

Interviewee: R

User Interview Questions

Theme: Social Cues, Awareness, and Neurodivergent

Note: (If interviewee is uncomfortable its okay for them not to answer).

Background + Social Experiences

1. Tell me a bit about yourself!
 - a. Diagnosed with general anxiety disorder and depression. Therapist seems to agree that they might be on the scale neurodivergent wise.
 - b. Does not have any negative impact for them to seek out medical help in terms of neurodivergent.
2. Can you tell me a little about how you typically feel in social situations?
 - a. Likes to have a plan or at least know what they will be doing in the social setting, doesn't like to be thrown in the dark.
 - b. If they know less of what they're supposed to be doing, they tend to get stressed.
 - c. The less they know about what they are supposed to be doing, the more they are stressed. And vice versa.
 - i. So that way, they know what to expect and how to act in that social setting.
 - ii. Ex: Campus mixer, doesn't know what to expect, never been there, doesn't know how many people to talk to.
 - d. Even if they get social anxiety, they tend to cover it up.
 - e. Usually badly reacts if something bad is going on (ex. Couldn't work and struggled with anxiety cuz they were freaked out with a bunch of other stuff in general, like they were unprepared to head back home, and their plans were not going).
 - i. Like their plan wasn't going what they expected it to be.
 - ii. Or when their anxiety is spiraling, like a snowball effect. INa state of mental effect that is compounding all at once.
 - f. Ex. Had a pretty bad anxiety episode. Little things added up on her birthday. It resulted in her making everyone leave.
 - g. Doesn't know how to think through it, nor articulate it in a logical sense (in regards to what it mainly comes from, or what's the main trigger).
3. Are there certain places or social settings where you feel especially comfortable? Or others that feel a bit more challenging?
 - a. Comes back to do they know what they are supposed to be doing, or if they don't know

- i. Either needs to know everybody, or needs to know at least one person they can interact with constantly.
 - ii. That way, they can avoid interacting with people that they don't know.
 - iii. **May not enjoy being in social settings with people they do not know, but as long as they know what they are supposed to be doing, they can manage through it.**
- 4. Are there specific situations where you feel more anxious or unsure about how to respond?
 - a. Similar response to prior question, it's because they don't know what to expect in that situation.
 - b. Also it is nice to have a safety bubble or safety blanket (person/friend).**
 - i. Someone that understands what they need, without having to explain it to them.
 - ii. Also likes to communicate with what they need, especially towards friends they might not know as well.
 - 1. Ex: "Can I stick by you for the night?"

Awareness of Social Cues

- 5. When you're in a conversation or group setting, what helps you get a sense of how others are feeling?
 - a. Body language, facial expressions, overanalyzes what others say, studies human behavior per acting so they think they have a pretty good read, and can pick up on social cues.
 - b. "Feels like the person who knows most of what's going on".
- 6. Are there social cues (like tone of voice, body language, or facial expressions) that are easier or harder for you to read?
 - a. Finds all three listed as easy due to habit or analyzing for her acting major.
 - b. Struggles a bit when affected by the environment (e.g. in a loud club, can't hear a person, etc.).
- 7. Have there been moments where you've felt unsure about how to respond or what someone meant? Would you feel comfortable sharing an example?
 - a. Bad sometimes at picking up sexual innuendos (because they don't think about it fr), so it would fly by their head.
 - i. Had a friend in high school. Someone made a joke "Jacks on, Jacks off", and thought it was funny because of the inversion of on and off (e.g. like a light switch), but NOT the sexual innuendo.
 - ii. Since then has been paranoid, so tries to understand, but still lags every now and then.
 - iii. It's cuz they don't THINK about it often.

8. What do you typically do if you're unsure how someone is feeling or what they mean?
- a. **Likes to ask for clarification. Used to assume when they were younger, but finds that bad for relationships in general. So they find it more healthy to clarify.**
 - b. Doesn't like the idea of digging a hole or potentially misunderstanding someone.

Navigating Conversations

9. What are some things that make it easier for you to join or stay in a conversation?
- a. When people address them directly.
 - b. **If people are talking to each other, and not inviting them to speak on that topic, then they will wait until they find an opening to feel more comfortable.**
10. Have you ever wanted to leave a conversation but weren't sure how? How did you handle it?
- a. Depends on how "painful" it is
 - i. If they make a clean exit, they will do so. Usually makes excuses, but they are always true.
 - ii. However, if they are kinda stuck in the situation, they will give "fuck off" vibes, or give uninterested cues and one-word sentences.
11. When you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious in social situations, what tools or strategies do you use to cope?
- a. Does exercises as suggested by their therapist
 - i. Does "Square breathing"
 - ii. Does things with both sides of her body.
 - iii. Or doing hobbies they enjoy (e.g. sewing, etc.)
 - iv. Doing imperceptible exercises
 - b. **Makes the brain focus on doing the exercises and diffuses the energy that's going into your fight-or-flight response (which controls anxiety).**
 - c. **Or also does stuff that makes them think about something else (e.g. reading a book or watching YouTube videos).**

Tech + Support Tools

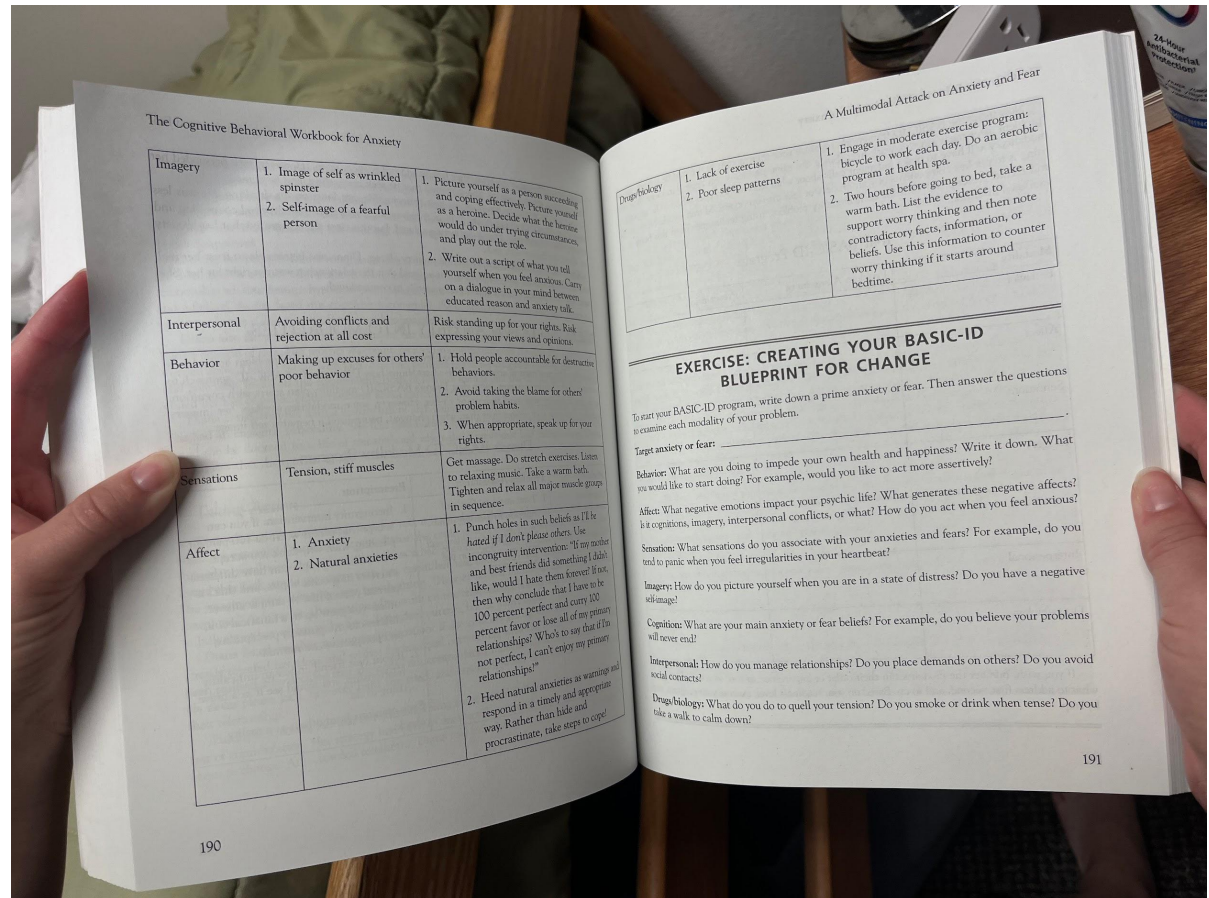
12. Have you ever used apps or tools to help with social communication, anxiety, or emotional regulation?
- a. Had one where it displayed breathing meditations (breathing parabola). Didn't find it as effective as doing "Square breathing" on her own.
 - b. Considered looking at stuff her therapist recommended (specifically, physically writing).

- i. Had anxiety from her phone (due to past friend group chats).

a. Likes stuff where they could work through and explain what was happening and how their brain was affected. Doesn't know how that would translate to a technological product.

ii. Liked the progress reports as well. Stuff that checked in at the end of each workbook exercise. (e.g. "Did the way that you think about this thing change? Are you thinking about it differently? Did you notice and physical changes in your body after you did this exercise?").





c.

14. If you could have a personal assistant or tool in your pocket during social events, what would you want it to do?

a. Would like intermittent messages to text them and give them something to do.

i. So to give them justification if they are not socializing or anything, and need some sort of excuse.

b. Kind of hard since they are not too keen on technology, but it MAY work for someone else.

c. Had a decision tree/flowchart that you could interact with. Would take you to a different list of tools per what you choose. Because its hard to articulate what you need.

i. Very similar to this, but not as good for what we may be considering

Reflection + Accessibility

15. How would you describe your relationship with technology when it comes to supporting your mental health or social life?

a. Finds it helpful in a less passive way. Like when they actually have time to reflect rather than in the moment.

16. Are there any tools you've seen or imagined that you wish existed to help with social awareness?
 - a. N/A
 - b. Feels more like they need to have a plan (e.g. Texting friends "whats the plan")
17. Is there anything you'd want others to better understand about how you experience social situations as someone with anxiety disorder?
 - a. Extra push, extra clarification, just be clear about what you expect from others.

Note:

This project idea reminds her of Cognitive behavioral worksheets she did back in therapy

- Books
- Go through different steps of deconstructing your reaction to it.
- The idea of processing and breaking down what people expect for you vs, how you can reasonably respond from it.
- Has friends on levels of autism.
- Maybe even include flowcharts
 - "Did they seem to reference something out of nowhere? And have a moment of expectation?"
 - Provide multiple options: "it could be this, or this, or that"

Interviewee: E

User Interview Questions

Theme: Social Cues, Awareness, and Neurodivergent

Note: (If interviewee is uncomfortable its okay for them not to answer).

Background + Social Experiences

18. Tell me a bit about yourself!

a. Undiagnosed but pretty sure autism and neurodivergent, diagnosed anxiety and depression.

i. **Sensory-based: taste, smell and sound (touch but not as much)**

1. Loud/crowded/unfamiliar environments they don't do well with.
2. Smell: Intense cologne, too strong.
3. Taste: Texture-thing, taste doesn't match texture vice versa. Specifically in regards to food.
4. New people.

19. Can you tell me a little about how you typically feel in social situations?

a. **In familiar situations, they tend to "unmask" and show their real selves.**

b. In class, "unmask" a little bit more, but it is still little bit anxiety inducing.

c. **Public transportation: Too crowded is "the worst, wants to get off"**

d. **Large crowds: High anxiety.**

e. **All ties in with sensory.**

20. Are there certain places or social settings where you feel especially comfortable? Or others that feel a bit more challenging?

a. **Comfortable: Really with people that they know. Or alone. (Based on trust)**

- i. If neither, theres still some sort of anxiety.
 - ii. Its not a "safe bubble" in which they can expect things
 - iii. Theres always that unknown factor
- b. 100% public transportation; especially when its crowded.
- i. Crowded, half-time its stuffy and hot, people are touching you.

21. Are there specific situations where you feel more anxious or unsure about how to respond?

a. **Any social setting with people that they don't know.**

- i. Don't know what jokes to make, or what to talk about.
- ii. Are they serious, is that a joke?
- iii. The tone is just off cuz u don't know them.

Awareness of Social Cues

22. When you're in a conversation or group setting, what helps you get a sense of how others are feeling?

- a. Sometimes its really hard to tell.
 - b. **View difference between neurotypical and neurodivergent**
 - c. Thinks it comes from neurodivergent (that you need to say what you mean)
 - i. A lot of people who are neurotypical (what they say isn't what they mean, etc.)
 - ii. **Lots of nuance to it.**
 - iii. **Wants people to say exactly what you mean so they can understand.**
23. Are there social cues (like tone of voice, body language, or facial expressions) that are easier or harder for you to read?
- a. Easy: Body language, facial expressions (but only partially)
 - b. **Hard: Tone of voice, societal norms (what do people expect, and how do they expect me to act?).**
24. Have there been moments where you've felt unsure about how to respond or what someone meant? Would you feel comfortable sharing an example?
- a. People bring up a thing (e.g. going somewhere), and they were like, that was an invitation for you to come
 - i. They need like a outright invitation?
 - ii. Kinda assumes that the statement and not invitation
25. What do you typically do if you're unsure how someone is feeling or what they mean?
- a. With someone they don't know: Nod head and go yeah. Nonverbal, casual actions (listening but not comprehending)
 - b. With someone they know: More comfortable asking them for clarification.

Navigating Conversations

26. What are some things that make it easier for you to join or stay in a conversation?
- a. If its something they are interested in, and they know about.
 - i. Has something to contribute
 - b. General vibe (with a lot of people, you can tell. "Gaydar but for autistic people"
 - c. **This is because they feel like they are on the same page, similar to each other, mutual understanding of how brains work.**
27. Have you ever wanted to leave a conversation but weren't sure how? How did you handle it?
- a. Just leaves, in a group setting
 - b. If solo, does something else to show lack of interest, just nods, or excuses to leave.
28. When you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious in social situations, what tools or strategies do you use to cope?

- a. Leave (if possible) and get somewhere comfortable
- b. Headphones (noise cancelling). And pray
- c. Finding a place to sit down away from people.

Tech + Support Tools

29. Have you ever used apps or tools to help with social communication, anxiety, or emotional regulation?

- a. None for social cues
- b. For emotional regulation, Finch
- c. For anxiety, Finch also has breathing exercises and toolkits
- d. Whsa (anxiety therapy chatgpt)
 - i. Didn't stick, but did help with therapy they did every other week.
 - ii. Stopped cuz seeing a therapist every week.

30. What kind of features or tools would make social situations feel easier or more manageable for you?

a. Something that could read people (their minds)

b. Reads their facial cues, tone, and analyzes it. And tell you the situation.

i. Tells you outright what it is.

31. If you could have a personal assistant or tool in your pocket during social events, what would you want it to do?

- a. (SIMILAR TO ABOVE ANSWER) Reads their facial cues, tone, and analyzes it. And tell you the situation.
 - i. Tells you outright what it is.
- b. Something that could log your own experiences. (This is how this situation made me feel).

i. Can bring up to professionals (how can we address this, how can we navigate, or deal with it next time).

1. Personally prefers professional over ai generated thing

2. We already have no standard for diagnosing. There is no base-line. No agreement between mental health professionals.

3. Does not trust AI, cuz not very distinct "this is how every situation should be acted upon, because there are so many factors."

ii. Trying hard to fit in, how could they learn from past social settings?

iii. Very mentally draining.

c. Notifies you to take a break.

Reflection + Accessibility

32. How would you describe your relationship with technology when it comes to supporting your mental health or social life?

- a. Telehealth is super helpful. Does Not have to see a therapist (transportation, social interaction, etc.)
- b. Hit or miss in regards to social stuff.

c. Not how people should communicate anyways. Treat technology as more of an assistant. (brb going to meeting)

33. Are there any tools you've seen or imagined that you wish existed to help with social awareness?

a. Didn't really seek it out. Has the luxury of seeing a therapist. Not everyone has that, so doesn't have the need.

b. On a scale of 1 – 5. If it had a need.

i. What worked for someone doesn't work for everyone else.

34. Is there anything you'd want others to better understand about how you experience social situations as a neurodivergent person?

a. Just be patient, everyone is so impatient. Just let that person say their thoughts.

b. When they advocate for their needs, listen and support them.

c. Respect people. "Such a rare sight now these days."

Interviewee: A

User Interview Questions

Theme: Social Cues, Awareness, and Neurodivergency

Note: (If interviewee is uncomfortable its okay for them not to answer).

Background + Social Experiences

1. Tell me a bit about yourself!
 - Currently not diagnosed with anxiety and ADHD but feels like there is a high chance she has both
 - Finds it hard to stay on topic all the time and hyper-fixates on multiple things
 - Always has high anxiety in social settings like public speaking and events
 - Has a therapist
 - Therapist says she has high levels of depression and anxiety
2. Can you tell me a little about how you typically feel in social situations?
 - tend to do better in social settings where there are smaller groups, 2-3 people
 - Public speaking is not her strong suit
 - Emailed her professor multiple times to cancel presentations
 - Also does well when there are other introverted/quiet people in groups
 - feels more comfortable to initiate a conversation
 - Prefers one on one conversations
3. Are there certain places or social settings where you feel especially comfortable? Or others that feel a bit more challenging?
 - Feels most comfortable in a quiet setting and at home
 - Most uncomfortable in larger group settings
4. Are there specific situations where you feel more anxious or unsure about how to respond?
 - In larger group settings, feelings of anxiousness – afraid what she'll say may appear wrong / too much pressure to speak up because she doesn't know when to jump in

Awareness of Social Cues

5. When you're in a conversation or group setting, what helps you get a sense of how others are feeling?
 - a. Observe others facial expressions and the way they speak
 - b. Tends to notice very fast when someone is down/sad/anxious
 - c. Body language

6. Are there social cues (like tone of voice, body language, or facial expressions) that are easier or harder for you to read?
 - a. "Not likely? Not necessarily"
 - b. Feels like she knows very fast how others feel by body language and speech
 - i. Thinks it's because shes very observant
7. Have there been moments where you've felt unsure about how to respond or what someone meant? Would you feel comfortable sharing an example?
 - a. when people asks her "how do you feel about .." type of questions
 - i. On the spot
 - ii. Cant think of anything of the top of her head so it feels abrupt
8. What do you typically do if you're unsure how someone is feeling or what they mean?
 - a. Change the topic / move on ?
 - i. But depends on the context or else it feels rude to change it abruptly

③ Navigating Conversations

9. What are some things that make it easier for you to join or stay in a conversation?
 - a. Have others ask her for her opinion
 - i. Feels more inclusive
 - ii. Feels more comfortable for her to jump in
 - b. Everyone should show interest in her speaking
 - i. Also in the conversation too
10. Have you ever wanted to leave a conversation but weren't sure how? How did you handle it?
 - a. 100% but can't think of any off the top of her head
11. When you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious in social situations, what tools or strategies do you use to cope?
 - a. therapist has recommended her to sit up straight so that she can act like she is confident
 - i. Hasnt worked that well tho

④ Tech + Support Tools

12. Have you ever used apps or tools to help with social communication, anxiety, or emotional regulation?
 - a. Headspace to meditate and breathing exercises for high stress and anxiety
 - b. Says breathing exercises is helpful for anxiety
 - i. Help slow down heart rate
13. What kind of features or tools would make social situations feel easier or more manageable for you?
 - a. n/a (couldn't think of any)

14. If you could have a personal assistant or tool in your pocket during social events, what would you want it to do?
- a. unsure (skipped)

5 Reflection + Accessibility

15. How would you describe your relationship with technology when it comes to supporting your mental health or social life?
- a. Likes using it as a distraction for anxiety
 - i. Helped a lot to calm her down because she is doing something she enjoys
 - b. Uses technology to also distract her from depression episodes

16. (followup question)

- a. What do you do on your devices/electronics that helps support your mental health?
 - i. Watch youtube and play games on PC to destress / lower anxiety levels
 - ii. Talk to friends too, friends help calm her down
17. Are there any tools you've seen or imagined that you wish existed to help with social awareness?
- a. n/a (skipped)
18. Is there anything you'd want others to better understand about how you experience social situations as a neurodivergent person?
- a. Just because she is not speaking doesn't mean she is not interested in the conversation
 - i. Mentioned clashing with her friend who said she should pay more attention to what she is talking about but she was, just not talking
 - ii. Also thinks she is a good listener because of this

Key Findings

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Interviewee R deals more with **anxiety** (diagnosed anxiety disorder).
- Unlike Interviewee E, R does not struggle with sensory triggers (e.g loud noises, bad/strong smells, etc.). **However, they struggle more with not knowing what to expect/when planned things go wrong.**
- Another key difference is that R will not hesitate to ask for clarification (it doesn't matter who it is). However, E will only ask for clarification if they trust or know the other individual well.
- Both have similar reactions/responses when it comes to no longer wanting to engage in a conversation.
 - They resort to uninterested body languages and cues, such as:
 - Looking at their phone
 - Giving short responses (one-words)
 - Making excuses to leave
 - Non-verbal head nodding.
 - Looking at other things