



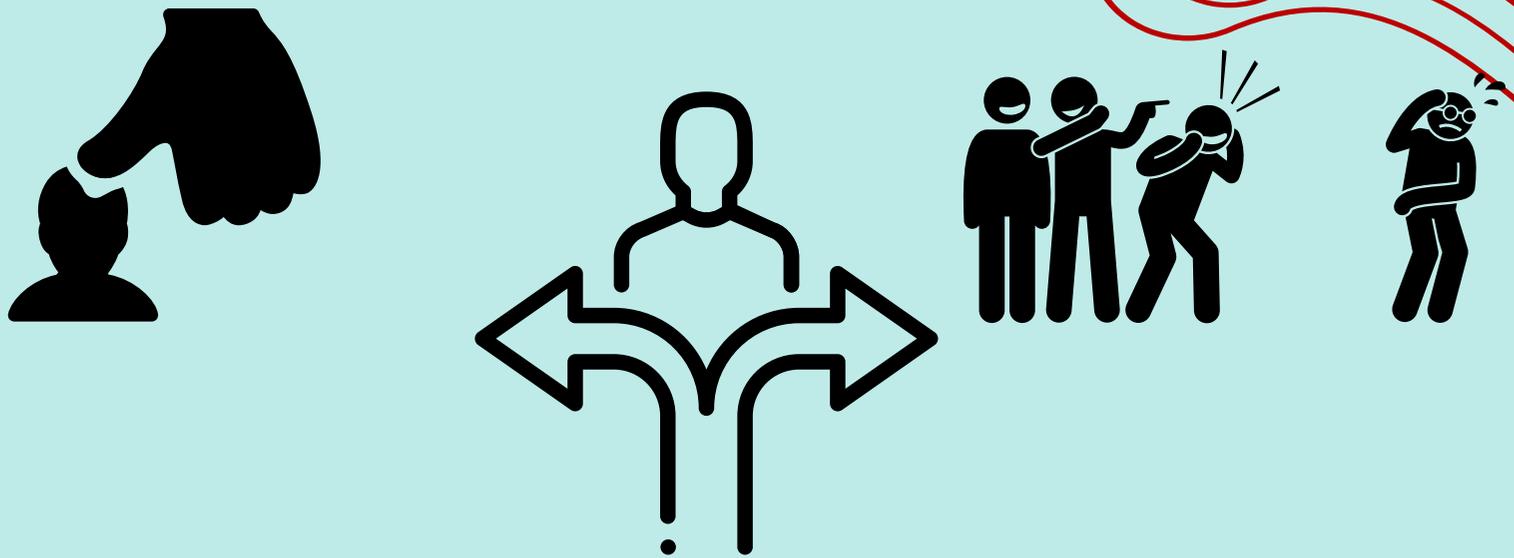
# Building Community, not Colonies

@NEUROCLASTIC



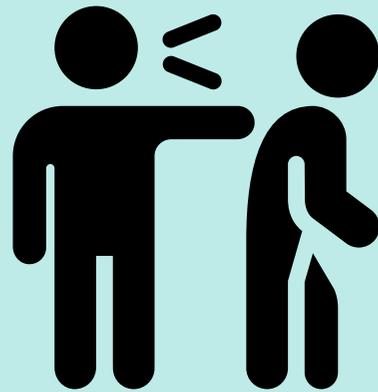
## **TRAUMA**

People entering the autistic community usually have a lot of trauma. Internalized ableism is trauma, not a moral failing. It is a response to living in a hostile society and trying to survive. The less privilege a person has, the more dangerous it is for them to oppose the status quo. Sometimes, people in hostile environments have to conform in order to stay alive and protect their families.



## SEARCHING FOR SAFETY

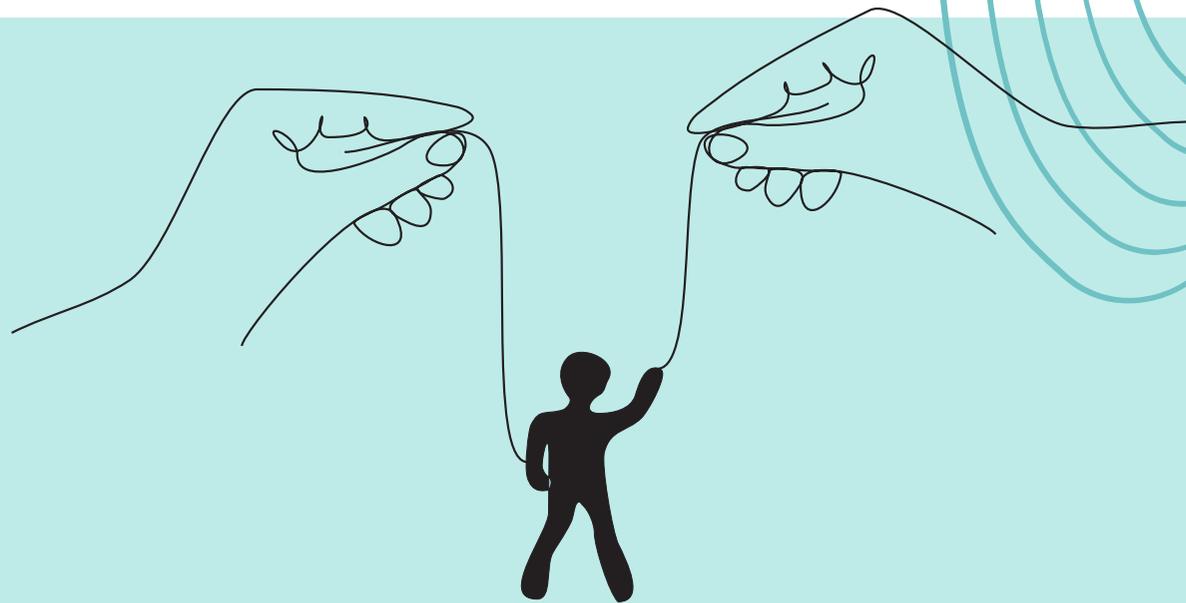
When someone deals with social oppression, bullying, gaslighting, and isolation, they have two options: conform to what is harmful and accept that conditional safety, or protest and accept the punishment for noncompliance. The best way for them to experience safety is within community. For autistic people, most of us have never had the safety to even get to know ourselves.



## **MORE OF THE SAME**

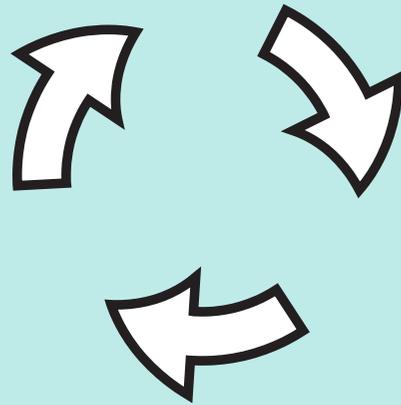
Within marginalized communities, structural oppression is often mirrored, sometimes brutally.

There is a pressure to comply with anti-oppression ideology that has a “you’re either with us or with them” message. People either comply or are accused of self-hatred. But marginalized people do not always have the privilege to live in protest. What they do **ALWAYS** have is the right to make personal choices.



## **FORCED COMPLIANCE**

An aggressive, unforgiving community that gives no room to be wrong, unpack harmful indoctrination, heal, and choose healthy options that work for each individual in their own space and time, that forever polices and penalizes individual's choices, gets pulled into a toxic cycle. Those who resist are shunned and demonized and those who comply add to the harm.



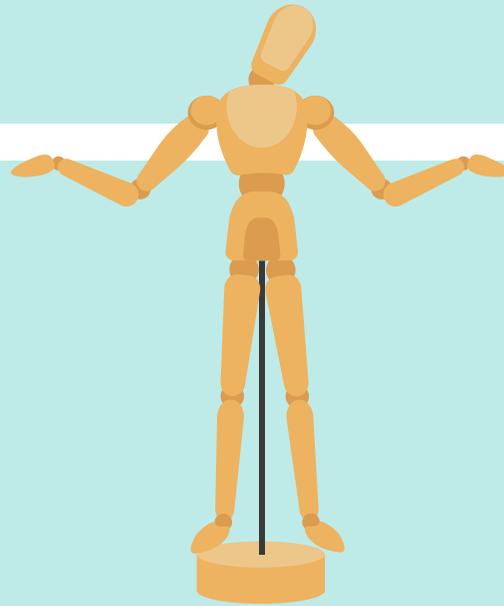
## **THE CYCLE OF HARM**

The community norm becomes to keep the oppression out of the community by targeting the specifics, like what language is best or what symbols to use. The real harm and oppression is in the coercion and lack of autonomy that underlies the specifics. No one thrives in a choiceless existence. If someone is engaging in harm, there is an underlying reason— often to avoid worse harm.



## **COMMUNITY AND AUTONOMY**

A healthy community provides information and choices, not membership that will be revoked for non-compliance. People's choices may be upholding their safety, even if they're not ideal. Safety is not just physical safety, but also social safety, emotional safety, and financial safety.



## **LEARNED HELPLESSNESS**

If we put out the information about why we do what we do, as a community, then others can choose to accept that information and adopt it if it makes sense to them and does not compromise their safety. They will do it when they're ready and able if they feel it suits their life and makes sense to them. Being forced or shamed into compliance is not healthy. It doesn't promote authentic progress, but learned helplessness.



## **REAL OR PERFORMATIVE**

Change through coercion is performative. It is a protective response, a mask, and not a commitment values. We can build a more committed community by giving people the time, space, and freedom to opt in when they are ready and when it's right for them.



## **SAFETY THROUGH BOUNDARIES**

Advocates wanting to protect themselves from burnout, toxic antagonism, trolls, and abuse from people engaging in bad faith can do so by creating and maintaining boundaries. It is always okay to step away, block, mute, or ignore what we don't have the bandwidth to process or the will to tolerate. We can build support networks with others in community and can recharge, rest, laugh, and restore when we need.