

Supporting Neurodivergent Trainee Teachers



By Catrina Lowri

Who?

Catrina Lowri; experienced SENCO, qualified SEND teacher and founder of Neuroteachers.. I am neurodivergent myself; dyslexic and bipolar, traits of ADHD, dyspraxia and APD. Wrote an article for PIXL on teachers with SEND. When I first went into teaching I thought I was the only one!

What?

We will begin with introduction to Neurodiversity. Discuss how this affects neurodivergent colleagues and how to create a sense of belonging and opportunity.

A Neuroteachers Perspective

Context, Barriers and Understanding



1. Context :Knowing your Colleague

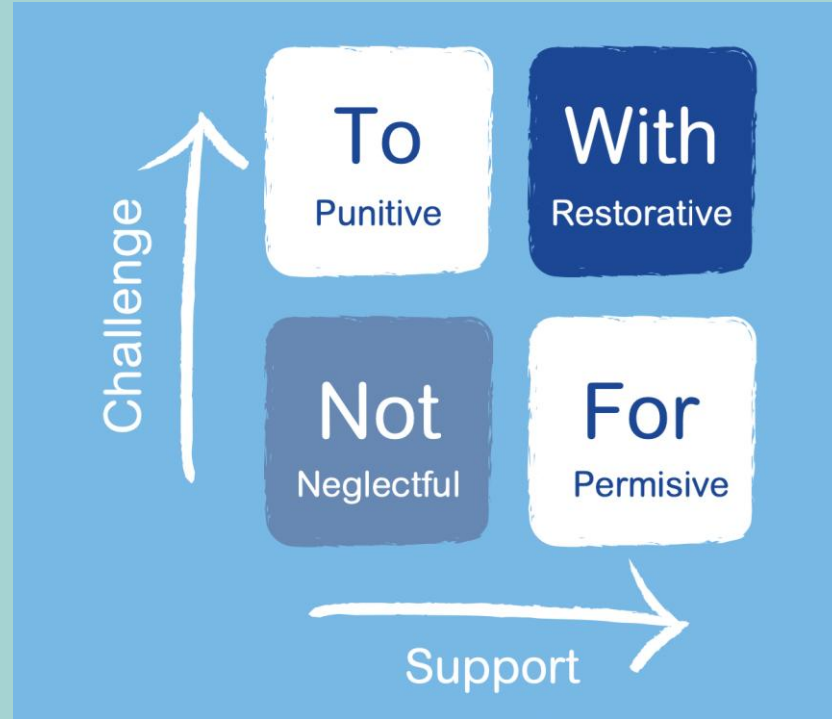
What do they like doing?

What are they good at?

How can you help them to feel job satisfaction?



Nothing about us without us



The disclosure gap



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- Why less than 40% of neurodivergent staff disclose, and cultural factors affecting this

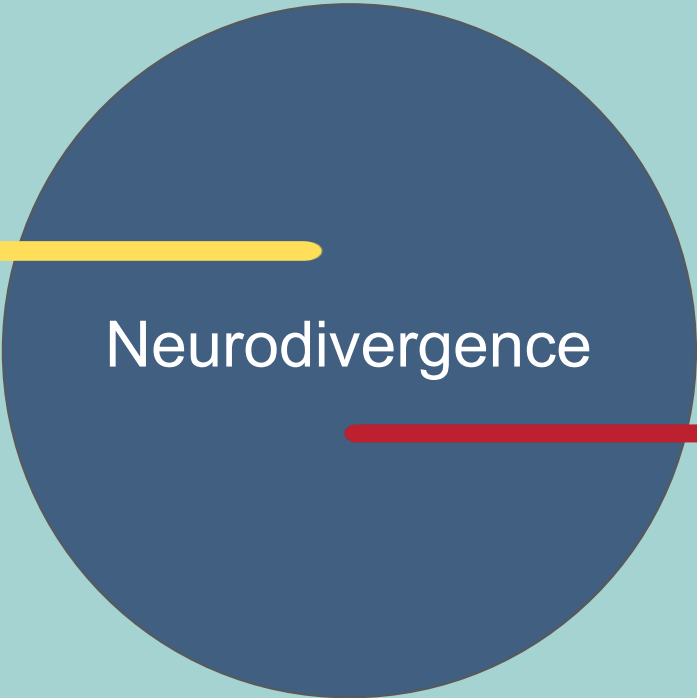


This includes

*All hereditary conditions which cause a difference in neurology

*All hereditary mental health conditions

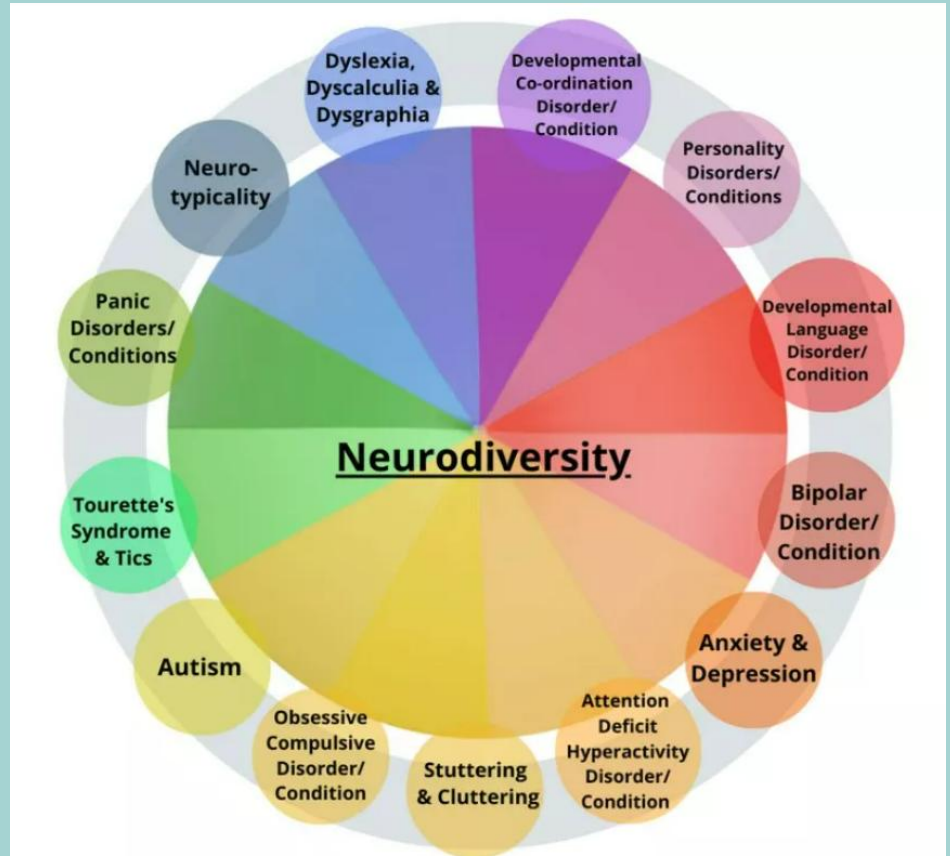
*All acquired neurological difference such as those caused by injury



Neurodivergence

Co-occurring Neurodivergent Conditions

These include common conditions such as Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia (DCD), Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)



The Fruit Salad Approach



4 Areas of Difference (Access)



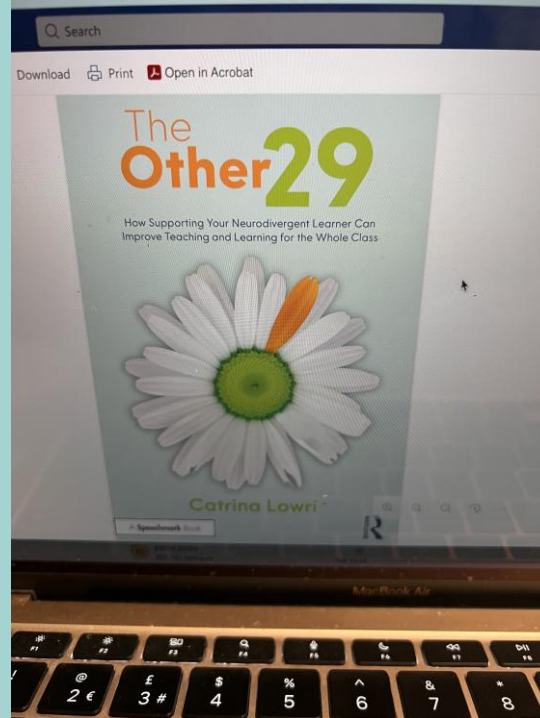
Processing– Your neurodivergent college may process information more slowly, quickly or otherwise differently to NT peers

Sensory Needs –Your neurodivergent college may be hyper or hypo sensitive in one or more sensory area

Executive function –Your neurodivergent college may have needs in one or more area of executive functioning

Social communication–Your neurodivergent college may have differences in the area of social communication and interaction.

The Patchy Profile



Reflection

What did you know
before that you now see
in a different light?



Activity Start with hiring

How could you actively recruit and hire Neurodivergent Talent?

What have you already tried?



Think about Interviewing

- Could you have a rolling programme of interviews?
- Could you give a choice of interview formats? (in person, via video, phone or chat application)
- Do you need an aptitude test?
- Could you give questions in advance?
- Could you split the interview over several days?
- How do you give feedback?

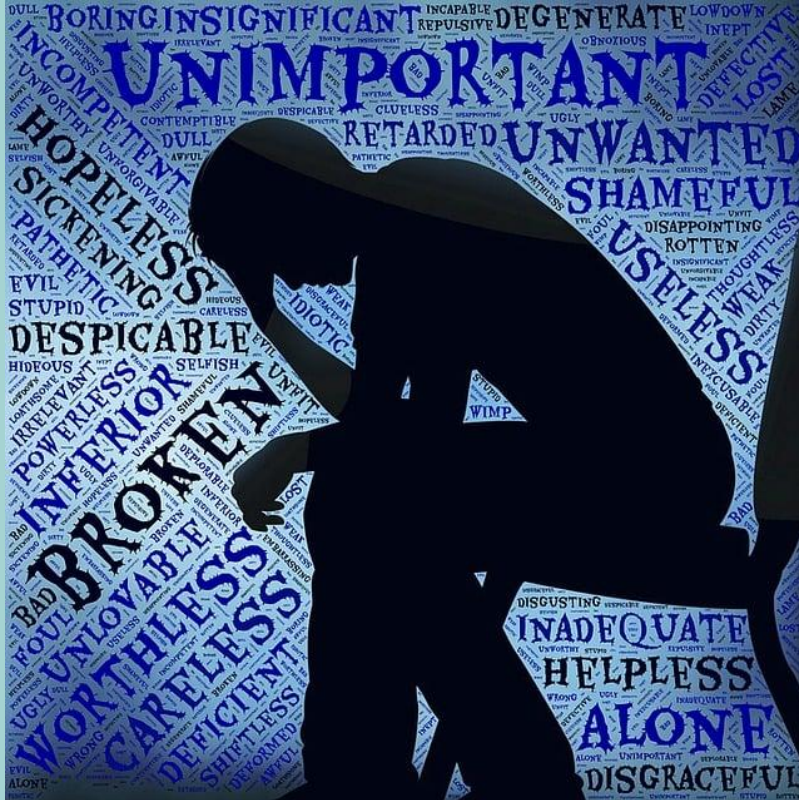


Think about the induction process

- Work in coproduction with your new employee so you both know what is needed from each other
 - Would a one page profile be useful?
 - Does the line manager need particular training or information about the type of ND?
 - Could 'Access to Work' be helpful?
 - Are there any other organisations which might be able to help? (National Autistic Society, ADHD foundation etc.)



-2. Barriers: The Feedback Paradox



- Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria
- Intrusive thoughts
- Negativity Bias
- Rumination
- Self Esteem issues
- Self Blame
- Hypervigilance



Underemployment

- Remove barriers to recruitment, employment, retention **and** progression





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Executive Function and Task Initiation



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Processing



- Supporting ND in your setting-
Processing Time



Executive Function

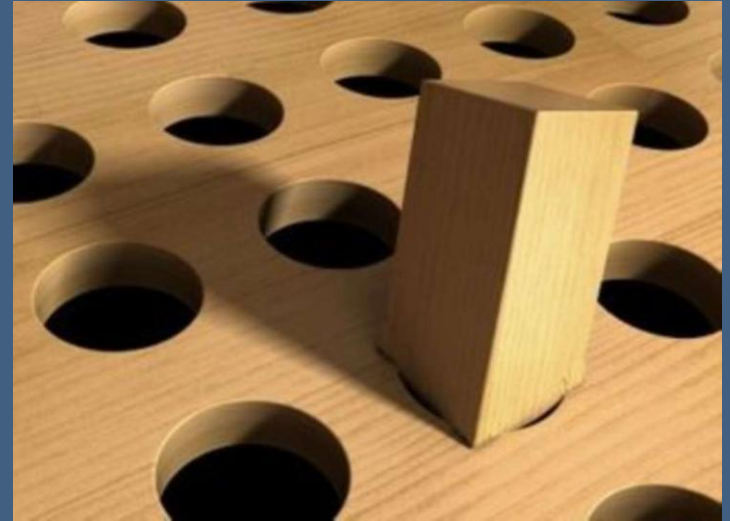
- Organisational skills
- Impulse control
- Task Initiation
- Emotional Control
- Flexible thinking
- Planning and prioritising
- Self-motivation
- Working memory



And the key to this is working memory *



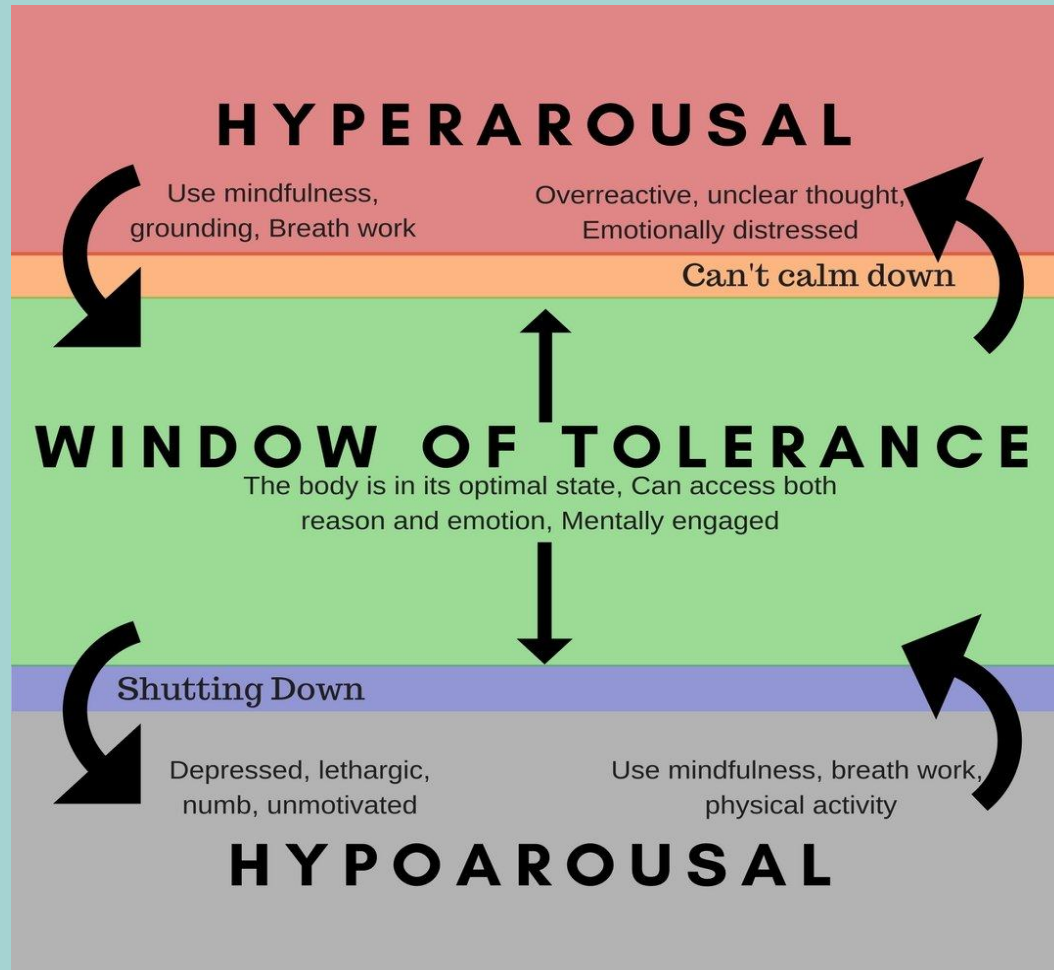
- Routines and predictability lower mental load



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Dysregulation – ‘Regulation Before Education’”





Social communication and Interaction *



***Strategies to support some of the building blocks for social communication**

- Joint Attention
- Language
- Perspective



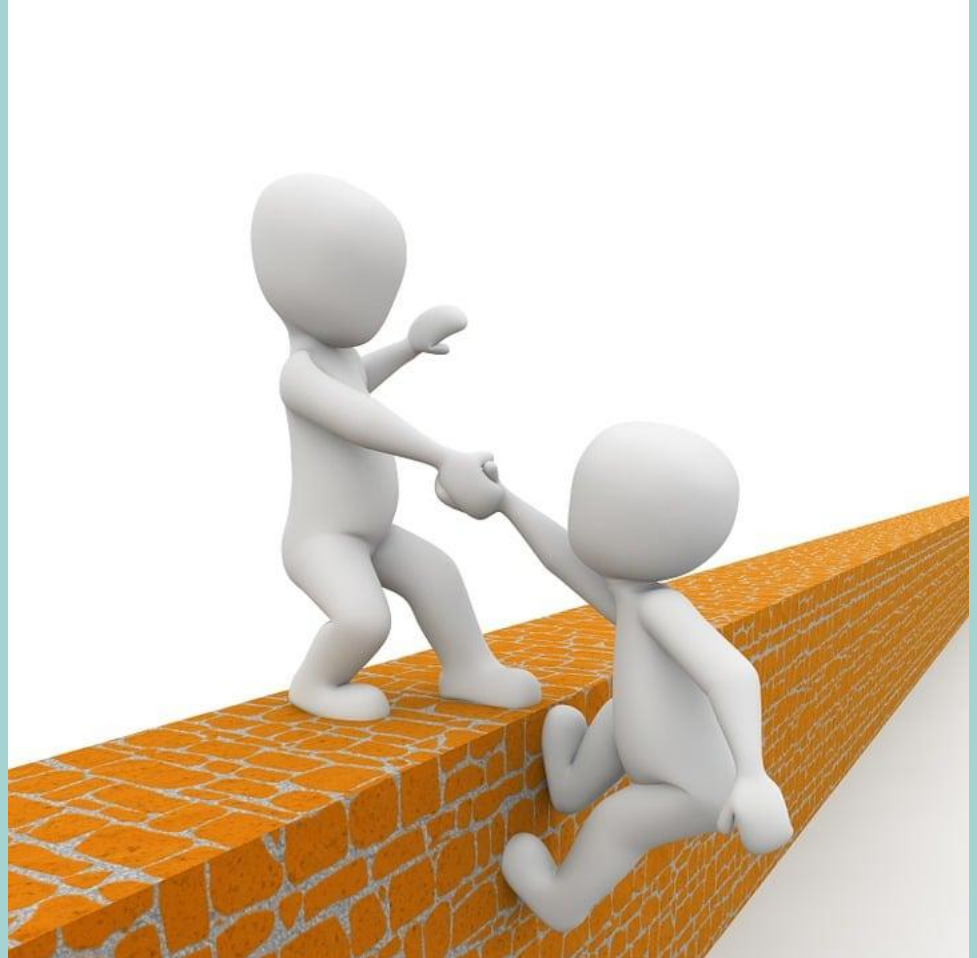
Diagnosis and Self Identification

The vast majority of ND people do not have a diagnosis. You may have an employee or colleague who is going through the diagnostic process, thinking about going through it or self identifies as ND.



Reasonable Accommodations

- What do you know about laws and regulations?



Addressing Criticism – Role Models and Evidence

8 Elements of Effective Coaching



**Ask
questions**



**Listen
intently**



**Be
non-judgmental**



**Align ideas to
research and
evidence**



**Model
strategies**



**Provide
honest
feedback**



**Create a safe
environment
that encourages
conversation**



**Utilize
positive
reinforcement**



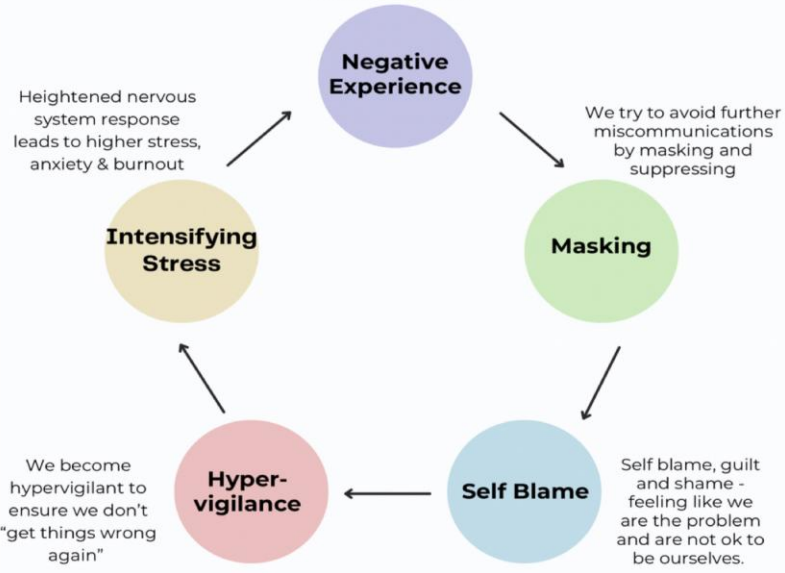
What is neurodivergent trauma?



Neurodivergence & Trauma

The Neurodivergence Trauma Cycle

Traumatic experiences where neurodivergent person is consistently misunderstood and does not get needs met



<https://newgladecounselling.co.uk/2024/05/13/neurodivergence-and-trauma/>

Practical Mentoring Strategies – Case Study



Management V Leadership

- Good managers:

- Identify resources
- Allocate resources
- Direct activity

- Good leaders:

- Provide direction
- Provide vision
- Demonstrate optimism



Actions

Things to consider;

- Excellent staff training and information about the scope and variety of ND
- Have a good understanding of the OFSTED standards
- Excellent understanding of reasonable adjustment and the necessary changes in place
- Knowledge about who your ND employees are and what their need is
- Ongoing support for ND staff
- Peer support
- Co-production



Final Thoughts

Allowing your ND trainees to be their authentic selves will add to the diversity of your organization.

This is kintsugi. A Japanese art form where the artist uses gold paint to fix a broken piece of crockery. This represents acceptance



Questions?





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