

NEUR  DIVERSITY
SIX MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS

**SIX MHS TOOLKITS:
NEURODIVERSITY**



SIX MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

WHAT IS IT?

- Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience, process information and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one 'right' way of thinking, learning, and behaving.
- It's estimated that roughly 1 in 7 people in the UK are neurodivergent.
- Those with neurodivergent conditions are often more at risk of suffering from mental illnesses. This is often due to a lack of support, and the stress of 'masking' to avoid negativity.

NEURODIVERSITY SUPER-POWERS

- People with ADHD have high levels of spontaneity, courage, and empathy. They can hyperfocus on certain tasks.
- Those with ASD pay attention to complex details, have good memories, and show certain "speciality" skills
- People with dyslexia can perceive certain kinds of visual information better than those without the condition.





WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

DEEPER DIVE

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

The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as ADHD or learning disabilities. The neurodiversity movement emerged during the 1990s, aiming to increase acceptance and inclusion of all people while embracing neurological differences. Through online platforms, more and more people with ASD were able to connect and form a self-advocacy movement. At the same time, Judy Singer, an Australian sociologist, coined the term neurodiversity to promote equality and inclusion of “neurological minorities”. While it is primarily a social justice movement, neurodiversity research and education is increasingly important in how clinicians view and address certain disabilities and neurological conditions.



TYPES OF NEURODIVERGENCE

EXAMPLES OF NEURODIVERGENCE INCLUDE:

ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia and Tourette's Syndrome



Most forms of neurodivergence are experienced along a 'spectrum'.

Each form of neurodivergence has range of associated characteristics and these can vary from individual to individual.



For example, the effects of dyspraxia on one person can be different to another person who also has dyspraxia. The effects on the individual can also change over time.



Additionally, an individual will often have the characteristics of more than one type of neurodivergence.

It is therefore important that people are not stereotyped according to the better known characteristics. For example, not all people with ASD will be good at maths.



Despite this, it is still helpful to have an awareness of some of the indicative traits and super-powers that a person with each type of neurodivergence can have:

ADHD

(ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER)



It is estimated that about 4% of the UK population has ADHD. It affects the person's ability to control attention, impulses and concentration, and can cause inattention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. Some people have problems with attention but not the hyperactivity or impulsiveness. This is often referred to as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder).

SUPER-POWERS

People with ADHD can often be good at completing urgent, or physically demanding tasks, pushing on through set-backs and showing a passion for their work.

ASD

(AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER)



It is estimated that about 1-2% of the UK population has ASD. It impacts how a person perceives the world and interacts with others, making it difficult for them to pick up social cues and interpret them. Social interactions can be difficult as they can have difficulty 'reading' other people and expressing their own emotions. They can find change difficult and uncomfortable.

SUPER-POWERS

People on the autistic spectrum are often very thorough in their work, punctual and rule observant. Many people with ASD develop special interests and can hold high levels of expertise in their given topic.

DYSLEXIA

It is estimated that 10% of the UK population is dyslexic. Dyslexia is a language processing difficulty that can cause problems with aspects of reading, writing and spelling. People with dyslexia may have difficulties with processing information quickly, memory retention, organisation, sequencing, spoken language and motor skills.

SUPER-POWERS

People with dyslexia can often be very good at creative thinking and problem solving, story-telling and verbal communication.

DYSPRAXIA

It is estimated that up to 5% of the UK population is dyspraxic. Dyspraxia relates to issues with physical co-ordination, and for most, organisation of thought. People with dyspraxia may appear clumsy or have speech impediments and might have difficulties with tasks requiring sequencing, structure, organisation and timekeeping.

SUPER-POWERS

People with dyspraxia often have good literacy skills and can be very good at creative, holistic, and strategic thinking.



OTHER FORMS OF NEURODIVERGENCE INCLUDE:

- **Dyscalculia:**
a difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a range of difficulties with maths
- **Dysgraphia:**
the condition of impaired writing by hand
- **Tourette's Syndrome:**
a condition which causes a person to make involuntary sounds and movements called tics

All forms of neurodivergence bring strengths as well as difficulties.



ADHD: DEEP DIVE



WHAT ADHD STANDS FOR

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a relatively common lifelong mental health condition that affects an estimated 1 in 20 individuals in the UK. ADHD can be diagnosed at any stage in life and can affect anyone regardless of gender or ethnicity. It's officially defined as 'a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by inattention, or excessive activity and impulsivity'.

It's also often described as the worst named mental health condition, as it:

- Contains two negatives (Deficit and Disorder) and no positives
- Emphasises hyperactivity which is not necessarily present
- It's not a deficit of attention but a difficulty in channelling that attention: understeered, it manifests as inattention, and oversteered, as hyperfocus



CHARACTERISTICS OF ADHD

THERE ARE THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF ADHD:

1. INATTENTION
2. IMPULSIVITY
3. HYPERACTIVITY

All three individually or together combine to create difficulty in task starting, task completion and keeping to time.

| INATTENTION | IMPULSIVITY | HYPERACTIVITY |
|--|--|--|
| Difficulty sustaining attention (looks like a short attention span) | Interrupting others in conversation | An internal drive to have constant motion; sometimes no goal except motion |
| Difficulty listening to others | Taking undue risks; making decisions too quickly without enough thought to the consequences | Difficulty remaining in place |
| Easily distracted. This is significantly exacerbated when the task is boring | Trouble controlling emotions. Often feeling more intensely and then acting before considered thought intervenes. | Fidgeting excessively |
| Difficulty attending to detail | | Difficulty engaging in quiet activities |
| Forgetfulness (from inattention to detail) | | Loses or forgets things repeatedly & often |
| | Talking excessively | |

TYPES OF ADHD

There are three main types of ADHD characterised by differing levels of hyperactivity/impulsivity and inattention:

1. INATTENTIVE
2. HYPERACTIVE AND IMPLUSIVE
3. COMBINED

TASK STARTING AND COMPLETION

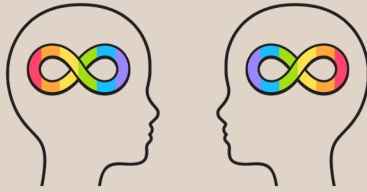
All three characteristics, individually or together, contribute to significant challenges in focusing to start a task, and then staying on task to completion and/or shifting from one task to another without bringing any to completion.

TIMELINESS

Noting the challenge of task completion, bringing completion to a rigidly fixed timetable or deadline can make a task significantly more challenging. A helpful way to consider timeliness, as an additional task is concurrent to the desired task and is equally impacted by ADHD.

HYPERFOCUS

Hyperfocus is an aspect of a lack of control of attention. Understeering of attention results in the fleeting short-term attention that many associate with ADHD. Oversteering of attention, or hyperfocus, is the opposite. It describes concentrating on one thing alone, often for hours, with no regard for time, and at the cost of other objectives. It can be a significant challenge for an individual with ADHD to extract themselves from hyperfocus. This can be a problem when an individual zooms in on the wrong thing or for too long. However, many with ADHD consider it is a strength when applied to completing significant important tasks.



THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ADHD

Creative

Diffuse attention allowing rapid switching between aspects of the task under consideration

Flexible Associative Memory recalling, linking and using more distantly related ideas, which is associated with creativity

Impulsivity which causes people with ADHD symptoms to consider ideas which others may not have

Great in a Crisis

Crises generally requires creativity **ALONGSIDE** absorbing large amounts of information

The distractibility of someone with ADHD means they can absorb large amounts of information very quickly - for example they may have a photographic memory

Positive User of Hyperfocus

The ability to focus on one topic or task to the exclusion of all else can be used effectively to complete major tasks.

THE STRUCTURED CONVERSATION

Talking about difference is often difficult. Concerns of getting it wrong can hamper discussion; however, it is only through dialogue that the optimal outcome can be obtained.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF ADHD IN THE WORKPLACE

Maximising their strengths and getting the best out of anyone, regardless of neurology, is about supporting any weaknesses.

EXAMPLES OF MISUNDERSTOOD TRAITS:

| ADHD Trait | Common Negative Reaction | Common ADHD Reason |
|--|---|--|
| Not waiting to speak / butting in to conversations | ADHD person is rude or arrogant. They don't care about other's opinions. | ADHD person is interested and wants to pick up on a point before their distraction means they forget it. |
| Fidgeting and moving while talking | ADHD person is rude and lacking in control. They might be trying to hide something. Perception that the ADHD fidgeter isn't enjoying the conversation and wants to leave. | They are fidgeting to help themselves focus on the other party. Using movement provides an outlet for the energy and distraction to help them focus on the conversation. |
| Forgetfulness | ADHD person is of low intelligence or ability. They do not care enough about the person or project. | A part of the condition. They are often more upset about it than you are. |
| Not paying attention / getting distracted | The ADHDer doesn't care about the individual they are speaking to or doesn't care about their work. | A part of the condition. They are often more upset about it than you are. |

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: DEEP DIVE

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is associated with differences in communication, learning, and behaviour, though it can look different from person to person. People with ASD may have a wide range of strengths, abilities, needs, and challenges. For example, some people with ASD are able to communicate verbally, have a normal or above average IQ, and live independently. Others might not be able to communicate their needs or feelings, may struggle with impairing and harmful behaviours that impact their safety and well-being, and may be dependent on support in all areas of their life. Additionally, for some people with ASD, differences may not cause any suffering to the person themselves. Instead, the suffering may result from the barriers imposed by societal norms, causing social exclusion and inequity.

Medical evaluation and treatment is important for individuals with ASD. For example, establishing a formal diagnosis may enable access to social and medical services if needed. A diagnostic explanation may help the individual or their family understand their differences better and enable community connections. Additionally, neurodevelopmental conditions may also be associated with other health issues that require extra monitoring or treatment. It is important that people who need and desire behavioural supports or interventions to promote communication, social, academic, and daily living skills have access to those services in order to maximise their quality of life and developmental potential. However, approaches to interventions cannot be one-size-fits-all, as all individuals will have different goals, desires, and needs.



we are here to **HELP**

If you are concerned about your mental health and would like to talk to someone, please give us a call.

Free, confidential Helpline: 0800 880 7373

Or send us a message at: helpline@sixmhs.com



Sources:

Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School

adhduk.co.uk

webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa

helpline.com

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