

the neurosloth[®]



bundle

embracing inclusivity & acceptance
through connection & play.

for Kidadults &
smaller kids too

Created & Designed by Yasmin Shaheen Zaffar

www.neurosloth.com

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Who are these resources for?

The neurosloth[™] resources are designed for individuals of all ages, embracing neurodiversity and through the illustrations promoting playful learning. They are ideal for both children and adults, encouraging a sense of wonder, self-discovery, and personal growth. These resources are for anyone who appreciates the power of playfulness and seeks to explore their unique traits and experiences.

Kidadulting Refers to the process of embracing one's inner child while navigating the responsibilities and challenges of adulthood.

- It recognises the importance of maintaining a playful and curious mindset even as we grow older.
- Kidadulting encourages individuals to tap into their playful nature, fostering creativity, resilience, and a positive outlook on life
- Kidadulting is important because it allows us to reconnect with our authentic selves and find joy in everyday experiences.
- It promotes mental well-being, reduces stress, and helps to cultivate a balanced perspective on life.
- By incorporating playfulness into our adult lives, we can enhance our problem-solving skills, improve interpersonal relationships, and approach challenges with a more lighthearted and open-minded attitude.

Playfulness is essential because it unlocks our imagination, encourages exploration, and stimulates learning. It promotes cognitive development, problem-solving abilities, and emotional resilience.

Through play, we can discover new perspectives, experiment with different ideas, and develop a sense of self-awareness. By connecting to our playful part, we tap into our innate creativity and curiosity, enabling personal growth and a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

The neurosloths[™] are created to support and nurture these important aspects of kidadulting and the playful nature within each of us. They provide a safe and enjoyable space for self-reflection, exploration, and connection, fostering a sense of wonder and appreciation for neurodiversity.

Whether you're a child or an adult, these cards offer a delightful opportunity to engage with yourself and others in a playful and meaningful way.

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Our Mission

We want to raise awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity in an accessible, fun and playful way.

Our values are **inclusivity, acceptance & playfulness**.

Through our cards, resources, programs, stories and products our hope is to:

- Offer representation and inclusivity, providing a sense of being seen and valued to both children and adults alike - across generations.
- Normalise the conversation to promote inclusion of all neurodiversity and traits.
- Champion and recognise our unique strengths and traits.
- Promote self-advocacy skills so neurodivergent individuals are better able to seek accommodations without shame or apology.
- Support in deconstructing ableism and prejudices through diversity education.
- Raise awareness and exploration of intersectionality and neurodivergence.

the neurosloths™

Imber

Nugget

Spectrum

Chroma

Feenyx

Zaphyr

techno

Koda

Violet

www.neurosloth.com

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This deck of cards is not a substitute for crisis or professional mental health support. If you need support please reach out to your G.P or medical healthcare professional. If it is a matter of emergency or you are in crisis please make contact with emergency services as soon as possible.

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a remarkable tapestry that weaves together an array of unique traits and characteristics within individuals. Which in everyday life can mean different people do different things in different ways. And that's O.K .

It is a reminder that each person's neurological makeup is distinctly their own, and no two neurodivergent individuals are exactly alike. It is essential to recognise that different neurodivergent individuals may exhibit varying traits and experiences, making it crucial not to make assumptions or generalise each person's experiences.

Embracing neurodiversity means embracing the beautifully diverse range of traits that emerge within individuals. It encourages us to approach each person with an open mind and a willingness to explore and understand their distinct strengths and challenges.

By shedding preconceived notions and allowing space for individuality, we create an environment that fosters personal growth, acceptance, and celebration of the unique qualities that make each person special.

The exploration of different traits within neurodiversity serves as a gateway to understanding and appreciating the vast spectrum of human experiences. It invites us to embark on a journey of discovery, to engage in meaningful conversations, and to actively listen to the voices of neurodivergent individuals.

By doing so, we can gain insight into their perspectives, learn from their diverse lived experiences, and broaden our understanding of what it means to be human.

In this pursuit, it becomes evident that every individual holds a treasure trove of untapped potential waiting to be explored.

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Each person's uniqueness is an opportunity for growth and learning, not only for themselves but also for those around them.

By embracing and celebrating the distinct traits that manifest within neurodiversity, we foster an inclusive society that values and uplifts every individual, allowing them to flourish and contribute their invaluable perspectives to the world.

Neurodivergent or Neurodiversity?

Neurodivergent/ neurodivergence is a term used to describe individuals who have neurological differences or conditions in thinking, being or doing that are not considered mainstream or usual in society (the Neurosloths™ try to refrain from using terms such as "normal").

ADHD, Autism, Dyspraxia, and Dyslexia all fall within the spectrum of "Neurodiversity" and are all neurodiverse conditions/ traits. So individuals with these conditions would be considered "neurodivergent". Individuals who are not neurodivergent are considered "neurotypical". Although we have a sneaky feeling there may be a time when there are far more neuro-divergents.

Simply put all neurodivergents & neurotypicals are neurodiverse. It feels important to also recognise language can change over time & individual preference of language used is always important.

the neurosloths™ Nugget
Imber Chroma Feenyx
Spectrum Koda
Zaphyr techn Violet
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What's in the Neurosloth bundle™?

The Neurosloth™ bundle is designed to increase self-awareness and promote psychoeducation about neurodivergence in an affirming and inclusive manner.

In this resource pack you will find:

- **10 Neurosloth™ cards** - identifying the original 9 neurosloths™ from the Neurosloth Academy™ & a short bio about each one's traits, likes and dislikes. There's also one template for you to create your own neurosloth™ character and write a short bio for them also.
- **1 A4 Sheet** - All the Neurosloths™ and template on one sheet.
- **1 A4 Neurosloth™ "my traits map"** template for you to create your own unique neurosloth™ exploring your own traits, likes and dislikes.
- **59 Neurosloth™ cards with Koda** - representing a wide range of possible traits and experiences that neurodivergent people may experience.
- **59 Reflection prompts:** Alongside each image card you will find a brief explanation and reflection prompts - extracts from the Neurosloth™ workbook.
- **1 A4 Neurosloth™ Sensitivities Tracker** - to help explore & track sensory processing challenges.
- **1 A4 Neurosloth™ emotions with Koda** - 15 emotion faces

As the creator of these I am someone who identifies as neurodivergent, a parent of neurodivergent teen, and a psychotherapist who works with neurodivergent clients - adolescents, emerging adults & adults & couples.

I created the Neurosloths™ with the goal of providing a valuable creative tool for children, adults, individuals, groups, parents, teachers, communities, young and old seeking to spark discussion, help better support neurodivergent individuals and as a way to unite together to champion and celebrate our differences.

How to Use the Cards

Here are some suggestions which provide various ways to engage with the cards and promote self-reflection and exploration. Here's a summary of the suggested uses:

- **Random Card Reflection:** Choose a card at random and contemplate its image, considering how it relates to yourself or your loved ones. Reflect on the thoughts and sensations it evokes, and explore its personal meaning.
- **Create a Personalized neurosloth™:** Utilise the worksheet provided to design your own neurosloth™ by coloring, doodling, sketching, or writing words that represent your unique self. This activity can be done individually or as a group or family.
- **Select Resonating Cards:** Go through all the cards and choose the ones that resonate with you the most. Explore why these cards are appealing or interesting to you and discuss their significance. Each card can serve as a prompt for reflection and discussion.
- **Personalised Traits Map:** Use the included worksheet and the cards to create a traits map. This map helps process thoughts and emotions related to the cards and fosters awareness and understanding. It can also help identify areas in your life that you would like to work on.
- **Create Stories or Play Card Games:** Use the neurosloth™ cards to create your own stories or engage in card games such as snap, where you can learn about different traits through play.

Remember, the neurosloth™ resources are not intended as a diagnostic tool but rather as a means of self-reflection and exploration. If you are facing significant challenges, it is important to seek professional help. These cards can complement professional support but should not replace it.

Meet The Neurosloths™

Prepare to embark on an extraordinary journey to the Neurosloth Academy based in the depths of the Amazon jungle, where you'll encounter a group of curious beings like no other - the Neurosloths™!

These neurodiversity champions have captured the hearts of both the young and the young-at-heart, uniting everyone in a celebration of understanding, acceptance, playfulness and the power of friendship.

The Neurosloths™ come from different backgrounds and have neurodiverse traits - just like the biodiversity that lives in the jungle. Some traits unique to them and some they recognise also in others.

Through their adventures they all eventually accept and support one another working through their everyday challenges and ups and downs of relationship.

Join us as we delve into the thrilling escapades of these nine remarkable Neurosloths™, each possessing their own unique neurodiverse traits! Biodiversity and Neurodiversity living side by side and as we follow their adventures ... don't be surprised to learn a fact or two about the biodiversity of their home they call the jungle.

Meet the Neurosloths™ coming soon near to you!

Brace yourself for an introduction to Koda, whose sensitivity to noise and ADHD make for an adventure-filled existence and meet Violet, a vibrant soul who is both autistic and has Protanopia.

Spectrum occasionally experiences the pang of feeling left out due to being neurotypical, while Ember's rollercoaster tumbling of emotions, fueled by RSD, leads to unforgettable meltdowns that rumble the peace of the jungle.

As you immerse yourself in their stories, you'll also encounter Chroma, an exquisite neurosloth™ on the autism spectrum - always armed with a fact or two to share about the biodiversity of the jungle, and Feenyx, whose dyslexia and dyspraxia only add spoonfuls of lovability to their already quirky traits and ways of seeing the world.

But the surprises don't end there! You'll meet Nugget, a snuggable neurosloth™ with a constant battle against social anxiety, always hesitant to explore new experiences and places.

Zaphyr, on the other hand, radiates boundless energy and an insatiable appetite for noise, bouncing through the jungle with contagious enthusiasm. And let's not forget Techno, whose Alexithymia leads to unpredictable outbursts, blending moments of hilarity and heartfelt revelations.

Through the enthralling tales of the Neurosloths™ and their extraordinary adventures, you'll discover the boundless power of unconditional acceptance and the genuine bonds of challenging friendships.

Despite their differences and the everyday challenges they encounter, these incredible neurosloths™ stand as a beacon of hope, proving that understanding and acceptance can conquer any obstacle that comes their way.

Meet the neurosloths™



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Koda

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Ember

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Feenix

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Zaphyr

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Techno

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Nugget

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Spectrum

neurosloth© 2023



Violet

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Chroma

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KODA

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Introducing Koda, the adventurous neurosloth™ whose sensitivity to noise and ADHD create an exhilarating existence in the jungle.

With boundless energy and a zest for life, Koda navigates the vibrant wilderness with an insatiable curiosity and a mischievous spirit. Koda's heightened sensitivity to noise adds a whole new dimension to their jungle experience.

Every rustle of leaves, chirping bird, or distant roar can captivate their attention and fuel their sense of adventure.

However, it also poses challenges, as loud noises can sometimes fast forward them into overwhelm. Despite these obstacles, Koda's determination and resilience shine through, propelling them forward and transforming each hurdle into an opportunity for growth.

As an individual with ADHD, Koda's mind is a whirlwind of creativity and ideas. They thrive on the constant stimulation the jungle provides, allowing their imagination to soar to new heights.

While their focus may shift from one thing to another, Koda's ability to embrace spontaneity and live in the moment brings a sense of wonder and excitement to their surroundings.

Amidst the vibrant tapestry of jungle life, Koda is constantly seeking self-discovery and personal growth. Their experiences and curiosity about the biodiversity of the jungle prompt moments of introspection, as they question their place in the world and ponder the meaning of their journey. Through these reflections, Koda inspires us to explore our own identities and embrace the transformative power of self-exploration.

Koda

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EMBER

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Get ready to meet Ember, a neurocloth™ whose emotions ride the rollercoaster of life in the jungle. Fueled by RSD (rejection sensitivity dysphoria), Ember's journey is marked by unforgettable meltdowns that rumble the tranquility of the jungle.

Ember's emotional landscape is both intense and vibrant. Their experiences of rejection sensitivity dysphoria amplify their emotional responses, making every situation feel magnified and deeply personal.

The ups and downs of their emotions create a whirlwind that sweeps through the jungle, leaving an indelible mark on their surroundings and the hearts of their companions.

Despite the challenges they face, Ember's meltdowns are not merely chaotic outbursts. They are a testament to the depth of their emotional capacity and a reminder of the importance of self-care and understanding.

Through these meltdowns, Ember teaches us the value of acknowledging and expressing our emotions authentically, even when they may seem overwhelming.

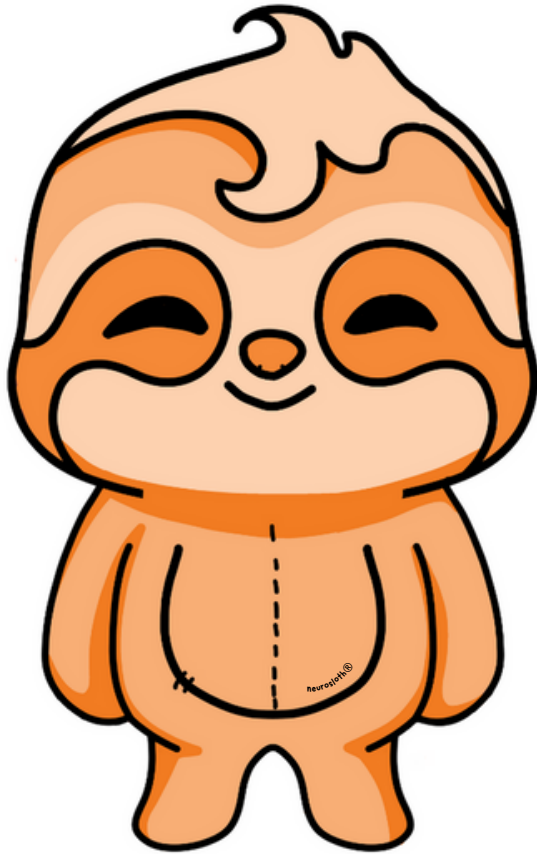
In the midst of their emotional storms, Ember's vulnerability and resilience shine through. They remind us that it is okay to experience intense emotions and that we can find strength in embracing and navigating them.

Ember's journey is an invitation for self-reflection and a reminder that our emotions, even the tumultuous ones, are an integral part of our human experience.

Witness their journey as they navigate the peaks and valleys of their emotional landscape, showing us the power of self-compassion. Get ready to be moved by Ember's emotional intensity and inspired by their ability to find beauty and strength amidst the storm.

 Ember

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Feenix

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Introducing Feenix, an endearing neurocloth™ whose quirky traits and unique perspective on the world are enhanced by their dyslexia and dyspraxia.

These challenges only add spoonfuls of lovability to their captivating personality. Feenix's dyslexia and dyspraxia contribute to their delightful idiosyncrasies and unconventional ways of navigating the jungle.

While swinging from the trees may pose a challenge due to their difficulties with balance, Feenix's determination and unwavering spirit make every attempt a heartwarming adventure in itself. Their determination to conquer obstacles, despite the odds, inspires their fellow neurocloths™ and reminds us all of the power of perseverance.

At the Neurocloth™ Academy, Feenix may occasionally find themselves in a bit of trouble for appearing lazy or not completing their daily tasks. However, beneath their seemingly laid-back demeanor lies a vibrant mind and a boundless curiosity.

Feenix's unconventional approach to life often leads to surprising and creative solutions, demonstrating that there is beauty and innovation in embracing our differences.

Feenix's presence in the jungle brings a touch of whimsy and a fresh perspective to every adventure. Their ability to find joy and love in the simplest of things serves as a gentle reminder that life's treasures are often found in unexpected places.

Feenxxxx

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Zaphyr

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Meet Zaphyr, a neurosloth™ bursting with boundless energy and an insatiable appetite for noise.

Their enthusiasm is infectious as they bounce through the jungle, spreading joy wherever they go. Zaphyr's hypermobility adds an extra level of agility to their vibrant personality, allowing them to navigate the jungle with remarkable flexibility.

Zaphyr's love for all things energetic and noisy is unparalleled. They find delight in the bustling sounds of the jungle, seeking out excitement and adventure at every turn. Their contagious enthusiasm inspires their fellow neurosloths™ to embrace the vibrant spirit of life and find joy in the noisiest of moments.

While Zaphyr is constantly on the move, it is when exhaustion sets in that they experience a unique sensitivity to noise and smells. Their heightened senses become attuned to the subtleties of the jungle's fragrances, bringing a different dimension to their sensory experience.

However, Zaphyr's poor interoception sometimes hinders their ability to recognise when their body is telling them enough is enough. This can lead to a boom-bust cycle, where they push themselves to their limits before realizing the need for rest.

Despite this challenge, Zaphyr's unwavering zest for life shine through. They remind us of the importance of balancing our energy and recognising our body's needs. Zaphyr's journey is an invitation to embrace our own unique sensitivities and find harmony between our enthusiasm and self-care.

Join Zaphyr on their high-energy escapades through the jungle, where every bounce and boom of excitement is a celebration of life's vibrancy. Let Zaphyr inspire you to embrace your own passions, while also listening to your body's signals for rest and rejuvenation.

Zaphyr

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Techno

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Introducing Techno, a neurocloth™ with a unique blend of quirks and surprises. Techno's journey through the jungle is filled with unpredictable moments, thanks to their experience of Alexithymia.

Alexithymia is a condition that affects Techno's ability to identify and express their own emotions, leading to unexpected emotional flooding that can range from moments of hilarity to heartfelt revelations.

Techno's emotional landscape is an intricate tapestry that unfolds with each interaction, leaving everyone in awe of their raw authenticity.

In addition to their Alexithymia, Techno also faces the challenges of dyscalculia. As the accounts manager at the Neurocloth™ Academy, this condition presents its own set of obstacles. Numbers and calculations may not come easily to Techno, but their determination and unique problem-solving approach make them an invaluable member of the team.

They find creative ways to navigate the world of mathematics, bringing their own distinctive flair to the role. Techno's presence in the neurocloth community is a powerful reminder of the diversity of human experiences. Alexithymia, in particular, highlights the complexity of emotions and the challenges some individuals face in understanding and expressing them.

Through Techno's journey, we gain insight into the beauty of vulnerability and the strength that comes from embracing our unique learning landscapes.

Techno's story invites us to reflect on our own emotional journeys and encourages us to foster a more compassionate and understanding world, where individuals of all emotional experiences are embraced and celebrated.

techno

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Nugget

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Meet Nugget, the snuggable neurocloth™ on a courageous journey to overcome social anxiety.

With a heart full of warmth and a gentle spirit, Nugget navigates the world with cautious steps, always yearning for comfort and familiarity.

This endearing neurocloth™ finds solace in the embrace of trusted companions, cherishing the safe spaces they create.

Though hesitant to venture into the unknown, Nugget's determination shines through, as they gradually gather the strength to face their fears and embark on new experiences and places. With each small triumph.

Nugget's resilience grows, inspiring others to embrace their own vulnerabilities and find the beauty in life's adventures.

Get ready to be enchanted by Nugget's unwavering spirit and their remarkable journey of self-discovery.

😊 Nugget

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Spectrum

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Introducing Spectrum, whose journey through the jungle is as captivating as their name suggests. While Spectrum may be labelled as neurotypical, their extraordinary abilities and unique perspective make them an invaluable member of the neuroloth™ community.

From a young age, Spectrum's exceptional intelligence and aptitude were evident, earning them a prestigious scholarship at the renowned Neuroloth Academy. Their academic prowess and keen intellect classify them as gifted, showcasing their remarkable potential and thirst for knowledge.

Despite their exceptional abilities, Spectrum occasionally experiences pangs of feeling left out among their neurodivergent companions. Being neurotypical in a world of extraordinary neurodiversity can evoke moments of self-doubt, questioning their own uniqueness and what makes them special.

Some neuroloths even wonder if there is more to Spectrum than meets the eye, intrigued by the mystery surrounding their neurotype. However, Spectrum's story reminds us that being neurotypical is a gift in itself.

Their presence serves as a reminder that diversity extends beyond neurodivergent traits and that every individual, regardless of their neurotype, has something valuable to contribute.

As Spectrum embarks on thrilling adventures with their neuroloth companions, they discover the power of acceptance and celebration of differences. They come to realise that being special is not solely defined by one's neurotype but by the unique qualities and contributions each individual brings to the world.

Join Spectrum on their journey as they unravel the mysteries of the jungle, forging meaningful connections and embracing the strength of unity amidst diversity. Through their story, we are reminded that true specialness lies in the collective tapestry of experiences, perspectives, and abilities that make us who we are.

Spectrum
xo xo

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Violet

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Meet Violet, a vibrant soul in the world of neurocloths™. With a unique blend of being autistic and having Protanopia.

Violet brings a fascinating perspective to the jungle and the adventures that unfold within it.

Violet's autistic traits contribute to their incredible perceptiveness and attention to detail. Their mind operates in a way that allows them to notice and appreciate things that others might overlook.

This heightened awareness enriches their experiences and adds a whole new dimension to their interactions with the world around them. Violet's autistic nature also grants them a deep sense of empathy, allowing them to connect with others on a profound level.

In addition to being autistic, Violet has Protanopia, a condition that affects their ability to perceive certain colors. Despite this unique challenge, Violet's world is a vibrant tapestry of hues and shades. Their alternative color perception enables them to discover beauty in unexpected places and appreciate the subtle nuances that might go unnoticed by others.

Their ability to embrace and celebrate their own unique way of seeing the world inspires those around them to look beyond the surface and explore the richness of their own perspectives.

Violet's vibrant and empathetic spirit make them an invaluable member of the neurocloth™ crew. Their presence brings a sense of wonder and authenticity to every adventure, reminding us to embrace our differences and appreciate the diverse tapestry of humanity.

Violet 😊

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Chroma

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Meet Chroma, whose presence in the jungle is a testament to the beauty of diversity.

Chroma, being on the autism spectrum, offers a unique perspective that enchants those around them. With an insatiable curiosity for the biodiversity of the jungle, Chroma is always armed with fascinating facts to share, illuminating the wonders of their biodiverse habitat.

One of Chroma's remarkable traits is their photographic memory, which allows them to recall details and information with astonishing accuracy. This gift makes Chroma a walking encyclopedia, providing valuable insights into the intricate web of life in the jungle.

However, their autism also presents certain challenges, such as difficulty maintaining eye contact and struggling to pick up on social cues. While Chroma's extraordinary memory and passion for knowledge make them an invaluable asset, their social interactions can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and landing in hot crocodile waters.

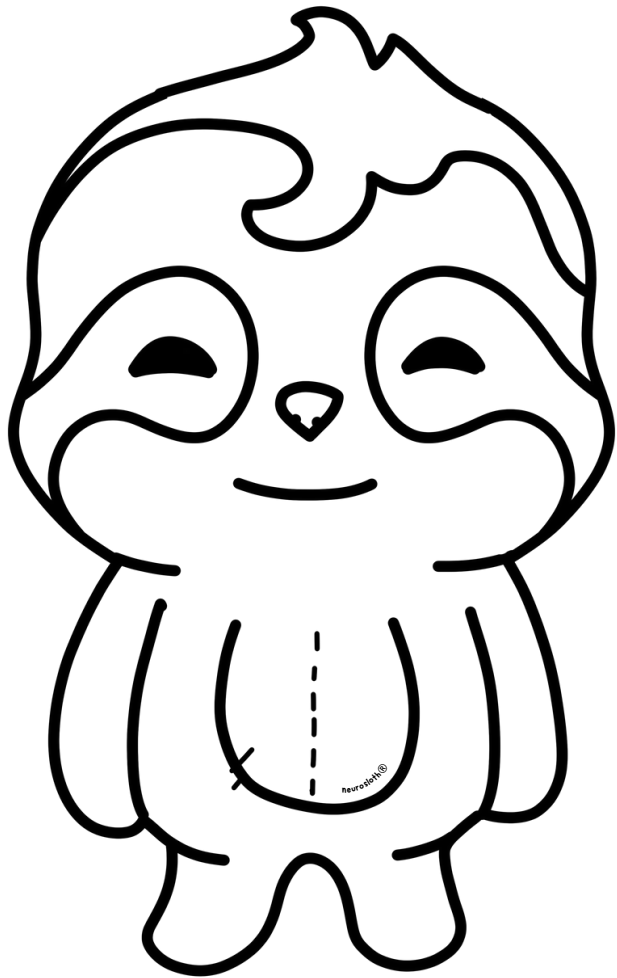
The nuances of nonverbal communication and social expectations can be perplexing for Chroma, but their genuine enthusiasm and unwavering dedication to understanding the world around them serve as a source of inspiration to others.

Through their journey, we learn the power of knowledge, the importance of understanding and accommodating differences, and the beauty of embracing one's authentic self.

Witness the magic that unfolds when we embrace unique perspectives, and discover the profound impact that acceptance and celebration of neurodiversity can have on the world around us.

Chroma

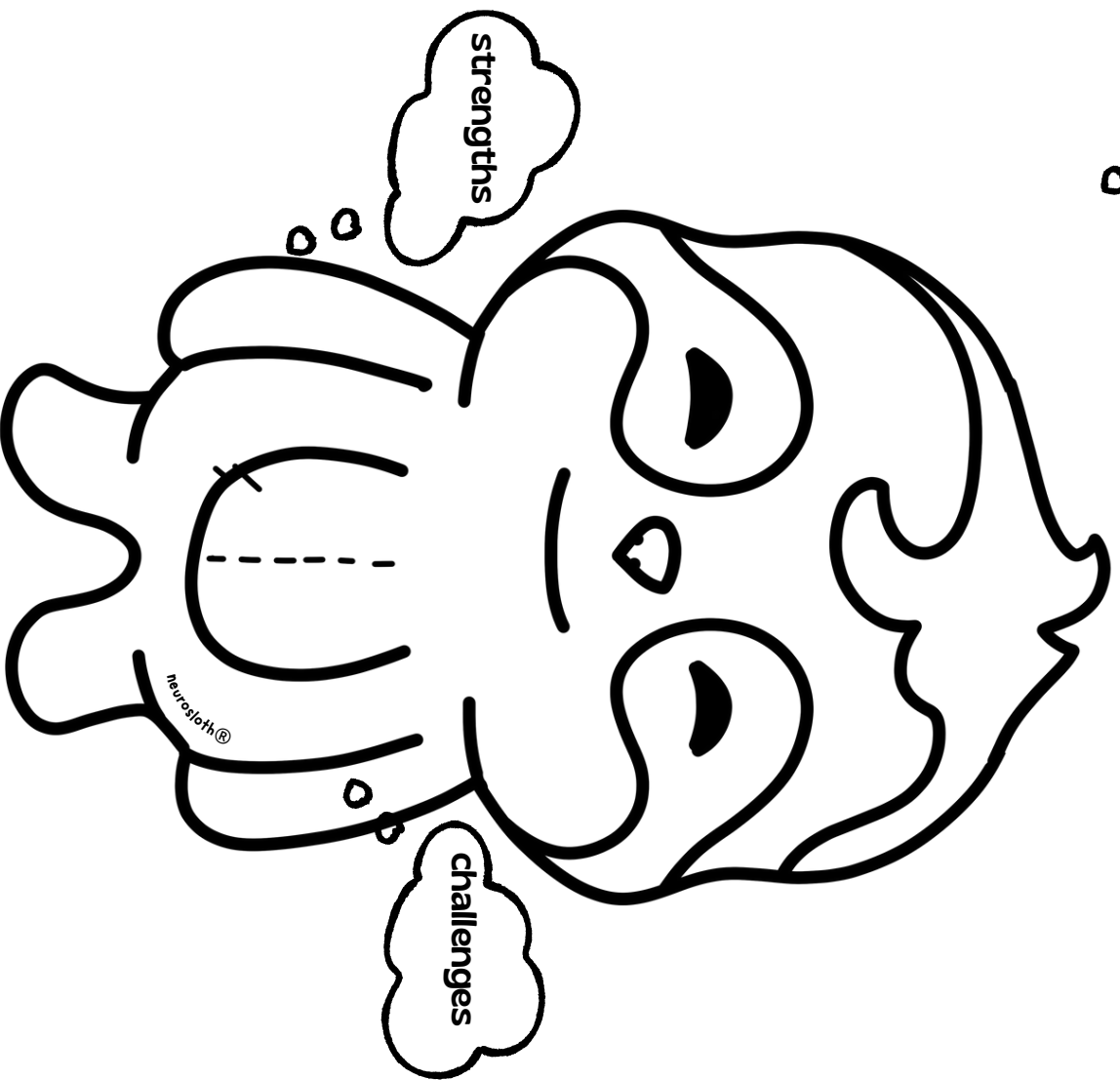
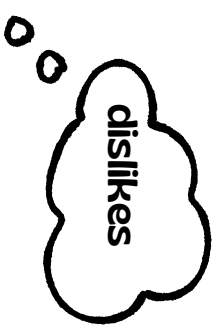
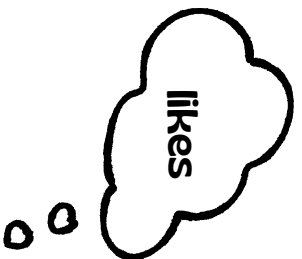
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my traits map by neurosloth™



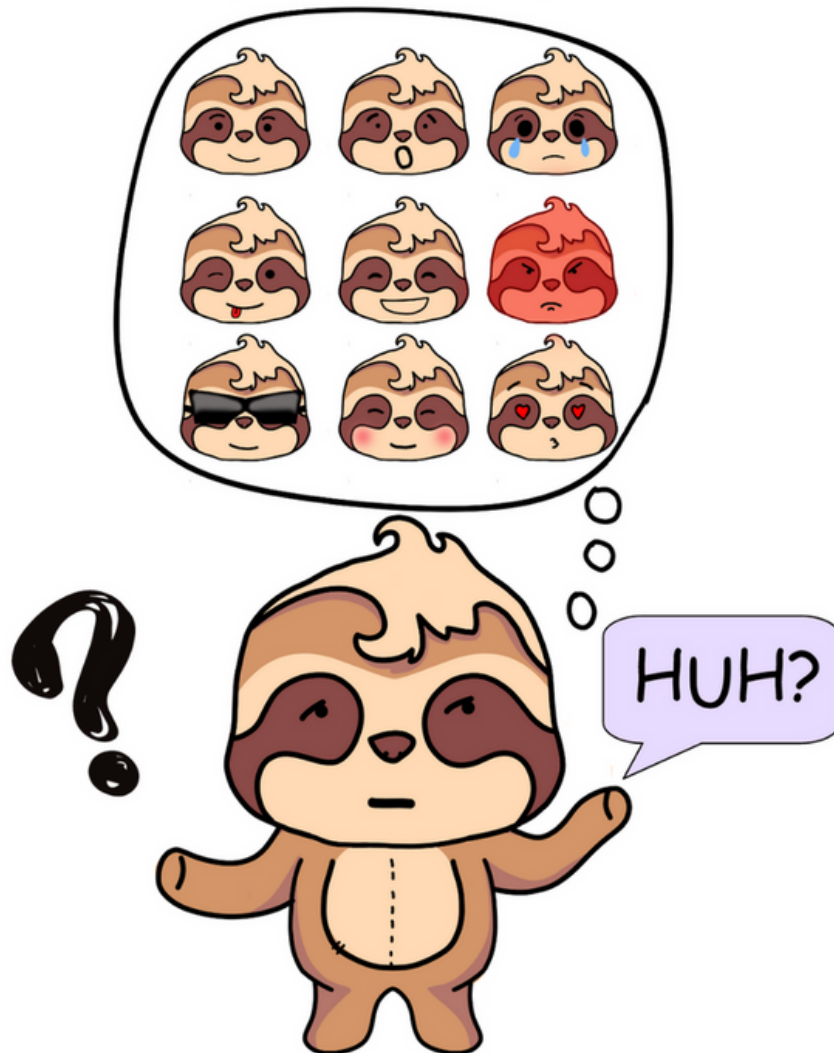


sensitivity to	when feeling on top of the world	when feeling average	when feeling tired	when feeling hungry	when feeling rushed	when feeling stressed	when feeling
neurosloth© 2023 noise							
light							
taste							
smell							
balance							
rejection							

my sensitivities tracker by neurosloth®

neurosloth[®] expressions with Koda





ALEXITHYMIA

alexithymia

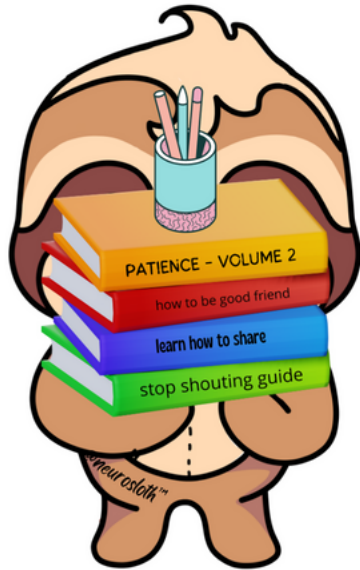
Alexithymia is a psychological condition characterised by difficulty in identifying, describing, and expressing one's emotions. People with alexithymia often struggle to understand their own feelings and have limited awareness of their emotional states.

- This condition can impact both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals, although it is more commonly observed in individuals with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and post-traumatic stress (PTS)
- For neurodivergent individuals, alexithymia can pose additional challenges in understanding and navigating social interactions. The difficulty in recognising and verbalising emotions can make it harder for them to connect with others on an emotional level.
- Expressing empathy or understanding the emotions of others may be challenging, leading to potential misunderstandings or strained relationships. In everyday relationships, alexithymia can contribute to communication difficulties.
- Expressing one's own emotions and understanding the emotions of others is essential for effective communication and building strong connections. Individuals with alexithymia may struggle to accurately convey their feelings or may appear emotionally detached, which can be perceived as a lack of empathy or disinterest by their partners, friends, or family members.
- The inability to identify and communicate emotional needs may also result in feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction within relationships.

It is important to note that alexithymia does not imply a lack of emotions or empathy. Individuals with alexithymia may still experience emotions, but they struggle to identify and articulate them

reflection prompts

- Have you ever experienced difficulty in identifying, describing, or expressing your own emotions?
- How does this impact your personal understanding of yourself and your interactions with others?
- How might the challenges associated with alexithymia manifest in these relationships?
- How can we promote understanding and adapt our communication styles to better support individuals with alexithymia?



THE DOUBLE EMPATHY PROBLEM

the double empathy problem

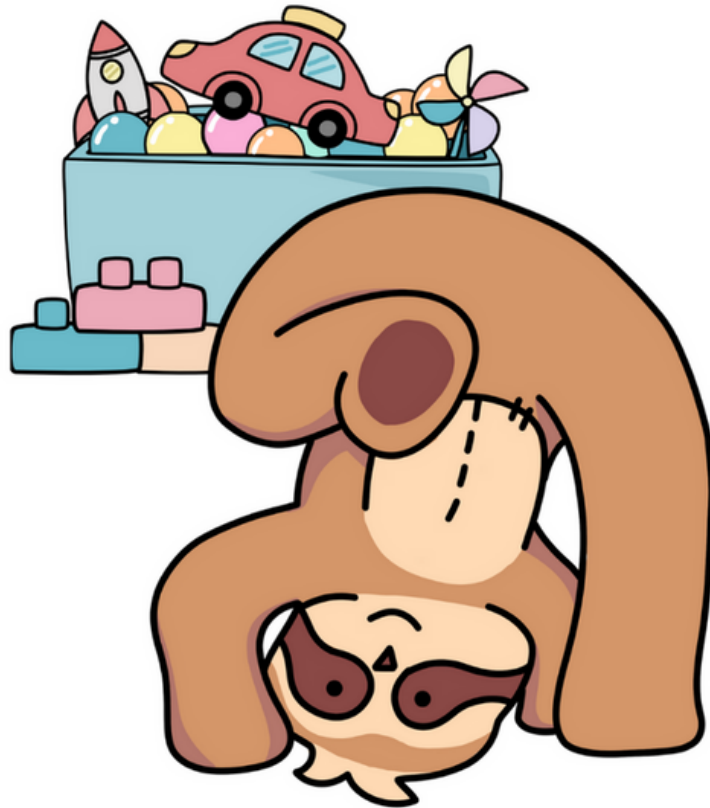
The double empathy problem is a concept that describes the challenges in mutual understanding and communication between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals. It suggests that the difficulties in relating to each other are not solely the responsibility of the neurodivergent individual, but rather a shared issue arising from a lack of reciprocal empathy.

- The term was coined by Damian Milton, an autistic scholar, who proposed that the traditional empathy deficit model, which primarily focuses on the social and emotional difficulties of neurodivergent individuals, fails to acknowledge the role of context and shared understanding in effective communication.
- According to the double empathy problem, both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals have different cognitive and perceptual styles, making it challenging to empathise with each other's experiences and perspectives.
- Neurodivergent individuals often have different ways of processing information, social cues, and communication styles, which may not align with the expectations and norms of the majority neurotypical population.
- Similarly, neurotypical individuals may struggle to understand and appreciate the unique perspectives and experiences of neurodivergent individuals.
- The double empathy problem highlights the need for a shift in perspective, emphasizing the importance of reciprocal understanding and accommodating different communication styles and cognitive approaches.

It suggests that bridging the empathy gap requires efforts from both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals to meet each other halfway, foster empathy, and create inclusive environments where diverse perspectives are valued and understood.

reflection prompts

- Have you ever encountered difficulties in understanding or connecting with someone who has a different cognitive or perceptual style?
- How did this impact your communication and relationship with that person?
- What lessons did you learn from that experience?



CAN'T SIT STILL

fidgeting behaviours

A common characteristic associated with neurodivergence is difficulty with focus, restlessness, or a struggle to sit still.

- This can be particularly relevant for individuals with ADHD, who often experience challenges with attention regulation and hyperactivity. Such individuals may have a tendency to fidget, squirm, or engage in repetitive movements in an attempt to manage their restless energy or increase their focus. These behaviors are often referred to as "fidgeting" or "fidgeting behaviors."
- Fidgeting behaviors can serve as a way for neurodivergent individuals to self-regulate and enhance their concentration. Yelling at them to "stop fidgeting" can cause them to move more due to anxious feelings.
- Some examples of fidgeting behaviors include tapping fingers, bouncing legs, playing with objects in hand, or engaging in subtle movements. These actions can provide sensory stimulation and help individuals with ADHD or similar conditions maintain their attention and manage restlessness.
- It's important to note that fidgeting behaviors are not limited to neurodivergent individuals. Many people, neurodivergent or not, engage in fidgeting as a way to alleviate stress, improve concentration, or release excess energy.

it can be helpful to explore strategies or accommodations that promote focus and comfort. These may include the use of fidget toys or tools, creating a supportive environment, incorporating movement breaks, or employing other techniques that cater to individual needs.

reflection prompts

- Have you ever experienced restlessness or difficulty sitting still?
- How does it affect your ability to concentrate or engage in tasks?
- How might having accommodations help improve focus and overall well-being?
- Can you think of any potential supportive measures?



NEUROSPICY

neurospicy

Since its popularization, the hashtag "neurospicy" has gained significant traction on TikTok, accumulating a remarkable over 1 billion views. This intriguing hashtag carries a deeper meaning within the realm of mental health discussions on social media platforms.

The term "neurospicy" amalgamates the concepts of neurodiversity and the dynamic nature of human experiences. It serves as a catalyst for conversations surrounding mental health, encouraging individuals to embrace and celebrate their unique neurocognitive traits and challenges.

What Does It Mean To Be Neurospicy?

It encompasses conditions such as autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, Tourette syndrome, and others.

The idea behind this term is that everyone's brain works differently, so there isn't one way of thinking or experiencing things that applies to everyone.

The popularity of the "neurospicy" hashtag has fostered a greater awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity among a wider audience. It has opened up opportunities for education, advocacy, and the dismantling of societal stigmas surrounding mental health.

As the hashtag continues to gain momentum, it holds the potential to shape the narrative surrounding mental health and empower individuals to embrace their authentic selves.

reflection prompts

- Explore the notion that everyone's brain works differently, and there isn't a universal way of thinking or experiencing things. What comes up for you?
- How does this perspective challenge societal expectations and norms?



TAKE
the
RISK

IMPULSIVITY

impulsivity

In certain neurodivergent conditions like ADHD, impulsivity can often be a prominent challenge.

Individuals with ADHD may struggle with impulse control, finding it challenging to regulate their actions, emotions, or thoughts. However, it's important to note that impulsivity is not exclusive to neurodivergent individuals and can be present in neurotypical individuals as well.

It can show up in various forms some examples are risk taking, doing every day tasks without thought for safe practice, over committing when asked to do something by others or excess shopping (especially online)

In children it can show up for example as blurting out, grabbing objects, touching things without permission, acting on momentary emotional reactions, difficulty waiting in line, taking turns during games, or waiting for their chance to speak or participate in activities.

It's crucial to approach impulsivity with understanding and support. Strategies for managing impulsivity may involve

- developing self-awareness
- normalising the conversation around it without shaming
- learning coping mechanisms
- practicing mindfulness techniques
- utilising organizational tools to enhance planning and decision-making skills

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your own experiences with impulsivity.
- Have you ever struggled with impulsive behavior?
- How has it impacted your decision-making or relationships?



DISORGANISATION

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disorganisation

Neurodivergence and disorganization can be linked for several reasons.

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals experience disorganization, and not all disorganized individuals are neurodivergent. However, there are certain factors that can contribute to a connection between the two, here are some to consider:

Executive Functioning Challenges: Many neurodivergent conditions, such as ADHD, autism, and dyslexia, can involve difficulties with executive functioning. Executive functions encompass a set of cognitive processes responsible for planning, organization, time management, and self-regulation. When these functions are impaired, individuals may struggle with organising tasks, maintaining routines, managing time effectively, and staying on top of responsibilities.

Divergent Thinking and Processing: Neurodivergent individuals often have unique thinking patterns and processing styles. This can result in alternative approaches to organizing information, which may differ from conventional methods. These divergent thinking styles can lead to disorganization from a societal or normative perspective, as their systems of organization may not align with traditional expectations.

Working Memory Limitations: Working memory refers to the ability to hold and manipulate information in mind for short-term use. Some neurodivergent individuals may have limitations in working memory capacity, making it more difficult to remember and juggle multiple tasks or items simultaneously. This can contribute to disorganization as they struggle to keep track of important information or complete tasks in a systematic manner.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your own experiences with organisation and disorganisation.
- Are there any areas of your life where you struggle with staying organised?
- How does it impact your daily routines, productivity, or overall well-being?

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TROUBLE GETTING ALONG

trouble getting along

Neurodivergent individuals, like any other group of people, can have diverse experiences and challenges that may contribute to difficulties in getting along with others.

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals struggle with social interactions, and there is significant individual variation within the neurodivergent population.

However, there are some factors that can contribute to challenges in social relationships for some neurodivergent individuals:

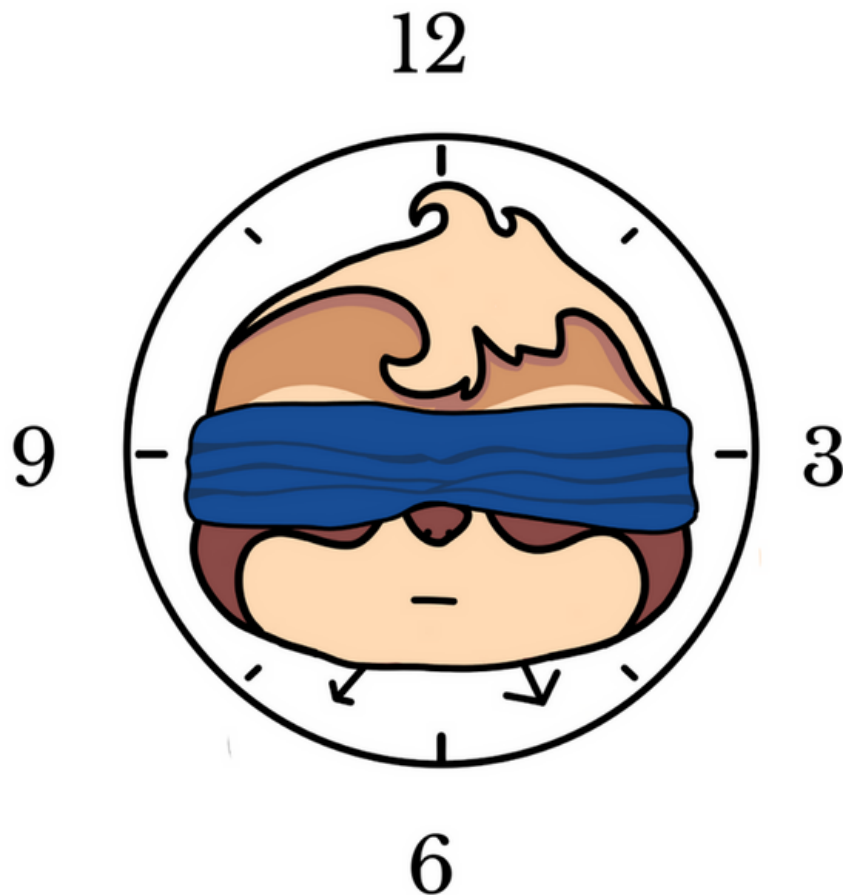
- Differences in Communication
- Sensory Sensitivities
- Social Skills and Pragmatic Difficulties
- Executive Functioning Differences
- Stigma and Misunderstanding

It's important to approach these challenges with empathy, understanding, and open-mindedness.

Building a supportive and inclusive environment that values neurodiversity, promoting education and awareness, and providing appropriate accommodations can help foster positive social interactions and relationships. It's also important to recognise that neurodivergent individuals have unique strengths, perspectives, and contributions to offer in social settings, and embracing neurodiversity can enrich our social fabric.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your own experiences with neurodivergent individuals or situations where you have observed challenges in social interactions.
- How did those experiences impact your understanding of neurodiversity and the difficulties neurodivergent individuals may face in getting along with other



TIME BLINDNESS

time blindness

Time blindness refers to a difficulty in accurately perceiving and managing the passage of time. It is associated with challenges in estimating the duration of time intervals and being aware of the passage of time in a consistent manner.

Time blindness is often linked to neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder), autism spectrum disorder, and certain learning differences. Here are some challenges associated with time blindness:

- Time Management Difficulties
- Poor Planning and Organization
- Impulsivity and Procrastination
- Difficulty with Transitions
- Impact on Relationships and Responsibilities
- Increased Stress and Anxiety
- Becoming hyper focused on tasks and missing appointments, etc.

It's also worth noting that some individuals may experience time over-awareness, where they become hyper-focused on time and experience anxiety related to its passage. This can also be a challenge and may be linked to neurodivergent conditions.

Overall, recognising and addressing time blindness can help individuals improve their time management skills, reduce stress, and enhance their overall productivity and well-being.

reflection prompts

- Consider how time blindness impacts your daily routines, tasks, and responsibilities.
- Reflect on specific instances where difficulties in time perception have had consequences in your personal and professional life.
- How have these challenges impacted your productivity, stress levels, and overall well-being?

talking over others

Cooperative overlap itself is not inherently negative, but excessive or poorly managed overlapping speech can disrupt effective communication and strain relationships.

Cooperative overlap refers to a conversational pattern where two or more individuals speak simultaneously but in a cooperative and non-confrontational manner.

It is often characterised by overlapping speech, interruptions, or interjections that are meant to show engagement, agreement, or support in a conversation. In the context of neurodivergent individuals, cooperative overlap can sometimes manifest differently and may have negative impact on relationships, these can include:

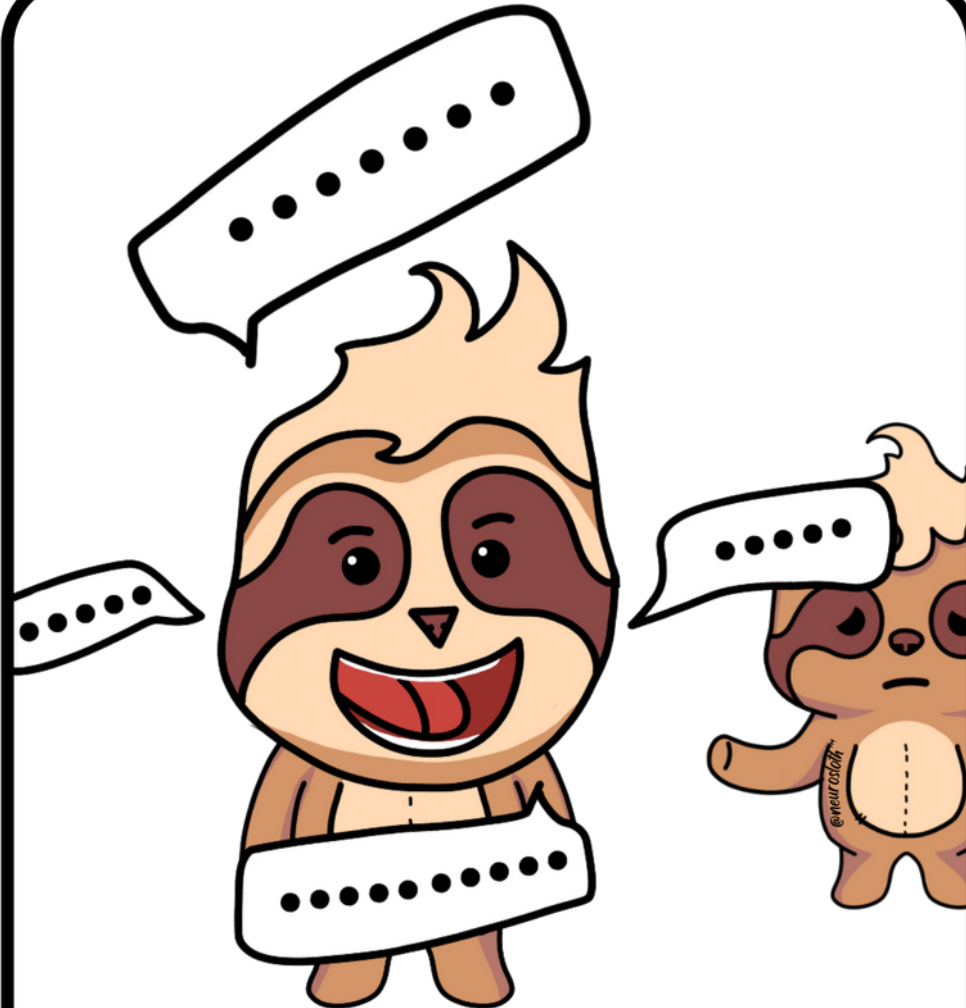
- Difficulty in Taking Turns
- Miscommunication or Misunderstandings
- Important information or ideas may be lost or not fully understood
- Reduced Engagement and Participation
- Disruption of Flow and Focus
- Perceived Lack of Listening Skills

To mitigate the negative impact of cooperative overlap, strategies such as promoting turn-taking, setting conversational norms, practicing active listening skills, and encouraging open communication about individual communication styles can be helpful.

reflection prompts

- Have you noticed instances where you or others engage in overlapping speech?
- How have these experiences impacted the flow, understanding, and overall dynamics of the conversation?
- Consider specific examples and their effects on your relationships.

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ENTHUSIASTIC

COOPERATIVE OVERLAP

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RULES & ROUTINE

rules & routine

Neurodivergent individuals often benefit from rules and routines as they can provide structure, predictability, and a sense of security. Here are some points to consider regarding the relationship between neurodivergent individuals and rules/routines:

- **Sensory Regulation:** Many neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or sensory processing difficulties, may have heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli. Having consistent rules and routines can help create a predictable environment, reducing sensory overload and promoting sensory regulation.
- **Executive Functioning Support:** Neurodivergent individuals may face challenges with executive functioning, which includes skills like planning, organization, and time management. Rules and routines can act as external supports, providing guidance and structure to help with task initiation, prioritization, and overall organization.
- **Social Understanding and Interaction:** Rules and routines can help neurodivergent individuals navigate social situations by providing guidelines for appropriate behavior, social expectations, and communication norms. They offer clarity and help individuals understand and follow social rules, facilitating smoother interactions and reducing social anxiety.
- **Rule Breakers:** It's equally important to understand that neurodivergent individuals may break societal rules for various reasons. This can be attributed to their unique cognitive and sensory processing differences, which may result in alternative ways of thinking, perceiving, and interacting with the world. These differences can lead to behaviors, preferences, and communication styles that deviate from societal norms. As a result, neurodivergent individuals may face additional pressure to conform to societal expectations, which can impact their well-being and sense of self. Understanding and embracing neurodiversity can help alleviate this pressure and create a more inclusive and accepting society.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on specific situations where rules/routines have helped or hindered your or others' experiences.
- How have they contributed to your sensory regulation, executive functioning, emotional well-being, or social interactions?



SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

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social butterfly

Neurodivergent individuals, like anyone else, can vary in their social tendencies.

While some may identify as "social butterflies" and enjoy extensive social interactions, and flit from one friendship to another others may lean toward introversion or have specific challenges related to socialisation.

Here are some key points to consider regarding neurodivergent individuals and their social tendencies:

- **Individual Differences:** Neurodivergent individuals, just like neurotypical individuals, have unique personalities and preferences when it comes to socializing. Some may naturally be more outgoing, sociable, and comfortable in social settings, while others may feel more reserved or prefer smaller, more intimate social interactions or online settings. It's essential to recognise and respect these individual differences.
- **Special Interests and Focus:** Neurodivergent individuals often have intense interests or passions that may be different from those of their neurotypical peers. These special interests can sometimes become a focal point of their social interactions, leading to engaging discussions and connections with others who share similar interests. Being a "social butterfly" within these shared interest communities can enhance social connections and provide a sense of belonging.
- **Social Skills Development:** Some neurodivergent individuals may require additional support and guidance in developing social skills. Social skills training, therapy, friendship coaching or targeted interventions can be beneficial in helping individuals navigate social situations, understand social cues, and develop effective communication strategies.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on the importance of recognising and respecting individual differences when it comes to social tendencies.

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HIBERNATE

procrastination

Procrastination is a common challenge that many individuals, both neurodivergent and neurotypical, face.

However, there may be some unique factors related to neurodivergence that can contribute to procrastination tendencies. Here are some points to consider regarding neurodivergent individuals and procrastination:

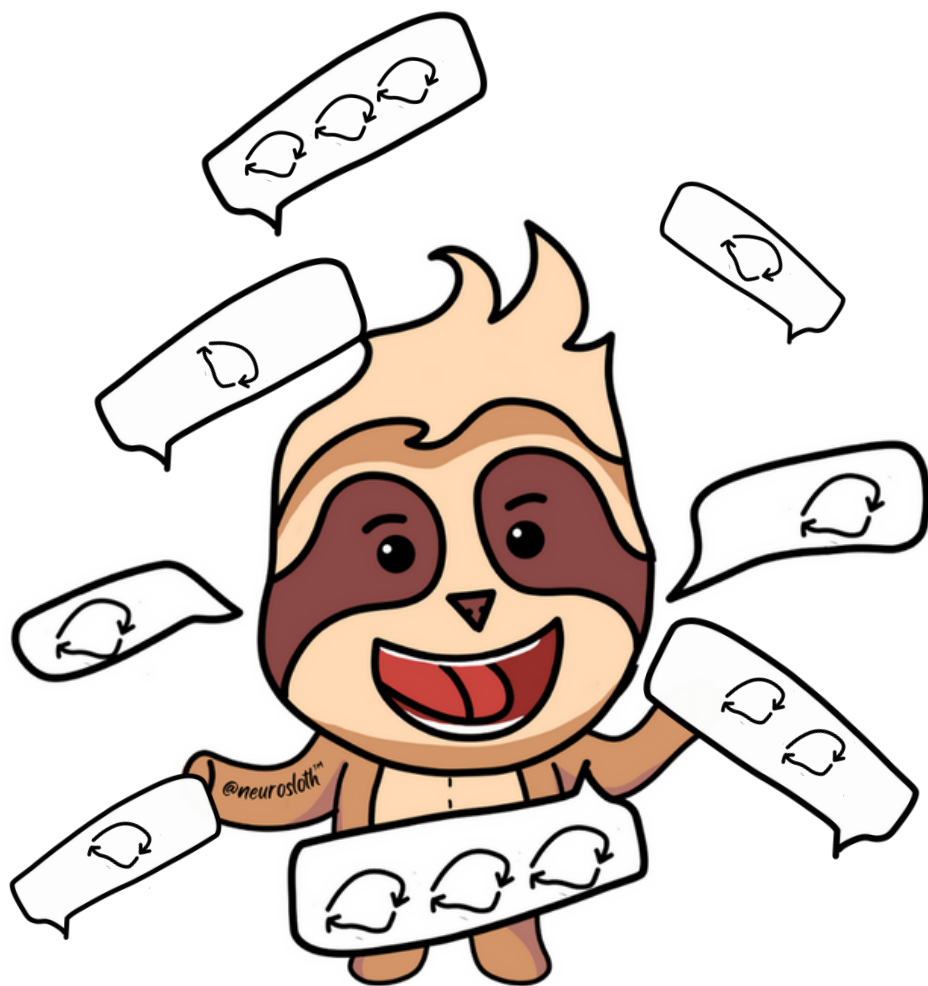
Executive Functioning Difficulties: Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with ADHD or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), often experience challenges with executive functioning. This can include difficulties with planning, organization, time management, and prioritisation—key skills needed to overcome procrastination. These executive function difficulties can make it more challenging to initiate and sustain tasks, leading to a higher propensity for procrastination.

Task Complexity and Perfectionism: Neurodivergent individuals may face challenges related to task complexity and perfectionism. They may have a preference for structure and routine, and when faced with tasks that are ambiguous or require a high degree of organization and planning, they may feel overwhelmed and unsure of how to proceed. Perfectionism can also play a role, as individuals may fear not meeting their own high standards and therefore delay starting or completing tasks.

Difficulty with Transitions: Transitioning between tasks or shifting focus can be challenging for neurodivergent individuals. The cognitive flexibility needed to switch gears and move from one task to another may be more demanding, leading to avoidance and procrastination and exhaustion. Difficulty with transitions can manifest as a preference for maintaining a current activity, even if it means delaying or avoiding other responsibilities.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your self-awareness regarding procrastination tendencies.
- Do you recognise the signs of procrastination in your behavior?
- Are you aware of the underlying factors that contribute to your procrastination?
- How does this awareness influence your ability to address and manage procrastination?



REPEAT (ECHOLALIA)

echolalia

Echolalia is a term used to describe the repetition or echoing of words, phrases, or sounds that someone hears. It is often associated with neurodivergent individuals, particularly those on the autism spectrum. Echolalia can manifest in different ways, such as immediate or immediate-delayed repetition of words or phrases spoken by others.

For neurodivergent individuals, echolalia can serve various purposes and may have different underlying mechanisms. Here are a few key aspects of echolalia in relation to neurodivergence:

- **Communication and Social Interaction:** Echolalia can be a form of communication for neurodivergent individuals. It may help them process and understand language, express themselves, or establish social connections. By echoing words or phrases they have heard, they may be attempting to engage in conversation or imitate social interactions.
- **Language Acquisition and Expression:** Echolalia can also be related to language development and acquisition. Neurodivergent individuals may use echolalia as a way to learn and practice language skills, including vocabulary, syntax, and intonation. It can provide them with a foundation for developing their own expressive language abilities.
- **Sensory Processing and Stimulation:** Echolalia may have sensory components for some neurodivergent individuals. Repetition of certain words or sounds can provide a sensory experience that is comforting or stimulating. It can serve as a self-soothing mechanism or help regulate sensory input.
- **Pragmatic Challenges:** Echolalia can sometimes present challenges in social communication and pragmatic language skills. The repetition of words or phrases may not always align with the context or expectations of a conversation, making it difficult for others to understand the intended meaning. However, it is important to note that echolalia can also be a meaningful form of communication for the individual, even if it appears repetitive to others.
- **Individual Variations:** It's essential to recognize that echolalia can manifest differently in different individuals. Some may engage in immediate echolalia, repeating words or phrases immediately after hearing them, while others may exhibit delayed echolalia, repeating previously heard words or phrases at a later time. The function and meaning of echolalia can vary widely, and it is important to consider the individual's unique characteristics and communication style.

Overall, echolalia is a complex phenomenon connected to being neurodivergent, particularly within the autism spectrum. It can have various functions, ranging from communication and language development to sensory regulation. Understanding and respecting an individual's use of echolalia can contribute to effective communication and foster greater inclusivity and acceptance.

reflection prompts

- How can an understanding of echolalia inform inclusive approaches to supporting communication development?
- Think about the challenges that echolalia may present in social communication. How can we create an environment that values and accommodates diverse communication styles, including echolalia?



OVERWHELM

overwhelm

Is a state of feeling excessively burdened, stressed, or emotionally overloaded, often resulting from an accumulation of stressors or challenges that exceed an individual's capacity to cope effectively.

In adults, overwhelm can manifest as a sense of being constantly on edge, feeling irritable or easily agitated, experiencing difficulty concentrating or making decisions, and having an increased reliance on coping mechanisms such as avoidance or withdrawal. Physical symptoms may include tension headaches, muscle tightness, digestive issues, fatigue, or sleep disturbances. Overwhelm can also contribute to a decrease in productivity, feelings of burnout, and a sense of disconnection from oneself and others.

In children, overwhelm can present differently based on their developmental stage. Younger children may exhibit signs such as increased irritability, restlessness, tantrums, clinginess, or regressive behavior like bed-wetting or thumb-sucking. They may also struggle with changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Older children and adolescents might display emotional volatility, withdrawal from social activities, decreased academic performance, changes in eating or sleeping habits, or engagement in risky behaviors.

For neurodivergent individuals, overwhelm can have unique implications. They may be more sensitive to environmental stimuli, have difficulties processing sensory information, or experience challenges in social interactions. Neurodivergent individuals might have specific triggers or sensitivities that can intensify feelings of overwhelm.

For example, someone on the autism spectrum may struggle with sensory overload in certain environments or have difficulty understanding and managing social cues, which can contribute to overwhelm. Additionally, individuals with neurodivergent traits or conditions may have distinct coping mechanisms or strategies that work best for them. Understanding and respecting these differences is crucial in providing support.

reflection prompts

- How do you personally recognise when you or someone else is experiencing overwhelm?
- Are there any specific signs or symptoms you notice?
- How do these manifestations differ among individuals?



HYPERFOCUS

hyperfocus

Hyperfocus is a term used to describe an intense state of concentration and absorption in a particular task or subject. It is commonly associated with neurodivergent individuals, such as those with ADHD or autism spectrum, although it can also occur in individuals without these conditions. Here are some benefits and challenges of hyperfocus:

Benefits of Hyperfocus:

- Increased productivity
- Enhanced creativity
- Heightened attention to detail
- Deep knowledge acquisition
- Achievement of goals

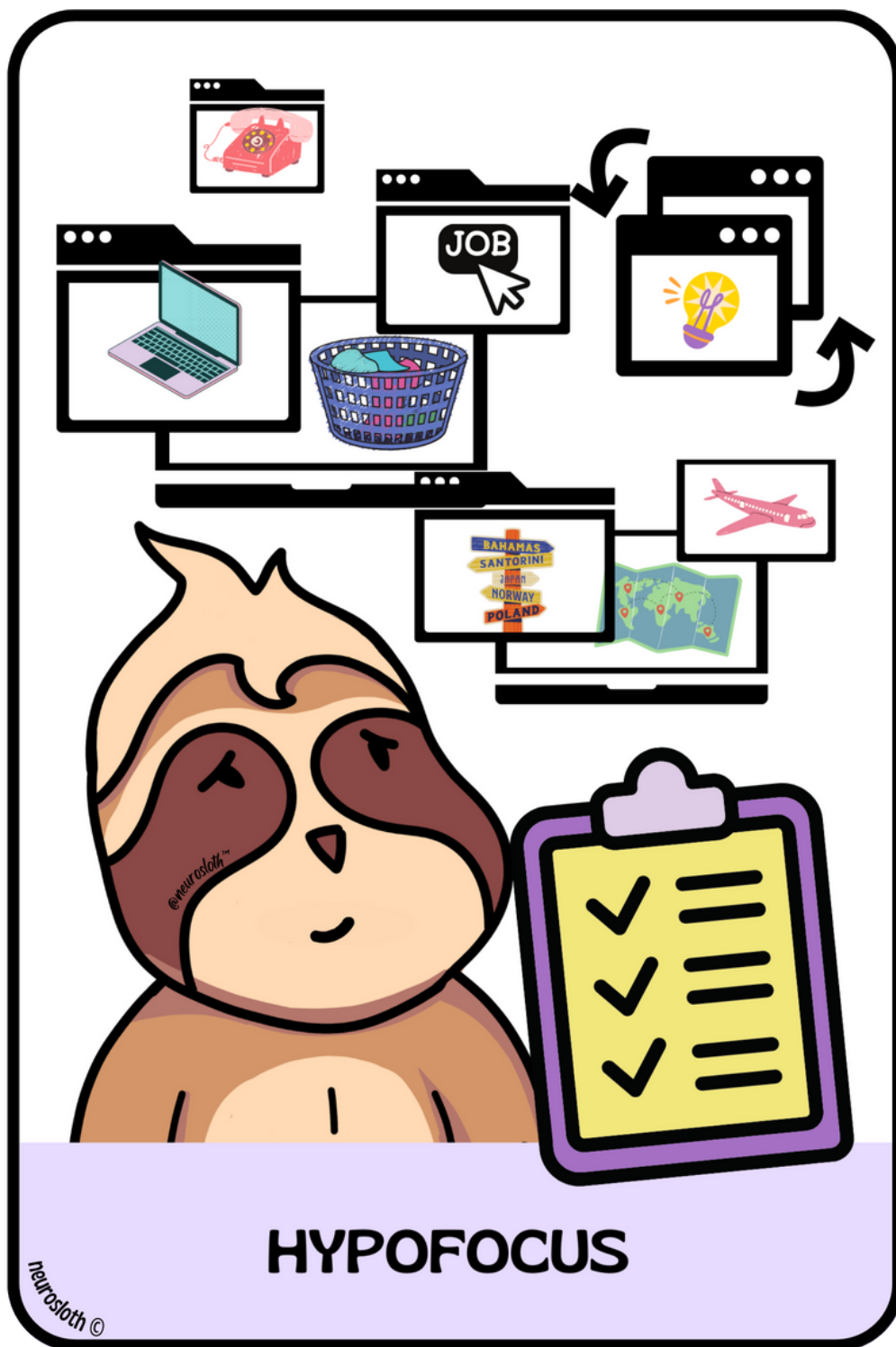
Challenges of Hyperfocus:

- Selective attention
- Time distortion
- Neglect of self-care
- Reduced flexibility
- Social disconnection

It's important to note that the experience of hyperfocus can vary among individuals and the specific context in which it occurs. While it can be a valuable asset, it is helpful for individuals to learn to manage and balance their hyperfocus to ensure overall well-being and effectiveness in various areas of life.

reflection prompts

- What are some of the benefits or advantages of hyperfocus? How can it be harnessed as a strength?
- On the flip side, what are some of the challenges or drawbacks of hyperfocus?
- How can it potentially interfere with daily functioning or relationships?
- Have you found any strategies or techniques that help manage or regulate hyperfocus?



hypofocus

In neurodivergent individuals, hypofocus refers to a tendency or experience of reduced focus and attention. Neurodivergent individuals may have challenges with sustaining attention and concentration, which can manifest in various ways.

- They may find it difficult to stay engaged in tasks or conversations for extended periods and may easily become distracted by their surroundings or their own thoughts.
- Hypofocus in neurodivergent individuals can be influenced by factors such as sensory sensitivity, cognitive processing differences, and executive functioning challenges. Sensory overload or sensitivity to certain stimuli may lead to difficulty focusing on specific tasks or filtering out distractions.
- Cognitive processing differences, such as having a highly associative thinking style, can contribute to a mind that jumps from one thought to another, making it challenging to maintain a singular focus. Executive functioning difficulties, including problems with attention regulation and task initiation, can further impact the ability to sustain focus.
- It's important to note that hypofocus is not necessarily a negative trait or indicative of a lack of intelligence or capability. Neurodivergent individuals may have unique cognitive strengths and ways of processing information that are not always aligned with traditional norms.
- While hypofocus can present challenges in certain contexts, it can also be accompanied by strengths such as divergent thinking, creativity, and the ability to make unique connections between ideas.
- Understanding and accommodating hypofocus in neurodivergent individuals may involve implementing strategies such as breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable chunks, providing clear and explicit instructions, minimizing distractions in the environment, and utilizing tools or techniques that support attention and focus.

Creating an environment that allows for flexibility and provides accommodations can help neurodivergent individuals navigate and mitigate the challenges associated with hypofocus.

reflection prompts



LATENESS

lateness

The implications and impairments of being late can have various effects on neurodivergent individuals in the areas of work, home, and friendships. Here are some considerations:

- **Work:** Being consistently late for work can lead to negative consequences such as strained relationships with colleagues and supervisors, decreased productivity, and potential disciplinary actions. Neurodivergent individuals may face challenges with time management, organisational skills, and executive functioning, making punctuality more difficult to achieve.
- **Deadlines:** Meeting deadlines is crucial in many aspects of life, including work projects, academic assignments, and personal commitments. Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with planning and prioritising tasks, estimating time accurately, or getting easily overwhelmed, which can result in missed deadlines. This can lead to increased stress, lowered self-esteem, and potential negative impacts on their professional or studies.
- **Home Life:** Being consistently late in personal life can impact daily routines, household responsibilities, and family dynamics. Neurodivergent individuals may face challenges in managing time effectively, leading to disruptions in family activities, increased stress for themselves and their loved ones, and strained relationships due to unmet expectations or frequent tardiness.
- **Friendships:** Chronic lateness can strain friendships and social connections. Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with time perception, time management, or transitioning between activities, which can lead to consistently arriving late to social engagements. This can cause frustration, inconvenience, and a perception of disrespect from friends or social circles, potentially straining those relationships.
- **Impairments:** Neurodivergent individuals may experience impairments related to executive functioning, such as difficulties with time perception, organization, planning, and time estimation. These impairments can make it challenging to accurately manage and allocate time, resulting in chronic lateness.

Strategies such as using visual schedules, reminders, alarms, and seeking support from professionals or loved ones without shaming or criticising can help mitigate the impairments and improve punctuality for neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts



DAY DREAMER

day dreamer

A daydreamer is someone who frequently engages in vivid, **spontaneous**, and immersive daydreaming experiences. Daydreaming is a form of spontaneous self-generated thought that allows the mind to wander and create scenarios, narratives, or imagined experiences.

While daydreaming can be a common experience for many individuals, it can have unique impacts on neurodivergent people. Here are some benefits and challenges associated with daydreaming:

Benefits:

- Creativity and Imagination
- Coping Mechanism
- Enhanced Focus

Challenges:

- Distractibility:
- Time Management
- Social Interactions
- Productivity and Achievement:

If daydreaming becomes excessive or interferes with daily responsibilities, it can hinder productivity and achievement. Neurodivergent individuals may need to find a balance between indulging in daydreaming and meeting their obligations and goals

Daydreaming can be compared to be similar to the practice of creating positive imagery in your mind which is commonly referred to as "visualization" or "guided imagery."

Visualisation involves **intentionally** creating mental images or scenes that evoke positive emotions, sensations, and experiences. It is often used as a therapeutic technique to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and enhance overall mental well-being. By engaging in positive visualisation, individuals can tap into the power of their imagination to create a mental landscape that supports their mental health and emotional well-being.

reflection prompts

- Are there specific situations or challenges in your life where you think visualization techniques could be particularly helpful?
- What are some positive images or scenes that you personally find uplifting or calming when you visualize them in your mind?



INTUITION

intuition

Intuition is often described as a deep, instinctive understanding or knowing without conscious reasoning or logical analysis. It is a form of perception that operates beyond our conscious awareness and is often associated with gut feelings, hunches, or a sense of knowing.

Neurodivergent individuals can have a wide range of intuitive experiences, just like neurotypical individuals.

However, some neurodivergent individuals may have heightened or unique forms of intuition due to their different ways of processing information and perceiving the world. For example, individuals on the autism spectrum may possess exceptional attention to detail and pattern recognition, which can contribute to intuitive insights in specific domains or areas of interest.

Past trauma can significantly impact a person's ability to understand and trust their intuition. Trauma can disrupt the connection between the mind and body, making it difficult for individuals to accurately interpret their internal signals and sensations.

They may struggle to differentiate between genuine intuitive cues and trauma-related triggers or emotional responses. In such cases, the trauma may create a sense of hyper-vigilance or dissociation that can interfere with accessing and trusting one's intuitive abilities.

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals have experienced trauma, and trauma affects individuals differently. Some neurodivergent individuals may have a well-developed and reliable intuition despite past trauma, while others may require additional support to reconnect with their intuitive senses and build trust in their own perceptions.

reflection prompts

- How would you define intuition?
- How do you personally experience or interpret it in your own life?
- How do you think past trauma can impact a person's ability to trust their intuition? Can you share any personal experiences or examples?



CHAMELEON

chameleon

In the context of neurodivergent individuals, a "chameleon" refers to someone who adapts their behavior, appearance, or social interactions to fit in with different environments or social situations. They may consciously or subconsciously alter their behavior, interests, or even their persona in order to blend in and avoid standing out as different - to feel safe or "approved of"

Other words or phrases that could be associated with this behavior include:

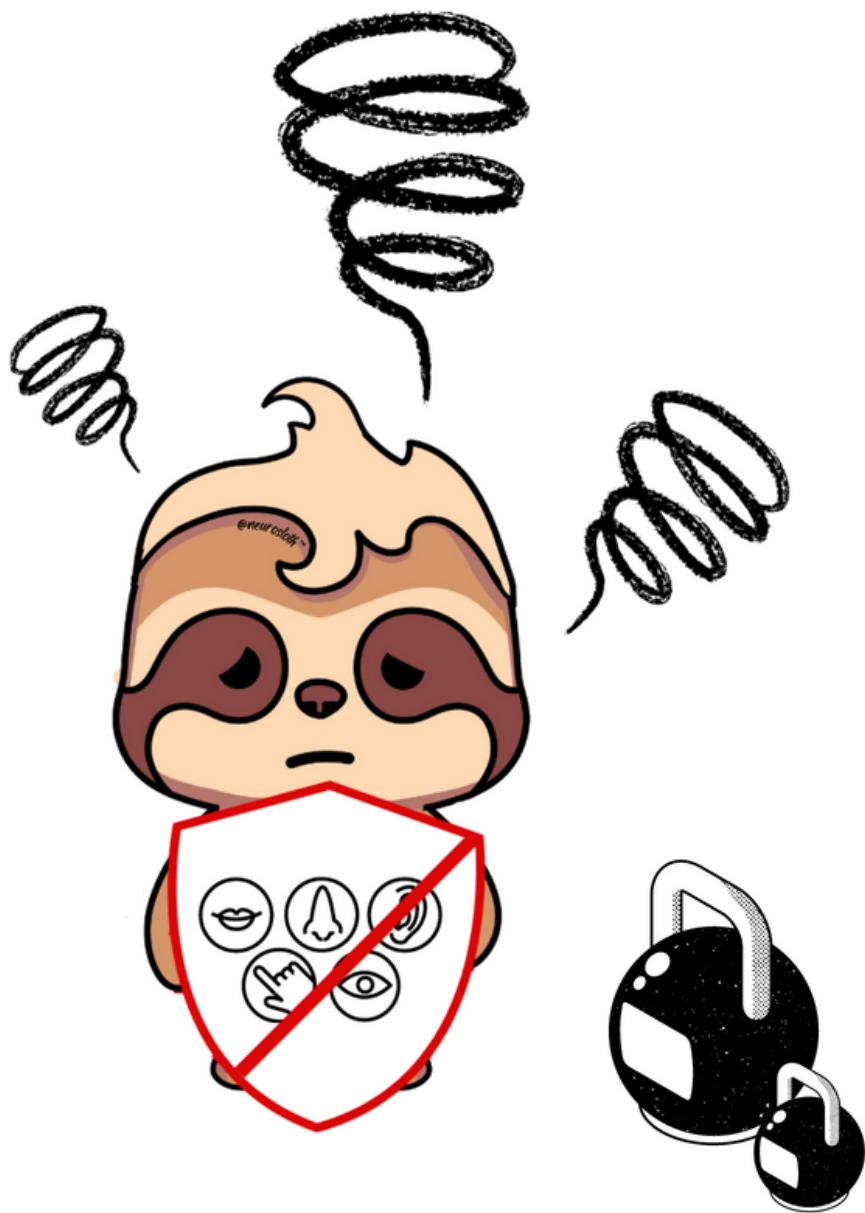
- Social camouflage
- Masking or camouflaging
- Assimilation
- Conformity
- Mimicking social cues
- Social chameleonism
- Social mirroring
- Code-switching
- Social adaptation
- Fitting in or blending in
- Appeasement

It's important to note that while the ability to adapt and blend in can provide some benefits, such as avoiding social ostracism or minimising conflict, it can also come at a cost.

The constant effort to appease or conform to societal expectations can be mentally and emotionally exhausting, leading to difficulties in maintaining a sense of self-identity and authenticity. It may also contribute to feelings of anxiety, stress, and a sense of disconnect from one's true self.

reflection prompts

- Discuss instances or experiences where you or someone you know has observed or practiced the chameleon effect. How did it manifest?
- What are some potential benefits of the chameleon effect for neurodivergent individuals?
- How can it help them navigate social situations or environments more smoothly?
- what are the downsides for you personally?



sensory overload

Sensory overload refers to an overwhelming amount of sensory stimuli that exceeds an individual's capacity to process and cope with effectively. It can occur when the sensory input from the environment becomes too intense, such as loud noises, bright lights, strong smells, or crowded spaces.

While sensory overload can affect anyone, neurodivergent individuals often experience it more intensely and frequently due to differences in sensory processing.

Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, or sensory processing disorder, may have sensory sensitivities or difficulties regulating sensory input.

This means they may be more sensitive or reactive to certain stimuli, and their brains may struggle to filter or prioritize sensory information effectively. As a result, everyday sensory experiences that others may find tolerable or even enjoyable can become overwhelming and distressing for neurodivergent individuals.

The impact of sensory overload on the lives of neurodivergent individuals can be significant. It can lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, or irritability, as well as physical discomfort or pain. Sensory overload can interfere with their ability to concentrate, engage in social interactions, or participate in daily activities. It may also contribute to sensory-seeking or sensory-avoiding behaviors as individuals try to regulate their sensory experiences.

In educational or work settings, sensory overload can hinder attention, productivity, and performance. It may also result in meltdowns or shutdowns, where individuals experience emotional or cognitive overwhelm and may withdraw or become unresponsive. Sensory overload can impact relationships, as neurodivergent individuals may need accommodations or understanding from others to manage their sensory needs effectively.

However, it's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals experience sensory overload in the same way or to the same extent. Sensory profiles can vary widely, and individuals may have different sensory preferences or sensitivities. Understanding and respecting individual sensory needs is crucial in creating supportive environments and promoting well-being for neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts

- Have you ever experienced sensory overload? What were the circumstances and how did it impact you?
- How did you manage or cope with it?
- Discuss the concept of sensory processing differences and how they can affect neurodivergent individuals. Share examples of sensory stimuli that can trigger overload and how they may vary from person to person.



OVER THINKING

overthinking

Overthinking refers to the tendency to dwell excessively on thoughts or ideas, often replaying them repeatedly in one's mind. It involves analysing situations, events, or conversations from various angles, often leading to excessive worry, self-doubt, and rumination. Overthinking can impact neurodivergent individuals in different ways, but there are some common challenges they may face:

- **Heightened Sensitivity:** Neurodivergent individuals may be more sensitive to external stimuli, social cues, or perceived expectations, which can contribute to overthinking. They may pick up on subtle details or nuances that others might miss, leading to increased analysis and interpretation of situations.
- **Cognitive Overload:** The processing style of neurodivergent individuals can involve intense focus and attention to detail. While this can be beneficial in some situations, it can also lead to cognitive overload when too many thoughts, possibilities, or worries flood the mind simultaneously.
- **Perfectionism and Self-Criticism:** Neurodivergent individuals may have a tendency towards perfectionism and high self-expectations. Overthinking can stem from a fear of making mistakes, a desire for control, or a need for things to be "just right." This can lead to self-criticism and an ongoing cycle of overthinking.
- **Anxiety and Overwhelm:** Overthinking is closely linked to anxiety, and neurodivergent individuals may experience heightened levels of anxiety due to their unique sensory and cognitive processing. Overthinking can intensify feelings of overwhelm, making it challenging to navigate everyday situations.

Recognising when someone is overthinking can vary from person to person, but some common signs may include:

call

- Excessive worry or rumination about past events or future possibilities
- Difficulty making decisions or feeling constantly indecisive
- Repeatedly going over details or conversations in their mind
- Feeling stuck in a cycle of overanalysing and unable to let go of thoughts
- Physical symptoms of anxiety, such as increased heart rate, tension, or restlessness.

It's important to approach the topic with sensitivity and respect for individual experiences. Overthinking can be a complex and personal struggle, and support from friends, family, or professionals can be beneficial in developing coping strategies and promoting mental well-being.

reflection prompts

- Share a personal experience or situation where you have noticed yourself or someone you know engaging in overthinking.
- How did it impact your thoughts, emotions, and behavior?
- What strategies or techniques have you found helpful in managing overthinking tendencies



DOESN'T FIT

don't fit in

Neurodivergent people often experience a sense of disconnect and isolation because the systems and structures in place are primarily designed to cater to neurotypical individuals.

- These systems may not account for the diverse ways of thinking, perceiving, and processing information that neurodivergent individuals possess. As a result, neurodivergent individuals may struggle to navigate social environments, educational settings, and workplaces that prioritise conformity to the neurotypical norm.
- The constant pressure to conform and fit into societal expectations can take a toll on the mental health of neurodivergent individuals. They may internalize the belief that there is something inherently wrong with them for not being able to easily blend in or meet the expectations of others. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and a sense of being misunderstood or undervalued.
- The lack of acceptance and understanding from others can exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness. Neurodivergent individuals may find it challenging to form meaningful connections or establish a sense of belonging when their unique perspectives and ways of being are not recognised or validated.
- This can result in feelings of alienation and the perception that they are fundamentally different from others, which can negatively impact their overall mental wellbeing.

It is crucial to recognise the importance of creating inclusive environments that embrace neurodiversity. By fostering acceptance, understanding, and accommodations for diverse ways of thinking and being, we can create spaces where neurodivergent individuals feel valued and included.

Supporting neurodivergent individuals in celebrating their strengths and unique perspectives can promote positive mental health outcomes and create a sense of belonging and acceptance.

reflection prompts

- How can we foster a more inclusive and accepting society that embraces neurodiversity and ensures that all neurodiverse individuals feel valued and included?
- What steps can be taken in various settings such as education, workplaces, and communities to create environments that accommodate and celebrate diverse ways of thinking and being?



CREATIVE

creativity

Neurodivergence and Creativity: Exploring the Intersection

Creativity is a multifaceted and fundamental human trait that encompasses the use of imagination, original thinking, and problem-solving skills to create, do, or be something different. It is not limited to the realm of art or the creation of finished products; rather, it can manifest in various forms such as gardening, dancing, cooking, writing, or even approaching everyday tasks with a fresh perspective.

- The intersection of neurodivergence and creativity unveils a rich and vibrant landscape of innovative thinking and imaginative exploration. Neurodivergent individuals often possess distinct cognitive styles and processing differences, which can enhance their creative abilities. Their unique neurocognitive wiring allows them to perceive the world through alternative lenses, making novel connections and generating fresh insights.
- One aspect where neurodivergence and creativity intertwine is in divergent thinking. Neurodivergent individuals frequently exhibit a capacity for thinking outside the box, breaking free from conventional patterns, and generating unconventional ideas. This ability to explore different angles, perspectives, and possibilities can lead to innovative solutions, artistic expressions, and breakthroughs in various fields.
- Additionally, neurodivergent individuals often experience intensified sensory perceptions, which can heighten their awareness of subtle nuances, patterns, and details that others might overlook. This heightened sensitivity can fuel their creativity, enabling them to capture and express these intricate sensory experiences through various artistic mediums or creative endeavors.
- Many neurodivergent individuals tend to embrace their unique perspectives and embrace their authentic selves, often resisting societal pressures to conform. This authenticity and willingness to embrace their differences can foster a sense of freedom and liberation, creating fertile ground for self-expression and unconventional creative outputs.

However, it's important to recognise that neurodivergent individuals may face both advantages and challenges in their creative journey. While their divergent thinking and unique perspectives can lead to innovative ideas, they may also encounter difficulties in navigating social structures, communication norms, or traditional educational settings that may not fully accommodate their individual needs and modes of expression.

reflection prompts

- How do you personally define creativity? What does it mean to you?
- Have you noticed any specific traits or characteristics that tend to accompany creativity in neurodivergent individuals?
- Can you share any personal experiences or examples where neurodivergence and creativity intersected in your own life or in someone you know?



IDENTITY

identity

Identity is a fundamental aspect of being human, encompassing the distinguishing characteristics that define who we are as individuals. It includes our beliefs, values, interests, personality traits, and the various roles we assume in our lives.

However, identity is not a fixed concept and can evolve and change over time as we grow and experience different aspects of life.

For neurodivergent individuals, having a diagnosis can be beneficial in several ways when it comes to identity.

- Firstly, a diagnosis can provide a sense of validation and clarity. It helps individuals understand why they may experience certain challenges or differences in thinking, feeling, or behavior.
- It can offer a framework to make sense of their unique experiences and connect with a community of people who share similar experiences.
- Additionally, a diagnosis can lead to self-acceptance and self-compassion. It allows individuals to recognize that their differences are not flaws or shortcomings but simply variations of human neurodiversity. This understanding can foster a positive sense of identity and reduce feelings of shame or self-blame.
- A diagnosis can open doors to appropriate support and accommodations. It enables individuals to access resources, therapies, and strategies that can enhance their well-being and quality of life.

With a better understanding of their neurodivergent traits, individuals can develop self-care practices tailored to their specific needs, engage in self-advocacy, and build a support network that understands and accepts them.

However, it's important to note that a diagnosis does not define a person entirely. It is just one aspect of their identity and should be seen as a tool for understanding rather than a label that limits them.

Each individual is a unique combination of their neurodivergent traits, personal experiences, and individual strengths. Embracing a holistic view of identity allows neurodivergent individuals to embrace their authentic selves and find a sense of belonging and purpose in the world.

reflection prompts

- How can a diagnosis contribute to self-acceptance and self-compassion?
- What are the potential challenges or drawbacks of relying too heavily on a diagnosis for one's identity?
- Are there alternative ways to cultivate a positive sense of identity for neurodivergent individuals without relying on a diagnosis?



BURNOUT

burnout

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion that results from prolonged stress or excessive workload. It can occur when individuals are overwhelmed by their responsibilities and face ongoing challenges without sufficient time for rest and recovery.

Burnout can impact neurodivergent people in unique ways due to their specific cognitive, sensory, and emotional characteristics.

- Neurodivergent individuals may experience burnout more intensely or frequently due to factors such as sensory overload, social difficulties, executive functioning challenges, and the need for masking or adapting to neurotypical environments.
- The heightened sensitivity and cognitive processing differences of neurodivergent individuals can make them more susceptible to stressors, leading to increased exhaustion and emotional strain.
- The impact of burnout on neurodivergent individuals can be significant. It may exacerbate existing mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, and lead to difficulties in managing daily life tasks. Burnout can affect cognitive functioning, making it harder to concentrate, make decisions, or engage in problem-solving. It can also contribute to feelings of isolation, frustration, and reduced self-esteem.
- Additionally, burnout can disrupt the ability to regulate emotions and manage sensory input, potentially intensifying sensory sensitivities and emotional reactivity. This can further contribute to exhaustion and a sense of being overwhelmed by the demands of daily life and emotional flooding.

It is crucial to recognise the signs of burnout in neurodivergent individuals and provide appropriate support and accommodations. Strategies such as establishing self-care routines, creating sensory-friendly environments, practicing stress management techniques, and seeking professional assistance can help manage and prevent burnout. Creating inclusive and supportive environments that acknowledge and accommodate the unique needs of neurodivergent individuals can also play a vital role in mitigating the impact of burnout.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on ways in which workplaces, schools, and other environments can provide accommodations and flexibility to help reduce stress and prevent burnout.
- This may include adjustments to sensory stimuli, flexible work schedules, or alternative methods of communication.



EYE CONTACT

eye contact

Eye contact plays a significant role in social interactions and communication. However, for neurodivergent individuals, eye contact can present unique challenges that can impact their ability to make friends. Some neurodivergent individuals may struggle with maintaining consistent eye contact due to various factors such as sensory sensitivities, social anxiety, or differences in social processing.

Hyper eye contact refers to an intense and prolonged fixation on maintaining eye contact. Some neurodivergent individuals may engage in hyper eye contact as a way to compensate for their difficulties in social interactions. While it may be seen as intense or off-putting to non neurodivergents, it is important to understand that it can stem from a genuine desire to connect and understand others.

Hypo eye contact refers to a decreased or limited amount of eye contact. Neurodivergent individuals may find it challenging to make sustained eye contact due to sensory overload, social anxiety, or difficulties with social cues. This can be misconstrued by others as disinterest or lack of engagement, leading to misunderstandings and potential difficulties in forming friendships.

The impact of eye contact variations on making friends for neurodivergent individuals can be multi-faceted. On one hand, difficulties with eye contact can hinder the establishment of social connections and may make neurodivergent individuals appear aloof or disinterested. They may struggle to pick up on nonverbal cues and miss out on important social information.

However, it is crucial to recognize that eye contact is not the sole indicator of friendship potential or meaningful connections. Neurodivergent individuals may find alternative ways to express their interest and engage in social interactions, such as active listening, asking questions, or sharing their passions and interests. It is important for non-neurodivergent individuals to understand and respect these differences in communication styles and be open to building friendships based on shared understanding and acceptance.

reflection prompts

- Explore the concept of hyper eye contact and hypo eye contact.
- How might these variations in eye contact affect social interactions and the formation of friendships for neurodivergent individuals?

SHHHH...



QUIET TIME

quiet time

Quiet time plays a crucial role in supporting the well-being of neurodivergent individuals, especially those who experience sensory overload. Sensory overload occurs when an individual's sensory system becomes overwhelmed by excessive stimulation from the environment.

This can include loud noises, bright lights, strong smells, or crowded spaces. For neurodivergent individuals, such as those on the autism spectrum or with sensory processing differences, these sensory inputs can be overwhelming and lead to heightened stress and anxiety.

- One of the challenges neurodivergent individuals may face is recognizing their own need for quiet time. This difficulty stems from various factors, including differences in sensory processing and self-awareness.
- Neurodivergent individuals may have unique sensory experiences, where their sensory systems are either hyper- or hypo-responsive. Hyperresponsivity refers to being overly sensitive to sensory stimuli, while hyporesponsivity refers to being less responsive or seeking sensory input.
- In the context of quiet time, some neurodivergent individuals may have trouble recognising their need for it due to these sensory differences. They might not immediately connect their feelings of overwhelm or fatigue to sensory overload.
- Additionally, societal expectations and pressure to conform may lead them to push through challenging situations without taking the necessary breaks. This lack of recognition can perpetuate a cycle of stress, exhaustion, and increased susceptibility to sensory overload.

Creating awareness around the importance of quiet time and its benefits for neurodivergent individuals is crucial. Quiet time provides an opportunity for self-regulation and sensory processing. It allows the individual to retreat to a calm and controlled environment, away from excessive sensory input, to recharge and regain a sense of balance and prevent perfect blowouts.

During quiet time, individuals can engage in activities that help them decompress and find inner peace, such as reading, listening to calming music, engaging in gentle movements, or simply having uninterrupted solitude.

reflection prompts

- Recognise that some neurodivergent individuals may have difficulty recognising their own need for quiet time.
- Why is self-awareness challenging in this context, and how can we support individuals in recognizing and advocating for their own needs?



LEFT OUT

left out

Neurodivergent individuals may face unique challenges when it comes to creating and maintaining friendships, which can result in feelings of being left out or isolated, particularly in school settings such as not being invited to playdates or others birthday parties. Or no one turning up to theirs :-)

These challenges can stem from various factors related to neurodivergence, such as differences in social communication, sensory sensitivities, or difficulty with social cues and norms.

However, there are strategies that parents and adults can employ to support neurodivergent individuals in building meaningful friendships and fostering a more inclusive social environment. They can:

- **Foster understanding:** Educate themselves and their child about neurodivergence, helping them understand their own strengths and challenges. This knowledge can empower the child and their peers to be more accepting and inclusive.
- **Develop social skills:** Offer non-judgemental, compassionate guidance and opportunities for their child to practice social skills through structured activities, social groups, or therapy. This can help them navigate social situations with more confidence and ease.
- **Facilitate social connections:** Encourage their child/ yourself to participate in activities or clubs that align with their interests, providing opportunities to meet like-minded peers who share similar passions.
- **Advocate for support:** Work with the child's school/ your workplace to implement inclusive practices, such as social skills training programs, peer mentoring, or sensory-friendly environments that promote social interaction.
- **Promote self-advocacy:** Teach their child/ learn how to communicate their needs and preferences to others, fostering self-advocacy skills that can help in social settings.

It is essential to recognise that building friendships takes time and effort for everyone, regardless of neurodivergence. Patience, understanding, and a willingness to embrace differences are key. By providing support, education, and fostering a more accepting and inclusive society, we can create opportunities for neurodivergent individuals to form meaningful connections, reduce feelings of isolation, and experience the joy of authentic friendships.

reflection prompts



PEOPLED OUT

peopled out

Being "peopled out" refers to the feeling of exhaustion or overwhelm that occurs after being around too many people for an extended period of time. It is often associated with feeling drained, claustrophobic, and mentally or emotionally exhausted. This can be due to the sensory experiences, social expectations, and energy demands that come with interacting with others.

- Neurodivergent individuals may be more impacted by being "peopled out" for several reasons.
- Sensory sensitivities can make it challenging to process and filter out overwhelming stimuli in crowded or noisy environments.
- Social interactions can be mentally and emotionally taxing, as they may require extra effort to navigate social cues, expectations, and social norms that may not come naturally.
- Additionally, neurodivergent individuals may have limited energy reserves or require more downtime to recharge due to differences in processing speeds and responding to stimuli.

To mitigate the impact of being "peopled out," neurodivergent individuals can prioritize self-care and establish boundaries around social engagements. They may need to schedule regular breaks or alone time to recharge and regulate their sensory experiences.

Building a support network of understanding friends and family who respect their boundaries and needs can also be beneficial. In society, there is a need for more acceptance and understanding of neurodivergent individuals' unique experiences.

Creating inclusive environments that respect their sensory needs, communication styles, and social preferences can help reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed and excluded.

reflection prompts

- Explore times when you have felt "peopled out" or overwhelmed by social interactions.
- What were the specific factors that contributed to those feelings?
- How did you cope with or manage those situations?



EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

emotional dysregulation

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to effectively manage and respond to emotions in a way that promotes well-being and healthy relationships. It involves recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, as well as implementing strategies to regulate and express them appropriately.

- For neurodivergent individuals, emotional regulation can present unique challenges due to various factors such as sensory sensitivities, atypical processing of emotions, or difficulty identifying and labeling emotions.
- impact of emotional regulation difficulties on neurodivergent individuals can be significant. They may experience heightened emotional intensity, longer emotional recovery times, or difficulty transitioning between different emotional states.
- This can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed, frustrated, or misunderstood. In relationships, challenges with emotional regulation can contribute to misunderstandings, conflict, and difficulties in maintaining close connections with others.

Remember, it's important to approach emotional regulation with patience, self-compassion, and a willingness to seek support when needed. Each individual's experience is unique, and finding strategies that work best for them may require some trial and error.

Neurodivergent individuals can take proactive steps to support their emotional regulation. For example through emotional education, learning about emotions, their functions, and the range of emotional experiences can be empowering. Understanding how emotions impact thoughts, behaviors, and relationships can contribute to more effective emotional regulation.

reflection prompts

- Reflect how difficulties with emotional regulation impact everyday life for neurodivergent individuals.
- Explore situations where emotional regulation challenges are particularly prevalent, such as in social interactions, work or school environments, or during sensory overload.
- How does it affect their overall well-being and functioning?



SELF ESTEEM

self esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation and perception of their own worth and value. It encompasses beliefs about oneself, including one's abilities, qualities, and sense of identity.

- Self-esteem can have a significant impact on various aspects of a person's life, such as their emotional well-being, relationships, and overall functioning.
- For neurodivergent individuals, self-esteem can be influenced by a range of factors related to their neurodivergent traits and experiences.
- Some neurodivergent individuals may face societal stigma, discrimination, or misconceptions surrounding their neurodivergence, which can negatively affect their self-esteem. They may internalize negative societal messages and develop a sense of self-doubt or shame about their differences.
- Neurodivergent individuals may also experience challenges in areas such as social interactions, communication, sensory processing, or executive functioning. These difficulties can impact their self-perception and contribute to lower self-esteem. For example, struggling with social cues, feeling misunderstood, constantly being corrected for incorrect spelling or facing frequent sensory overload can lead to feelings of frustration, isolation, and a sense of not fitting in.
- Add to it the experience of masking or trying to camouflage one's neurodivergent traits to fit into neurotypical norms can take a toll on self-esteem. Constantly trying to conform or hide one's true self can erode self-confidence and create a persistent fear of rejection or judgment.

To support neurodivergent individuals in cultivating healthy self-esteem, it is important to promote acceptance, understanding, and validation of their unique strengths and challenges. Encouraging self-advocacy, self-acceptance, and self-compassion can also be beneficial. Providing opportunities for skill development, celebrating achievements, and fostering inclusive and supportive environments can contribute to a positive sense of self and improved self-esteem.

reflection prompts

- Consider the impact of societal stigma and misconceptions on the self-esteem of neurodivergent individuals.
- How can you contribute to challenging and dismantling these negative narratives to foster a more inclusive and accepting society?



KNOWING WHAT'S NEXT

knowing what's next

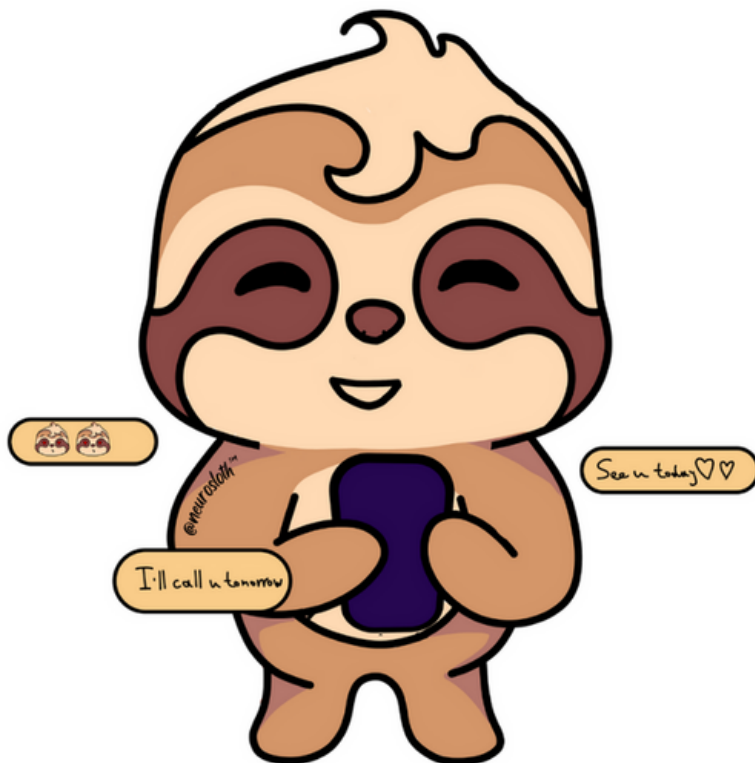
The desire to know what's next can vary among individuals, including neurodivergent people. However, there are a few reasons why some neurodivergent individuals may have a stronger inclination to seek predictability and clarity about future events:

- **Need for Routine and Predictability:** Many neurodivergent individuals find comfort and stability in routines and predictability. Having a clear understanding of what's next helps them navigate their daily lives more effectively and reduces anxiety or uncertainty.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with sensory processing differences, may be more sensitive to environmental stimuli. Knowing what's next allows them to mentally prepare for potential sensory challenges and make necessary accommodations to manage their sensory experiences.
- **Cognitive Processing Differences:** Neurodivergent individuals often have unique cognitive processing styles. Some individuals may have a preference for structured thinking or a tendency to engage in systematic planning. Knowing what's next provides a sense of mental order and allows them to better organize their thoughts and actions.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Changes in routines or unexpected events can be emotionally overwhelming for some neurodivergent individuals. Knowing what's next can help them regulate their emotions and maintain a sense of control over their environment, reducing the likelihood of emotional distress or meltdowns.

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals have a strong preference for knowing what's next. Preferences can vary among individuals and may depend on their specific neurodivergent traits, personal experiences, and coping mechanisms. Some individuals may also embrace spontaneity and adaptability. Understanding and respecting individual differences is crucial in providing support and creating inclusive environments for neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts

- Why do you think some neurodivergent individuals have a stronger preference for knowing what's next, while others may embrace spontaneity and adaptability?
- How can we create inclusive environments that accommodate both preferences?



COMMUNICATION

communication

Communication is the process of sending and receiving information between individuals or groups. It is an essential aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in conveying thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

- Communication can occur through various channels, including spoken language, written text, body language, gestures, facial expressions, and even through technological means like emails or video calls.
- However, communication styles can vary among individuals, and this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. Non-neurodivergent individuals may rely on subtle cues, ambiguous language, or sarcasm to convey their messages, which can be challenging for neurodivergent individuals to interpret.
- Some neurodivergent individuals may experience **social-emotional agnosia**, also known as emotional agnosia or expressive agnosia. This condition affects their ability to perceive facial expressions, body language, and voice intonation. As a result, they may struggle to non-verbally perceive others' emotions in social situations, limiting their normal social interactions.
- In response to these challenges, neurodivergent individuals may prefer alternative methods of communication that better suit their needs. They may rely more on explicit language, written communication, or structured systems that provide clear and direct information.
- Additionally, some neurodivergent individuals may find comfort and effectiveness in using assistive technologies or visual aids to enhance their communication abilities.

Understanding and accommodating different communication styles, including the challenges posed by social-emotional agnosia, is essential for fostering inclusive and effective interactions.

It involves creating an environment that encourages open and clear communication, embracing diverse communication preferences, and being mindful of potential barriers faced by neurodivergent individuals. By promoting understanding and flexibility in communication, we can ensure that everyone's voices are heard and valued.

reflection prompts

- Explore the significance of clear and explicit communication for neurodivergent individuals.
- Reflect how using straightforward language, avoiding ambiguity, and providing direct information can enhance understanding and minimize miscommunication.



EXHAUSTION

exhaustion

Exhaustion, in the context of neurodivergent individuals, refers to a state of extreme fatigue and depletion of physical, mental, and emotional energy. It can occur more often in neurodivergent individuals due to various factors related to their unique neurology and life experiences.

- **Sensory and cognitive overwhelm:** Neurodivergent individuals may experience heightened sensory sensitivity, which means they can easily become overwhelmed by sensory input from their environment. This constant sensory bombardment can be exhausting and drain their energy. Additionally, neurodivergent individuals may have cognitive differences that require extra mental effort and processing, leading to cognitive fatigue and exhaustion.
- **Masking and social demands:** Neurodivergent individuals often face social expectations and pressure to mask or camouflage their neurodivergent traits in order to fit into neurotypical environments. This constant effort to hide or suppress their natural behaviors and adapt to social norms can be mentally and emotionally draining, leading to exhaustion.
- **Hyperfocus and intense interests:** Neurodivergent individuals may experience intense focus and engagement in their areas of interest or passion. While this hyperfocus can be beneficial in certain contexts, it can also lead to neglecting other important aspects of life, such as self-care and rest, resulting in exhaustion from an imbalance in energy allocation.
- **Executive functioning challenges:** Executive functioning refers to a set of cognitive processes responsible for organization, planning, time management, and self-regulation. Many neurodivergent individuals may struggle with executive functioning, leading to difficulties in managing their energy and time effectively. This can result in overexertion, pushing themselves beyond their limits, and ultimately experiencing exhaustion.
- **Heightened sensitivity to stress:** Neurodivergent individuals may have heightened sensitivity to stress due to factors such as sensory overload, difficulties with emotional regulation, or challenges in navigating social interactions. This increased vulnerability to stress can contribute to a higher likelihood of burning the candle at both ends, as they may struggle to recognize and respond to their own limits and boundaries.
- **Poor interoception:** Interoception refers to the ability to sense and perceive internal bodily sensations, such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, and emotions. Neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with conditions like autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), may experience difficulties with interoception. Lack of interoceptive awareness can contribute to exhaustion. Neurodivergent individuals may have difficulty recognising when they are physically or mentally fatigued because they may not perceive the usual signs of tiredness, such as bodily sensations or cues from the environment. As a result, they may push themselves beyond their limits, engaging in activities or tasks that drain their energy without realizing it by burning the candle at both ends.

To address and manage exhaustion, it is crucial for neurodivergent individuals to prioritise self-care, establish healthy boundaries, and practice effective stress management techniques. This may include engaging in activities that recharge their energy, setting realistic expectations, seeking support from understanding individuals, and developing strategies for self-regulation and stress reduction.



EAR DEFENDERS

ear defenders

Ear defenders, also known as earmuffs or hearing protectors, are devices designed to reduce the intensity of sound reaching the wearer's ears. They consist of two ear cups connected by a headband or a strap that goes over the head. The ear cups are typically padded and contain sound-absorbing materials or sound-dampening chambers to provide a barrier against loud noises.

Ear defenders are commonly used in various settings to protect the ears from excessive noise levels. They can be used in recreational activities like concerts, motor racing, or other events with high noise levels.

In the context of neurodivergent individuals, ear defenders can play a crucial role in managing sensory sensitivities or sensory overload. Many neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism, ADHD, or sensory processing disorder, may experience heightened sensitivity to certain sounds or find loud environments overwhelming.

In these situations, wearing ear defenders can help reduce the impact of excessive noise, providing a sense of comfort and reducing sensory stress.

The use of ear defenders allows individuals to create a more regulated and controlled auditory environment. By minimizing or blocking out noise, they can help promote concentration, focus, and emotional well-being for neurodivergent individuals who may be easily overwhelmed by auditory stimuli. This can be particularly beneficial in educational settings, workplaces, or public spaces where noise levels can be challenging to manage.

Ear defenders come in different styles and designs, ranging from basic earmuffs to more advanced electronic versions that can amplify low-level sounds while blocking out loud or harmful ones. Some models also offer additional features such as Bluetooth connectivity, allowing individuals to listen to music or other audio sources while still benefiting from noise reduction.

Overall, ear defenders provide a practical solution for managing noise sensitivity and promoting a more comfortable sensory experience for neurodivergent individuals. By reducing the impact of excessive auditory stimulation, they can support individuals in maintaining focus, reducing stress, and participating more comfortably in various environments.

reflection prompts



NOISE SENSITIVE

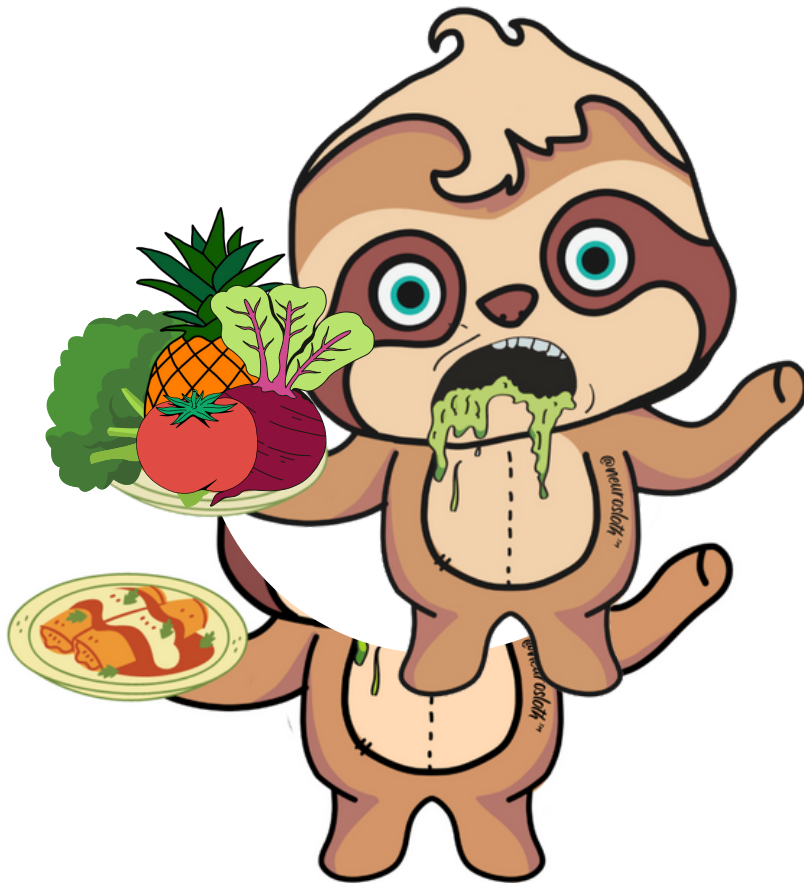
noise sensitive

Being noise sensitive, also known as auditory sensitivity or hypersensitivity, refers to an increased sensitivity to sounds.

- It is a common experience among neurodivergent individuals, including those with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory processing disorder (SPD), and various other neurodevelopmental conditions.
- Noise sensitivity can impact the auditory sense, which is responsible for processing and interpreting sounds.
- Neurodivergent individuals who are noise sensitive may have difficulty tolerating certain sounds or environments that others might find typical or unbothersome.
- They can perceive sounds as overwhelming, distressing, or physically painful, even at lower volumes.
- The impact of noise sensitivity on neurodivergent individuals can vary. For some, exposure to loud or overwhelming sounds can lead to sensory overload, causing stress, anxiety, or meltdowns. It can also result in difficulties with concentration, attention, and communication.
- In certain cases, individuals may exhibit avoidance behaviors, such as withdrawing from social situations or attempting to control their environment to minimise exposure to triggering sounds.
- Additionally, poor interoception, which refers to difficulties in perceiving internal bodily sensations, can further complicate the behaviors of neurodivergent individuals. Interoception plays a crucial role in self-regulation, emotional awareness, and understanding one's physical needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, fatigue).
- When interoceptive awareness is impaired, individuals may struggle to recognise and respond to their own sensory and physiological states, which can contribute to difficulties in self-regulation and adaptive behaviors.

reflection prompts

- Reflect how noise sensitivity affects different aspects of their lives, including sensory overload, stress, anxiety, and difficulties with attention and communication.



TASTE SENSITIVE

taste sensitive

Being taste sensitive, also known as gustatory sensitivity or hypersensitivity, refers to an increased sensitivity to taste sensations. It is a phenomenon experienced by some individuals, including those who are neurodivergent. Taste sensitivity impacts the gustatory sense, which is responsible for detecting and perceiving different flavors.

- Neurodivergent individuals who are taste sensitive may have heightened responses to certain tastes, textures, or smells associated with food and beverages. They may find certain flavors overwhelming, unpleasant, or even intolerable. This sensitivity can impact their eating habits, dietary choices, and overall food experiences.
- In addition to taste sensitivity, the concept of poor interoception (difficulty perceiving internal bodily sensations) can further influence the behaviors of neurodivergent individuals in relation to taste. Interoception plays a role in recognizing hunger, satiety, and other internal cues that guide eating behaviors. When interoceptive awareness is impaired, individuals may struggle with identifying and responding to their own physiological needs, including hunger and taste preferences.
- Certain medications may cause alterations in taste perception, resulting in changes to how flavors are experienced. This can range from a diminished sense of taste to unusual or distorted taste sensations.
- A phenomenon called synesthesia exists where individuals experience cross-sensory perceptions. In certain cases, individuals with synesthesia may perceive colors when tasting specific flavors or foods. For example, they may associate the taste of a certain fruit with the visual perception of a particular color. However, it's important to note that synesthesia is a rare condition and not directly related to neurodivergent traits.

Overall, understanding taste sensitivity, interoception, and their impact on neurodivergent individuals can help create supportive environments that consider their sensory needs, promote self-regulation, and ensure a positive food experience. Encouraging self-awareness, providing sensory accommodations, and exploring different textures and flavors can contribute to a more inclusive and enjoyable dining experience for neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts

- How does the concept of taste sensitivity resonate with you? Have you ever experienced heightened sensitivity to certain flavors or textures?
- How has it influenced your eating habits or food preferences?



LIGHT SENSITIVE

light sensitive

Being light sensitive, also known as photophobia, refers to an increased sensitivity or intolerance to light. It can affect the visual sense, specifically the perception and processing of light through the eyes.

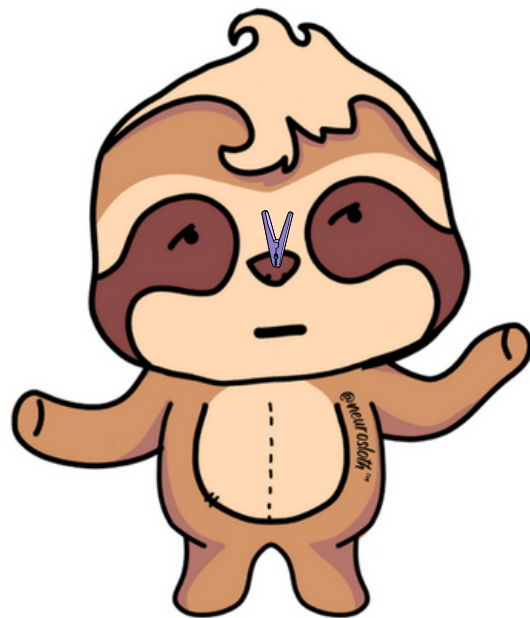
Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), migraines, or certain neurological conditions, may experience light sensitivity more frequently or intensely.

- Exposure to bright or intense lighting conditions, including natural sunlight or artificial lighting, can trigger discomfort, eye strain, headaches, or even physical pain for those who are light sensitive.
- Various factors can contribute to light sensitivity in neurodivergent individuals. It can be influenced by sensory processing differences, heightened neural sensitivity, or underlying sensory integration difficulties. While light sensitivity is commonly associated with visual processing, it can also have broader impacts on overall well-being, including sleep disturbances and heightened stress levels.
- The concept of poor interoception, which involves difficulties in perceiving internal bodily sensations, can also impact the behaviors of neurodivergent individuals in relation to light sensitivity. Impaired interoceptive awareness can hinder their ability to recognise and respond to the physical discomfort or symptoms triggered by light sensitivity. This can result in difficulties with self-regulation, communication, and adaptive behaviors in light-intensive environments.
- It is important to note that photophobia can be a symptom or feature of various conditions, rather than a standalone diagnosis.
- Color sensitivity, also known as chromatic sensitivity or color intolerance, refers to an increased sensitivity or discomfort when exposed to certain colors or color combinations.
- Some individuals may experience specific colors as overwhelming, visually jarring, or physically discomforting. Color sensitivity can coexist with light sensitivity, as light plays a significant role in how colors are perceived.

It is worth mentioning that individual experiences of light sensitivity and color sensitivity can vary widely, and not all neurodivergent individuals may have these sensitivities.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your own experiences with light and color sensitivity, or imagine how these sensitivities might impact someone's daily life.
- How can you advocate for and contribute to accommodating these sensitivities in your surroundings?



SMELL SENSITIVE

smell sensitive

Being sensitive to smells, also known as olfactory sensitivity, refers to an increased sensitivity or heightened response to various scents or odors. It impacts the olfactory sense, which is responsible for detecting and perceiving different smells.

Neurodivergent individuals, including those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sensory processing disorder (SPD), or certain neurological conditions, may experience heightened smell sensitivity. They may have a more intense reaction to certain smells or find them overwhelming, unpleasant, or even physically discomforting. Smell sensitivity can impact their sensory experiences, emotions, and overall well-being.

The impact of smell sensitivity on neurodivergent individuals can vary. Some may experience sensory overload, nausea or heightened stress levels when exposed to strong or specific odors. It can affect their ability to concentrate, engage in activities, or participate in certain environments where strong smells are present.

The factors that impact smell sensitivity can vary from person to person. It can be influenced by individual sensory processing differences, neural sensitivity, or specific neurological conditions. It's important to note that individuals with smell sensitivity may have individual triggers or specific scents that are particularly bothersome to them.

Poor interoception, which involves difficulties in perceiving internal bodily sensations, can also impact the behaviors of neurodivergent individuals, including those with smell sensitivity. Impaired interoceptive awareness can affect their ability to recognise and respond to their own physiological and sensory states, potentially influencing their behaviors and self-regulation.

Understanding and accommodating smell sensitivity are essential for creating inclusive environments that respect the sensory needs of neurodivergent individuals. This can include reducing or managing strong odors, providing well-ventilated spaces, and promoting awareness and understanding of smell sensitivity among peers and professionals.

reflection prompts

- How can individuals communicate their needs and boundaries regarding smell sensitivity?
- How can you support and empower individuals with sensory sensitivities to prioritize their well-being?



TOUCH SENSITIVE

touch sensitive

Being touch sensitive is often referred to as tactile sensitivity or tactile hypersensitivity. It impacts the sense of touch and can have various effects on neurodivergent individuals.

- Within the scientific and clinical contexts, touch sensitivity or tactile sensitivity is commonly referred to as tactile defensiveness, tactile hypersensitivity, or tactile overresponsivity. These terms help describe and classify the experiences and characteristics associated with touch sensitivity, enabling professionals to better understand and support individuals with tactile sensitivities.
- Neurodivergent individuals, such as those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sensory processing disorders (SPD), or other conditions, may experience heightened touch sensitivity. This means they may have a lower threshold for perceiving and reacting to tactile stimuli, making them more sensitive to touch sensations on their skin. They may find certain textures, clothing materials, or types of touch uncomfortable, overwhelming, or even painful.
- The impact of touch sensitivity on neurodivergent individuals can be significant. It can influence their behaviors, emotional responses, and overall well-being. Some individuals may actively avoid or withdraw from touch, leading to social challenges or difficulties in daily activities that involve physical contact. Others may seek specific types of touch or pressure for self-regulation or to mitigate sensory overload.
- Various factors can impact touch sensitivity, including individual sensory processing profiles, neurological differences, and sensory integration abilities. Some individuals may have difficulty processing and integrating tactile input, leading to challenges in discrimination, modulation, or habituation to touch sensations.
- There are different types of touch sensitivity that individuals may experience. Hypersensitivity refers to heightened sensitivity to touch, where even light touch or gentle pressure can feel uncomfortable or overwhelming.
- Hyposensitivity, on the other hand, refers to reduced sensitivity to touch, where individuals may require stronger or more intense touch to perceive or register the sensation.

reflection prompts

Interoception, which is the sense of internal bodily sensations, can also intersect with touch sensitivity. Poor interoceptive awareness can affect how individuals perceive and interpret touch sensations on their skin, potentially leading to difficulties in self-regulation, emotional awareness, or body awareness.



REJECTION SENSITIVITY

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rejection sensitivity

Being rejection sensitive is commonly referred to as rejection sensitivity or rejection sensitivity dysphoria. It primarily impacts the emotional and social sense of an individual, rather than a specific sensory sense.

- Rejection sensitivity can have a significant impact on neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or borderline personality disorder (BPD).
- It involves an intense emotional reaction to real or perceived rejection or criticism from others. Neurodivergent individuals with rejection sensitivity may interpret neutral or ambiguous social cues as signs of rejection, which can trigger intense feelings of distress, anxiety, or self-doubt.
- The impact of rejection sensitivity on neurodivergent individuals can be profound. It can affect their self-esteem, social interactions, and overall emotional well-being.
- Individuals may be more prone to fear or avoid social situations, have difficulty forming and maintaining relationships, or experience heightened emotional reactivity in response to potential rejection. This can lead to social withdrawal, emotional dysregulation, and even depressive symptoms.
- Various factors can impact rejection sensitivity. Neurological differences, past experiences of rejection or trauma, and underlying mental health conditions can contribute to the development or exacerbation of rejection sensitivity.
- Additionally, difficulties in emotion regulation and self-perception can play a role in how individuals interpret and respond to social cues related to rejection.
- While rejection sensitivity is not directly related to interoception, it can still impact the behaviors of neurodivergent individuals in terms of emotional awareness and regulation. Individuals with rejection sensitivity may struggle with recognizing and effectively managing their own emotional reactions, leading to impulsive or maladaptive behaviors as a means of coping with the fear of rejection.

reflection prompts

- Explore the interplay between rejection sensitivity and other aspects of neurodivergent experiences, such as social communication difficulties or emotional regulation challenges.
- How do these factors intersect and influence one another?
- How can you create supportive environments that account for the unique needs of individuals with rejection sensitivity?

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STIMMING

stimming

Stimming, short for self-stimulatory behavior, refers to repetitive or self-soothing behaviors that neurodivergent individuals engage in to regulate their sensory experiences, emotions, or overall arousal levels. Stimming is commonly associated with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and sensory processing disorders (SPD). It serves various purposes, including self-calming, sensory seeking, and self-expression.

Neurodivergent individuals engage in stimming for a range of reasons. It helps them manage sensory overload or understimulation, reduce anxiety or stress, and provide a sense of predictability and control in their environment. Stimming behaviors can be both noticeable and subtle, and they can include physical movements, vocalizations, or sensory interactions.

Here are examples of different stimming ideas and techniques:

- **Hand-flapping:** Rapidly moving the hands up and down or shaking them in a repetitive motion.
- **Rocking:** Swaying back and forth or rocking the body to provide rhythmic sensory input.
- **Finger-flicking:** Quickly flicking the fingers against a surface or in the air.
- **Spinning or twirling:** Rotating the body or spinning in circles to experience vestibular stimulation.
- **Tapping or drumming:** Repeatedly tapping fingers or objects to create a rhythmic pattern or sound.
- **Rubbing or stroking:** Running hands or objects along different textures or surfaces for tactile stimulation.
- **Vocalizations:** Making sounds, such as humming, repetitive words or phrases, or using specific tones or pitches.
- **Visual stimulation:** Engaging with visually stimulating objects like spinning tops, flashing lights, or moving patterns.
- **Hand movements or finger play:** Engaging in intricate hand movements, finger motions, or finger play activities.
- **Squeezing or pressure:** Applying deep pressure or using fidget toys to provide tactile feedback and regulate sensory input.
- **Repeating or scripting:** Repeating words, phrases, or scripts from movies, songs, or books as a form of self-regulation or self-expression.
- **Visual or auditory stimming:** Watching visual patterns, light reflections, or listening to specific sounds or music for relaxation or focus.

It's important to remember that stimming is a natural and often helpful self-regulatory behavior for neurodivergent individuals. While some stimming behaviors may appear unusual or different to neurotypical individuals, they serve a purpose in managing sensory and emotional experiences.

reflection prompts

- What are your initial thoughts or perceptions about stimming behaviors?
- How has your perspective evolved after learning more about the purpose and significance of stimming for neurodivergent individuals?



BALANCE CHALLENGED

balance challenged

While balance challenges can be experienced by individuals with various neurodivergent conditions, it is important to note that being balance challenged alone does not typically serve as a diagnostic criterion for specific neurodivergent conditions. However, balance issues can be present in individuals with certain neurodivergences. Here are a few examples:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Some individuals with ASD may experience difficulties with balance and coordination as part of their overall motor challenges. These difficulties can impact their gross motor skills and coordination during activities requiring balance.
- Dyspraxia or Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD): DCD is a neurodevelopmental challenge characterised by difficulties in coordination and motor skills. Challenges with balance and coordination are central features of DCD, and individuals with this condition often struggle with maintaining stability and performing activities requiring balance.
- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD): While not recognized as a standalone diagnosis in the DSM-5, SPD refers to difficulties in processing and integrating sensory information. Some individuals with SPD may experience challenges in perceiving and responding to vestibular input, which can affect their balance and coordination.
- Cerebral Palsy (CP): CP is a group of motor disorders caused by damage to the developing brain, often occurring before or shortly after birth. Balance and coordination difficulties are common in individuals with CP, and these challenges can vary in severity and presentation depending on the specific type and distribution of motor impairment.

Individuals can experience balance challenges without having a specific neurodivergent condition. Balance issues can also occur due to other factors such as medical conditions, medication side effects, or injury.

It's important to note that balance challenges can vary in severity and presentation among neurodivergent individuals.

Some individuals may require additional support, therapies, or accommodations to help manage their balance challenges effectively. Physical therapy, occupational therapy, and sensory integration therapy are some approaches that can be beneficial in addressing balance challenges and improving motor skills and coordination.

reflection prompts

- Consider the challenges neurodivergent individuals face in maintaining balance and coordination.
- How might these challenges impact their daily lives, social interactions, or participation in physical activities?
- How can you foster empathy and understanding towards individuals with dyspraxia in these contexts?



SPECIAL INTEREST

special interest

The trait commonly known as having a special interest is often observed among neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A special interest refers to an intense and focused fascination or passion for a specific topic, activity, or subject matter.

Here are some key points to understand about special interests and their characteristics:

- **Intensity and Focus:** Special interests are marked by an intense level of engagement and concentration. Individuals with special interests often exhibit deep knowledge and expertise in their chosen topic.
- **Narrow Focus:** Special interests tend to be narrow and highly specialized, focusing on specific subjects or areas of interest. This can include anything from trains, dinosaurs, or astronomy to languages, historical periods, or musical instruments.
- **Long-lasting and Persistent:** Special interests often endure over an extended period, sometimes lasting for years or even a lifetime. The level of enthusiasm and dedication to the interest remains consistent over time.
- **Engagement and Absorption:** When immersed in their special interest, individuals may display high levels of motivation, enthusiasm, and absorption. They may spend extensive amounts of time exploring, learning, or engaging with their preferred topic.
- **Unique Expertise:** Individuals with special interests can acquire an impressive depth of knowledge and expertise in their chosen field. They may excel in retaining and recalling information, identifying patterns, and making connections related to their interest.

The causes of having a special interest are not fully understood. However, some theories suggest that the neurocognitive characteristics of neurodivergent conditions, such as enhanced attention to detail, pattern recognition, or focused thinking, may contribute to the development and intensity of special interests. It is believed that these interests may serve as a way for individuals to seek comfort, engage in meaningful activities, or find a sense of purpose and identity.

reflection prompts

- How do individuals with special interests find others who share their passion?
- How can special interests serve as a catalyst for meaningful interactions and a sense of belonging?
- How can having a "special interest" be unhelpful or unhealthy?



ANGER OUTBURSTS

anger outbursts

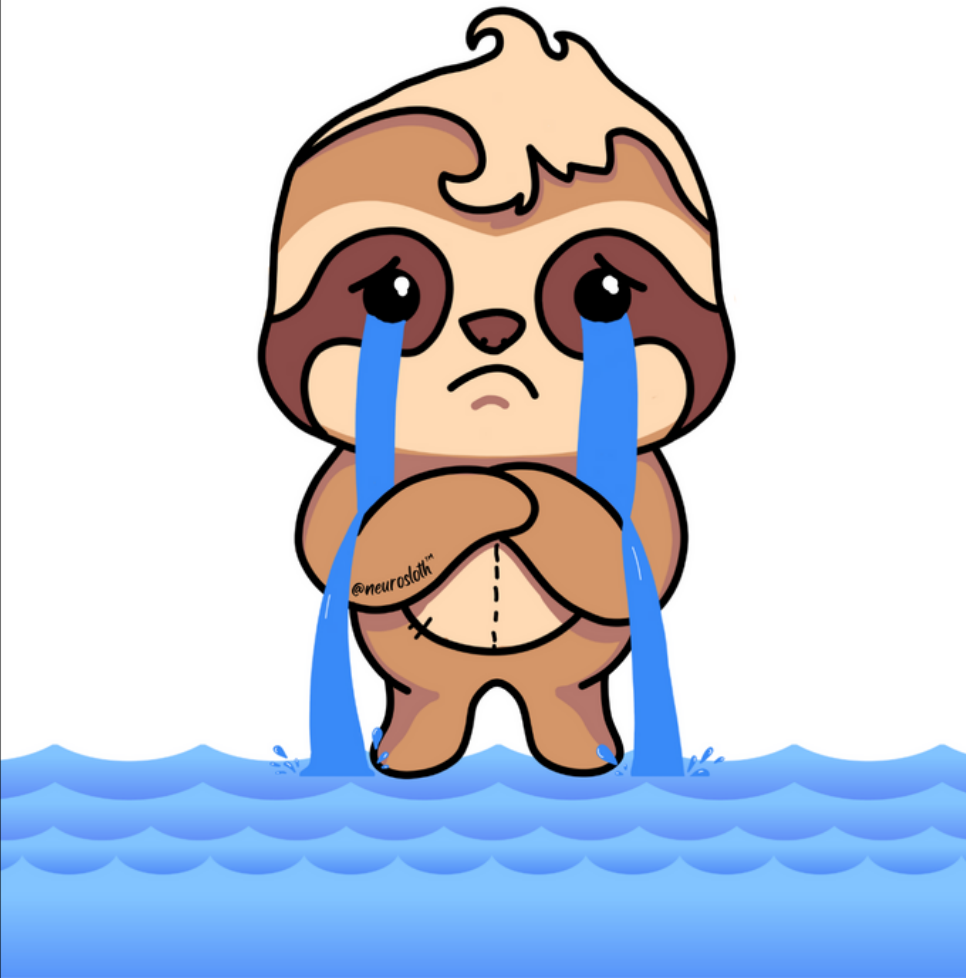
Anger outbursts in neurodivergent individuals can be connected to various factors related to their neurodivergence and the challenges they may face in navigating a neurotypical world. While it is important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals experience anger outbursts, some may be more prone to them due to specific characteristics of their condition. Here are some points to consider:

- **Sensory Overload:** Neurodivergent individuals may be more sensitive to sensory stimuli, which can lead to sensory overload and heightened stress levels. When overwhelmed, individuals may exhibit anger outbursts as a response to the intense sensory experiences they are trying to process.
- **Communication Difficulties:** Neurodivergent individuals may have challenges in effectively communicating their needs, emotions, or frustrations. When they feel misunderstood or unable to express themselves verbally, they may resort to anger outbursts as a way to release their pent-up emotions.
- **Executive Functioning Challenges:** Difficulties with executive functioning, such as impulse control, emotional regulation, or planning, can contribute to anger outbursts. Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with managing their emotions and impulses, leading to sudden outbursts of anger.
- **Social Stress and Misunderstanding:** Living in a world that often does not accommodate their unique needs and communication styles can result in increased stress and frustration for neurodivergent individuals. The constant pressure to conform to societal norms can lead to heightened anxiety and anger, which may manifest as outbursts.

To support neurodivergent individuals who experience anger outbursts, it is important to consider accommodations and increased awareness of their needs.

reflection prompts

- How might increasing your knowledge about neurodivergent experiences, including anger outbursts, shape your interactions and responses to individuals in your personal or professional life?
- How can you actively contribute to creating environments that promote sensory support, communication strategies, and emotional regulation techniques?



EMOTIONAL FLOODING

emotional flood

Emotional flooding refers to an overwhelming and intense emotional response that can occur in neurodivergent individuals. It is characterised by a rapid and intense surge of emotions that can be challenging to manage and regulate. Here are some factors that can contribute to emotional flooding in neurodivergent individuals:

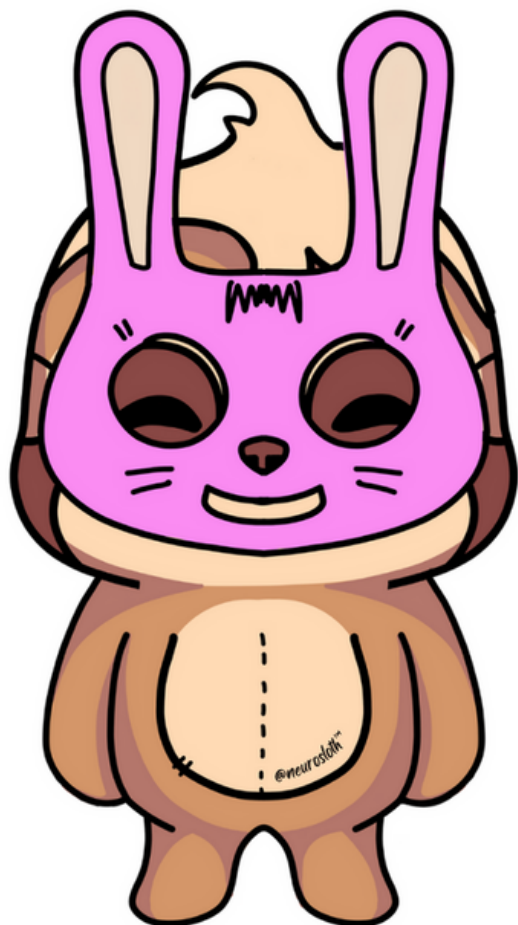
- **Sensory Overload:** Neurodivergent individuals may be more sensitive to sensory stimuli, such as loud noises, bright lights, or strong smells. When exposed to overwhelming sensory input, it can trigger a heightened emotional response and lead to emotional flooding.
- **Difficulty Processing Emotions:** Neurodivergent individuals may have challenges in processing and regulating emotions. Difficulties in recognizing and understanding their emotions, as well as expressing and communicating them effectively, can contribute to emotional flooding.
- **Changes in Routine or Unexpected Events:** Neurodivergent individuals often thrive on routine and predictability. Any disruptions or unexpected events, such as a change in schedule or an unforeseen circumstance, can trigger anxiety and emotional flooding.
- **Social Interactions and Rejection:** Difficulties in social communication and navigating social relationships can contribute to emotional flooding. Negative social experiences, such as rejection, bullying, or feeling misunderstood, can evoke intense emotional responses.
- **Cognitive Overload:** Neurodivergent individuals may experience cognitive overload when they are faced with excessive demands on their attention, information processing, or problem-solving abilities. This cognitive overwhelm can result in heightened emotions and emotional flooding.
- **Masking and Camouflaging:** Many neurodivergent individuals engage in masking or camouflaging behaviors to fit into social situations. The effort involved in hiding their neurodivergent traits and suppressing their natural behaviors can lead to emotional exhaustion and contribute to emotional flooding.

It is important to note that the causes of emotional flooding can vary greatly among individuals, and it is essential to approach each person's experiences with empathy and understanding.

Supporting neurodivergent individuals in managing emotional flooding involves providing them with tools and strategies to recognize and regulate their emotions, creating a supportive and understanding environment, and promoting self-care and well-being.

reflection prompts

- How did you initially react to others intense emotions, and how might understanding the underlying causes of emotional flooding change your perspective?
- How can you cultivate empathy and support, rather than judgment or dismissal, in these situations?



MASKING

masking

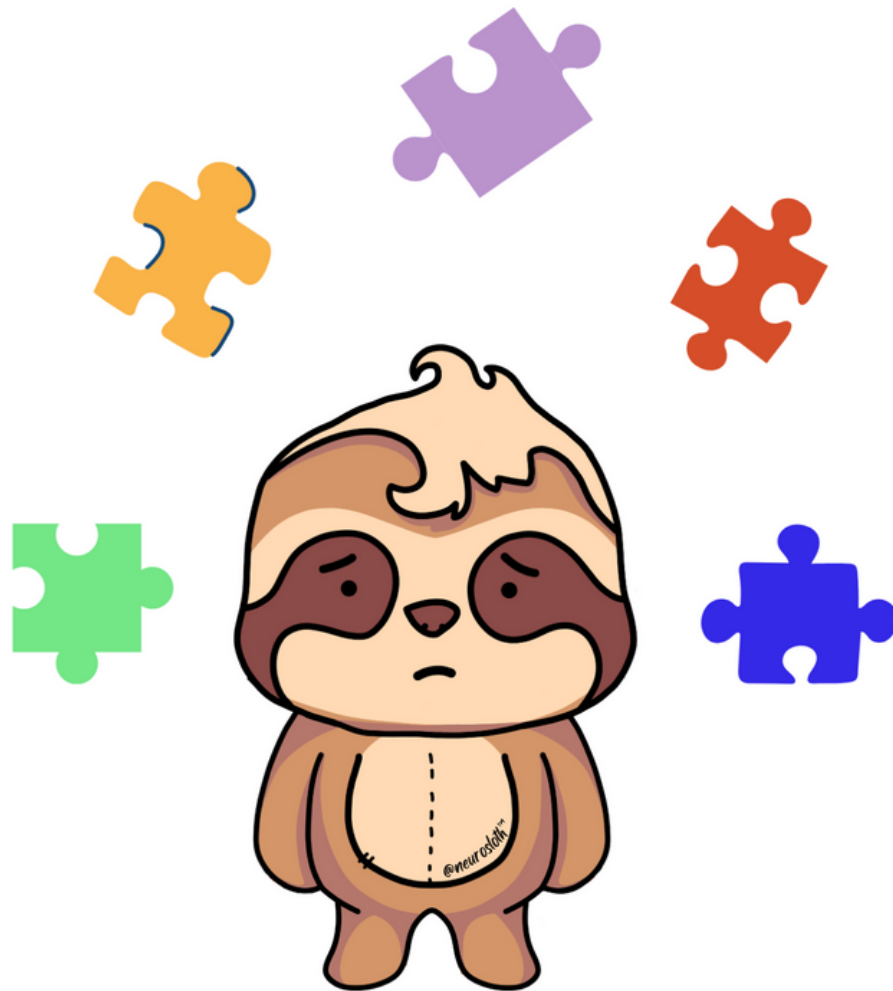
Masking, in the context of neurodivergence, refers to the practice of hiding or suppressing one's neurodivergent traits, behaviors, or characteristics in order to fit into social norms or expectations.

It involves consciously or subconsciously adopting behaviors, mannerisms, or communication styles that may be more typical or acceptable in the neurotypical world.

For many neurodivergent individuals, masking can be a coping mechanism and a way to navigate social interactions and environments that may not be accommodating or understanding of their unique neurocognitive differences. Masking can have significant impacts on their well-being and mental health.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on your own experiences with masking and its impact on your well-being.
- Consider times when you felt the need to hide or suppress your neurodivergent traits, behaviors, or characteristics in order to fit in or conform to social expectations.
- How did this practice of masking affect your mental and emotional state?
- Did it create a sense of disconnection from your authentic self? How did it impact your relationships and interactions with others?
- Take a moment to explore the potential consequences of masking and consider the importance of embracing and accepting your true neurodivergent identity.
- How can you create spaces where you feel safe to express yourself authentically?
- What support or resources can you seek to navigate social situations without the need for masking?



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

executive functioning

Executive functioning refers to a set of cognitive processes that enable individuals to plan, organize, prioritise, initiate, monitor, and adapt their behavior to achieve goals. It involves skills such as time management, working memory, self-control, problem-solving, and task switching.

Executive functioning plays a crucial role in managing daily tasks, making decisions, regulating emotions, and achieving success in various areas of life. For neurodivergent individuals, executive functioning can pose unique challenges. Here are a few reasons why executive functioning can be more difficult for them:

- **Cognitive Variability:** This variability can impact different aspects of executive functioning, leading to difficulties in specific areas while excelling in others.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Sensory overload or distraction caused by certain sensory stimuli can make it challenging to concentrate, stay organised, or engage in tasks that require sustained attention.
- **Difficulty with Transitions:** Difficulties in shifting attention, adjusting to changes in routines, or adapting to new environments can impact their ability to effectively manage their time, prioritize tasks, and switch between different responsibilities.
- **Impaired Working Memory:** This can affect their ability to remember and follow multi-step instructions, recall information, or keep track of multiple tasks simultaneously.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Difficulties in managing and regulating emotions can impact decision-making, impulse control, and the ability to stay focused on tasks.

reflection prompts

- Consider your own experiences with executive functioning and how it impacts your daily life.
- Reflect on the specific challenges you face in areas such as planning, organising, prioritizing, or adapting to change.
- How have these difficulties influenced your personal and professional life?



NON-VERBAL

non verbal

Non-verbal can refer to a specific mode of communication often associated with individuals on the autism spectrum.

Non-verbal communication in this context refers to the use of gestures, facial expressions, body language, and other forms of communication besides spoken or written words.

Some individuals on the autism spectrum may have challenges with spoken language or may prefer to communicate non-verbally.

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals communicate non-verbally, and not all individuals who communicate non-verbally are neurodivergent.

Non-verbal communication can be a characteristic of certain neurodivergent conditions, such as autism, but it varies from person to person. Some individuals with autism may rely more on non-verbal communication methods, while others may have strong verbal skills.

reflection prompts

- How does non-verbal communication impact our interactions and relationships?
- How is non-verbal communication influenced by culture?
- How can we improve our understanding and use of non-verbal communication?
- How do you use non-verbal communication?
- How are you able to support others better that are non-verbal?



JUGGLE

juggling tasks

Juggling tasks refers to the act of engaging in multiple tasks or activities simultaneously or in rapid succession. It can involve dividing attention between different tasks, switching between them, or even attempting to perform them at the same time.

Juggling tasks can have both positive and negative implications, and its effects can vary among individuals, including neurodivergent individuals.

One aspect that can influence multi-tasking behavior is the role of dopamine-seeking activity. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. Engaging in activities that provide a dopamine "high" can create a desire for more stimulation, leading some individuals to seek out multiple tasks or activities simultaneously. This drive for dopamine can fuel the urge to multitask, as it provides a sense of reward and excitement.

However, it is important to note that not all multitasking is driven solely by dopamine-seeking activity. For some neurodivergent individuals, multi-tasking can actually enhance focus and productivity. One example is listening to music while working. This additional sensory input can help some individuals regulate their attention and create a conducive environment for concentration. The music serves as a stimulant that helps them block out distractions and maintain focus on their tasks.

reflection prompts

Take a moment to reflect on your own multitasking habits. Do you find yourself frequently engaging in multiple tasks simultaneously, or do you prefer focusing on one task at a time?

Consider the advantages and disadvantages of your approach and how it impacts your productivity and overall well-being.



ANXIETY

anxiety

Anxiety is characterised by persistent feelings of excessive worry, fear, or apprehension. It involves a combination of emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioural symptoms that can significantly impact an individual's daily life.

Anxiety in neurodivergent individuals can stem from a variety of factors related to their neurocognitive differences and experiences. Here are some common causes of anxiety in neurodivergent individuals:

- Sensory Sensitivities.
- Social Challenges.
- Uncertainty and Change.
- Cognitive Processing Differences
- Hyperfocus and Perfectionism
- Past Experiences and Trauma

It's important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals will experience anxiety, and the causes can vary from person to person. Understanding and addressing the specific triggers and challenges faced by each individual is essential in providing effective support and interventions for managing anxiety in neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts

- How have you noticed anxiety manifesting in yourself or other neurodivergent individuals? What specific triggers or challenges seem to contribute to their anxiety?
- What strategies or interventions have you found effective in helping neurodivergent individuals manage their anxiety?
- How can cultivating empathy and understanding towards the anxiety experienced by neurodivergent individuals help create a more supportive and inclusive environment? Reflect on ways to promote empathy within your personal or professional circles.



SADNESS

sadness

Sadness is an emotion characterised by feelings of unhappiness, sorrow, or a sense of emotional pain. It is a natural and universal human emotion that can be triggered by various factors such as loss, disappointment, loneliness, or the experience of challenging or distressing circumstances.

Sadness is often accompanied by physiological changes and may manifest as crying, a heavy or constricted feeling in the chest, lethargy, changes in appetite, or difficulty finding enjoyment in previously pleasurable activities.

Sadness can be a common emotional experience for neurodivergent individuals, here are some key points to consider regarding sadness in neurodivergent individuals:

- **Emotional Intensity:** Neurodivergent individuals may experience emotions, including sadness, with heightened intensity. The depth and intensity of their emotional experiences may differ from those of neurotypical individuals.
- **Social Challenges and Rejection:** Neurodivergent individuals may face social challenges, such as difficulty understanding social cues, feeling misunderstood, or facing rejection or exclusion. These experiences can contribute to feelings of sadness, loneliness, or social isolation.
- **Empathy and Emotional Empathy:** Neurodivergent individuals can exhibit high levels of empathy and emotional sensitivity. They may be deeply affected by the emotions and distress of others, which can contribute to their own experience of sadness.

reflection prompts

- Reflect on the importance of empathy and support in relation to sadness.
- How can you cultivate empathy towards others who are experiencing sadness, including neurodivergent individuals?
- What actions or behaviors can you engage in to provide support and create a safe space for individuals to express and navigate their sadness?



BIGGER PICTURE

bigger picture

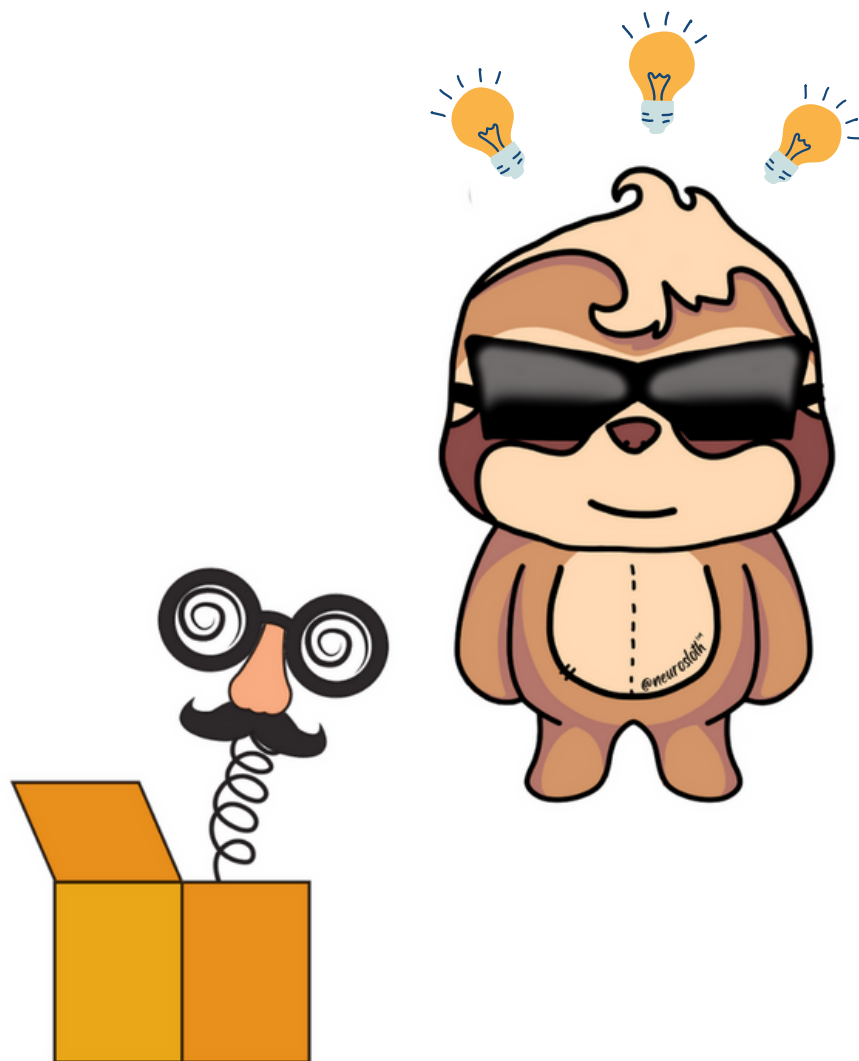
Neurodivergence can often bring the ability to perceive the broader perspective or implications of a project or task.

This includes a strength in grasping the larger-scale significance and impact. Looking at the bigger picture allows individuals to see beyond immediate circumstances and consider long-term goals and outcomes.

This enables strategic thinking, helping individuals make informed decisions and plan for the future. However, it may also result in occasionally overlooking the finer details.

reflection prompts

- Harnessing the power of the bigger picture: How can we leverage the neurodivergent ability to see the broader implications and significance of projects or tasks? How might this skill enhance problem-solving, innovation, or decision-making processes?
- Balancing the big picture with attention to detail: What strategies or approaches can be employed to ensure that neurodivergent individuals who excel in seeing the bigger picture also attend to the necessary smaller details? How can teamwork or collaboration be utilised to achieve a balance between these perspectives?
- Appreciating diverse perspectives: How can organisations, educational settings or parents foster an inclusive environment that values both the big picture thinking of neurodivergent individuals and the attention to detail from others? How might this integration of perspectives lead to more comprehensive and successful outcomes?



OUT OF THE BOX THINKING

out of the box thinking

Out of the box thinking" refers to a cognitive approach that deviates from conventional or traditional thoughts and solutions. It involves thinking creatively, innovatively, and unconventionally to explore new ideas, perspectives, and possibilities.

Out of the box thinking often involves breaking free from established patterns, challenging assumptions, and considering alternative viewpoints.

For neurodivergent individuals, out of the box thinking can be a natural inclination due to their unique cognitive processing styles and divergent thinking patterns.

They may have a knack for making unique connections, thinking outside of established norms, and approaching problems from unconventional angles. This ability to think differently can lead to innovative problem-solving, fresh insights, and novel approaches to various tasks, projects, or challenges. Out of the box thinking can manifest in different ways, such as:

- Making Unconventional Connections
- Embracing Nonlinear Thinking
- Challenging Assumptions
- Generating Innovative Solutions

reflection prompts

- Think about the environments or situations where out-of-the-box thinking is encouraged and valued.
- How can individuals and organisations and schools create a supportive space for neurodivergent individuals to express their unique perspectives and contribute their out-of-the-box ideas?
- Reflect on the importance of fostering diversity of thought and how it can drive creativity and innovation.



FRIENDSHIP

friendship

Friendship and neurodivergence can present both unique strengths and challenges. Neurodivergent individuals may experience some difficulties in social interactions, communication, and understanding social cues, which can impact their ability to form and maintain friendships. Here are some key points to consider:

- **Challenges in Social Interactions:** Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with understanding social norms, reading nonverbal cues, or grasping the intricacies of social communication. This can make it challenging to initiate conversations, interpret social signals, or navigate social hierarchies, which may impact their ability to form friendships.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Many neurodivergent individuals have sensory sensitivities, such as sensitivity to certain sounds, textures, or lights. These sensitivities can make social environments overwhelming and lead to discomfort or anxiety, making it more difficult to engage in social interactions and form connections with others.
- **Special Interests:** Neurodivergent individuals often have intense and focused interests in specific subjects or activities. While these special interests can be a source of passion and expertise, they may also limit common interests with peers, making it harder to connect and find common ground for friendship.
- **Communication Differences:** Neurodivergent individuals may communicate differently, whether it's using direct language, taking things literally, or having difficulty understanding subtle cues. These communication differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or challenges in building rapport with others.
- **Bullying and Teasing:** Unfortunately, neurodivergent individuals can be more vulnerable to bullying, teasing, and social exclusion due to their differences. This can have a significant impact on their self-esteem, social confidence, and willingness to engage in social situations, making it harder to form and maintain friendships.

To support neurodivergent individuals in building friendships, it is crucial to foster inclusive and accepting environments. Each person's experience is unique, and it is important to approach friendship and social connections with empathy, patience, and understanding.

reflection prompts

- Have you ever encountered challenges in forming or maintaining friendships?
- How might those experiences relate to the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals in building social connections?
- How do societal expectations influence the way we form friendships?



AVOIDING SMALL TALK

small talk

The link between being neurodivergent and avoiding small talk is a topic that has been observed and discussed among many individuals within the neurodivergent community. While it is important to remember that experiences and preferences can vary among individuals, there are several factors that can contribute to this tendency.

- **Processing Differences:** Neurodivergent individuals often have unique processing styles, which can include a preference for deep, focused, and meaningful conversations. Small talk, on the other hand, typically involves casual and superficial exchanges. The cognitive effort required to engage in small talk can feel challenging or unfulfilling for some neurodivergent individuals.
- **Sensory Overload:** Social situations can be overwhelming for individuals with sensory sensitivities. In crowded and noisy environments, such as parties or social gatherings, the sensory input can become overwhelming, leading to feelings of anxiety or discomfort. In such situations, focusing on small talk may be difficult, as individuals may be more focused on managing their sensory needs.
- **Difficulty with Social Cues:** Neurodivergent individuals may face challenges in interpreting and responding to social cues. Small talk often relies on subtle cues and implicit social norms, such as understanding when to initiate or end a conversation. These complexities can create anxiety or uncertainty, leading some neurodivergent individuals to avoid small talk altogether.
- **Preference for Depth and Special Interests:** Many neurodivergent individuals have intense interests or passions in specific subjects. They may find it more engaging and fulfilling to discuss these interests rather than engage in superficial conversations. This preference for depth and specificity can contribute to a tendency to avoid small talk.
- **Misunderstood:** The perception of neurodivergent individuals avoiding small talk can sometimes be misunderstood or seen as aloofness, disinterest, or rudeness. It is crucial to recognise and respect individual differences and communication preferences. Rather than labeling it as a myth or reality, it is more appropriate to acknowledge that neurodivergent individuals may have different communication styles and preferences, including a potential inclination to avoid small talk.
- **Not all are the same:** It is important to note some neurodivergent individuals may still engage in small talk comfortably, while others may develop strategies to navigate small talk effectively.

reflection prompts

- How do you typically feel during small talk conversations?
- Do you find them engaging or challenging?
- Are there specific topics or situations where small talk feels more comfortable or uncomfortable for you?



EMPATHETIC

empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings, emotions, and perspectives of others. It involves recognising and acknowledging the experiences and emotions of another person, and being able to respond with care, compassion, and understanding. Empathy plays a vital role in building meaningful connections, fostering positive relationships, and promoting social cohesion.

- There is a common misconception that neurodivergent individuals are less empathetic compared to their non neuro-divergent counterparts. However, this belief is largely a myth and is not supported by scientific evidence. Empathy is a complex cognitive and emotional process that can manifest differently in individuals, regardless of their neurodivergent or neurotypical status.
- While some neurodivergent individuals may express empathy in ways that are different from societal norms or expectations, it does not imply a lack of empathy. In fact, many neurodivergent individuals can demonstrate high levels of empathy, compassion, and sensitivity towards others. However, the expression and interpretation of empathy may vary due to individual differences in sensory processing, social cognition, communication styles, and emotional regulation.
- It is essential to recognise and understand the diverse ways in which empathy can be experienced and expressed. Some neurodivergent individuals may have heightened empathy, experiencing emotions intensely and deeply. Others may demonstrate empathy through actions, such as problem-solving or providing practical support, rather than explicitly expressing emotions.
- It is important to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions that generalise the empathy of neurodivergent individuals. Each person's experience and expression of empathy are unique and should be appreciated within the context of their individual strengths and challenges.

By fostering understanding, promoting acceptance, and embracing diverse perspectives of empathy, we can create a more inclusive and empathetic society that values and appreciates the rich tapestry of human experiences, including those of neurodivergent individuals.

reflection prompts

- Consider your own empathetic tendencies and how they may differ from others.
- Reflect on the factors that influence your capacity for empathy, such as personal experiences, cultural background, and social conditioning.
- How might these factors also impact the expression and interpretation of empathy in neurodivergent individuals?



EMOTIONAL EATING

emotional eating

Emotional eating refers to the consumption of food as a way to cope with or regulate emotional states, such as stress, sadness, or anxiety, rather than in response to physiological hunger. It is a behavior that can be influenced by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, psychological factors, and individual experiences.

- The link between being neurodivergent and emotional eating is a complex and multifaceted topic that can vary from individual to individual.
- While there is no direct causal relationship between neurodivergence and emotional eating, certain factors associated with neurodivergent traits and experiences may contribute to emotional eating tendencies in some cases.
- For some neurodivergent individuals, the challenges associated with their neurodivergent traits, such as difficulties in social interactions, sensory sensitivities, or executive functioning, can contribute to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, or emotional distress. In these cases, emotional eating may serve as a coping mechanism to soothe or manage overwhelming emotions or as a way to seek comfort and regulate mood.
- Additionally, some neurodivergent individuals may have sensory processing differences or sensitivities that can affect their relationship with food. This can manifest as seeking certain textures, flavors, or repetitive eating patterns as a way to regulate sensory experiences or find comfort.
- It is important to note that not all neurodivergent individuals engage in emotional eating, and individuals within the neurodivergent community can have varied relationships with food and eating behaviors, just like neurotypical individuals.
- The presence of emotional eating tendencies may also be influenced by other factors such as personal history, cultural influences, and individual coping strategies.
- To better support neurodivergent individuals who may experience challenges with emotional eating, it is crucial to focus on holistic approaches that address their unique needs. This can include providing alternative coping strategies for managing emotions, promoting self-awareness and emotional regulation skills, creating a supportive and understanding environment.
- It is important to approach the topic with sensitivity and avoid making generalizations or assumptions about the eating behaviors of neurodivergent individuals. Each person's relationship with food and emotional eating can be influenced by a wide range of factors, and a personalised and comprehensive approach is necessary to address individual needs and support overall well-being.

reflection prompts

- Have you ever engaged in emotional eating or witnessed it in others, regardless neurodiversity status?
- Reflect on the factors that contribute to emotional eating in general and how they may manifest differently in neurodivergent individuals.



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whats next?

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