

Neurodiversity in the Workplace



HMS Dag

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Jessica Nelson

- Postdoc at NHM
- Current manager of NorCollect project
- Interest in biodiversity but also neurodiversity



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- Lab manager of Socio-Cognitive Lab
- NFR project on ADHD, attention, and communication

Outline

- Introduction
 - What is neurodiversity?
 - Why learn about it?
- Neurodiversity at the workplace
 - Communication and neurodiversity
 - Perceptions of neurodiversity
 - Diverse Neurodivergent Experiences
 - Workplace challenges
- Q&A
- Discussion



What is neurodiversity?



Key terms: Neurodiversity, Neurodivergence

What Neurodivergence Means

- Differences in brain development and functioning
- These differences shape experiences in different contexts and usually across the lifespan
- Diagnosis requires impairment in daily life

Examples of Neurodivergence

- Autism, ADHD, Tourette syndrome
- Dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia



Instructions

Go to

www.menti.com

Enter the code

1850 2636



Or use QR code

Why learn about neurodivergence?



Ekspløsiv økning i bruk av ADHD-medisin

**Trump kobler Paracet til autisme: –
Udokumenterte påstander**

**Trump and RFK Jr touted leucovorin as
a treatment for autism. The FDA quietly
walked it back**

**Why autism pioneer Uta Frith wants to
dismantle the spectrum**

**Half of neurodivergent employees miss work due to lack of
support, report finds**



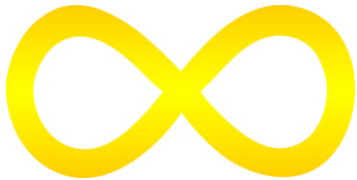
ADHD-diagnose som 51-åring

Anne Marie fikk ADHD-diagnose som 51-åring: – Jeg har følt dyp skam

Common neurodivergent neurotypes

Autism

- Differences in social interactions, “restricted” behaviors and interests, sensory processing differences
- Affects approx. 1–4%



ADHD

- Symptoms or behaviors related to inattention, impulsiveness or hyperactivity
- Affects approx. 3–11%



Communication and ADHD

- Some communicative symptoms
 - Frequent interrupting
 - Excessive talking
 - Speaking without thinking first
 - Easily distracted
 - Abrupt topic shifts
- Symptoms are subtle and vary by ADHD presentation, executive functions, and co-occurring conditions
- Social consequences: more peer rejection; conversation partners rated children with ADHD as less likable and invested less effort (Samniya et al, 2025)



Picture: Colourbox

Communication and Autism

- Some communicative symptoms
 - Differences in eye contact
 - Difficulty with implied meanings
 - Difficulties reading social cues
 - Challenges with conversational turn-taking and small talk
 - Restricted topics of conversation
 - Differences in prosody (intonation, rhythm, volume)
 - Preference for written or text-based communication
- Social consequences: fewer friendships, higher risk of bullying, loneliness



Picture: Colourbox

Perceptions of neurodiversity

- “If you have met one autistic person, you have met one autistic person.”
- Masking: Hiding true behaviors and opinions to blend in with neurotypical peers for safety
 - Not the same as “being polite” or “following the crowd”
 - Effects: anxiety, depression, burnout, etc.
- Is being neurodivergent a disability?
 - **Medical model:** Disability is a problem within the person that needs treatment or fixing
 - **Social model:** Disability arises from barriers in systems, environments, and attitudes
 - **Neurodiversity paradigm:** Neurological differences are part of normal human variation



One Autistic Person's Journey

- Anxiety symptoms beginning in teenage years
- Many confused therapists
- Read about autism online and started watching YouTube videos
- Many months of diagnostic process, culminating in an autism diagnosis at age 32
- Did a diagnosis make a difference?



How Hannah Gadsby's High-Functioning Autism Works |
2.1M views • 6 years ago
Netflix Is A Joke
Her teacher was not happy about her use of prepositions. Watch Hanna Gadsby: Dou
Summary Hannah Gadsby explains how visual thinking and literal interpretati



Orion Kelly - That Autistic Guy

@orionkelly • 232K subscribers • 1.5K videos

I'm Orion Kelly - That Autistic Guy, and I'm all about providing validation and support for /

orionkelly.com.au and 5 more links

Subscribe

Community



Auticate with Chris & Debby

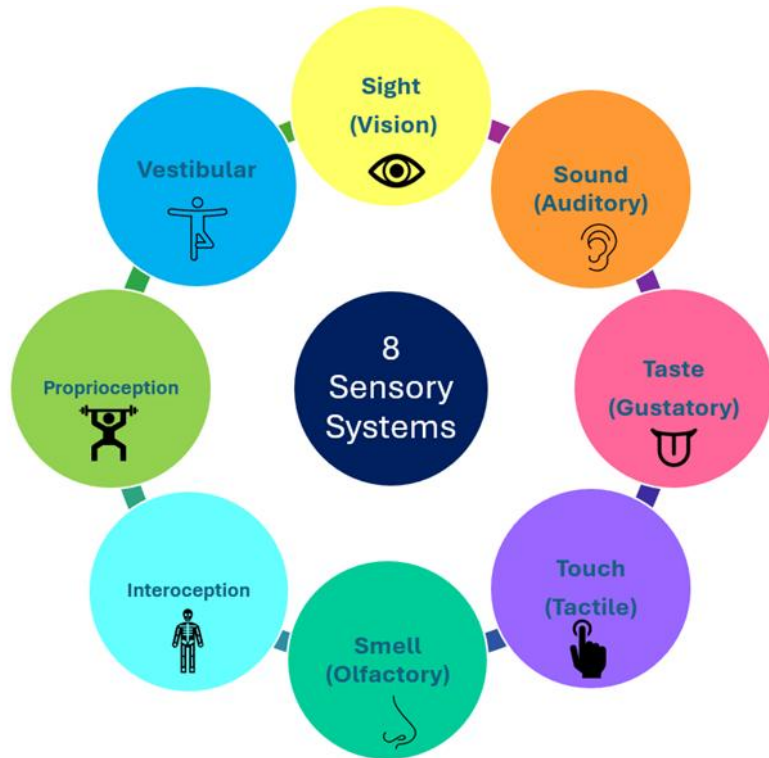
@Auticate • 218K subscribers • 160 videos

Helping autistic and AuDHD adults and parents of neurodivergent kids nav

auticate.com/membership and 5 more links

Subscribe

Diverse Neurodivergent Experiences



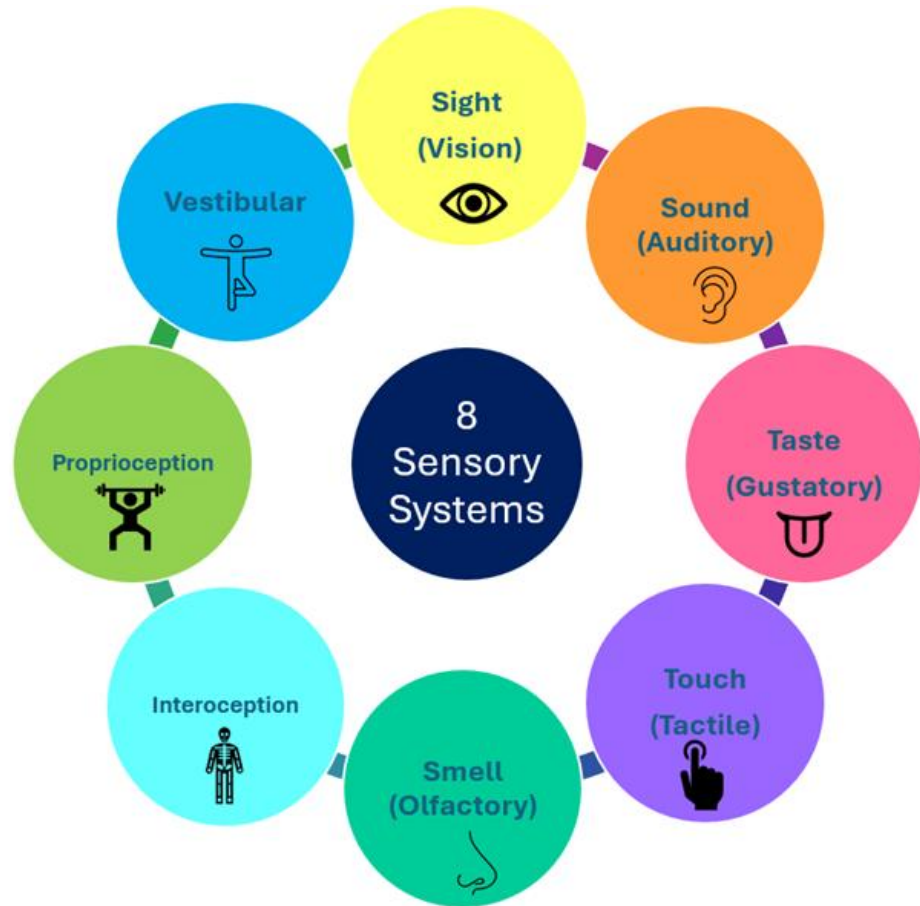
- Perception
 - Experience of time
 - **Sensory experiences**
- Thought & Focus
 - Hobbies
 - Hyperfocus
 - Memory
 - Creativity
 - Speed of processing e.g. spoken, written, numbers
- Movement patterns & **“stimming”**
- Emotional regulation
- Social Interactions
 - Socializing & friendships
 - Expressing emotions
 - Rejection sensitivity
- Rules, morality, values
- Daily routines
 - Sleep
 - Adaptability & routine
 - **Executive function**
- **Co-occurring**
 - Hypermobility
 - Gender & sexuality

Workplace challenges

- Social interactions
 - Communication between neurotypes (double empathy problem)
 - Unspoken social rules, unclear expectations
 - Difficulty contributing in meetings
 - Being put on the spot e.g. interviews
 - Requests for adjustments not being taken seriously
- Senses and regulation
 - Sensory overload
 - Stress from unpredictability
 - Difficulty restarting tasks after interruption
- Mental health consequences
 - Anxiety, depression, burnout



Questions?



Discussion

What could we do to make working at NHM more inclusive of diverse neurotypes?

- Communication channels and practices
- Social environment
- Physical and sensory environment
- Work location and schedule
- Recruitment, onboarding, and training



Resources



Kunnskapsbanken

Alle tei

Tilstander, skader og diagnoser

ADHD

- [Arbeidssøkere med ADHD](#)
- [Veileder for innsikt, forståelse og kunnskap om tilrettelegging for studenter med ADHD og ASD \(Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse\)](#)
- [ADHD og søvnvansker](#)
- [Ressursside om ADHD og andre nevroutviklingsforstyrrelser \(adhdautismetourettes.no\)](#)

Autismespekterdiagnoser (ASD)

- [Arbeidssøkere med ASD](#)
- [Ressursside om ADHD og andre nevroutviklingsforstyrrelser](#)
- [Veileder for innsikt, forståelse og kunnskap om tilrettelegging for studenter med ADHD og ASD \(Direktoratet for høyere utdanning og kompetanse\)](#)

