

Date: March 14, 2023
Re: Change of company logo



In 2018 my husband and I led a team to create Growing Together Behavioral Center. At that time, the puzzle piece was widely known as the symbol of autism awareness and was the first thing we considered as part of our logo. To me, this symbolized that we were a safe space for the autistic community, we were a school for children with autism, and we were going to do everything we could to support our local autism community. As parents of, at that time one child diagnosed with autism, we felt connected to this puzzle piece. Autism was, and is, a big part of who our son is, but it was only a piece of who he was. So, the puzzle piece made perfect sense to us.

I later found out the origin of the puzzle piece symbol which began with a negative connotation. It was designed in 1963 for the National Autistic Society in the UK. They believed that autistic people suffered from a “puzzling” condition, so they adopted a logo of a puzzle piece with a weeping child. To this day, Autism Speaks uses the symbol to represent the “search for answers” that they say refers to is the search for cures and treatments.

Over the past five years we’ve grown as a company, and now serve a new population of children, teens and young adults with autism. This expanded our services to groups I had very little experience with personally, as my son was only 12 at the time. As we grew we also started to hire more autistic adults, again a group I had little to no experience with.

It was over the past year that I started to hear more autistic adults speaking out about their dislike of the puzzle piece. I did more listening, less talking, and really understood what people were saying about how this symbol made them feel. I will admit, I didn’t understand in the beginning, but as I continued to listen I learned more about this perspective of the puzzle piece being ableist and negative.

I have taken time to empathize and ally with the autistic community, and right now what I hear is that individuals with autism do not like the connotation of

6789 Southpoint Parkway #100, Jacksonville, FL 32216
4310 Barkoskie Road, Jacksonville, FL 32258
904-379-6045 (p) 904-301-4741 (f)

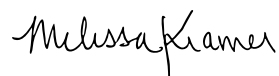
needing to be fixed or suffering of a disease. They don't want to be seen as missing a piece of themselves, or that people need to search for a way to cure them of autism. They want their differences to be celebrated and accepted.

Nothing about Growing Together has ever been about adhering to outdated beliefs, it's built for (and now being grown by) autistic children and adults. Their voices need to be heard, and we desire to show them we are their ally! In December 2022, I consulted with my neurodivergent staff members and reached out to an amazing graphic designer who has children on the spectrum expressing my interest in changing our logo to be more in line with the ever-evolving growth and voices of the neurodiverse community.

Today, we are so proud to share our new logo with you! The infinity symbol was chosen by the neurodiverse community to represent that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways, there is no right way. This new logo is intended to feel human. The infinity symbol feels hand-drawn and purposely meant to feel that every loop of the infinity is individual and uniquely beautiful. In color, the strands of the infinity symbol can each be a vary between a brand gold and orange, simulating a gradient (or spectrum) and we kept our original wording which is anchored in the familiar blue meaning optimistic and green meaning vitality and growth.

We hope you love this as much as we do, and we hope our neurotypical friends learned something like we did through this change!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Kramer". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Melissa Kramer
Executive Director/Founder