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Neurodiversity information

This is a document of notes and information gathered over the years about a wide variety of different topics and subjects.

Feel free to add your own notes.

Please try to put them into a relevant section (or near other info that's around a similar topic)

Intro

Imagine you are born left-handed and everyone else is right-handed. The world around you is built for right-handed people. You go through life doing things the right-handed way because that is what's 'normal'. You feel exhausted all the time and can't understand why other people make it look so easy doing right-handed things. Other people don't even think about being right-handed, it's automatic for them, but you always find it difficult and can't understand why it's not easy for you as well. One day you hear about 'left-handed' and you wonder, could that be me? You try using your left-hand and all of a sudden things are easier, you can understand, you can manipulate objects, life is easier when you approach it left-handed, but you can only be left-handed at home. When out in public or at work you still have to force yourself to use your right-hand because that is what the majority of people use. -

Amanda Jackson

Attached is a powerpoint that goes through some of the types of neurodiversity, and the issues and benefits of them. [Neurodiversity.pptx](#)

Useful Links

ADHD	https://www.adhd.org.nz/what-is-adhd.htm ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and describes the unique structure of your brain.
CO-EXISTING CONDITIONS (Co-morbidities)	https://www.adhd.org.nz/co-morbidities.htm If someone may be experiencing ADHD on its own but others experience ADHD alongside other challenge(s).
Dyslexia	https://www.speld.org.nz/specific-learning-disability-definitions / dyslexi a Dyslexia is a specific learning disability ('SLD') that makes it far harder to learn to read, write or do number work. It is a processing difficulty that makes achieving success in literacy and numeracy a real challenge.
Autism and the Social Mind	https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/autism-and-the - social-mind / Social-cognitive neuroscience offers insights into the early course of brain development and its connections to autism spectrum disorder
Dyscalculia	https://www.speld.org.nz/specific-learning-disability-definitions / dyscalculi a People with dyscalculia have a huge struggle acquiring arithmetical skills in spite of a good learning environment at home and at school.
Dyspraxia	http://dyspraxia.org.nz/what-is-dyspraxia / https://www.speld.org.nz/specific-learning-disability-definitions / dyspraxi a
Tourette Syndrome (TS)	https://tourettes.org.nz/about-ts /
Oppositional defiance disorder (ODD)	https://kidspot.co.nz/health/oppositional-defiance-disorder /
Obsessives Compulsive disorder (OCD)	http://www.familydoctor.co.nz/categories/mental-health / obsessive-compulsive-disorder-a-patients-guide /

Add RSD to this list....

Questions & Other information

Questions asked after running the presentation via email

- What is Aphantasia? Aphantasia is a newly discovered neurodiversity that was named around 5 years ago. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/when-the-minds-eye-is-blind1/>

It's an inability to form mental images. This drastically changes what you can remember, which drives how you think. People with this diversity tend to be very analytical and fact focused, but have issues remembering people and events which can lead to social isolation. There is a lack of research around this condition, so much is still unknown.

- How do autistic people think?

Great answer here, plus some additional answers in the comments: [https:// qr.ae/pNAQrn](https://qr.ae/pNAQrn)

Also: note that if you've met one autistic person, you've met one autistic person. There are similarities but all people are different.

- What is autistic catatonia?

Lots of information here: <https://qr.ae/pNF4T6>

- What is autistic meltdown?

Lots of information here:

<https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-physiology-of-an-autistic-meltdown-and-its-after-effects>

Summary: ***It's not the same as a tantrum, it's also not autism***, it is a trauma response that causes a neurological shutdown that short circuits the individual's ability to reason or self-regulate. Internally it is a state of abject terror and helplessness.

Interviewing and other HR ideas

If we have the option for online java tests that prevent cheating, that would work. I do have copies of tests I normally print out and ask interviewees to do in person but that's a bit hard with COVID anyway, so online is good.

Second interviews would normally be Delivery Managers, so less technical. For ND interviewees perhaps only put through to a second interview if the java test comes back positive.

People running interviews need to be aware if someone is neurodiverse prior to starting the interview and need to understand that ND people may interact differently than they do. Here's some initial notes based on an interview I ran. I can only write notes from my own perspective but it may help people understand a little.

- I liked the interviewee but they were difficult to converse with. We got the occasional glimpse of a relaxed person, but then they seemed to remember it was an interview and clammed up again.
- When we asked around topics they were confident with they talked more animatedly, for topics they were not confident in the answers were short and silences long.
- They've got technical skills as shown by their grades, but struggled to answer questions, you could see with a couple of questions asked that once their brain clicked into place for an answer, the rest of the answer around that topic also appeared, other topics didn't get the click which could be down to issues processing the questions, or not knowing, it's hard to tell.
- Looking at other things during a conversation – I doodle, look on my computer, type etc... because it helps me listen. Sounds weird but I need to distract touch and sight senses in order to actively listen.
- Having previous things you've worked on in front of you, or just a list of the words for things, can help with executive dysfunction. It's hard to find the words you need to explain things. If I could have a google page open for every meeting I would. Even now, with things I've done hundreds of times, I will struggle to explain them unless I have typed out the words to read out. Before meetings I prep and type out all my questions/information to make sure I don't say anything too stupid.
- When you ask a question it goes into my ears as "blah do blah gobbledegook fish", I then have to translate it before thinking of an answer, sometimes I answer questions several days later.
- Seeing questions written down is better. My eyes work a million times faster than my ears.
- Sometimes when talking I will stop talking mid-sentence. This is because of inner terror of saying the wrong thing, or thinking the person listening is bored.
- Sometimes I talk a lot, other times I won't talk for weeks (literally). When younger (until about mid 30's) I only spoke to people who talked to me first, questions were answered in short form. Some autistics don't talk at all even though they can.
- Face and tone of voice often don't match what's being said. I get quite upset when people snap at me for being angry or aggressive when I'm being neither and am just trying to explain things enthusiastically.
- 100% of the time I think of answers and responses hours after a conversation has finished.

We need interview guidelines. We had an autistic person interviewing here and it was very difficult for the neurotypical interviewers, I too struggled but also struggle from the point of view of not wanting to automatically make allowances.

I've suggested some lunch and learn sessions to allow people to ask questions, but we also need HR guidelines as it is very different interviewing someone autistic. The immediate response of the other two interviewers was 'No' because she had difficulty answering questions. I've suggested we set up a written test as if she's like me, questions enter the ears as "blah blah fish gobbledegook?", whereas written down they are immediately understood.

It's never fun failing at interviews because of communication differences. I was rejected for a SQL developer role because I failed to answer all questions in a face to face and they said my knowledge was poor, at the time I was a SQL PASS presenter and ran the local SQL usergroup at the request of Microsoft.

Leadership Through Action Course

This was a two hour high level course/meetup that took place on the 17th Sept 2020. Amanda Jackson attended and here are the notes.

Your goal?

Help others be more open to neurodiversity and to normalize it.

Learn as much as I can about different ways to share knowledge so all brain types benefit and understand.

What is working now?

Talking to people

Being open and honest

Knowledge sharing

What is most blocking you?

Old ideas that won't die, such as autism is caused by vaccines - it isn't, or that it can be cured - it can't and we don't want to be cured thank you very much.

Fatigue. Constant masking and pretending to be neurotypical is exhausting.

Ideas/Approaches/People/Questions/Resources

40% of population have some form of neurodiversity, i.e. dyslexia, autism etc... *Note: I'm not sure on this figure so will investigate, they may have calculated incorrectly and added together all the dyslexic, autistic numbers, but it's possible that these are not discrete therefore not 40% of population.*

Quote: People are more likely to own their challenges if they know it's their brain and not them. *Note: I disagree with this as it's the opposite of what #ActuallyAutistics are saying. Our neurodiversity is not something separate to us, it is us. By saying it's their brain and not them, it implies neurodiversity is a condition that can be cured or is separate to the person, and that without the neurodiversity they would be a better, aka 'normal', person.*

Why should businesses bother with neurodiversity?

- Autistics are 140% more productive than neurotypical people.
- Autistics get up to speed faster when starting a new job or task.

This information from a JPMorgan research study where they employed a large number of autistic people, provided support to management and the autistic people, and watched what happened.

Biggest cause of burnout is not being understood by leaders - cost to business of burnout is \$179million ☐

What are the costs of providing different supports?

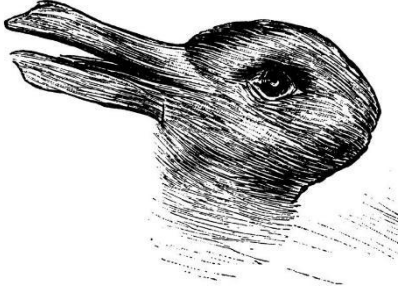
Interview processes need to change to accommodate neurodiverse people.

Research different interview styles/techniques

Job adverts need to be worded to be inclusive of all neuro types, for example, don't include words like "must be a people person" as this will exclude a large number of people.

When onboarding staff, ask if they need any additional support in place to help them be their best selves at work. For example, quiet, no flickering/neon lights, away from aircon blower.

A way to explain communication differences is the Rabbit/Duck picture. Ask people what they see first. Now imagine that this is solution requirements. If you have a solution designer who has looked at the customer requirement and seen a duck, so they have designed a solution for a duck, but the developer sees a rabbit in the customer requirement, so doesn't understand why the solution is so wrong for designing a rabbit.



A good high level way to explain different thinking styles to neurotypicals is using a thinking styles profile. It was split into four types of thinkers. Very focused on functionality. It doesn't cover things such as stressors or explain certain behaviour and learning differences but does give leaders an idea of how best to motivate and possibly communicate with different styles of thinkers. It also didn't cover what happens when different neurodiverse types are forced to be 'normal'.

General Notes

On a scale of 0-10:

- How much do we maximise neurodiversity in our teams? My answer was 2 at the moment, but we're working on it and are open to improving.
- How helpful would it be to recruit from the edges? My answer was 10. Neurodiverse people can be very beneficial to the business.

Why is it good to hire a diverse range of people? Helps avoid 'group think'.

Need to make work/meetings etc... a safe space for people of all thinking styles to share ideas.

Stress management - don't be at the bottom of the cliff, don't even be at the top of the cliff, avoid the cliff altogether.

A way to do this is to focus on employee wellness. We've already started this but need to continue it.

Examples of how leaders can help people with different thinking styles

- ADHD - break down a task/deadline into smaller tasks with short deadlines to avoid last minute work/rush
- ODD - offer them the opportunity to prove you wrong by showing that they can do something amazing, i.e. I don't think we'll be able to get this done in time *Note: bit manipulative, but it works on me a treat*
- Linear thinkers - ask for their opinion on how to get from point A to point Z and they will thrive doing this. The nonlinear thinkers may know what point Z is, but will be frustrated with the slow, methodical process of planning the steps to get there.
- Best way to help as a leader is to find out from each person how they think.

Experience sensory overload

Autistics are often highly sensitive to their environment. This can mean different things to different people but in general, autistic people have unusually delicate sensory systems, meaning that their senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—can be easily overloaded.

Sensory overload is when your five senses — sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste — take in more information than your brain can process. When your brain is overwhelmed by this input, it enters fight, flight, or freeze mode in response to what feels like a crisis, making you feel unsafe or even panicky.

Have you ever wondered what it's like to experience sensory overload? Watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/KurXpARairU>

Note: Sensory overload is not limited to autistic people. When overwhelmed with stimuli they can neither ignore nor filter out, non-autistic people will often respond with anxiety and impulsive behaviors that are not unlike those seen in people who are autistic.

Links to useful stuff and random notes

I only got diagnosed at 48 with Autism, ADHD, and a few other fun things, after having a series of quite spectacular meltdowns. Until then figured I was an angry irrational idiot when tired and would get super frustrated at my brain not doing what I wanted it to.

I'm really open about all this because I don't want anyone else to go through life thinking there's something wrong with them. Since getting a diagnosis, my life has clicked into place and the past makes sense. Knowing means it's possible to find solutions and make life easier for me, for others, and for work to get the best person. It's still a bit like asking a fish to ride a bike having me as a people manager, but my team seem to really like me, possibly because I have no filter and am very open & honest. If I'm really tired, I just tell them outright, I'm really tired today, I apologise in advance for being monosyllabic and distant.

Bad sources of information – Autism Speaks and any other place that wants to 'cure' us and views autism as a tragedy. Autism has its downsides with the sensory overload etc... but also has its superpowers with the data processing speed and fast thinking etc...

Good sources of information – There's loads of stuff on The Mighty, and people like Autistic not Weird, The Autistic Avenger, and others are great sources of information.

- <http://annsautism.blogspot.com/2016/07/autism-brain-event-not-nastiness.html>
- <https://www.fierceautie.com/p/recommended-facebook-pages.html> - list of useful pages/groups
- <https://themighty.com/2016/04/what-does-autism-feel-like/> Everyone with autism has some form of sensory struggle. Sight, sound, smell, taste and touch (the five senses that all of the experiences of life must pass through) can be absolutely harrowing and horrifying to a person with autism. Everything that enters the ASD body is often accompanied by some semblance of pain or at least by some extremely uncomfortable sensation. Here's where the analogy of the frayed wire may help you understand autism a bit better.
- <http://autismguide.co.uk/everyday-life/autism-being-tired-all-the-time-and-how-to-increase-energy/> This explains the exhaustion, which is very true for people with aspergers or autism who work in offices. *I would love my workplace to have library rules and lights off.*
- Library Rules: <https://signalvnoise.com/posts/3357-an-office-with-ldquolibrary-rulesrdquo>
- An amazing comic strip: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/gcbpdfs/Spectrum+of+Voices+Autism+Comic.pdf>
- The full original presentation: [originalNDslides.pptx](#)

Just some memes and info images

Not sure about other neurodivergent types, but autistic people mostly seem to communicate in memes.



Someone talking about a special interest: have you heard about this?
Me, vibrating fast enough to ascend to the astral plane: yes I have heard about that thing and I know a normal human amount of facts about The Thing and I can talk about The Thing for a normal amount of time yes

"I'm autistic, which means everyone around me has a disorder that makes them say things they don't mean, not care about structure...drop weird hints and creepily stare into my eyeballs..."

[From AutisticNotWeird.com]

BECAUSE THE LAST
THING YOU NEED TO
WORRY ABOUT
IS
WORRYING!
(YOU DON'T WANT TO
GET STUCK IN A WORRY LOOP.)



20

PEOPLE HAVE LOTS OF
REACTIONS
TO ANXIETY:



21



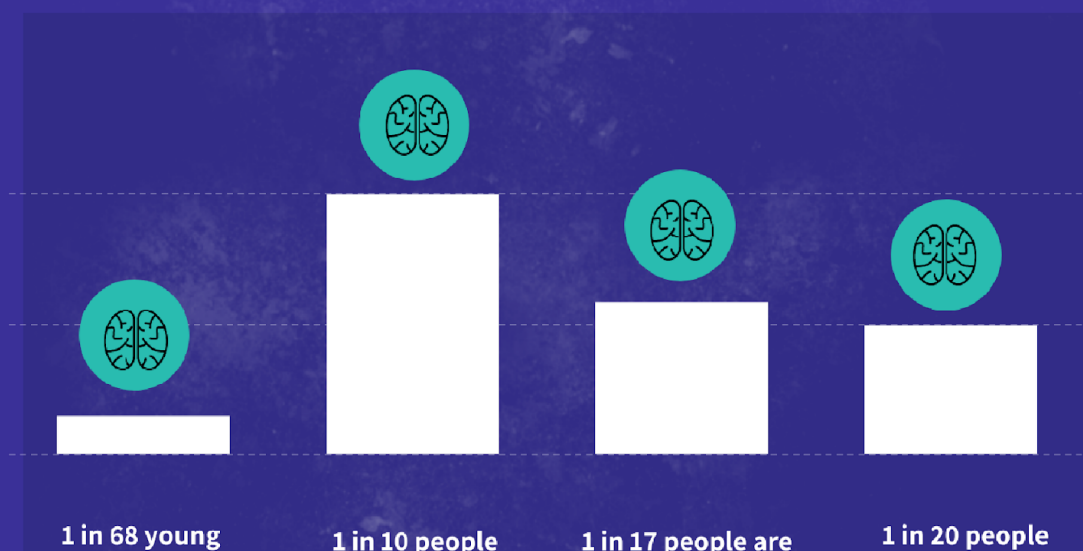
Celebrating Minds That **THINK DIFFERENTLY** Is Good For Business

The Facts and Figures



1 in 10

of the potential workforce are now
from Neurodiverse groups (2)



Neurodiversity in media

Initial draft - this focuses on how Neurodiversity is portrayed in film and TV:

The world of film and television is being used increasingly to deal with societal challenges and address inequality and under-representation across many areas. It provides a stage to spark discussions about difficult issues and misunderstood aspects of life, and if done well, can give those who feel in some way different or separated from everyday society a feeling of inclusion and representation.

With regards to Neurodiversity in film and TV fiction, that sadly is not always the case. Film and TV have a long history of inaccurate and misleading representations of neurodiverse characters. If the portrayal of a neurodiverse character is not approached carefully, conscientiously and diligently, the effect on the neurodiverse community could be harmful, regardless of the intentions of the writer. The treatment of such personalities is almost unique, in that the neurodiversity aspect of the story *is* the story, or at least a key part of it, rather than simply an interesting element of a character engaged in a separate, unrelated plot. The implications of this are that it is usually the more extreme behaviours associated with the condition that are emphasised, often for shock value. Think of The Big Bang Theory's socially-awkward hyperintelligent scientist Sheldon Cooper; a character laced with elements of misogyny and racism which is excused by the strong implication that he is on the autistic spectrum. Or perhaps the movie Rain Man which resulted in the widespread belief that autistics possess borderline magical powers! A neurodiverse character tends to be positioned as either a misfit (as a result of their condition) or superhero (for overcoming their challenges) and for the purposes of improving our understanding of Neurodiversity, these don't particularly help!

Of course the reality is usually very different. Studies in the UK and Australia estimate that around 15%-20% of the population is Neurodiverse, with some suggesting that this figure is actually closer to 40%. If extrapolated across the globe, this suggests that anywhere between one and three billion people are Neurodiverse; a handful of film and TV characters therefore, created mostly for entertainment purposes, doesn't paint a balanced picture of the experiences of so many people. Every Neurodiverse person will have a unique experience; perhaps it is unrealistic to expect the entertainment world to provide a balanced depiction of a character with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) for instance, when the conditions are so complex and associated behaviours and traits are so varied.

It is not all bad news though. There are an increasing number of what could be argued to be more realistic representations of Neurodiverse characters moving into the spotlight. Characters such as Leslie Knope (played by Amy Poehler) in Parks and Recreation, or Eddie Redmayne's portrayal of Newt Scamander in Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them, subtly exhibit behaviours that are associated with Neurodiversity, but are not the focal point really just add colour to a much wider story line. These support the fact that there isn't a predefined list of behaviours or traits that somebody with Autism or ADHD for example will definitely have, and to what extent they will experience or display these, if at all. Our best chance to build a fair and balanced understanding of Neurodiversity is to talk to those friends, family and colleagues that are Neurodiverse and learn about their experiences. It may be that you can make small adjustments that could make a great deal of difference to somebody but to understand if these are required and what they should be - starting the conversation really helps that put the wheels in motion.

The main advice? Try to not let Neurodiverse characters in film and TV shape your whole understanding of how a Neurodiverse individual behaves or feels in real life. Everybody has different experiences and to ensure each person is included, feels comfortable, engaged and enjoys what they do, we need to listen to them!

Neurodiversity Interview Considerations

Notes from HR based on stuff the ND team have provided – with some added comments from the ND community 😊

Intro

This page includes suggestions and guidelines for HR representatives and interviewers who may encounter neurodiverse candidates during their talent acquisition activities. The purpose of these guidelines is to accommodate for challenges which neurodiverse interviewees face, and to help talent acquisition staff to create conditions which enable the candidates to give the best from themselves.

The key points summarized below have been enhanced with comments from ND persons on how they perceive certain situations or behaviours.

Prior to interview

Pre-interview check

- Run questionnaire to check for any accommodations helpful to the candidate during the interview:
- Physical disabilities
- Wheelchair, hearing or eyesight deficiency
- Neurodiversity
- Language processing, sensory issues, alternative communication methods, etc.

Location

- Make the location feel hospitable:
- Quiet, avoid noisy settings
- No flickering lights
- No distractions in the room or outside
- Avoid confrontational seating positions
- Avoid large groups, consider using multiple interviews to reduce group size
- Consider online / phone rather than face to face

During the interview

Indicators

- The behaviours below may indicate a neurodiverse candidate:
- Nervousness or fidgeting
- Lack of eye contact
- Misunderstanding questions / taking things literally
- Going off topic on random trains of thought
- Talking too much and going into too much detail on a topic of interest
- Communication issues
- Over preparedness
- Unconventional attire
- Struggling to make “small talk” or limited detail in answers

Language

- Be direct and clear with questions
- Limit abstract lines of questioning and ask closed questions where possible
- Ask the candidate if they'd like a list of questions in advance (at the start of the interview session), or have a white board available with questions written down so the candidate can visualize the words

- Allow for other methods of communication such as written or typed onto a communication device. If a candidate is more comfortable typing out an answer instead of verbalizing it, let them do this.
- NDs words mean what they say – don't hear the word 'Goat' and assume the word 'Duck' – listen to what is said and don't infer extra information or meaning other than what is said

Note from ND

NDs are not at fault misunderstanding, the NTs are at fault for not asking clearly enough. Are the questions too NT – i.e. vague, not actually a question, asking something completely different. NTs are well known for not saying what they mean and it's super frustrating to many NDs.

One of the biggest things around this that I see mentioned over and over again by actual ND people is that they understand the question, probably know the topic better than the questioner, but when you ask it their brain doesn't hear it because the ears don't forward the info to the brain. The ND brain is swamped by all senses firing at same time so sound can take a while to enter in order for the brain to decipher it. The way I describe this is that my eyes and hands are faster than my ears. I would suggest allowing them to answer one question behind as that's how it seems to work sometimes. Ask me a question, I'll answer the previous one from last Tuesday that my brain just realized you asked! Best option – write the questions down.

Behaviour

- Take the stress out of an already stressful situation:
- Be patient, allow the candidate to "digest" the question and "prepare" a response in their head Don't expect expansive answers – be prepared to lead the interview to find out what you need
- Don't interrupt
- Set expectations about what will happen during the interview itself and the wider process
- Fidgeting – say up front that it is fine for candidate to fidget, doodle, whatever they normally do to allow them to focus.

Note from ND

With sensory processing disorders it can take several minutes for the brain to process a question, this means the candidate may look blank or go silent for several minutes – they are processing – just sit back and let it happen without appearing impatient and without interrupting.

Listening for NT means looking at the person, listening for ND may be doodling, bouncing legs, counting lines on fingernails, and most importantly, not looking at the speaker – we need to distract our other senses in order to use our ears and hear you.

Think

- Focus on skills not social competence
- Can this person do the job – design your interview to assess this
- Promote our D&I initiatives as part of commencing the interview
- Obtain examples of previous work

Thoughts around communication & meetings

Some non-linear thoughts - just getting the ramble down.

General interaction notes

Parts of the document 'Tips for managing remote employees with autism' reads like micro-management and there is nothing more stress inducing than being micro-managed, even more so if you're being singled out for it. I'd alter the title of the document to read – 'Tips for managing remote employees' – don't make autistic people different, create a policy that is good for all people.

Need to rethink how we approach this so that it is 'How can we as managers change our behaviours to be more inclusive' instead of 'How we as managers can help autistic people be less annoying to the 'normal' people', because that's how most communication guides for autistic people are written.

Lots of interruptions, even planned interruptions, will just stress autistic people out and make them less productive. I would imagine it's similar for the non-autistics too, however, the added bonus of executive dysfunction makes task changing difficult. If you pull someone out of a task to check in with them, then it's going to take them a long time to switch back to what they were working on. The idea of regular daily 1:1 meetings fills me with horror.

Something I found out a few weeks ago is that autistic people are 140% more productive than non-autistic people and we get up to speed a lot faster, i.e. days not months when starting new jobs.

Things that stop me being productive:

- Regular catch-ups during the day
- Having to stop what I'm doing to tell someone what I'm doing twice a day
- Task switching
- Interruptions
- Noise
- Meetings
- Exhaustion from too much peopling
- Mundane tasks
- Anxiety
- Executive dysfunction - so to load the dishwasher I first need to empty the clean stuff, but to empty the clean stuff I need to clean the surfaces, but to do that I need clean cloths, so need to do laundry, but I'm out of laundry powder so need to go shopping..... etc.... it's not fun getting stuck in an ED loop. So with development tasks it can sometimes be similar if people throw too many priorities across, the result is that nothing gets done because everything is needed.
- People chattering

Things that make me uber productive:

- Long periods of time in the day with zero interruptions
- Quiet
- A to-do list
- Clear priorities
- Working on a topic of interest (I spent three months in the evenings documenting all cars ever made into a spreadsheet - with photos - those special interest topics are a doozy)
- A 1hr walk at 4pm to reset the focus
- Being able to finish a task
- Also... being able to work on multiple tasks at the same time - sometimes needed to stay focused, so working on lots of boring tasks for short periods of time to complete them on time.

- No meetings or catchups or chats in the afternoon
- Messaging me first if you want to chat via a call Text messages instead of phone calls

Communication - these notes are a response to the items listed in the guide to managing autistic employees.

Suggestions that are okay with a few minor tweaks:

- Preview all anticipated changes, to the extent possible. – yep good for all people, during the restructuring it became very obvious that the NTs in the team were more stressed out and reading into things than the neuro diverse members. Neurodiverse people will read an email as it is. Neurotypicals will read between the lines.
- Daily project updates to the whole team to advise progress and work remaining with due dates/ estimated times to complete – also have this available on a Jira dashboard for real time information - we have daily standups
- Shared calendars for whole team - already in place on our Jira dashboards
- Everyone – message someone before calling to check it's okay regardless of who you are
- Share challenges, ask questions, share knowledge
- End of day recap is also the daily project goals/updates - when working from home we do a second
- 15min team standup in the afternoon

New suggestions to add:

- Make sure all written communication is clear and precise with zero ambiguity.
- When providing instructions ask for feedback to ensure the instructions provided are correct and cannot be understood in a different way.
- Built in breaks – what could work for this is a browser app for all team members that gets people moving once an hour: techrepublic.com/blog/five-apps/five-free-apps-to-help-remind-you-to-take-abreak122
- Leave it up to the person to decide how they complete tasks in the way that works best for them. Provide a list of tasks and a deadline. Neurotypicals often think in a linear way, so what may be logical to them i.e. do ABC first then look at DEF when ABC is completed, is often illogical to an autistic person who sees that elements of DEF include ABC, so working on DEF will also resolve ABC and why are the NTs taking so long to get from A to F?

Suggestions to burn with fire and destroy:

- Regular daily and weekly 1:1 meetings with your autistic team member – no to the power of no. We're adults not kids and don't need close supervision like this.
- Built in breaks in its original form (make sure your autistic person has a break every hour) – again, we're adults, not kids, a manager telling us to take a break every hour is a tad rude. I understand it if we've been head down in the code for three hours, but not hourly. This should be more about keeping an eye on the whole team to ensure people aren't overworking themselves and are taking regular breaks, also, as a manager we see this by the quality of work, if it is slipping, does the person need to do something different for a day to refresh their brain?
- Tool I use is RescueTime – it's brilliant and great for showing me what I'm working on. Initially installed it to find out how my time as a manager was spread task wise across the day to see how much actual time was available for dev work. Again, don't single out autistic people for something like this as they are likely to be focused and working on a task, from an autistic point of view these tools would be great for neurotypicals to see how much time they spend working vs. talking so perhaps everyone should be using them? Also, only for personal use, do not have this as information that is shared with your manager, people will generally be adult enough to police their own actions when made aware of their productivity numbers.

Meetings

- Plan all meetings so that the day isn't splattered with meetings with 15-30min intervals available for work between each of them. For example, have a rule that all meetings should be in the morning where possible,

and if not possible, put them as close to the end of the work day as you can. This will provide a window of several hours of uninterrupted work time. Better for all neuro types.

- Ideas:
 - Meetings are between 9.30am and 12.30pm, ensuring the afternoon is free to focus on work.
 - No booking early morning meetings on the day of the meeting - seriously, why do people do that and then get miffed at you for missing it when you have no idea it's even booked?
 - Have a meeting free day each week
 - Science of meetings info : <https://blog.rescuetime.com/effective-meetings-data/>
 - Meetings must have an agenda / Pre-plan meetings. I did a blog post on this a while back and incorporated it in my team and it worked to improve the meetings for everyone. <http://nzgirlgeek.blogspot.com/2019/04/meetings-meetings-and-more-meetings.html>. It got quite a lot of likes on LinkedIn so I'm guessing badly planned and unnecessary meetings annoy most people.
- If a 15min meeting is booked for 15mins instead of 30mins, then the next meeting can be pulled forward, this then gives you more time later in the day.
- Don't book meetings during peoples' lunch breaks

Anxiety support - additional things in general (so in office as well)

- Provide quiet rooms – my technique is to book one of the small meeting rooms if I need to be away from noise and I'll sit in there with the lights off. I get loads of work done that way.
- Provide privacy – no one likes feeling as though people are looking over their shoulder all the time
- Get rid of open plan offices – they are bad for all neuro types. I think the only people who like them are BAs right?
- Avoid sensory overload
- Lots of greenery – bring nature in where possible
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Don't try and hide stress producing news, that will cause more anxiety
- Be open and honest
- If someone needs to exit a meeting due to overload, let them do so without guilt or repercussions

Original info dump

Most people have a perception of Autism based on media misconceptions, such as kids meltdowns in shops being autism, that's not autism, that's a traumatic response to those around the kid not noticing that sensory overload is getting out of hand. As adults we can remove ourselves from situations and communicate that something hurts, as a kid you can't do that so well.

BSD is a business solution design. Developers in general, not just autistics, need black and white information, whereas designs are often more conversational and this leaves room for misunderstanding.

I work on the principal that if you say something nice to someone it could brighten their day. You never know what sort of day they've had so it could be just the thing they need to turn around a horrible day.

Accessibility options

Option to view a transcript instead of waiting for a video.

Environment - few more gotchas

Temperature

Smell

Personal space

Communication

This needs to go both ways. Often we find as autistics that we are the ones constantly having to do all the meeting in the middle and way past it over to the other side in order to get neurotypicals to understand. So, suggesting that neurotypicals (or social thinkers) speak more slowly so that we understand is not only highly offensive, but could be turned around to ask the neurotypicals to start trying to think in a more analytical way and speak without using lots of ambiguous filler words that add no meaning. It's very patronizing as we're slow or stupid, my IQ was measured at 194 when at college, even now following multiple head injuries it's still over 150, the issue is not our intelligence it's that it's not being explained correctly.

Autistics have learned to bend and think in different ways to try and understand others. It would be nice, even for one day, to have others make the effort to try and think the way we do, or even make an effort to come up with alternative ways to explain things.

Good morning – small talk is strange. We said this last week, do we have to say it every day? Seriously? Okay then! Lots of other words that pad out conversations to avoid getting to the point.

We will often answer a question or start talking about something that was being discussed yesterday, two weeks ago, as if it's just been discussed and it's soooooo frustrating then having to back pedal and repeat the previous conversation because the other person has forgotten. If you listen in to autistic people talking to each other, it is very fast and probably sounds quite chaotic. We jump between topics very rapidly and easily. If NT's could just keep up and jump in to a conversation without needing a full reprise, that would be awesome thanks.

We remember everything! People telling me I'm remembering incorrectly is upsetting. As I've gotten older I've become very good at documenting things because it's horrible having people constantly gaslight you and tell you that you're wrong when you know you're right. If I don't have something documented I now just let it go whilst knowing inside that I'm correct. All people, NT or divergent, need to protect themselves from this as being told your memories or information are incorrect when you know that to be untrue is horrible.

We tend to take in a lot of information all at once and very quickly. Autistic brains are very fast. So a diagram with a few words is absorbed, processed, and understood quickly. *Just because others cannot do this, does not mean we haven't.* This means we can find NT thinking very slow and laborious. It's not a criticism and we're not calling NTs stupid or slow, it's just different.

It's helpful to email prior to asking a question so we can switch our brain to the question and get ready to answer questions correctly. For me, 100% of the time it is always better to have discussions in writing so that I can say what I mean without being misunderstood or have words jumped on because they mean something different to someone else. By writing things down, I can work through it and make sure it's re-worded to make NT people less likely to stress me out by being angry at me for saying something wrong that wasn't intended. ***Note: This is a huge amount of emotional labour and super exhausting.***

Listen to what is actually said. I am often accused of saying things I haven't actually said because NTs tend to say one thing but mean another. It's exhausting being constantly accused of things you haven't done and having to back pedal to figure out what you've said to cause offence or confusion. Autistics tend to say exactly what they mean with no hidden meaning or ulterior motive. So if we say 'That dress is nice on you', we don't mean 'why on earth are you wearing that you look awful', we actually mean it looks nice.

When tired, it is very hard for autistic people to keep up the mask of pretense - i.e. using facial expressions that make NT's understand our words better because the words alone are not believed. For example, if we say "that's brilliant, thank you" but are so tired we can't smile or do anything other than resting b***** face, we aren't mad at you or annoyed, we just can't.

Tone of voice - I get really upset at being told to 'calm down', when I'm perfectly calm and am just trying to explain something to someone. When keen/eager/passionate about a topic, I talk fast - this is not anger or annoyance, it's just all the information trying to get out at the same time. Other times I don't want to speak at all and will often go several days without talking. Often when too tired. If I do talk during this time I tend to be quiet and monotone.

Communication - some of us find it easier to write explanations rather than voice them. I am one of these. I hate meetings that are called to discuss issues and figure out how something works through discussion because my brain doesn't work like that and I find it extremely difficult to explain complex issues verbally. This is often taken as not knowing something or being stupid or slow, but often it's because my brain and eyes work faster than my speech so words get jumbled.

Communication - autistics get overwhelmed by having all senses working at once with no filter. In meetings to help me listen I will likely be doing something else, like doodling. This distracts my touch and sight senses so that I can actively listen. I can't count the number of times I've been accused of not listening only to surprise people with a detailed playback.

Meetings that go on too long or have too many people physically hurt us. Literally, not figuratively. It causes pain.

Eye contact - lack of eye contact is not lack of empathy, eye to eye contact feels as though you are touching us and it's icky.

Don't be ambiguous. Recent example. A project manager said to me "Raise a task for the enhancement work but don't do it until the IA is approved". My understanding was don't raise the task until the IA is approved, what was meant was, raise the task, but don't do the work until the IA is approved.

Don't be ambiguous in BSDs - seriously, these need to be better in general to avoid any misunderstandings. People need to be black and white and totally obvious with things.

https://autisticnotweird.com/why_do_autistic_people_struggle/ <https://autisticnotweird.com/fifty-facts/>
<https://theconversation.com/autistic-people-can-hear-more-than-most-which-can-be-a-strength-and-a-challenge-77039>

Something interesting that's come to light fairly recently is around why autism seems to start when kids are 2-3 years old. They've discovered that babies are all born 'autistic' for want of a better word, this is so that in the first few years of life a baby can absorb as much information as possible from sight, sound, smell, touch etc... but at around 2 years old the human brain starts filtering the information to make it less traumatic. In autistic people this filtering doesn't happen, so we end up left wide open to all the information.

Inappropriateness. Always happening and often I'm very baffled why people think something is inappropriate. I'm the person who tells a stranger that I really like their shoes, or will go over to someone obviously in distress to ask if they are okay, or I will say that it's too hot and sweat is dripping down my back so can we turn down the aircon please (actually happened, colleague was sitting opposite me saying "don't do it, don't do it.... arrrrghhh you said it. Hey, I'd started the sentence and it needed to be finished).