



# Neurodiversity: What is it? Plus: the Intermediary Experience

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Registered Intermediary



Today:

What do we mean by Neurodiversity?

How can you be aware of this?

What is Autistic masking?

The Intermediary Experience

The Importance of Visual Cues

Neurodevelopment,  
Neurodiversity and  
Neurodivergence

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Neurodevelopment: the cognitive functions we are all born with

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Neurodiversity: We are all different.

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Neurodivergence: Those people who cannot function in conventional society without reasonable adjustments/special measures/increased care and support.

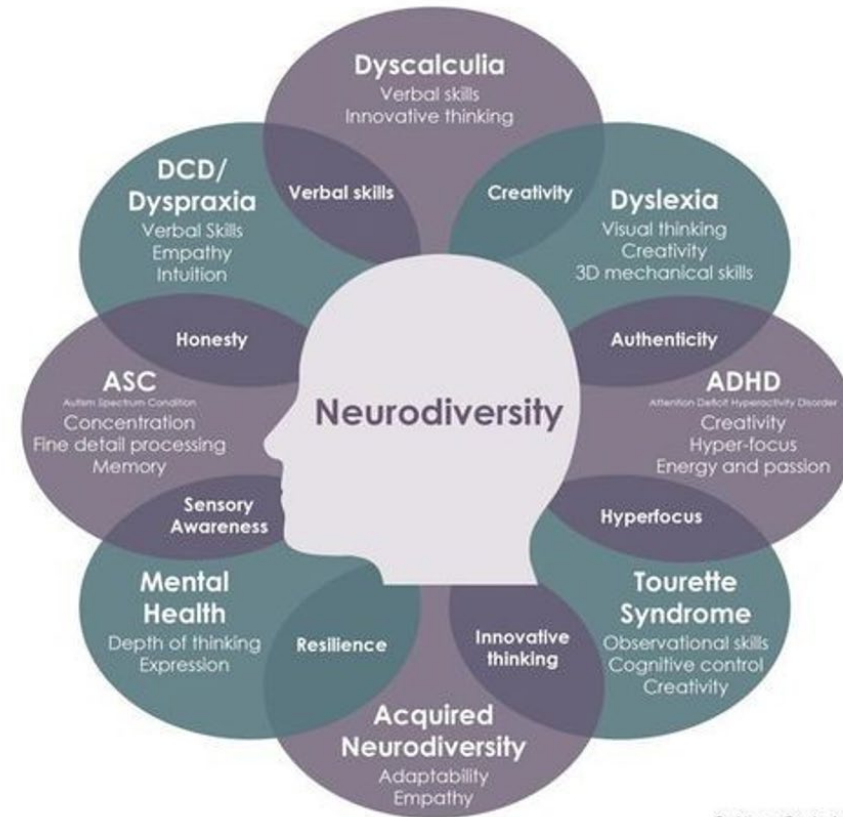
The image shows two axial MRI brain scans. The top scan is a T2-weighted image showing hyperintense areas in the white matter. The bottom scan is a T1-weighted image showing normal brain anatomy. Both scans have technical data overlays in white text, including parameters like TR, TE, SL, and TA. The scans are set against a dark background with a red and blue gradient at the bottom.

# Not forgetting Acquired Brain Injury

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- E.g. Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Stroke
  - Dementia
  - Parkinson's Disease
  - Multiple Sclerosis
  - Motor Neurone Disease
- Etc.

# From The World Economic Forum 2022



Dr Nancy Doyle, based on the work of Mary Colley

# How to be Aware

Not always easy to spot

Approach with curiosity and make no assumptions

Reasonable Adjustments

Decision making

Narrative –style learned speech leading nowhere.

High attention to specific details.

Poor attention and listening

Sensory Differences

# Sensory Differences. Why is this SO Important

5 “Peripheral” Senses: Taste, Touch, Vision, Smell, Auditory

2 Spatial Senses: Kinesthetic and Proprioceptive

Interoception: Internal sensory regulation: Hunger, Thirst, Pain, Temperature, Tiredness, emotions, need for the toilet, etc.

**If I am unable to regulate, or integrate, these sensations, I will become overwhelmed and anxious.**

**I will NOT be processing Language.**

**A N X I E T Y**

**makes**

**it**

**very**

**difficult**

**to**

**process**



# What you can Do

- **Ask:**
- Do you have any diagnoses such as autism/asperger's syndrome, or others?
- How does that affect you?
- What can I do to make this easier for you?
- Do you think you understand everything that I am saying?
- Can you always say exactly what you want to say?

Consider:

Your manner: build rapport

Prepare them

Give time

Multiple sessions

Write down key messages

Clarity on plans

# Autistic Masking

Book: Autistic masking: Understanding Identity Management and the Role of Stigma. Amy Pearson and Keiran Rose. 2023.

Definition: To 'mask' or to 'camouflage' means to **hide or disguise parts of oneself in order to better fit in with those around you:**  
**National Autistic Society. July 2022**

It gives the impression one is more able/competent/knowledgeable than one might actually be.

We all do this in some circumstances: It is exhausting.

Excessive masking leads to autistic burnout/crisis.

# Reasonable adjustments

## Questions to ask neurodiverse employees

1



### Sensory difference

Which physical environments do you find most challenging?

Eg lighting, sound, temperature, space, smells

2



### Communication

What are your communication preferences?

Eg written (letters, emails, texts), graphics (pictures, graphs), verbal (spoken information)

3



### Social interactions

Do you benefit from explanations of workplace interactions?

Eg who to speak to in open plan offices, how to navigate etiquette in meetings

4



### Structure

Do you need a clear structure to your work?

Eg agendas before meetings, tasks with clear beginnings and endings, clear and specific instructions

5



### Quiet spaces

Do you need a quiet space to go to if you become overwhelmed?

Eg going to a quiet room, taking a break from a noisy area

Source

The  
Registered  
Intermediary  
Experience

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## My Background

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Supported approx. 140 adults to  
give evidence to the police and  
cross examination in Court.

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At least half were autistic

## Case Study

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30 year old autistic man. Living alone.  
Victim of cuckooing.

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Special Interest: Classic Car collection

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Groomed and controlled into taking Class  
A drugs.

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His entire collection was taken in front of  
his eyes to sell for more drugs

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# Intermediary Involvement

## Communication Assessment:

### For Court:

- Special measures: Intermediary Presence
- Edited and prepared Qs
- Written version in front of witness. Each question shown as being asked.
- Achieved steady, controlled pace. Clarity of Qs.
- When asked why he had allowed the cars to be taken from his home, he was able to say he was overwhelmed.
- Able to use a complex abstract concept in a stressful situation.

Witness was empowered to speak up and give his account in Court.