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Movement, Rest, Bodyminds

Ekat Osipova

marissa micah schut's piece resonated with me a lot. There were so many parts I could relate to, even if our bodyminds also diverge in different ways. Reading the piece felt soothing; it was the kind of fuzzy, joyful feeling Mia Mingus describes as access intimacy (Mingus 2011). This feeling evoked reflections on the bodyminds I inhabit and the different ways of knowing and caring enacted by those bodyminds. Produced in a time of dissociation, exhaustion and brain-fog, the result is a small compilation of textual/pictorial vignettes. Their fragmented nature reflects my neurodivergent way of making sense of things in research and beyond (akin to Kender and Spiel's found footage ethnography 2023).

There is no point ignoring your body. And yet, academia expects you to. More often than not, research is presented as disembodied. Knowing is seemingly a detached, immaterial activity. Any basic bodily need is not allowed to matter when you have to push through to make the deadline.

When my body is overwhelmed by stress and sensory overload, I cannot ignore it. My entire body starts to feel sore from within. My skin feels very sensitive, and I feel a burning tightness and tension in my chest. If I don't rest or get out of the situation causing these sensations, my body eventually shuts down. If I don't listen to my body's demands for care, I start feeling numb, my head gets clouded, and I can't speak properly. At some point I just get so tired, I can fall asleep instantly. My body takes the rest it needs (Figure 8.1).

Stimming is a recurring rhythm of the bodymind. Yergeau describes stimming as a preservation and a neuroqueer retrofit to inaccessible environments:

[W]hile stimming holds many sensory meanings, it is frequently a means of seeking sensory balance in an overwhelming, stressful, or painful situation. A neurodivergent person might rock their body hard against a wall in order to remain in a room; the rocking, in this instance, is a

Figure 8.1: Ekat and their cat resting in bed. Ekat's head is leaning on a Blåhaj plush toy



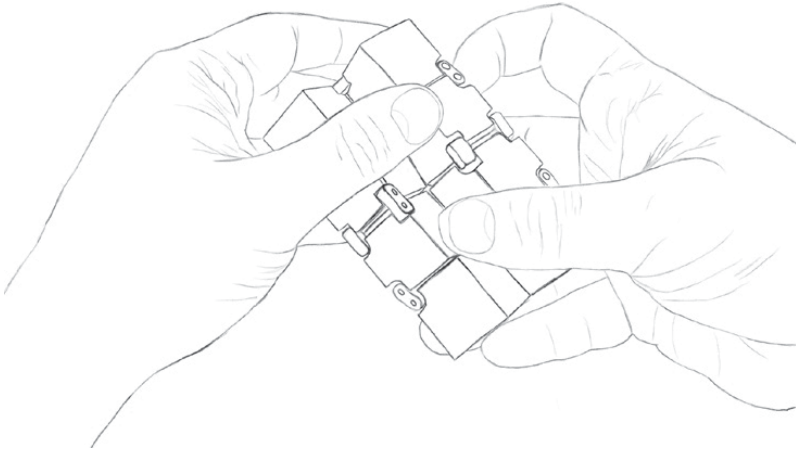
way to create access in an inaccessible situation, a way to relate within or around normative space. (Yergeau 2023, 41)

Stimming, thus, is a practice of care enacted by the body (Figure 8.2). When my body stims, my affects, whether tumultuous or joyful, are directed outwards. When I stim, the boundaries between my inner life and my environment blur.

References

- Kender, K. and Spiel, K. (2023) Banal Autistic Social Media: A Found Footage Autoethnography. In *Proceedings of the 25th International ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility (ASSETS '23)*. New York: Association for Computing Machinery, Article 101, pp 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3597638.3614552>

Figure 8.2: Ekat's hands fidgeting with an infinity cube



Mingus, M. (2011) Access Intimacy: The Missing Link. *Leaving Evidence*, 5 May. Available at: <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/> [Accessed 4 September 2024].

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