Twitter Thread by Dusty Chipura



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okay so here's a snippet of what you missed on #neurodiverse TikTok yesterday; there was two things happening at once and they intersected so it got confusing

both things basically involved autistic tiktok vs ADHD tiktok which probably got really confusing for the people who are diagnosed as both. One issue was around gatekeeping and lateral ableism, and the other a more serious issue around research ethics vs. grassroots understanding

I know ppl on both sides of the research ethics debate & it's being dealt w already so I don't want to comment more on what happened there; let's just say that there are a lot of exciting and scientific things that eager ADHD folx are learning that COULD deepen our understanding

of neurodiverse physiological and metabolic practices but these are purely hypothetical and as neurodiverse people seeking to understand ourselves, we get excited, we info-dump and it becomes more of a question about when do you have responsibility as a content creator to clarify

and make sure your audience understands what you are saying and what you are NOT saying about things that have been scientifically proven to be related to ADHD?

That's probably as clear as mud but that's all I wanna say about that: onto the other thing!

SO

some folks from autistic tiktok started noticing that folks from ADHD tiktok were borrowing terms and experiences that had been generated by the autistic community that they felt were also applicable to them

stuff like the idea of 'masking', 'stim' etc

Now, we all know this is complex and nuanced bc ADHD and autism share a lot of traits and many people have both. So it's challenging to answer the question of whether ADHD folks mask or stim because some probably do while others dont

the issue is that someone from autistic tiktok, who is like a 20 year veteran disability advocate & researcher, said they felt that ADHD tiktok should be citing or creiditing the autistic community that came before them that even made it possible for

them (us) to have this lingo

and that it isn't really okay for ADHDtok to be explaining things like masking and stimming as if they ARE ADHD things and more or less 'taking credit for' those things.

Understandably, some from ADHDtok felt this was gatekeeping

the creator used the example of 'code switching' and how she wouldn't refer to something she does as 'code switching' because it's taking that out of its social context, its not really the same thing and it's coming from a different marginalized community.

So as a disabled person you might say something you do is similar in some ways to 'code switching' but if you say you ARE 'code switching' and basically explain it like you made it up, now you're co-opting it.

While some on ADHDtok felt that this was linguistic and conceptual gatekeeping, those from autistictok felt that this was lateral ableism on the part of ADHDtok because ADHDers enjoy relative privilege to those who are more visibly autistic/neurodiverse.

so now we're talking neurodiversity privilege withing the ND community. There are some further debates happening about the idea of 'masking' being a privilege AT ALL, even among autistics, because some autistic folk cannot mask. Many were resistant to that idea because

masking comes at great personal trauma and its hard to feel like adopting that trauma is a 'privilege', but other creators pointed out that the ability to do so at all, to keep one safe in social situations, may be construed as privilege.

HERES WHERE I COME IN

I saw ADHDtok talking about masking and I too jumped on that bandwagon cuz I really identified with the concept of a sort of manual social engagement that required active self-management of 'weird' behaviours. However, after hearing the concerns of the autistic community

I felt that what i was experiencing truly WASNT masking (although something similiar) and the conversation around privilege isn't new to me; when someone tells me I am doing them harm or that using a term is doing them harm, then I don't do that. Or I take accountability for that

HERES THE THING: nobody from Autistictok was saying that people w ADHD *CANT* use these terms or *DONT* experience these things; the issue was with ADHD creators talking about masking/stim etc as if they made it up and not conveying the work and history of the autistic community

they simply wanted acknowledgement of historical context and for ADHD neurodiverse creators to learn a bit more of the history of the disability advocacy movement to have more of an understanding of how we can even disseminate this information today.

And that's fine like that TOTALLY makes sense. The creator in question rightly pointed out that the austistic community has not only laid a lot of groundwork for our discussions and language about neurodiversity today, but that they still are often not benefiting from that work.

Autistic folks have the highest likelihood of being unemployed or underemployed. @CBC news says "According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, the employment rate for autistic adults is 14.3 per cent, compared to 92.7 per cent for the general population"

so autistic advocate work tirelessly w/out pay to make it possible for us to have these understandings today and are now asking us as a community to be responsible with how we throw these terms around and cite/ground them in the historical struggle.

Everybody - including them - understands the neurodiversity nuance and that many with ADHD are legitimately experiencing masking and stimming as understood by the autistic community. They just want respect and acknowledgement.

to do otherwise is erasure and I would argue, IS lateral violence in the disability/neurodiverse community. We can just be like, respectful and caring and responsible even though we're all a bunch of super hyped people who get excited when we learn a new thing!

ANYWAY THATS WHAT YOU MISSED HAVE A GOOD DAY