

# Olivia Meriano

11:45AM - 1:00PM

## Uniquely Our Own: The Communication Profile of Autism and Down Syndrome

People who are Autistic with Down syndrome often communicate in ways that are unique. This workshop is designed for caregivers and educators who either suspect or support someone with a dual diagnosis and are looking to deepen their understanding of their communication, through a neurodiversity-affirming lens.

Together, we will explore key communication profile differences in Autism and Down syndrome, including social interaction styles and preferences. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, you'll leave with a clearer understanding of the dual diagnosis profile. Most importantly, you will gain language and confidence attuning to their strengths, needs and genuine ways of connecting with the world.



Liv is a registered Speech-Language Pathologist from Vancouver, Canada, who has dedicated her career to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities, with a specific interest in Down syndrome and Autism. Growing up with three siblings with developmental disabilities and as a neurodivergent clinician herself, her professional and personal experiences have shaped her approach to client-centred care and highlighted the importance of providing neurodiversity-affirming care. To Liv, this means recognizing that every brain is unique. In her practice, she seeks to understand and honour those differences, empowering individuals and families to feel seen, heard, and understood.

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3:45 - 5:00PM

## Parent Forum Description (Following the Workshop)

Caregivers of dually diagnosed children often report feelings of feeling alone, and perceive their experience as more stressful. Following the presentation, caregivers are invited to participate in a supportive interactive discussion forum. This space offers an opportunity to reflect, share experiences, ask questions and connect with other caregivers walking a similar path and provide caregivers the opportunity to connect and confide in others who experience similar journeys within the disability community.

This guided conversation encourages meaningful dialogue around:

- Personal experiences with Autism and Down syndrome
- What resonated from the workshop
- Celebrating strengths and identifying areas where support is needed
- Strength-focused ways to support communication, belonging, and relationship-building
- Building community and support networks

Whether you're seeking clarity, encouragement, or just a reminder that you're not alone, this forum provides a warm and collaborative environment to learn and connect with others within the Down syndrome community.



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