

Neurodiversity In The Workplace

Module One – Understanding Neurodiversity

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Aims and Objectives

- Introduction to Neurodiversity: Defining and exploring the spectrum of neurological differences.
- Neurodivergent Conditions: an overview of common neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, and others.
- Benefits of neurodiversity and neuro-inclusivity: Exploring how embracing neuro-inclusivity can enhance creativity, problem-solving, communication, and innovation within the workplace.

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1. What does the term "neurodiversity" refer to?

- a) A single neurological condition
- b) The idea that neurological differences are a natural and valuable part of human diversity
- c) The medical treatment of neurological disorders
- d) None of the above

2. Which of the following is **NOT** an example of a neurodivergent condition?

- a) ADHD
- b) Dyslexia
- c) Depression
- d) Bipolar Disorder

3. What is a common misconception about neurodivergent individuals?

- a) They have unique strengths and perspectives
- b) They all require the same type of accommodations
- c) They can contribute valuable skills to the workplace
- d) They have diverse communication styles

4. Why is it important to provide sensitivity training for employees?

- a) To ensure all staff adopt uniform communication and working styles regardless of individual differences
- b) To develop empathy, awareness, and inclusive practices towards neurodivergent colleagues
- c) To minimise discussion of inclusion and accessibility within the workplace
- d) To prioritise operational efficiency at the expense of staff wellbeing and understanding

5. How can workplaces benefit from embracing neurodiversity?

- a) Increased creativity and innovation
- b) Homogeneous thinking and problem-solving
- c) Decreased productivity
- d) Increased turnover rates

**Defining neurodiversity
and exploring the
spectrum of neurological
differences.**



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Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

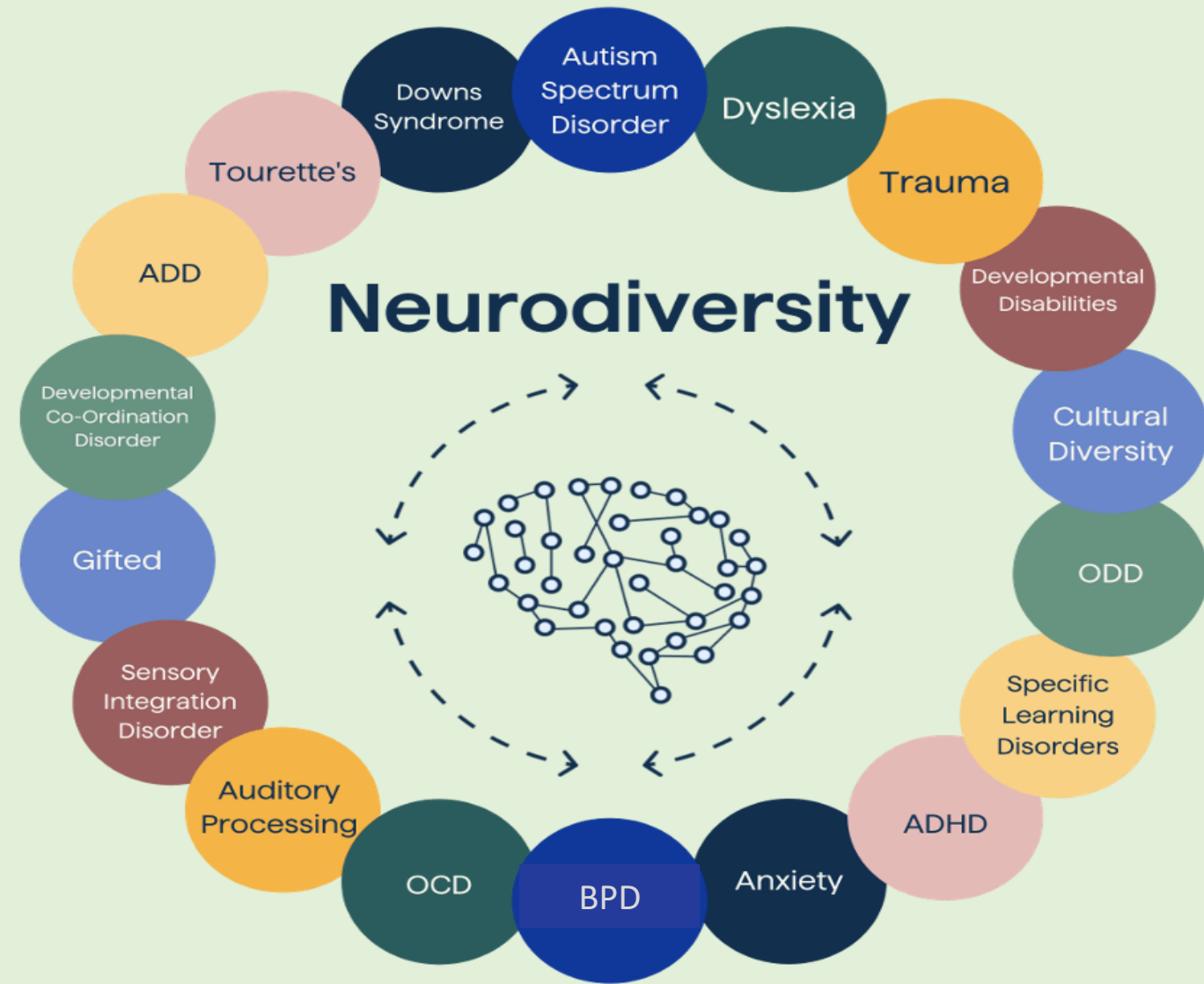
Harvard Health 2021



15-20% of the population are thought to be Neurodivergent

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Neurological Difference.....



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What may we see in Children?	ADHD	AUTISM
What is it?	A neurodevelopmental condition that makes it hard for kids to concentrate, pay attention, sit still, and curb impulsivity.	A range of neurodevelopmental disorders cause challenges with social skills, communication, and thinking. Repetitive behaviors are also part of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
Signs you may notice in children.	• Forgetful/distracted/daydreamy • Appears not to listen / issues following directions • Lack of impulse control – tantrums/meltdowns • May struggle to finish tasks (unless very enjoyable) • Struggles with social skills • Finds it hard to sit still / quiet • Patience / taking turns difficult • On the go/fidgets • Interrupts, blurts things out • Struggles with non-verbal cues • May not understand the consequences of actions • May overreact to sensory input – sound, smell, taste, look, feel • Plays roughly / takes physical risks	• Avoids eye contact • No speech / delayed speech / repeated phrases • Sensory processing issues – anxiety, frustration, communication = meltdowns • Upset by changes in routine • Struggles with social skills • Uses excessive body movement to self-soothe (rocking / flapping hands) • Obsessive interests and experiences – perseveration • On the go/fidgets / pick up objects to ‘fiddle’ • Can be very advanced verbally, but struggle with nonverbal cues • Difficulty with own and other's feelings (showing and understanding) • Reacts strongly to the way things sound, smell, taste, look or feel (sensory processing issues) • ? safety and danger awareness.
Possible emotional and social impacts.	• May find it hard to follow social ‘rules’ and make friends • Criticism for not paying attention / acting out = impact on self-esteem and motivation • Can interpret that they are ‘bad’ or ‘no-good’. • Emotions can feel more intense and get in the way of daily life	• Social understanding • Communication • Needing repetitive routines • Hard to make friends, relate to people, and make sense of social cues

Autism Myths

- Autism is caused by vaccines (and the current position in the USA)
- Autism is a childhood condition
- Autistic people have a special talent
- Autistic people have learning disabilities
- Autistic people are anti-social
- Autism can be cured
- Only boys are autistic
- Autism is caused by bad parenting
- Why are rates of Autism and other neurodivergent conditions increasing?

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Social Communication	Social Interaction	Repetitive and Restrictive Behaviour	Sensitivity to Light, Sound, Taste or Touch	Highly Focussed Interests or Hobbies	Extreme Anxiety	Meltdowns and Shutdowns
Interpretation – taking things literally	‘Reading’ others.....	Routines	Over Sensitivity	Often from a young age	Social situations	Everything becomes too much.
Speech	Feelings and intentions	Repetitive Movements	Under Sensitivity	Experts in specialist interests and share that – i.e. trains, cars etc	Change	Meltdown – overwhelmed and lose behavioural control – in children mistaken for temper tantrums
Non-verbal language	Emotions	Sensory Input	Vision – (fragment, colour, depth perception)	Can help academically and in the workplace	Impacts physically and psychologically	Shutdowns – overwhelmed but shut off
Tone of Voice	Appear Insensitive	Helps manage stress/anxiety	Hugging	May become so engrossed in one area – neglect others.	Difficult to regulate emotion	
Literal	Time alone		Information overload		1/3 have serious mental health illnesses due to anxiety	
Processing time	Comfort		Sleep			
Echolalia	Social Behaviour		Sound			
	Friendships		Body Awareness			

beautiful animation explaining **autism**



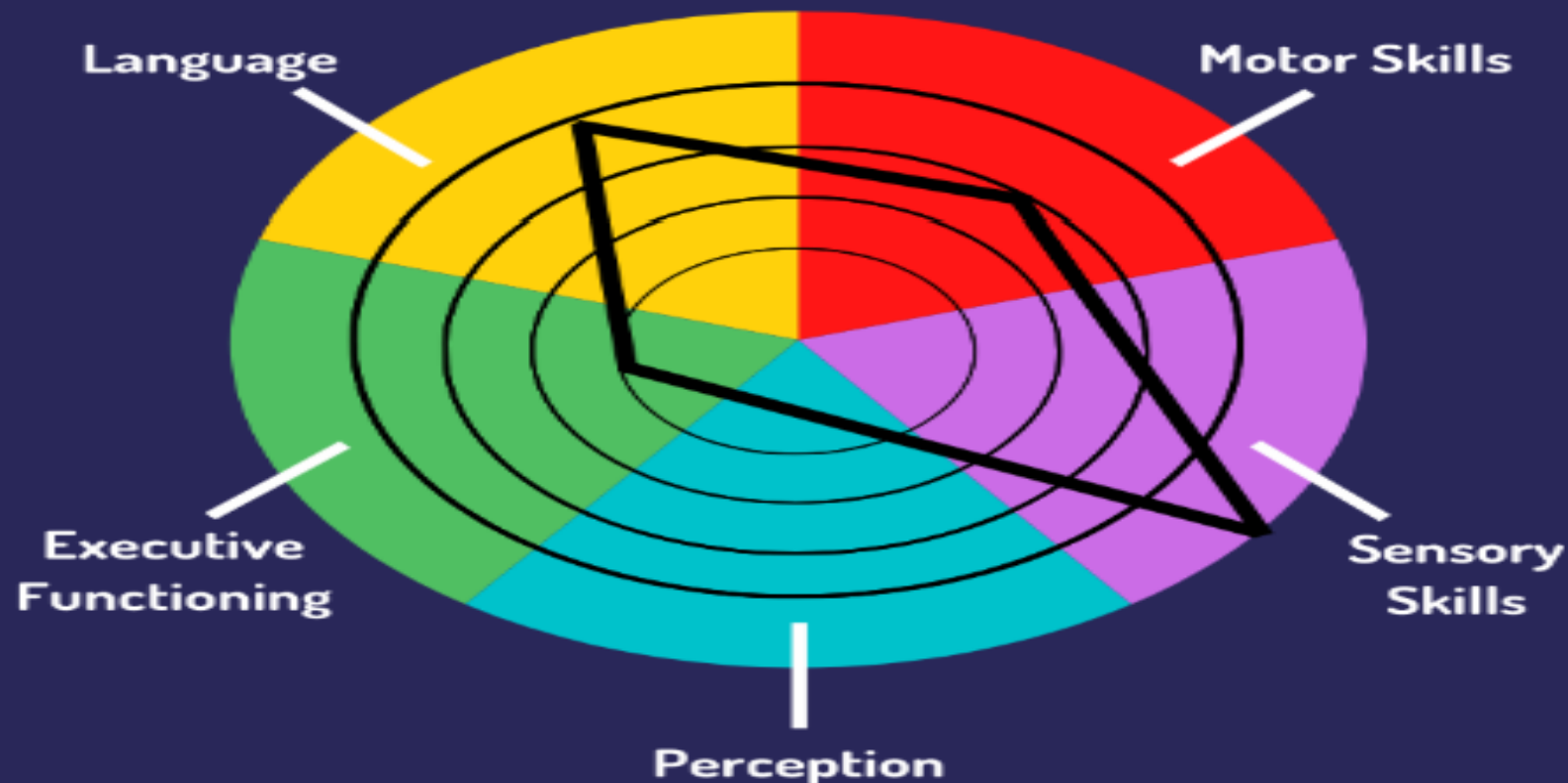
THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

What people think the autism spectrum looks like:

Less
Autistic

More
Autistic

What it can actually look like:



ADHD



A woman with dark hair, wearing a light grey button-down shirt, black trousers, and a stethoscope, stands on the right side of the frame. She is holding a large white rectangular board with both hands. The board has the text 'Other Neurodivergent Conditions' written on it in a dark blue, sans-serif font. The background is a solid light green.

Other Neurodivergent Conditions

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What conditions might a neurodivergent person have?

- 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.

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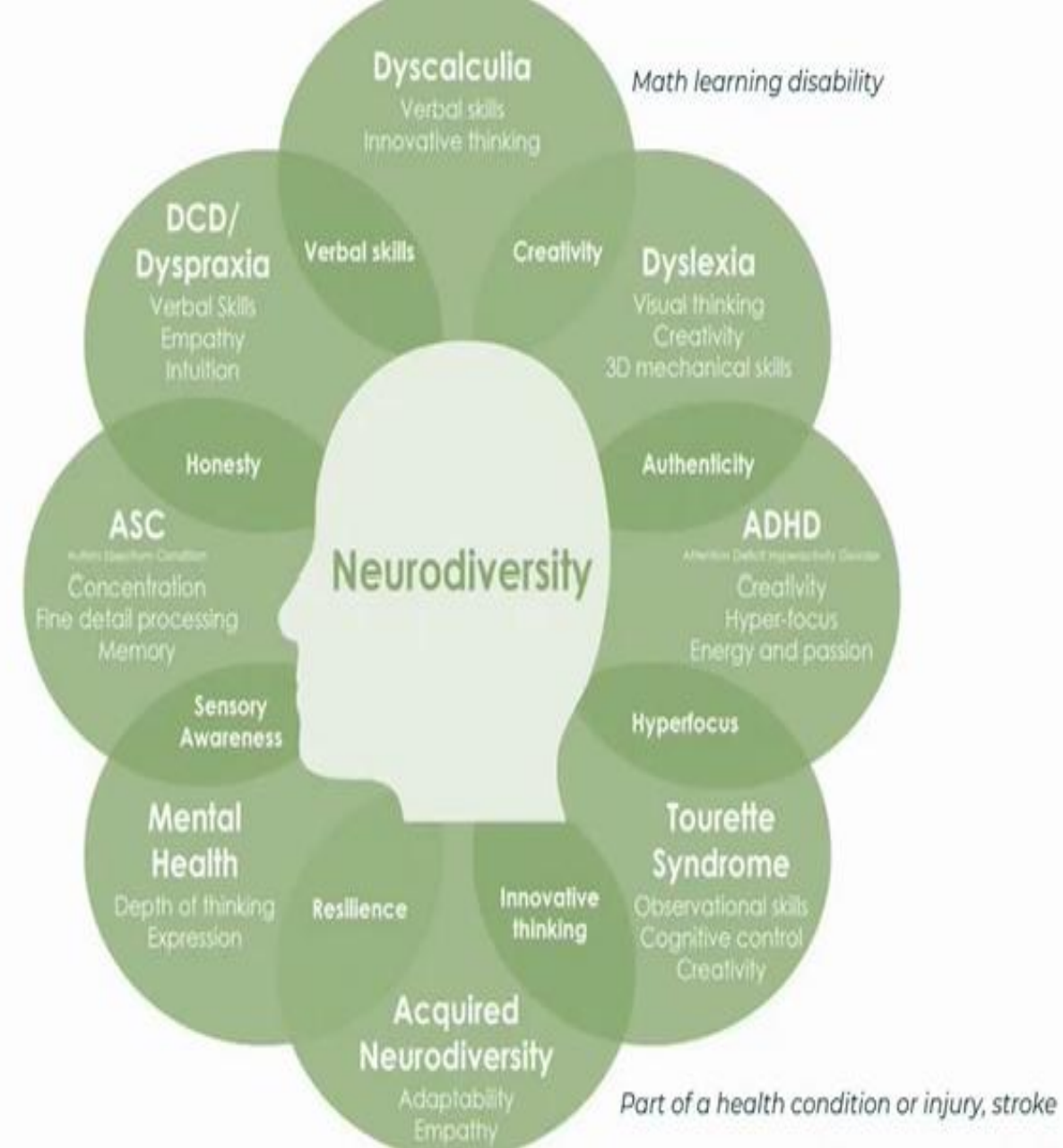
The Key Principles of Neurodiversity Include:

- Acceptance and Inclusion
- Having a Strengths-Based Perspective
- Understanding the Social Model of Disability:
- Empowerment and Self-Advocacy

How can we support this within our workplaces?

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The benefits of Neuro-Inclusivity



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The benefits of Neuro- Inclusivity

- Enhanced Innovation and Creativity
- Improved Productivity and performance
- Increased Engagement and Retention
- Broader talent pool
- Enhanced team dynamics
- Positive organisational reputation
- Legal and ethical compliance.

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Creativity – diverse thinking, creative ideas, novel solutions and innovation

Analytical Skills – attention to detail – complex problem solving.

Problem Solving – approach problems that may not appear in a homogenous environment. Identifying solutions others may overlook.

Understanding different communication challenges and styles breaks down barriers leading to less workplace conflict and a greater understanding of diversity.

Dynamic teamwork – each member brings unique insights and approaches.

Multiple Communication Styles – can lead to more inclusive and comprehensive information sharing in teams

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Autism	ADHD
Sign up for Autistica Neurodiversity Employers Index	Quiet spaces to work or noise-cancelling headphones, smaller offices (open plan can be hard), working from home
Encouraging career progression – targeted training for autistic staff	More frequent / shorter breaks
Improving recruitment and looking at recruitment methodology i.e. interview styles, group interviews, and candidate sift processes.	Reviewing individual positive ADHD traits to support development individually and organisationally.
Looking at premises, furniture, equipment and environments	Working patterns, times to hyperfocus or quiet undisturbed times, calendar bookings rather than just 'dropping in'.
Collaborating with software suppliers to develop IT systems, clear communication, clarity of requirement.	Collaborating with software suppliers to develop IT systems, clear communication, clarity of requirement.
Review the Buckland report to support workplace policy and procedure reviews (published February 2024)	Review the ADHS at Work Welfare Pack (free to download)
Workplace Training and Awareness Support	Workplace Training and Awareness Support

Neurodiversity Quiz

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- c) **Depression**
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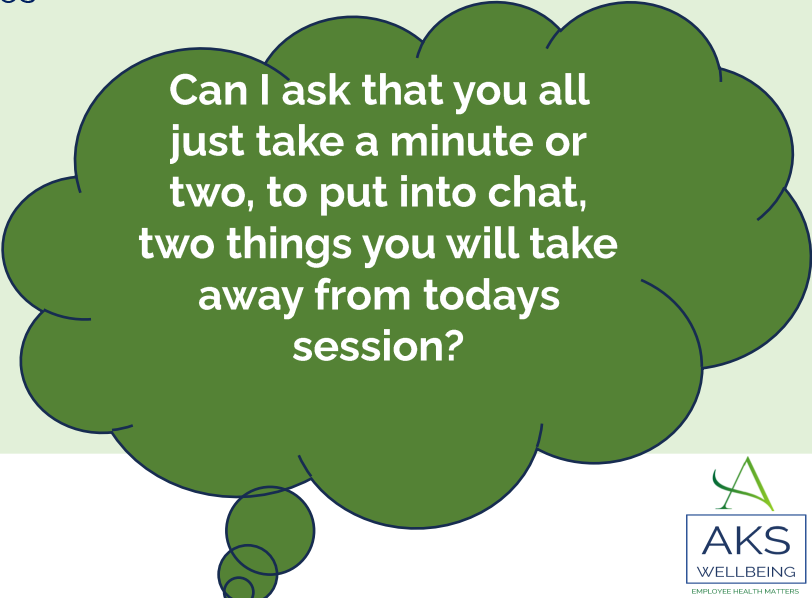
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Can I ask that you all just take a minute or two, to put into chat, two things you will take away from today's session?

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Resources and Support

- Branches (autism.org.uk) Find a local branch of the National Autistic Society near you (children and adults)
- AADD-UK | The site for and by adults with ADHD (aadduk.org)
- Autistica - <https://www.autistica.org.uk/about-us/about-us>
- Workplace support -Landmark review calls on employers to boost support for autistic people - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- The Buckland Review of Autism Employment: report and recommendations - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- ADHD UK Welfare Pack | ADHD UK
- Autism Occurrence by MMR Vaccine Status Among US Children With Older Siblings With and Without Autism | Public Health | JAMA | JAMA Network

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Links to Media Clips Used in Today's Session

What is Autism - <https://youtu.be/Lk4qs8jGN4U>

Beautiful Autism - <https://youtu.be/KhToNxCayEg>

Let's talk about ADHD - <https://youtu.be/YeamHE6Kank>

Module 2 – Creating an Inclusive Environment

Module Three – Awareness and Sensitivity Training

Module Four – The Role Of The Line Manager and Organisation

- **The Role of leadership:** understanding the importance of leadership in fostering a neuro-diverse friendly workplace.

- **Communication strategies –** Effective communication techniques to accommodate diverse communication styles.

- **Physical environment –** Adapting the workspace to meet the needs of neurodivergent individuals

- **Building Awareness:** Educating employees on neurodiversity and breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions
- **Sensitivity Training:** Developing empathy and understanding towards neurodivergent colleagues.
- **Creating Allies:** Empowering employees to become advocates for neuro-inclusion in the workplace.

- **Legal Framework:** An overview of legal requirements related to neurodiversity in the workplace.
- **Ethical considerations:** Ensuring a respectful and inclusive environment while respecting privacy and individual rights.
- **Recruitment and Retention –** attracting neurodivergent talent, interviews, and reasonable workplace adjustments.
- **Challenges and Solutions:** Learning from the experience of companies that have navigated neurodiversity inclusion effectively.
- **Creating lasting change –** key takeaways to continuing to foster a neurodiverse and inclusive workplace culture.

Neurodiversity in the Workplace – Modules 1 to 4

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Thank You



www.akswellbeing.com



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National Autistic Society u tube -<https://youtu.be/Lk4qs8jGN4U> [Accessed 11.7.24]

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