

# 5<sup>th</sup> European Autism Congress

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### **The development of an IT tool to support autistic people's self-regulation.**

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Autistic people can sometimes have difficulties identifying internal sensations (interoception) and with emotional awareness and regulation. Recent studies show that high alexithymic traits, not Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), had been associated with these difficulties, and although not all autistic people have alexithymic traits, it is common and associated with co-occurring mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression. As emotions are often felt in the body, due to somatosensory feedback, sensations can serve as a marker for different emotional states. Emotional awareness and identifying body sensations may facilitate autistic adults' process of self-regulation and improve mental health and well-being. Concurrently, there's been an increase in the development of digital tools to support autistic people, showing promising results, especially when the autistic community is involved in participatory research. As such, this communication aims to present the architecture of a mobile app, developed according to the Demola Innovation process (1), to support autistic adults' identifying their sensory profile and alexithymia scores, assess bodily sensations and record emotional experiences (through writing, audio recording, and/or visual emotion scales). This tool will then provide several self-soothing and regulatory tools, wellness check-ins, and others, based on their sensory and needs profile, to improve knowledge of their own sensory and emotional needs. Although the app is mainly for self-assessment of autistic users, it could also be an important tool for parents of autistic children to better understand their needs and support them in increasing emotional and sensory awareness and regulation, as well as psychologists supporting autistic adults.

#### **Biography**

Deanna Mulvihill has her expertise in evaluation and passion in improving the health and wellbeing. Her open and contextual evaluation model based on responsive constructivists creates new pathways for improving healthcare. She has built this model after years of experience in research, evaluation, teaching and administration both in hospital and education institutions. The foundation is based on fourth generation evaluation (Guba& Lincoln, 1989) which is a methodology that utilizes the previous generations of evaluation: measurement, description and judgment. It allows for value-pluralism. This approach is responsive to all stakeholders and has a different way of focusing.

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