

Newsletter



What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a term that refers to the natural variations in how everyone's brain works slightly differently to each other and was first used in 1997 by Australian sociologist Judy Singer. It can be compared to other ways in which we describe our human differences such as race, culture, class and gender.

What are 'neurodivergent' and 'neurotypical'

Within neurodiversity, people can be described as 'neurotypical' (those whose brains work within the usual range of brain variation) or those who are 'neurodivergent' (those who have a neurodivergent condition where the brain is working significantly different to the usual range of brain variation).

There is no definitive list of what conditions can be included under the umbrella term of neurodivergent conditions, but it would definitely include Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

The advantage of seeing such conditions as neurodivergent is that it is more positive to describe them as differences in how the brain work rather than as a 'condition' or 'disorder'.

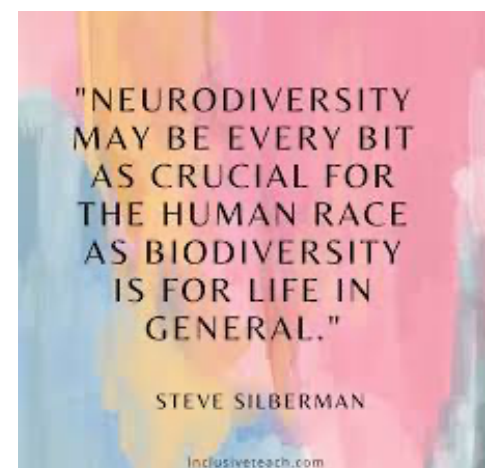
It is thought that up to 15% of the population may have a neurodivergent condition.

Society is structured and organised with an assumption that there is one form of brain functioning. So many systems (education, employment, health and social services, social relationships) have been built up around the neurotypical brain. This can make life for someone with a neurodivergent condition harder to understand and negotiate.

Welcome to the first edition of the new newsletter from the Neurodevelopmental Pathway Team in Fife.

This newsletter will contain occasional updates from the team, useful information and links to the support helplines.

Any ideas about content for future editions are welcome info@theautismnetwork.co.uk



Social Masking

Social masking is to hide or disguise yourself so that you can better fit in with other people around you. This can be in any situation but mostly when you are out of the home, at school, work or in a social situation.



For most of us it is an unconscious strategy we develop when we are growing up and it means we learn to behave differently with different groups of people. We are different when we are with friends than when we are with family, school mates or work colleagues.

For autistic people, because they may feel that being their true selves is very different from others, it can be more difficult to mask and more exhausting. Often the autistic person spends a lot of time and many years hiding their traits and trying to fit in.

Masking may involve suppressing certain behaviours that the person can find helpful (such as stimming or focusing on intense interests). It also means mimicking the behaviours of others by using rehearsed 'scripts' in social situations.

Helplines:

If a child is developing differently, in a way that is causing them significant difficulties, then you and the professional(s) working with your child might think a referral for a neurodevelopmental assessment would be helpful. Children and young people should all have access to a range supports, prior to a referral for specialist neurodevelopmental assessment being made. A support plan should include strategies that can be put in place in school and at home and/or supports that you or your child can access outside of school.

Professionals:

If you are a professional in Fife who has concerns about a child who is developing differently and want to think about ways to support the child, please call the Children and Young People's Professional Enquiry Line for advice and support: 01383 674055 on Tuesdays 10am-12pm or Wednesdays 2-4pm.

Parents/carers:

If you are a parent or carer in Fife looking for advice and support, please call the Parent Advice Line: 01592 226699 on Tues 10am-12pm or Weds 2-4pm.

And finally:

Last month saw the passing of Steve Silberman, author of NeuroTribes, one of the most respected books on autism and neurodiversity. Here is a link to a YouTube video of him talking about the History of Autism.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MBiP3G2Pzc&t=57s