

Neurodiversity

What is neurodiversity and why should we care?

Neurodiversity is a naturally occurring variation in the way our minds work – in both neurotypical and neurodivergent people (Singer 1998). It means that all forms of neurological development are equally valid and valuable. Neurodiversity is not a synonym for disability although it is commonly associated with neuro differences, such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism spectrum, dyspraxia, Tourette’s syndrome, and dyscalculia. It impacts how people, for example, experience work and process information, social interaction, communication, and mood. Challenges caused by neurodiversity vary and can be debilitating. Strengths include attention to detail, deep and hyper-focus, problem-solving skills, novel and innovative solutions, creativity, visual thinking, and mechanical skills. Neurodiversity and mental health overlaps are common and complex, but it is uncertain what causes what. The way we speak about neurodiversity is very much part of inclusion and diversity. We should not talk about disability as an individual problem, a person with a disability, (medical model of disability) but instead as a social problem, a disabled person, with a disability occurring as a result of the environment failing to cater to their individual characteristics (social model of disability).

This topic is important because the number of disabled students entering Higher Education (HE) is growing globally and their study engagement and well-being are adversely affected by their disabilities. In addition, HE faculty and staff need to be better informed to support neurodivergent/ disabled students in their studies.

We invite you to engage with the following activities and resources to learn more about the topic of neurodiversity.

1. In Mentimeter, **write 5 words that come to your mind when you think of the word neurodiversity in Higher Education.**
→ After submitting your answers, check which words appeared most often [here](#).

2. In the same Mentimeter as for Question 1, **write the impact of the words that appeared most in the word cloud on neurodiversity in Higher Education in 2 years, 5 years, and 10 years.**
→ Check the word cloud of answers to this question [here](#).

3. In Mentimeter, **write as many neurodivergent conditions as you know.**
4. In the same Mentimeter as for Question 3, **write the positive/ negative impacts of these conditions on learning, education, or employment.**
→ Check the word cloud of answers to these questions on two pages [here](#).

5. In Mentimeter write: **how can you promote the positive effects of these conditions? How to change the negative effects?**
→ Check the word cloud of answers to this question [here](#).

Then choose one or a few materials below to dig deeper into this topic:

Watch:

[Disability Sensitivity Training Video \(not about neurodiversity, but more about visible disabilities\) \(3:40 mins\)](#)
dcgovernment

[What is Neurodiversity? And why it's important for academia to know about it. \(2:02 mins\)](#)
Differing Minds

More specific about autism:

Why everything you know about autism is wrong (13:20 mins)
| Jac den Houting | TEDxMacquarieUniversity

Autistic masking: a dangerous survival mechanism (16:42 mins)
| Leah Reinardy | TEDxHopeCollege

Education and employment:

Neurodiversity at work: What are the benefits of hiring and developing neurodiverse individuals? (6 mins)

We encourage you to think about/ go to the Mentimeter links again, do the exercises again, and note any differences in your thinking or in your attitudes.

Time for self-reflection:

1. How did today's exercise and materials help you grapple with the topic of neurodiversity?
2. How will you apply this information to your own work?
3. What would you like to learn next about this topic? (Put in the reflection sheet of the whole 21-day challenge)
4. Do you think you are neurodivergent?

Deep Dive Material:

Read:

Grimes, Susan, Erica Southgate, Jill Scevak, and Rachel Buchanan. 2021. "Learning impacts reported by students living with learning challenges/disability." *Studies in Higher Education* 46 (6):1146-1158. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1661986.



Watch:

[Neurodiversity in the Educational and Employment Settings](#) (56 mins)

UCSF Dept. of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

[Rethinking One-Size-Fits-All: Education for Neurodiversity](#) (56 mins)

Dr Lorna Hamilton

[Teaching and learning for neurodiverse students](#) (31:44 mins)

Microsoft Research

[Neurodiversity in education](#) (1 hr)

The Education Hub

Extra:

[Neurodiversity: An intro](#) (7:29 mins)

Skill Boosters

[Pro-neurodiversity Speech Therapy: Why I don't teach social skills](#) (7:54 mins)

Bryony Rust

[Common Differences Between Autistic & Neurotypical Communication](#) (7:05)

Emerge Pediatric Therapy

[Neurodiversity Inclusive Teaching](#) (3:03 mins)

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