging. On the other hand, these sensory sensitivities can also lead to remarkable abilities, such as heightened perception, deep focus, and unique insights that many neurotypical individuals might overlook.

Additionally, autistic individuals often have deep passions or intense interests that provide a sense of comfort and predictability.



These interests aren't just hobbies—they can offer pathways to meaningful careers, connections with others who share similar passions, and a profound sense of identity and purpose. Understanding these interests and respecting their significance can greatly enhance the therapeutic relationship and overall well-being of autistic individuals.

As we advance our understanding of autism, it's also essential to acknowledge the significant role of society and environment in shaping the experiences of autistic people. Social expectations and norms often don't accommodate neurodivergent ways of interacting or communicating, leading to feelings of exclusion or misunderstanding. Creating environments that are inclusive and respectful of neurodiversity not only benefits autistic individuals but enriches our communities by embracing diversity in all its forms. By shifting our perspectives and approaching autism with empathy and openness, we can foster more meaningful connections and provide better support. Our collective goal should be to ensure that autistic individuals feel seen, understood, and valued for who they truly are.



Effectiveness of Authoritative Parenting in Fostering Autonomy

By Hacer Subasi, MSc

Parenting plays a crucial role in a child's journey from being entirely dependent on their caregiver's decisions to becoming an autonomous individual capable of making their own choices.



Initially, a newborn relies completely on their parent, but over time, they transition from being an object into a subject, oscillating harmonically between dependence and independence—an essential process for developing a true sense of autonomy.

Among the three well-known parenting styles—permissive (liberal), authoritarian, and authoritative—each shapes this developmental journey differently. Permissive parenting aims to create a stress-free and nurturing environment but often lacks the structure necessary for long-term growth. Authoritarian parenting, on the other hand, is a rigid, rule-based approach that prioritizes obedience and discipline over warmth and flexibility. Parents set high expectations with little emotional engagement, enforcing strict rules through harsh discipline and fear-based motivation. With one-way communication and minimal room for autonomy, this style can lead to low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and difficulty in independent decision-making.

In contrast, authoritative parenting is widely regarded as the most effective approach, striking a balance between guidance and independence. By offering both warmth and clear boundaries, it supports a child's evolving autonomy while ensuring they receive the necessary structure for healthy emotional and cognitive growth.

The Effectiveness of Authoritative Parenting

As a balanced parenting strategy—often referred to as authoritative parenting—blends the warmth and responsiveness of liberal/permissive parenting with clear expectations and structure, fostering emotional resilience. This style encourages autonomy and independent thought while maintaining a well-defined framework that supports a child's development. Unlike permissive parenting, it provides necessary guidance without being overly controlling. Authoritative parenting is associated with positive outcomes such as:

Higher Self-Esteem and Confidence:

Children raised in authoritative households receive consistent encouragement and support while learning to take responsibility for their actions. This fosters self-worth and confidence in their abilities.

Better Emotional Regulation:

Because authoritative parents set clear boundaries while providing emotional support, children learn to manage their emotions effectively. They understand how to navigate conflicts and express themselves appropriately.

Improved Academic Success:

Authoritative parents emphasize the importance of education and effort, helping children develop a strong work ethic and perseverance. These children tend to perform better academically compared to those raised in permissive or authoritarian households.

Stronger Social Skills and Moral Development:

Children raised in authoritative environments learn the value of cooperation, empathy, and respect. Since they are encouraged to express their thoughts while respecting rules, they develop strong interpersonal skills and a solid moral compass.

The Relationship Between Authoritative Parenting and Autonomy

Parenting is not the art of making a child happy; it is the art of doing what is right for the child with a developmental perspective. Autonomy does not equate to the absence of boundaries. Rather, it signifies a child's ability to take initiative within the limits of the authority they are developmentally entitled to.



When children are deprived of the rights and responsibilities appropriate for their developmental stage, they may attempt to assert control in an asymmetrical and developmentally inappropriate manner. This is where authoritative parenting plays a crucial role—it fosters autonomy while maintaining necessary guidance. By providing children with structured opportunities to make independent decisions and take responsibility for their actions, authoritative parenting ensures that autonomy develops in a healthy and balanced way. This is achieved through:

Encouraging Decision-Making:

Unlike authoritarian parenting, which imposes strict rules, authoritative parents allow their children to make choices within appropriate limits. This helps children develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Providing Constructive Feedback:

Instead of punishing mistakes harshly, authoritative parents use them as learning opportunities. This helps children understand the consequences of their actions without feeling overly restricted.

Supporting Exploration with Boundaries:

Authoritative parents encourage children to explore their interests while ensuring they remain within safe and ethical limits. This balanced approach helps children develop independence without feeling abandoned or unsupported.

Promoting a Growth Mindset:

By emphasizing effort, perseverance, and responsibility, authoritative parents instill a mindset that values growth and self-improvement.



This prepares children to face real-world challenges with resilience and adaptability.

While liberal parenting may appear to offer children autonomy, its lack of structure can lead to negative developmental outcomes, including poor self-discipline, academic struggles, and difficulty managing emotions. In contrast, authoritative parenting strikes a balance between setting firm expectations and nurturing independence, ultimately fostering a strong sense of autonomy.

By providing a supportive yet structured environment, authoritative parents equip their children with the tools necessary for success in various aspects of life, from academic achievement to social relationships and emotional resilience.





Are Freudian Slips Accidents or Unconscious Desires?

By Sara Caroppo, MSc

You know that moment when you're deep in conversation, feeling totally at ease, and then you accidentally call your partner by your ex's name?



Suddenly, there is silence, eyebrows are raised, and you're left mumbling, while attempting to explain how that name just magically appeared in your mouth. Yeah, that's a Freudian slip. And no, you can't blame autocorrect this time!

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, believed that these little verbal hiccups are more than just accidents. They are windows into our unconscious mind, and those windows can reveal some uncomfortable yet powerful truths.

Most people think a Freudian slip is in fact, just about saying one thing when you mean your mother, I mean, another. But in therapy, they can go beyond words and sometimes, they take the form of odd sounds, sudden vocalisations, or unexpected bursts of laughter that escape before the brain can apply its usual filter.

Ever had a conversation with someone telling you how upset they were while having a big smile on their face? These mismatches are unconscious slips too, and they reveal more than any carefully curated Instagram caption ever could.

One time, a 10-year-old boy I worked with a few years ago insisted he was "super happy" at school but would unconsciously sing the horror movies theme song whenever we talked by his maths teacher. Or another teenage girl who repeatedly said her stepdad was "ok" but would keep scrunching up her nose while saying it, as if her subconscious just couldn't let that lie slide. But why do these slips matter?

As a child psychologist, I know children and adolescents rarely express their emotions in a clear and concise way. Their unconscious minds do a lot of the talking for them. And sometimes, the most revealing moments aren't in what they say, but in the pauses, the stutters, the sighs, and even the weird noises that slip out when they think no one is paying attention.

In Dubai's fast paced, high achieving environment, where emotions often take a backseat to success, these moments become even more valuable. A young person might insist they are handling school stress "perfectly fine" while repeatedly mispronouncing the word "exam" as "eczema." A child might loudly say "I love living here" but unconsciously draw pictures of airplanes heading back to their home country. These aren't just coincidences; they are tiny leaks from the emotional reservoir.



Now that we have this knowledge, however, it is important that we don't overanalyse every slip. Sometimes a latte really is just a latte, and not a symbol of your unresolved dairy-related trauma. But if you notice patterns, especially in young people, it is worth exploring what their subconscious might be trying to say. It is also critical that we embrace these moments with curiosity rather than embarrassment. The next time your child insists they love school but simultaneously lets out a noise that sounds like a deflating balloon, maybe dig a little deeper. And if you accidentally call your boss "dad" in a meeting... well, maybe take a day off.

Because whether we are in therapy, cooking, or just trying to survive Hessa Street traffic, our unconscious minds are always speaking.

The real question is, are we listening?

BRAINBREAK

This or That?

Circle your choice and reflect: Why do you prefer this? What does this say about what you need right now?

SPEAK UP or **STAY QUIET**

ALONE TIME or **TIME WITH FRIENDS**

CRY IT OUT or **HOLD BACK TEARS**

TALK TO SOMEONE or **WRITE IN A JOURNAL**

GO FOR A WALK or **TAKE A NAP**

LISTEN TO MUSIC or **SIT IN SILENCE**

SAY "I'M NOT OKAY" or **PUT ON A BRAVE FACE**

ASK FOR HELP or **HANDLE IT ON YOUR OWN**

LAUGH ABOUT IT or **TAKE A MOMENT TO FEEL IT**

LET IT GO or **WORK THROUGH IT**

Let's reflect!

- Pick one "this or that" where your choice surprised you. Why do you think that is?
- Is there a time when you would choose the opposite option?



BRAINBREAK

Word Search: All about emotions!

Take a mindful pause and explore this emotions-themed word search! Can you find all the hidden feelings? As you search, notice which words stand out to you — they might reflect how you've been feeling lately.

Happy
Sad
Angry
Calm
Lonely

Fear
Safe
Joy
Shame
Guilt

Hope
Excited
Nervous
Frustrated
Grateful



H A P P Y R E M O H O I N S
G U Y M P A C A L M J O Y A
E X C I T E D G U I L T E R
F E A R H O P E A A E F U S
N E R V O U S N K L A R T T
G R A T E F U L M S H A M E
A A M E G A Y R G N A F E R
L O N E L Y T I R G T D R A
A L T I M S U R F E S A D T
M O D E T A R T S U R F V E

Don't worry if you
can't find 'Calm'!
we sometimes
struggle with that
too!

Let's reflect!

Pick one positive and one difficult
emotion.

What helps you manage them?

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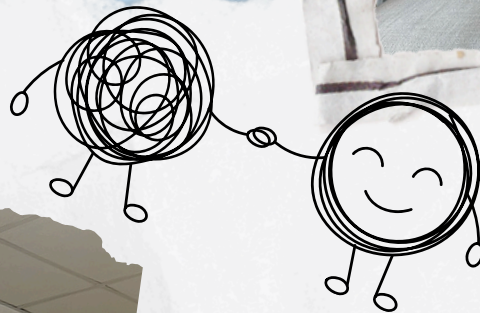
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