

introduction to neurodiversity

a quick-reference resource

neurodiversity

[noor-oh-di-**vur**-si-tee] *noun*

Neurodiversity is a collective term that refers to the diverse abilities of all people and the unique variations in cognitive functioning that exist across the human population.

Neurodiversity embraces the idea that neurodivergent conditions represent natural differences in human brain functioning, rather than a deviation from the norm, that do not need to be 'fixed' or 'corrected'.

As an extension of this, the neurodiversity movement recognises and celebrates different ways of thinking, perceiving, and experiencing the world.

neurodivergent

[noor-oh-di-**vur**-juhnt] *noun*

Neurodiversity and neurodivergent are related terms but have different meanings. These concepts promote acceptance, understanding, and accommodation of diverse ways of thinking and experiencing the world.

Neurodivergent or neurodivergence specifically refers to individuals whose neurological makeup diverges from the dominant or expected norm. Being neurodivergent implies having a brain that functions in ways that are atypical compared to most of the population.

neurodiversity in numbers:

15% to 20%
employees are neurodivergent¹

19% of managers are fearful of 'getting it wrong' for neurodivergent employees²

Neurodiverse teams can be **30%** more productive than neurotypical teams³

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why is it important?

Neurodiversity acknowledges the inherent variation in human neurological traits, which cannot be altered, making it essential for organisations to embrace inclusivity due to the societal and commercial benefits it brings. This includes:

- Ensuring workplaces are inclusive, accommodating, and supportive to provide equal opportunities for all employees.
- A neurodiverse workforce enhances adaptability and innovation as different cognitive approaches contribute to a more resilient and dynamic business environment, benefiting employee morale and engagement.
- Recognising and accepting neurodiversity contributes to a more accepting and harmonious society by challenging stereotypes and reducing stigma linked to difference.



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strengths

In an inclusive and accessible environment, neurodivergent individuals can display a range of cognitive abilities in different areas including attention to detail, pattern recognition, logical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, hyperfocus, and exceptional memory skills*.

challenges

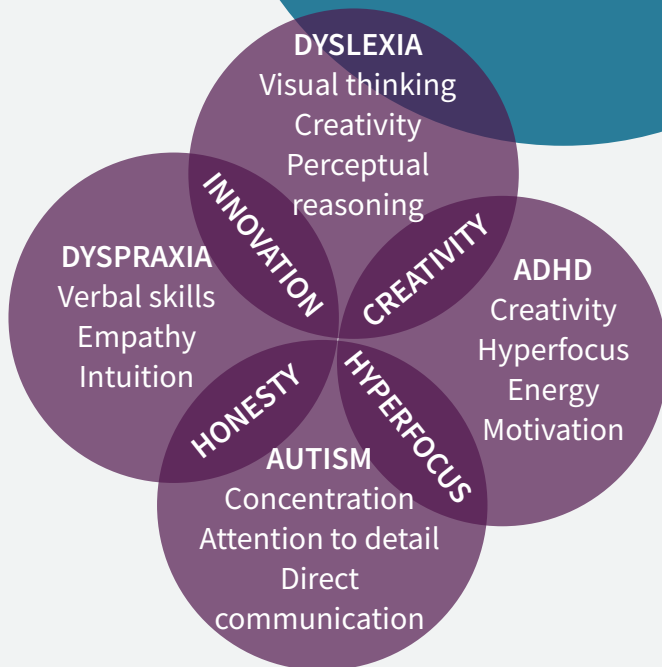
Sensory sensitivities can pose challenges in environments with bright lights, loud noises, or strong odours leading individuals to seek or avoid certain sensory stimulations.

Challenges with executive functioning, such as organisation, time management, and task prioritisation, may be present in some neurodivergent individuals.

Varied communication styles may lead to challenges in understanding or being understood. Some individuals may prefer more direct or literal communication.

Difficulty with transitions or changes in routine can be challenging for some neurodivergent individuals. Predictability and clear communication about changes can help mitigate this.

Neurodivergent individuals may exhibit high levels of stress and anxiety often due to experiencing non-accessible environments and working patterns.



* different neurodivergent people will have different strengths and challenges - this is not an exhaustive list

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in the workplace

The importance of language

Language plays a critical role in shaping attitudes, perceptions, and the overall experience of individuals with disabilities.

It is essential to use respectful and inclusive language to promote understanding, reduce stigma, and empower individuals.

DO

DON'T

✓ say 'is autistic', 'is dyslexic', 'is neurodivergent'

✗ Use terms; disorder, disease, deficit

✓ say 'experiences' of ADHD

✗ Speak of colleagues as 'they' or 'them' / generalised othering

✓ Difficulty / difference are acceptable

✗ 'suffering from' or 'affected by' ...

The social versus medical model of disability

The social and medical models of disability are contrasting perspectives that shape how society perceives disabilities

	MEDICAL MODEL	SOCIAL MODEL
Attitude towards neurodivergent conditions	Focus is on deficits	Society needs to become more inclusive and equitable
Who & what needs to change?	The individual	Societal attitudes and practises
If someone has a challenge what happens then?	Focus on a cure of deficits	Support to enable success
Goal of change	To change or cure perceived deficits	To increase acceptance of differences in society

At auticon, we believe the social model of disability is more inclusive as it recognises the wider role of society in accepting neurodifferences, accommodating reasonable adjustments and promoting equity where everyone's differences are supported.

REFERENCES

- ¹ [Doyle, N. \(2020.\) 'Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults,' National Center for Biotechnology Information, Oct, 14, 135 \(1\): p108-125](#)
- ² [Institute of Leadership & Management, \(2020\). Workplace Neurodiversity. The Power of Difference](#)
- ³ [Harvard Business Review \(2017\) Neurodiversity as a competitive advantage](#)

auticon is a social enterprise with the mission to **address the inequalities** in employment for **neurodivergent** adults.

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