Introduction to Neurodiversity: Creating inclusivity

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Agenda

- **Definitions/language**
- **Challenges**
- **Classroom/Office behaviors**
- **Creating inclusive spaces**
- **Strengths**
- **Resources**

Neurotypical

Someone whose brain functions in the way expected by society

Neurodivergent

Someone whose brain performs differently than what society considers the norm

Neurodiversity

A group that includes neurodivergent **and** neurotypical people

What is Neurodiversity?

Everyone has a differently-wired brain and their own unique way of thinking, interacting and experiencing the world.

Neurodiversity is based on the concept that neurological variances should be recognised and respected just like any other human variation, such as gender, race or sexual orientation.

Neurodiversity is about recognising that everyone's brain works differently.

Neurodivergent

ASD, ADHD, OCD, Tourette Syndrome, Dys(lexia, praxia, graphia), Sensory disorders

Neurodivergent

- "Neurodivergent" isn't a medical term, condition or diagnosis. People who are neurodivergent have differences in the way their brain works.

- There aren't any medical criteria or definitions of what it means to be neurodivergent, other conditions also can fall under this term as well. People with these conditions may also choose not to identify themselves as neurodivergent.

- **https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent**

A Quick Word On Inclusive Language

- Neurodivergent NOT "abnormal"
- Neurotypical NOT "normal"
- Neurotype NOT "disorder"
- When in doubt – ask!

Neurodiversity movement

A grassroots effort advocating for improvements in how neurodivergent people are viewed and treated in society

Why Does Neurodiversity Matter?

- The concept of neurodiversity is the acceptance that all humans are different, with unique minds, needs and abilities.

- This approach moves beyond labels such as autism, dyslexia or ADHD and recognises that difference in ability are natural in the human genome and can contain unique gifts and contributions.

- The human brain has a wide spectrum of functions, and any differences should be acknowledged as just another way of being or doing things.

Neurodivergence

Unique Challenges

Sensory related issues

Hearing

Feeling

Seeing

Smelling

Tasting

Exercise

Hearing

Feeling

Seeing

Smelling

Tasting

No one student is exactly like others

Many of the limitations have to do with the triad of issues:

Social interactions involving:

- communication
- intense interests
- repetitive behaviors.

The Cost of Masking

Masking – Changing behavior to hide or suppress natural neurodivergent traits

Masking changes behavior that doesn't hurt anyone; it's just different.

Masking is draining, stressful, and creates loneliness

Additional non-dominant identities increase the toll of masking.

Masking + code switching for a Black autistic person

Masking + hiding their sexuality for an LGBTQ person with ADHD

Issues and Challenges

- Social skills
- Body language
- Communication
- Literal thinking
- Unexpected change
- Sensory sensitivity
- Preoccupation with a subject
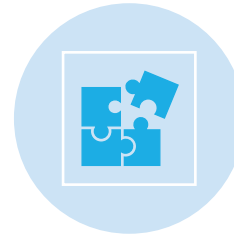
Strengths

Very individualized

Strengths

Very individualized

THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE WHERE YOU FLOURISH

BRAIN DIVERSITY

INNOVATION

PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

CHALLENGING OLD HABITS

ADDING PURPOSEFUL VALUE

QUESTIONING HOW THINGS ARE CURRENTLY DONE

STELLAR IMAGINATION

Behaviors in the classroom

Understanding Common Classroom Behaviors and their Causes

Behavior

Head on desk		
Mimics or recites back		
Great expressive skills		
Odd speaking habits		
May not respond to facial expressions, tone		
Does not recognize you		
May not shift topic on cue		

Behavior   Interpretation

Head on desk	Rude, sleeping	
Mimics or recites back	Not taking speaker seriously	
Great expressive skills	Overestimation of functioning	
Odd speaking habits	Inappropriate	
May not respond to facial expressions, tone	Leads to miscues in assignments	
Does not recognize you	Aloof, rude	
May not shift topic on cue	Self-absorbed, uninterested	

Behavior   Cause

Behavior	Cause	
Head on desk	Sensory overload	
Mimics or recites back	Time to process	
Great expressive skills	Compensates for receptive skills	
Odd speaking habits	Pragmatic Language deficits	
May not respond to facial expressions, tone	Difficulty with non-verbals	
Does not recognize you	Limited facial recognition	
May not shift topic on cue	Does not automatically catch on	

Behavior   (mis)Interpretation   Cause

Behavior	(mis)Interpretation	Cause
Head on desk	Rude, sleeping	Sensory overload
Mimics or recites back	Not taking speaker seriously	Time to process
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How to work within this framework

- **Approach each situation in a non-judgmental manner**

- **Treat everyone with respect**

- **Try not to make assumptions about the origins of the behaviors**

How to work within this framework

Incorporate Universal Design concepts such as

- Allow a moment for students to process questions

- Pay attention to visual/auditory stimuli (do you need to shut the door/turn down lights)

- Offer multiple means of learning (visual, auditory, tactile)

How to work within this framework

- **Incorporate inclusive classroom rules**
  - **Stepping out of the classroom if necessary**
  - **Allowing students to wear hats (can block out visual stimulations**
  - **Set CLEAR expectations of how/when communication should occur (eg: raise your and to speak; each student can speak X number times per class period)**
  - **Offer multiple ways for student to communicate with you (in person, via text/email, phone)**
  - **Direct and explicit communication**
  - **Invite clarification**
  - **Document expectations and instructions**
  - **Write down "unwritten" rules**

How to work within this framework

Incorporate Universal Design concepts such as

- **Allow a moment for students to process questions**
- **Pay attention to visual/auditory stimuli (do you need to shut the door/turn down lights)**
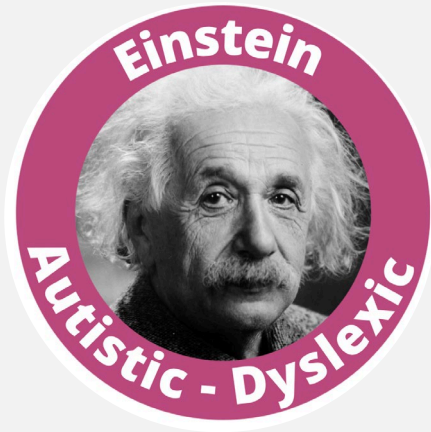- **Offer multiple means of learning (visual, auditory, tactile)**

Additional Suggestions for Inclusivity

- Create a space that allows all to contribute.
- Don't assume everyone can read your body language. Be Direct.
- Explain your meaning in multiple ways.
- Break down ideas to avoid overwhelming those who process information differently
- Vigorously but respectfully maintain class rules and other boundaries

Goal

"Normalize" differences and work to create norms that honor everyone's human dignity.

Einstein — Autistic - Dyslexic

Cara Delevigne — Dyspraxic

Bill Gates — Dyslexic

Emma Watson — ADHD

Tommy Hilfiger — Dyslexic

Keira Knightley — Dyslexic

Questions

Resources and Thank you for Attending

- [Hiring and Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace- Dr. Tiffany Jameson- LinkedIn Learning](#)

- [Helping Neurodivergent Employees Succeed](#)

- [AskEarn.Org](#)

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Evaluation is in the Whova app