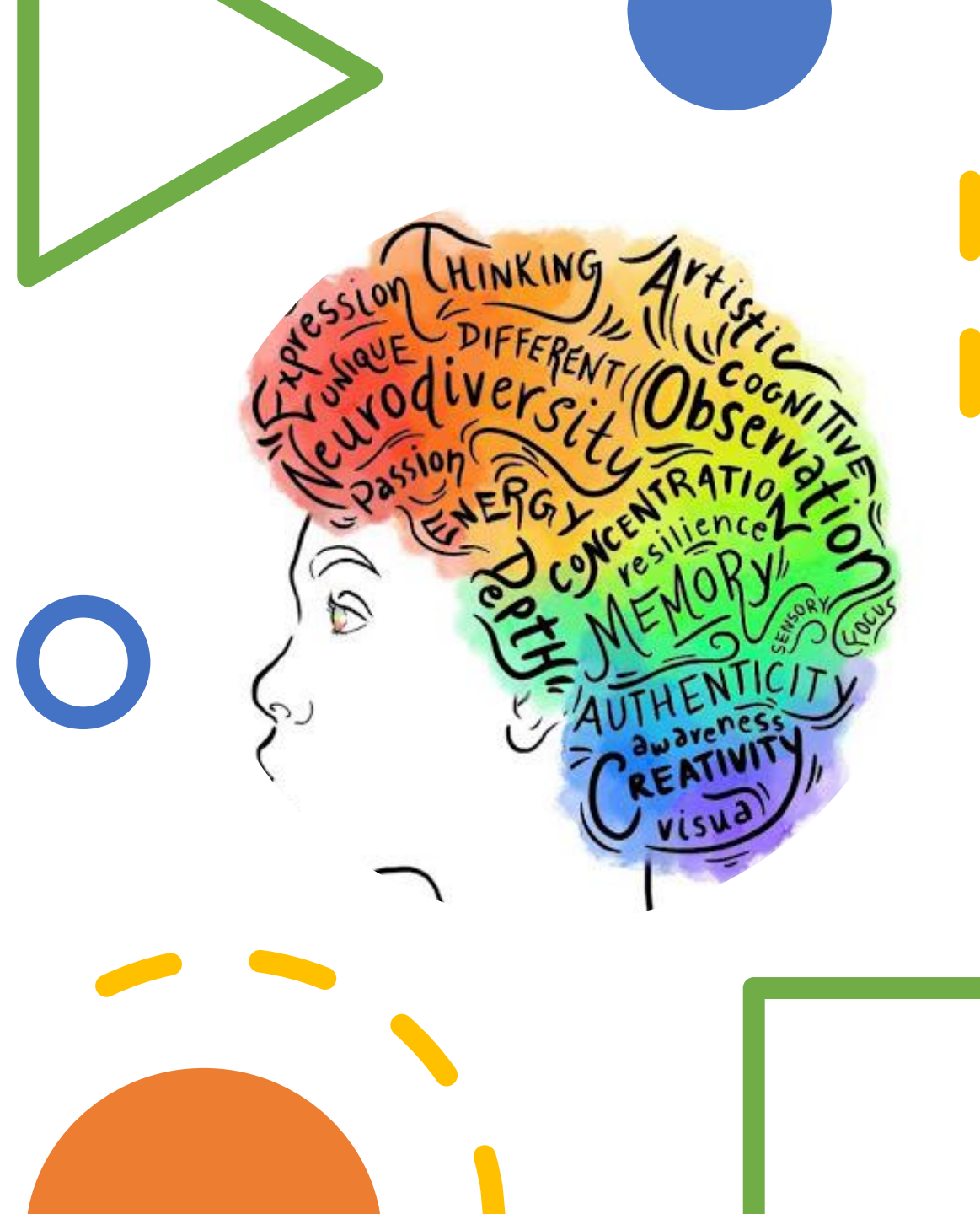


What is Neurodiversity?

- A word used to explain the unique ways people's brains work.
- While everyone's brain develops similarly, no two brains function just alike.
- Being neurodivergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or "neurotypical" person.
- This may be differences in social preferences, ways of learning, ways of communicating and/or ways of perceiving the environment.
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent>

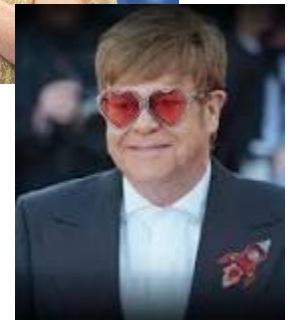
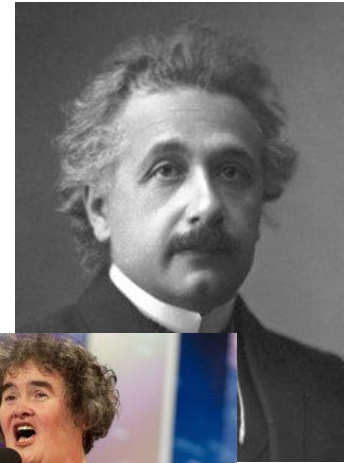


Did you know?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, neurodiverse people make up about **12 per cent** of Australians, but they are often underrepresented and misunderstood in the workplace. *March 2023*

Many household names are open about their differences – which in many cases have inspired and fuelled their achievements – including:

- Susan Boyle, singer – Asperger's
- Simone Biles, Olympic gymnast – ADHD
- Jamie Oliver, TV chef and campaigner Dyslexia
- Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist – Dyslexia
- Elton John, singer/songwriter – Epilepsy
- Billie Eilish, singer – Tourette's
- Mozart, composer – Tourette's
- Daniel Radcliffe, actor – Dyspraxia
- Elon Musk, tech billionaire – Asperger's



So, what conditions does Neurodiversity include?



- [Autism spectrum disorder](#) (this includes what was once known as [Asperger's syndrome](#))
- [Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder \(ADHD\)](#).
- [Down syndrome](#).
- [Dyscalculia](#) (difficulty with math)
- Dysgraphia (difficulty with writing)
- [Dyslexia](#) (difficulty with reading)
- Dyspraxia (difficulty with coordination)
- Intellectual disabilities
- Mental health conditions like [bipolar disorder](#), [obsessive-compulsive disorder](#) and more
- [Prader-Willi syndrome](#)
- Sensory processing disorders
- Social anxiety (a specific type of [anxiety disorder](#))
- [Tourette syndrome](#)
- [Williams syndrome](#)
- *Source: Cleveland Clinic*

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability that affects the way that people communicate and interact with others. All autistic people are unique.

Around 1 in 100 Australians is autistic.

Autistic people may have:

- challenges with communicating and interacting with others
- repetitive and different behaviours, moving their bodies in different ways
- strong interest in one topic or subject
- unusual reactions to what they see, hear, smell, touch or taste
- preferences for routines and dislike change.

Source: https://www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/English_What-Is-Autism.pdf

amaze
Shaping the future for Autism.

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability that affects the way that people communicate and interact with others. All autistic people are unique. However, autistic people may display some of the characteristics in the two main areas below:

Social communication and interaction

Finds two-way conversations difficult <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May find it difficult to start, maintain, or end a conversation• May find it hard to stay on topic	Needs help to interact with others <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May prefer to be alone• May want to join in but not know how• May find it difficult to form and maintain social relationships	Seems uninterested <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May avoid eye contact• May not respond to name• May appear to be in their own world
Needs help with communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have delayed or limited speech• May tend to interpret language literally• May have a large vocabulary but struggle with social use of language	Difficulty reading social cues or situations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May find it hard to read body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice• May need help to understand when a behaviour is appropriate	

Behaviour, interests and activities

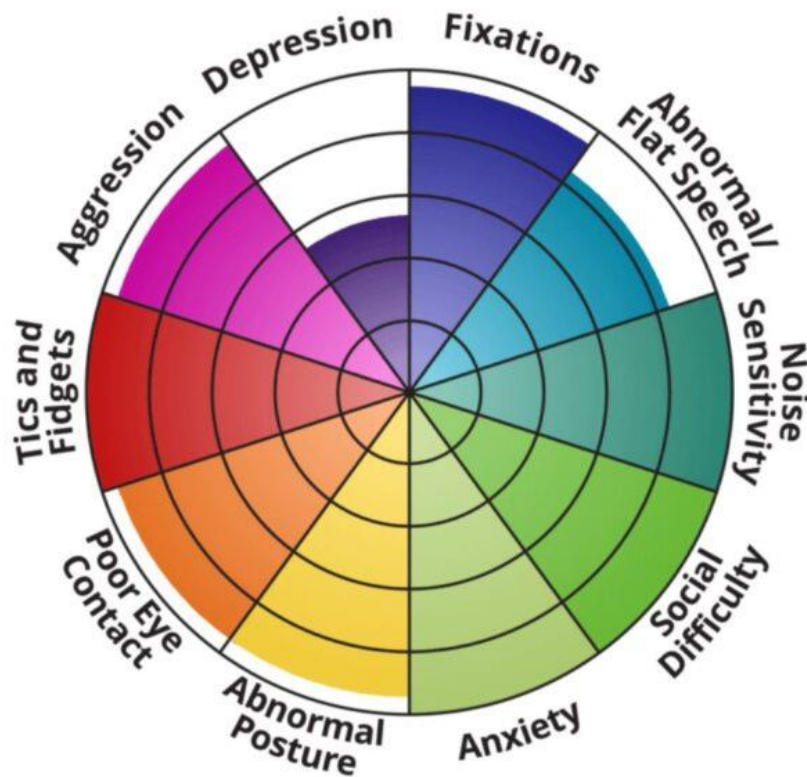
Under- or over-responsive senses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have unusual reactions to what they see, hear, smell, touch or taste etc• May need regular movement breaks	Prefers structure and routine <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May need structure or routine to help process information• May need to be prepared and supported to try new things• May need support and time when transitioning to a new activity, e.g. switching off a video game to go into doctor's office• May need support with planning tasks and time management
Narrow interests <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have an intense interest in one topic• May have an interest that is unusual• May have an unusual level of interest in a topic	Repetitive behaviours & body movements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May repeat the same action over and over e.g. lining up objects or watching the same movie repeatedly• May display echolalia (repeating words or phrases)• May display hand-flapping, spinning, rocking etc. This is also called stimming

For more information about autism, contact Autism Connect to speak with one of our autism advisors:
Call: 1300 308 699
Email, Webchat and Search: [amaze.org.au/autismconnect](https://www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect)

amaze autism connect
Information. Action. Support.

Autism Spectrum:

It's a circle, not a line.



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Helpful Tips

- **1. Structure**
 - Rules, schedules, timetables, checklists, task-based activities, and concise questioning can all help provide a structured environment that will aid decision making and enhance task focus.
- **2. Meaningful communication**
 - Sometimes words can be very difficult for an autistic person as they tend to be visual thinkers. If unsure, check that what you have communicated has been understood. Use Who, What, When, Where, and How to establish context.
- **3. Predictability**
 - Introduce change in a clear and concrete manner and give constant reassurance. The person's ability to generalise skills from one environment to another may not be well developed, so don't assume a learned skill will be transferred.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Helpful Tips Cont'd

4. Manageability

- It is important for Autistic people that tasks are broken down into manageable steps with realistic goals. Be aware that a person's behavior usually has a purpose, so look for the motivation, incentive, or reward that is available to them. Praise successful outcomes. Be mindful of the person's stress level.

5. Positive Support

- Autistic people can have low self-esteem, so it's important they feel supported. It can be more effective to use a reward system for good behaviour, rather one for bad behaviour.

6. Mutual Trust

- Autistic people need to trust the people who are helping them interpret their environment. Showing respect for the person and confidence in your ability can help them feel more comfortable in the environment.

- *Source:* <https://www.amaze.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Creating-a-positive-environment-for-autistic-people.pdf>2023FINAL.pdf

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



A complex neuro-developmental disorder which affects a person's ability to exert age-appropriate self-control.

Characterised by persistent patterns of inattentive, impulsive, and sometimes hyperactive behaviour, and is frequently accompanied by emotional regulation challenges.

An impaired ability to inhibit and regulate attention, behaviour and emotions; to reliably recall information in the moment; to plan and problem solve; to self-reflect and self-monitor; and to self-soothe.

See [ADHD Myth v Fact Factsheet](#)

Source: ADHD Australia

<https://www.adhdaustralia.org.au/about-adhd/>

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)



ADHD, previously known as ADD, affects around one in twenty Australians, which is over 1.2 million people

Around 1 in 20 Australian children have ADHD

- Co-existing conditions include: Autism spectrum disorder, anxiety, depression, learning disabilities, obsessive compulsive disorder, sensory processing disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder.
- ADHD, like ASD, is on a spectrum and everyone presents differently
- 3 types of ADHD – Inattentive, Hyperactive and Combination

Positives

- **Empathetic, energetic, spontaneous, creative, intuitive, imaginative, inventive, innovative, enthusiastic, can hyper focus on interests, adventurous**

Negatives

- Easily distracted, inattentive, forgetful, trouble listening, disorganised, talkative, difficult sleeping, day dreaming, hyperactive, poor time management, low frustration tolerance

Source: ADHD Australia

<https://www.adhdaustralia.org.au/about-adhd/>

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is an unexpected and persistent challenge with acquiring and using written language.



Individuals with dyslexia have trouble with reading and spelling despite having the ability to learn. Individuals with dyslexia can learn, they just learn in a different way. **Often these individuals, who have talented and productive minds, are said to have a language learning difference.**

- **It is highly hereditary**
- **Estimated to affect approx. 10% of Australians**
- Difference in the way the brain processes
- Challenges in the development of phonological awareness

Dyslexia occurs on a continuum from mild to severe and no two are alike.

There is no cure for dyslexia since it is a brain-based difference but with intervention, there are now some great outcomes

Source: Australian Dyslexia Association
<https://dyslexiaassociation.org.au/support/>

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is an [anxiety disorder](#) that affects two to three percent of the population (more than 500,000 Australians)

- It usually begins in late childhood or early adolescence.
- People with OCD experience recurrent and persistent thoughts, images or impulses that are intrusive and unwanted (obsessions).
- They also perform repetitive and ritualistic actions that are excessive, time-consuming and distressing (compulsions).
- **People with OCD are usually aware of the irrational and excessive nature of their obsessions and compulsions.**
- However, they feel unable to control their obsessions or resist their compulsions.
- Compulsions and obsessions may take up many hours of a person's day and can interfere with family and social relationships. They can also **have a negative effect on education and employment.**
- **Anxiety management techniques** can help a person to manage their own symptoms - relaxation training, slow breathing techniques, mindfulness meditation and hyperventilation control.

Source: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/obsessive-compulsive-disorder>

Top Tips for Supporting Neurodiverse young people

1. Neurodiverse young people don't always look at you all the time.

Reason: They often find looking and listening at the same time hard to do.

2. Give them time to answer any of your questions.

Reason: They have slower processing time. Sometimes it can take them up to a minute to formulate the answer

3. If they feel pressured, they will answer with stock standard answers.

Reason: They know it will get them out of trouble quickly. This may include: "I don't know", "yes", "maybe" and often this isn't their true answer!

4. They often don't "generalise" information between people and places.

Example: Homework for teacher 'x' is in the yellow basket but for teacher 'y' it's to be placed in the green basket.

Top Tips for Supporting Neurodiverse young people

5. They find organisation of their school equipment very difficult.

Tip: They are best with one folder with everything inside. Limit the number of pencils, pens etc. Keep their stationary basic.

6. Limit their choices and be very specific with choices.

Reason: They find choices overwhelming and are often concerned with making wrong choice due to their difficulty with problem solving.

7. Be as clear, concise and concrete as possible.

Reason: Neurodiverse young people have difficulty with abstract thinking.

8. Avoid verbal overload.

Reason: They are visual learners and verbal information takes them longer to process and retain.

Top Tips for Supporting Neurodiverse young people

9. Neurodiverse young people are often literal.

Reason: They misinterpret your questions/comments .i.e. 'Could' or 'Would,' can can be interpreted as an option. Words like "Stop" and "No" don't tell them what to do. If the time reads '10:56' and you tell them the time is 11 o'clock they will often correct you and tell you that it is 10:56.

10. Neurodiverse students often have sensory processing difficulties.

Reason: This is part of their diversity and different way of processing.

Source: [10 Tips to Embrace Neurodiversity \(suelarkey.com.au\)](http://suelarkey.com.au)

