Neurodiversity and Homelessness

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Neurodiversity (*noun*)

‘The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population, used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders ([AS*D*]ASC)’

Neurodiversity:
ASC
Or…
'… neuroatypical in a neurodiverse world, in which most are neurotypical'

‘I’m autistic, which means that everyone around me has a disorder that makes them say things they don’t mean, not care about structure, fail to hyper-focus on singular important topics, have unreliable memories, drop weird hints and creepily stare into my eyeballs.
So why do people say you’re the weird one?

Because there’s more of them than me.’

ASC

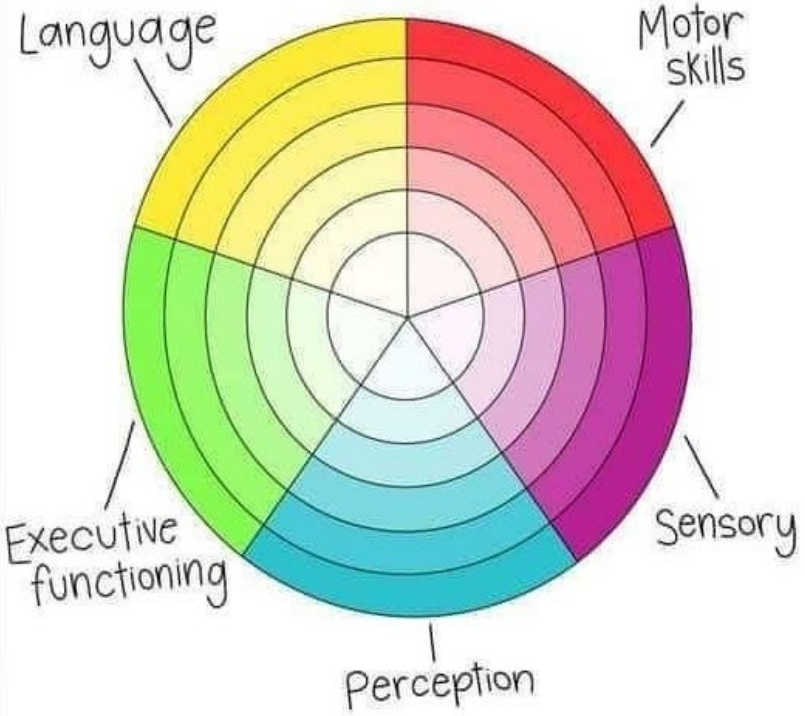
- Social communication and interaction
  - Eye contact
  - Facial expression
  - Literal expression (verbal)
  - Apparent lack of interest in others
    - Blunt, rude
- Apparent lack of understanding and expressing emotions
- Fixed attention and attention to detail
- Repetitive behaviours and fixed routines
- Sensory sensitivity



What People THINK the autism spectrum looks like:



What it can actually look like:





Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (Disorder)

- Innatention
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Emotion management
- Fine motor control
- Time management
- Sleep disturbance
- Lower academic performance than may be predicted
- Disruptive behaviour

Neurodiversity: Interaction of factors

- Factors common across neurodiversity
- Sensory processing issues (sensory overload) can present as:
  - Impulsivity
  - Anxiety
  - Distraction
  - Aggression
  - Disorganisation
  - Low motivation
- Sensitivity to arousal
  - Quick to anger
  - Prone to anxiety
- Personality variation



But…

- Adverse childhood experiences
- Impulsivity
- Emotion dysregulation
- Negative thoughts
- Interpersonal difficulties

Non-verbal communication

- All interactions are ambiguous
- Facial cues give context to aid interpretation.
  - Group species







Working with neurodiversity

Fundamentals of the environment within organisations

Built environment	Are the systems fit for purpose?	Inter and intrapersonal environment
• Evidence-based design, e.g., light, heat, space, greenery, colour • Configuration of space, e.g., 'territory' • Autonomy over space	• For whom were they designed? • Who designed them? • Are there meaningful feedback loops?	• Leadership, modelling, culture • Role of groups, unintended consequences of competition for resources • Perceived fairness and autonomy

What should we do: Interpersonal



Question route of strong emotions



Look for routine preference, anxiety and anger when environment doesn't allow



Notice urges to react to behaviours, apparent rudeness etc.

Don't assume knowledge of social rules

Use of language

Social 'tiredness' (people points)

Don't assume intentionality

What should we do: Built environment and systems

- Sensory stimulation
  - Reduction in noisy environments
  - Type of light
  - Smells and tactile materials

- Predictability of systems and people
- Enable flexibility of systems where possible to enable anxiety-reducing routines