

Summary for Open Zoom Discussion Thursday 29th of February

Attentional difference in ADHD and Autism

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Host – Cassandra Clemens

Transformational neurodivergence coach and founder of Heal Your Confidence Community Interest Company

[linkedin.com/in/Kassandra-clemens-coach](https://www.linkedin.com/in/Kassandra-clemens-coach)

kassandra.clemens@outlook.com

Heal Your Confidence Community Interest Company

Website: www.healyourconfidence.com

Email: hello@healyourconfidence.com

Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/healyourconfidence>

LinkedIn business page

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/heal-your-confidence>

Panellists:

IngerShaye Colzie

Alchemy Coaching. ADHD Leadership Coach | Executive Coach | Founder of The ADHD Black Professionals Alliance | Founder of Black Women with ADHD| Speaker| Executive Function Consultant| Neurodiversity Advocate

[linkedin.com/in/ingershayecolzie](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ingershayecolzie)

IngerShaye@ingershaye.com

Neil Lawrence

Top LinkedIn Neurodivergent Mindful and Teamwork Voice Helping Executives, Leaders, Young Professionals Overcome Fear of Finishing and Difference | Group & 1:1 Sessions and 'Touch Base' Calls

[linkedin.com/in/neil-lawrence-a7752129](https://www.linkedin.com/in/neil-lawrence-a7752129)

[linkedin.com/company/life-coach-london-ltd](https://www.linkedin.com/company/life-coach-london-ltd) (Personal)

lifecoach-london.com (Company)

neil@lifecoach-london.com

Plus 32 additional attendees. Several spoke up while others contributed via a very lively chat (only available to attendees). In addition, we had more than 40 apologies with requests for summaries.

Overview:

- Autism and ADHD experiences and diagnosis.
- Personal history, education, and coaching for ADHD and autism.
- ADHD coaching for black women.
- ADHD, menopause, and parenting.
- Neurodiversity, trauma, and identity.
- Therapy, ADHD, autism, and trauma.
- Neurodiversity, trauma, and inclusivity.
- Trauma and therapy approaches.
- ADHD, cancer, and nature-based healing.
- Neurodiversity, autoimmune diseases, and life expectancy.
- ADHD coaching for black women in Philadelphia.
- ADHD, mental health, and neurodiversity.
- Ethics and morals in research and decision-making.
- Neurodiversity, emotional experiences, and self-discovery.
- Neurodiversity, inclusion, and government action.
- Neurodiversity and employment.

Outline of discussion

Discussion strands included:

- autism and ADHD, with a focus on their overlap and potential co-occurrence.
- personal experiences with ADHD and how it affects life, including feeling burnt out, scared, and confused.
- a community for black women with ADHD to provide support and relief, and they find joy in helping others through coaching. The speakers own personal

experience with ADHD highlighted the lack of representation for black women in the field, leading them to start their own organization.

- ADHD, menopause, and parenting.
- being out of step with surroundings, ADHD, menopause, and children as a pathway to understanding. The challenges of navigating life and relationships when neurodivergent, and feeling like an "outsider" in a system not designed for neurodivergence.
- Neurodiversity, trauma, and identity, therapy, ADHD, autism, and trauma.
- impostor syndrome and feeling like a failure, relating to women and others who have felt the same.
- the polarization of opinions in social work and education, particularly around the labels and diagnoses of neurodivergent individuals.
- frustration with the lack of understanding and empathy towards individuals with trauma and neurodiverse experiences, and the tendency to label and diagnose rather than addressing the root causes.
- frustration with therapy models that pathologize and label individuals, rather than treating the person as a whole. Hopes to create a course for therapists on the ADHD and autism experience to help them better understand and support individuals with these neurodiverse conditions.
- experience with ADHD and trauma, including
 - The role trauma can play, both from external sources and the internalized trauma of constantly receiving negative messages about being neurodivergent.
 - parenting style is influenced by their own trauma and how they've learned to forgive and move forward.
 - Validating and using a trauma-informed approach in therapy can lead to more effective and efficient sessions, with people being able to build themselves up and make progress.
 - The importance of reframing narratives for healing and empowerment.
 - recommended Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for managing trauma and ADHD.
- the importance of compassion and self-compassion, and the need for inclusivity in addressing the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals.

Needed are strategies/hacks that work for the individual rather than trying to fit a mold.

- the potential for misdiagnosis or misidentification of neurodivergent status, and the need for a more nuanced understanding of neurodiversity.
- the need to listen to and honour the intentions of others, particularly in the context of PTSD and trauma, and explores various approaches to neural rewiring and healing.
- ADHD, cancer, and nature-based healing, exploring the overlap between the two and the importance of self-compassion.
- ADHD individuals find connection with nature, self, and others through nature-based work. The value of nature and outdoor environments for supporting cognitive functioning.
- Neurodiversity, autoimmune diseases, and life expectancy, the correlation between neurodiversity, chronic illnesses, and environmental factors impacting life expectancy.
- Natalie advocated for inclusive research on genetic diversity in non-white communities, highlighting potential benefits for medical research.
- the importance of personal growth and self-expression in a mastermind group.
- experience with ADHD and how it has impacted their life, including their profession and mental health.
- thoughts on the connection between ADHD and non-heterosexual orientations
- how to separate fact from conflicting information in research reports.
 - Ethics and morals in research and decision-making can only be attained through thorough cross-checking and analyzing data to come to an informed conclusion.
 - a need to navigate ambiguous data. the value of collaboration and sharing conflicting data to reach a decision,
 - excessive data can be overwhelming and hinder decision-making.
 - The need for more research and outreach involving diverse communities that are underrepresented in studies.
- the importance of considering life-facing services and products, rather than just patient- or client-facing ones.
- Neurodiversity, emotional experiences, and self-discovery.

- o need for acceptance, pride, and self-love in overcoming the challenges of being different and finding a middle ground.
- o emphasizing emotional focus in understanding neuro divergence, challenging traditional logic-based approaches.
- o the importance of emotional connection and understanding in communication, emphasizing that everyone is an emotional mammal.
- o concerns raised about the use of "superpowers" as a coping mechanism, suggesting it may be a reaction to feelings of inadequacy.
- Neurodiversity, inclusion, and government action.
- individualized approaches for neurodivergent individuals, advocating for inclusive design and government action.

End of March discussion: Cassandra hopes to organize a panel discussion on autism and employment, citing a significant gap in employment opportunities for autistic individuals. Importance of understanding and engaging with individuals who may have different perspectives and needs.