

**PRACTICAL WAYS TO INTEGRATE
NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS INTO
LEARNING AND SOCIAL
ENVIRONMENTS**

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- **Review of Learning Outcomes**
 - **Terminology**
 - **Defining Neurodiversity**
 - **Unique Issues Facing Neurodiverse Students In Primary and Secondary Education**
- **Strategies for Integrating Neurodiverse Students Into Learning and Social Environments**
 - **Future Considerations**

A FABLE



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKkS2CDLbLk>



**HOW CAN A FABLE ABOUT A GIRAFFE AND
ELEPAHANT
PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION IN
EDUCATION?**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY NEURODIVERSITY

NEUROTYPICAL

“Term used to define a way of processing information and making sense of the world in a manner that differs from the typical” (“neurotypical”)

“Brain different”

Encompasses a range of developmental and neurological conditions and represents those who are in some way “atypical” and experience the cognitive and sensory world in a different way

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NEURODIVERSITY PARADIGM

Neurodiversity is a naturally occurring and valuable form of human diversity



There is no “right” or “normal” type of brain in the same way that there is no one “right” or “normal” gender or race

The social dynamics around neurodiversity mirror those around other forms of human diversity



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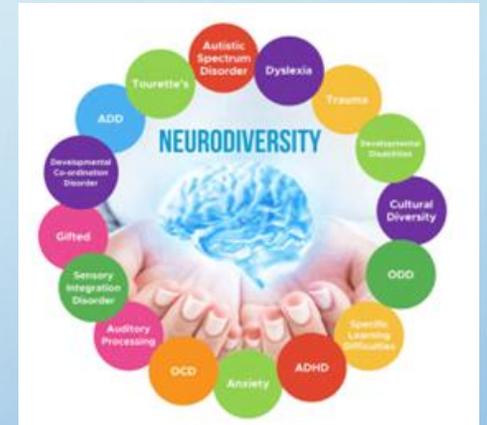
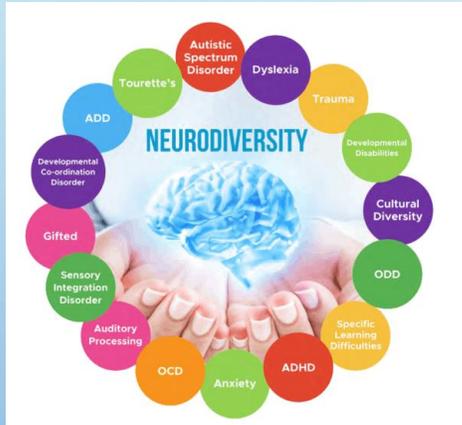
WHO EXACTLY IS NEURODIVERSE?



Technically, WE ALL ARE!

TYPES OF NEURODIVERSITY

- ❑ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**
 - ❑ **Learning Disability (LD)**
 - ❑ **Dyslexia – language disability**
 - ❑ **Dyspraxia – coordination disorder**
 - ❑ **Dyscalculia – math disability**
 - ❑ **Dysgraphia – writing disability**
 - ❑ **Auditory processing disorder**
 - ❑ **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**
 - ❑ **Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)**



COMMON PRESENTING CHALLENGES

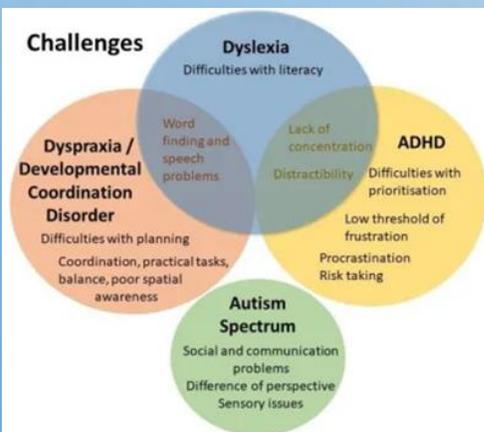
Executive functioning difficulties
Attentional and concentration difficulties
Processing issues

Visual, auditory, verbal, tactile, and motor coordination deficits
Comorbidity with other diagnoses (ex. psychiatric conditions – depression, anxiety)

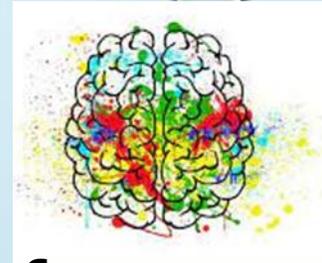
....but not an exhaustive list!

Very individual

Diagnosis (and sometimes not diagnosis) specific!



CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF DISABILITY



Stigma associated with disability in communities of color

May be at even greater risk of social isolation due to the “double whammy” of membership in two minority groups

Lack of disclosure – “passing” – students who do not disclose to their postsecondary institution are at a higher risk of dropping out

CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF DISABILITY

People of color with disabilities are almost twice as likely to be living in poverty as people without disabilities.

Low academic success

Food insecurity

Increased odds of living in an unsafe neighborhood

Substandard health care resulting in decreased physical health, increased stress and depression



CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF DISABILITY



Racialized discrepancies in diagnosis and receipt of support services

Lack of access to proper diagnosis.

Black and Hispanic students less likely to be identified as having ASD and when they are, it's later, in comparison to their White peers.





WE CAN BECOME MORE INFORMED...

SOME PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Revisiting our Fable: The Giraffe and the Elephant

The giraffe assumed that there was something intrinsic to the elephant that was creating the problems...

- **We now know and understand What?????**
- **That it was the Environment (the design of the house)**
- **So how does this apply to Neurodiverse Students????**
- **Doing an environmental scan....**
- **Schools (Access)**
- **Classrooms**
- **Playscapes**

Make changes to the environment that will allow neurodivergent students to feel welcomed and to get the most out of their brains.

Classroom Inclusion Framework

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Learning experiences that proactively meet the needs of all students

Assumption: Barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not in the student.

Based on brain science and evidence-based educational practices.

It also leverages the power of digital technology.



Classroom Inclusion Framework

The ultimate goal of UDL:
All learners will become “expert Learners.”

Expert learners are:
Purposeful and motivated;
Resourceful and knowledgeable;
Strategic and goal-directed

Students rarely do the same task in the same way at the same time.

UDL emphasizes variability instead of disability.

[UDL Principles and Practice](#)



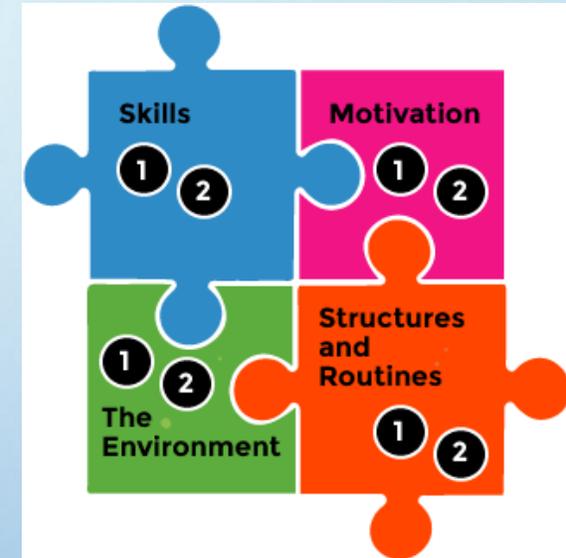
Creating an Inclusive Classroom for Neurodivergence as a Teacher

Be aware of the different types of disabilities (variabilities) that may present themselves in the classroom

(There is more than ADD/ADHD and dyslexia)

Remember that every student is different (students with the same disability, possibly also learn differently)

**Be Patient (with your student as well as Yourself!)-
Often neurodivergent students will need more time to process information or complete tasks.**



Creating an Inclusive Classroom for Neurodivergence as a Teacher

✓ **Focus on your student's strengths**

✓ **Advocate for your students**

✓ **Be flexible**

