



Episode 19 – Neurodiversity at work (Part 1): Myths, misconceptions and the lived experience, with Alice De Coverley, Ashlea Cromby, Tracey West and Victoria Othen

Ellie:

Hi, and welcome to the Work Couch podcast, your fortnightly deep dive into all things employment. Brought to you by the award-winning employment team at law firm RPC, we discuss the whole spectrum of employment law with the emphasis firmly on people. My name is Ellie Gelder. I'm a senior editor in the employment equality and engagement team here at RPC, and I'll be your host as we explore the constantly evolving and consistently challenging world of employment law. And all the curve balls that it brings to businesses today. We hope by the end of the podcast, you will feel better prepared to respond to these people challenges in a practical, commercial and inclusive way. Before we kick off today's episode, we would be super grateful if you could spare a moment to rate, review and subscribe to make sure you don't miss any of our fortnightly episodes, and please spread the word by telling a colleague about us.

In the first part of our three-part Neurodiversity at Work mini-series, we're going to tackle some of the myths and misconceptions around neurodivergence by focusing on the lived experience and how this affects people's working lives. And I'm thrilled to be joined by a panel of special guests who all have lived experience of neurodivergence. So first of all, we welcome Alice de Coverley, specialist education equality and public law barrister from [3PB Chambers](#). As an ADHDer herself, Alice is treasurer and trustee of [neurodiversity in law](#). She's passionate about advancing the representation of all neurodivergent lawyers. And she also recently won the Legal 500 ESG 2024 Disability Neurodiversity Bar Champion of the Year Award. We also welcome Ashlea Cromby, Neuroinclusion Advisor and Tracey West, Careers Coach, both who join us from [Auticon](#). Auticon is a global IT consulting business and social enterprise that exclusively employs adults on the autism spectrum in permanent roles as IT consultants. As an autistic majority company, Auticon is a wonderful example of a company succeeding as a result of its neurodiversity. And finally, we welcome regular Work Couch guest, RPC's own Victoria Othen, who is a consultant in our employment engagement and quality team, and she's frequently advising employers on disability discrimination claims, an increasing number of which involve neurodivergence. So, wow, what an amazing panel of expertise. Hi to you all. Thank you all for joining me today on the Work Couch.

Victoria:

Hi Ellie, lovely to be here

Ellie:

So I'd like to start with terminology because neurodiversity and neurodivergence can mean different things to some people, while others just may be totally confused as to what these terms actually mean. So Victoria, can you explain what neurodiversity means and the different terms associated with it.

Victoria:

Yeah, that's right, Ellie. It's an umbrella term really. It's not a medical definition. So there's no definitive definition of what neurodiversity is really. It was a term coined in the 1990s, originally by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, to describe brains that process information differently to what is considered neurotypical. So this can manifest in various different ways, perhaps such as processing sensory information differently. So sight, sound, touch, et cetera. Or other brain activities such as learning or memory, social interaction, emotional regulation, and other executive functioning differences. And within the neurodiversity umbrella are included many different conditions, all of which include their own particular diagnostic criteria, common conditions that people are familiar with hearing about are autism spectrum condition, ASC, which is variously called different things by different people, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD, and dyslexia. But also there are other lesser-known conditions, perhaps such as Tourette's or dyscalculia. So it's that universal term that describes those brains really, hence the term neurodiversity.

Ellie: Thank you, Victoria. That's really helpful. Alice, what are some of the common misconceptions about neurodivergent conditions that you'd like to dispel or that you've encountered both personally and also professionally when working with neurodivergent clients?

Alice: Thank you so much for having me, Ellie. So in my work, I work predominantly with children and young people who are autistic or have ADHD or have both or have mental health conditions that might arise from neurodiversity or may be separate to that. And one of the most common misconceptions that I come across with those children and young people who I work with is that when they are exhibiting behaviour that is challenging for those adults around them, that they're simply being naughty or misbehaving intentionally as a consequence of something else that's happening around them or to them. And what is so commonly misunderstood is that this behaviour is a choice, and these actions are often a result of sensory overload for example, so difficulties in communicating or difficulty of being understood. For example, a child may have an overload in a noisy school environment, a noisy playground, because the rules of the game, the playground have been changed. And that might be particularly unfair, or overwhelming or sensory input is at its high. And then as a result, that then leads to behaviours that the school perceives as naughty or behaviour that is intentional. And I think one of the most common misconceptions is the idea that these are things that you can separate out from the young person's condition. So that part is autism and that part here on the other side is the child behaving in a way that's their choice. And so that's one key thing that I see with the children and people who I work with. Then in relation to professionally, I work with a number of neurodivergent lawyers through neurodiversity and law and I myself have ADHD. And what I think of the most common misconceptions is that

Alice: we can't handle high stress environments like a legal practice because of difficulties with organisation, time management, so on. That may well be the case. That is the case for me in some ways. But what is less understood, I think, is that neurodivergent lawyers have often developed excellent coping strategies and systems to manage their workloads. And they often excel in things like creative thinking, problem solving, and working under pressure and particularly harnessing those skills like hyper focusing into that moment or thinking outside the box, thinking on different lines to perhaps how others may do. So it's this idea that the neurodivergent lawyer is not suited to the law that I think is a common misconception when actually there are many, more of us than I think that people realise.

Ellie: Absolutely. And Ashlea, just wanted to go back to that point that Alice was talking about in terms of growing up with a neurodivergent condition. So what were some of the biggest challenges that you faced growing up with autism and how has that impacted on your education and your career?

Ashlea: Well, the first challenge was I didn't have a diagnosis growing up. I am later diagnosed in my life. So that really was a challenge in itself. It meant that when I was growing up, I didn't have a good understanding of why I saw the world differently from my friends or why I couldn't navigate that social environment, particularly at school. And that's probably why I had so many issues when I was at school, I was always in trouble for not following the rules. It was a bit of a weird time because I was smart, and I really excelled academically at school. I mean, I nearly have a PhD now, so it shows that the studies and the academia weren't really what the issue was. But my problem was I didn't understand the rules for the sake of rules is how I felt because they weren't properly explained to me. And you know being undiagnosed at that time as a child it was difficult for people to understand I think they thought I was just being defiant. I actually got expelled from school. So in a way, I'm just lucky that I get on well with the kind of book smarts, if you like, or my life could have looked really, really different having been expelled from school for not necessarily following the rules. And also to touch on a little bit of what Alice said there, the sensory aspect as well. School is horrendous from a sensory perspective, especially when you're wearing polyester uniform and tights. So I would say that it's not necessarily negatively impacted my career, but it very much had the potential to, just not having that understanding of who I was and how I saw the world at the time.

Ellie: Can I ask you about your experience of seeking a diagnosis and just explain to us the barriers that you encountered along the way of gaining that diagnosis? Because I think it's really important to understand it can often be a very prolonged frustrating path to diagnosis.

Ashlea: Definitely and there is a slightly different experience for people who are diagnosed as children and people who are later diagnosed which is a conversation that is becoming more mainstream which is great. But seeking a diagnosis later on in life is what I can speak to, and it is a long game. For later diagnosed women in particular, which is the experience that I can speak to, is that often we can be misdiagnosed for quite a long time, things like OCD, depression, anxiety. I sometimes find that autistic women are diagnosed in bits and then that is all eventually pieced together. So for me, it was never ever suggested, you know, that, neurodivergence and autism might be, might be the cause of some of these things were. It was more, you know, you're anxious or you know, you're depressed. So before social media, there was no way to know because you think to yourself, autistic people are like X, Y and Z, you

know, all the stereotypes that we see. And so for me, I was like, "well, I can't be autistic. You know, that's not it." So then you sort of close the book on that, you know, because nobody brings it up to you.

Ashlea: Then it feels like you get pieced together eventually like this kind of, I don't know, Frankenstein. And then when the diagnosis does eventually come, you have to sort of learn everything about yourself and unlearn everything that you know about yourself, learn about autism, what that means, what that means for you, and then reflect on your past experiences. I mean, just that alone in just a couple of sentences, it's very messy and confusing. And there are a few different routes to diagnosis that you can take in the UK, which is you can go down the NHS route, but at the moment the waiting lists are upwards of three years. Then there's the private diagnosis route, has lesser waiting times, but it can be expensive, but also you have to check the qualifications of the people who are diagnosing you. There was a BBC panorama about private clinics popping up and they weren't always qualified. And then of course there's like self-identification which can be immediate and fulfilling but sometimes it makes you feel like people can dismiss you or you can dismiss yourself like "Have I read this wrong?", you know, whichever route has got its own challenges. But you know, it is all a journey the diagnosis really is the start of the journey basically.

Ellie: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that support or lack of support that you received post-diagnosis, because I guess some people might assume, "Great, you've finally got your diagnosis, so everything's fine now".

Ashlea: Yeah, I mean, it really is just the start. But by the time you even get to a diagnosis, whichever route that you take, you've already been on a really long journey. And then as I mentioned, you have to look back at yourself then and piece yourself back together with this kind of new knowledge. And the post-diagnostic support in my personal experience wasn't very helpful. You kind of get offered a sort of leaflet of information about autism and it's sort of very broad and vague so it's things like you know autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how you see and interact with the world and it's like what does that mean.

Ashlea: It doesn't really explain anything and if it does it's usually aimed towards sort of children and the child's experience so then it's difficult to apply that to yourself as an adult because it's quite abstract in that way. So I think people think sometimes that when you get diagnosed, you automatically download this sort of all-knowing manual about autism, and you understand everything and it's just not the case. If you don't know about autism before you're going through that diagnostic journey, you first have to learn about autism, then forget everything that was told about to you before the diagnosis came and then work out how that diagnosis sits within your personal experience, basically over the course of your whole life and potentially into the future of your life too. Then you have to tell people and help them understand how you know that's maybe changed their perception of you and how they are around you for people that you've known for you know 29, 30 years. But one of the best bits of support post diagnosis again in my experience is a place where a lot of people go, and it is social media. The experiences expressed on social media by neurodivergent content creators, for example, is often really nuanced. So the information that's been distributed about autism isn't like... a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts how you see the world, it's "I can't hear you because there's too many sounds that I can feel my toes too much". You know, it sort of really helps you to understand the experiences and why you're experiencing certain things. So in terms of post-diagnostic support, I think there could be more, but that's why social media is great because you're hearing from neurodivergent people who've been through the process and worked out some of that journey to help you navigate that journey as well.

Ellie: Yeah, that's wonderful. And Tracey, how has your neurodivergence impacted your day-to-day life and your career?

Tracey: So for me, my day-to-day life with dyslexia means that I read a bit more slowly, but actually enjoy reading. And sometimes following long written instructions can be more challenging and time consuming. My spelling's okay, however, when I get tired, spelling mistakes can creep in, and I sometimes find it hard to get my thoughts down on paper. So if I've got a blank piece of paper and I've got to write a report, it can take a little bit longer. The biggest area is memory and organisation. So this is the area where I struggle the most. Dyslexia affects my short-term working memory, making it hard to remember instructions or details from conversations. So to get around that, I keep a to-do list and I update it regularly. And with organisation, I sometimes find it hard to remember tasks, such as how, like getting the stuff ready together for this podcast and I leave things to the last minute. So I was doing this at half past five last night, which was a bit ridiculous really. So sorry about that. But I can find it hard to keep track of schedules and organising work can be a little bit more challenging. And at work, I need a little bit more time to complete assignments. However, it does affect my confidence and my self-esteem. So I'm really great at practical work in the workplace.

Tracey: but I worry that my job performance is affected by tasks that require a lot of report reading, for example. And I also struggle with our filing system, but where to find things, because it all wobbles to me and I can't find anything. But my colleagues always help me, and I bookmark important things. And I found ways around things and workplace adjustments for myself to manage my workload effectively. I do get frustrated with myself and embarrassed sometimes, and I can have low self-esteem, especially because dyslexia can be misunderstood by others. And the main thing I find is the constant effort can be mentally exhausting, stressful and quite draining. In my career, I've been overlooked for promotion so many times, not in this job I hasten to add, but I love now that I can support others to advocate for themselves and use adjustments to help them too. And I think as a job coach, it's important having that lived experience is actually an asset and not a drawback. So I never got a degree despite I think being intelligent. So I would like to achieve that one day just for myself.

Ellie: Thank you, Tracey. And that's really interesting to hear your own experience and the practicalities of dyslexia at work. Victoria, according to some recent [research](#) from diversity consultancy, Pearn Kandola, nearly two thirds of neurodivergent workers, 63%, reported hiding their condition from colleagues. And four in 10, 42%, felt uncomfortable asking for reasonable adjustments. So how can line managers spot signs of neurodivergence?

Victoria: That's right, Ellie. This is a really tricky area and something which we're often asked to advise on and there's no silver bullet or magic wand. I've kind of got some top tips based on my personal experience. I don't know if the others would agree with this, but the things that I think are really helpful are often things that run together with neurodivergence. And one of them is mental ill health or an inability to cope with stress. A lot of the time in the cases that we work with, the employees that are affected have co-conditions, which are things like anxiety, depression, or perhaps they're undiagnosed or misdiagnosed mental health conditions. So you might have sick notes, for example, which are stress at work or overwhelm, kind of terms which are describing a difficulty with that employee with coping. And then they sometimes develop into diagnosable mental health conditions such as generalised anxiety disorder or clinical depression. But that happens a lot. So employees will mask. And this is a life's work, a lot of the time with neurodivergent employees. They have had to mask from early childhood to try and fit into a society that they are trying to navigate but can't quite reach it. So every single day they have become practiced maskers. And that takes its toll. So fitting into a workplace with all its different demands that neurotypical people can just completely take for granted, that may carry that toll on their mental health and that can lead to mental ill health. So time off sick, and it may not be a consistent period. It may be a few days here and there. So perhaps spotting those patterns with employees who are off.

Victoria: having those conversations about, perhaps "What's going on here, is there something that you're struggling with? What is it that you're struggling with and what do you think it is that's making you struggle?" I would say that's one of the first things to keep a lookout for. And the other thing, it's a little harder to describe, but I would refer to it things which don't add up, perhaps inconsistencies. So there might be someone, for example, who on the face of it is seemingly very articulate, very proficient, might have some social skills and fly under the radar in some ways, but then might struggle in other ways communication-wise. So for example, they might be considered to be overly sensitive or maybe in some contexts, very literal and not be able to read a room necessarily. They might be deemed to lack some social awareness or come across as rude or abrupt or saying inappropriate things, insensitive things in certain situations. And that doesn't necessarily add up with this person who is in inverted commas, intelligent and good at their job. There might be someone who takes on lots of work, is very keen and very enthusiastic, who on the face of it is as far from lazy as it can possibly be deemed to be lazy, yet they procrastinate, or they appear to procrastinate. They can't quite get things done. They don't finish off tasks that they say they're going to do. And there are lots of kind of tabs left open or tasks left open. And that doesn't add up with this person who is clearly not someone who can't be bothered. So that can be a telltale sign perhaps of ADHD or perhaps a demand avoidance, which can be a feature of some types of autism. It might be someone who behaves inconsistently with a certain situation. So someone taking things very personally and perhaps a performance appraisal situation or overreacting.

Victoria: what's deemed to be overreacting to a certain situation. So something that's been said by a manager or perhaps a reorganisation, which from a cold objective perspective, "Well, it's a business reorganisation. We're keeping everyone informed. We're just going through this transition". But if an employee is clearly struggling to cope with that in a manner which seems to be disproportionate in your opinion to that workplace situation, that might be the first, "hang on a minute, there's something going on here beneath the surface which doesn't quite add up". So it's very hard to pin that down really. And that is reflective of neurodivergence because as Ashlea and Alice have alluded to, autism doesn't look like a certain thing. It is a spectrum. It has certain key diagnostic criteria, but it is different things to different people. And so it takes some intelligence and some thought and some experience in analysing and

communicating about those differences. But it can pay dividends in the long term rather than just bulldozing through and assuming that everyone has to fit a particular neurotypical mould because it can save so much conflict.

Ellie: Okay, so let's look at what the lived experience looks like at work now. So it would be great to hear if there are any positive experiences or support systems that you've encountered in the workplace that have really helped. So Ashlea, can we start with you?

Ashlea: Yes, so this is something I'm still actually working out because inevitably it will change as my work changes or you know there might be select changes to my role or even the people that I work with so that that's a constantly evolving thing but what I can say what has worked so far for me are things like having time and space to talk things through I can need to process information out loud with somebody or if changes have come up not necessarily in plans but in the way I thought things were going to pan out. I can find it really anxiety inducing and can catastrophise quite quickly and then ruminate on things. I call it getting stuck in a thought loop. So my manager is really great at giving me sort of half an hour, an hour, you know, whatever, when I need to talk things through and sort of share my concerns without him using them against me in the future. He's great because one of the things that I struggle with the absolute most in the workplace is staying in a consistent mood all day. I can't understand how people don't fluctuate as much as I do in their mood. I mean, I don't know, maybe they do they can just regulate it better. But my manager who I feel is supportive will see me very, very anxious, crying or annoyed at people because something hasn't gone how I thought it was gonna go. But then see me really, really happy with a piece of work that I've just done and joking and laughing and all of that can happen in a day. So for me, emotional regulation is something that I can need support with and the way that I'm supported in my role currently is just having that time and space to sort of work through and have a bit of support to regulate. And just another huge thing for me is giving me the space to talk about how I deliver information. I can be a little bit blunt sometimes and you know it's not something that you can try and stop because if you don't realise, you're being blunt then you can't stop yourself being blunt

Ashlea: or give me some space to ensure that I've understood things well and I can repeat back to what it is that they're asking of me. I haven't taken things too literally which can make me feel like sometimes I don't know what I'm on about or you know I'm not good at the job because I can't understand what people are asking me and you know that's not the case. So for me it's time and space and a bit of support to regulate are the key things for me.

Ellie: Deleted text is still in the audio, please remove: And Alice, I know in your practice as a very busy barrister, you've found ways of working that can really help you manage your ADHD.

Alice: Certainly, so as Ashlea says, if you're diagnosed later in life, it can be challenging to look back and untangle many of those learned coping strategies that you have used yourself to cope with the manifestations of your neurodivergence. And some of those things might not be healthy. And once you get that diagnosis as well, it's like learning the plot twist at the end of the book and then re-reading that book with a new and fresh understanding of who you are and who you have always been. And that process can be quite significant. So I first of all highly recommend seeking therapeutic support and having that compassionate environment around you to help you to come to terms with what's happened and to learn what are the better strategies to harness your strengths and to mitigate the challenges that may arise from your neurodiversity. Managing ADHD as a barrister for me therefore requires a combination of different strategies. There are lots of things that I get told to do like have a planner, use this timer and sorts of things and they may be good for some people, but you have to know that they would actually work for you. I can't tell you the number of apps or reminder apps or notepads that I have because people have told me this will change your life and you can do this. That doesn't work for me. What I needed was a phenomenal clerk who will organise things for me and send me written reminders of the things I need to do and to get myself into a routine that works, that has trained my brain into remembering look at this online diary, get this thing sorted for tomorrow, plan your day on a day to day basis rather than trying to plot something for the next two weeks, it's not going to work. So working out how it works for me is incredibly important.

Alice: The other thing is now that I work almost exclusively from home since the pandemic made life a lot easier for me, I can now create an environment at home that is minimising of distractions, that's full of sensory aids, that's very calm, that helps to regulate me, emotionally helps to regulate me in a sensory way and ensures that I can focus during long periods of concentration when I need it, but also so that I can go downstairs, go out into the garden and see my dog. I appreciate that. I'm lucky that I am able to work from home in that way. But it is using those opportunities to try and create as quiet or relaxed an environment as you need. Some people don't need that. Some people prefer to have a noisier environment and that will help them. It's all about working out what works for you, not what the cookie cutter barrister who has ADHD might want. It's got to be based on what you need. And one example in particular that I have is I really don't like out of the blue phone calls. I can manage them most of the time, but I actually find, because I really

want to answer it, it's really exciting and interesting things to do. It's usually somebody I do want to speak to. But as soon as I talk to that person, I've lost half an hour of my day, at least, and I've stopped working on that really important defence that needs to be done. takes me six hours to do I've got to finish it that day. And so I've asked my clerks, can you just bypass those types of calls and send me an email and say, this solicitor has asked to call you. And that sort of thing is really helpful because first of puts it in writing, helps me to remember that it's happened, sets the expectations of the solicitor to know that I'm busy at that moment, but I will call them back. But it also means that I'm not completely derailed. I can stay on track. So that works really well for me. The main thing is not making sure it would work for you to improve your life, your cognitive function, your focus and to get support and mentoring.

Alice: One of things that I would say it's wonderful to hear other people's voices here. It can be very validating to get that type of lived experience talked about with other people. So being able to seek out that advice and support which something that we do at Neurodiversity and Law, I think is really useful and valuable to young practitioners and to older practitioners who have come into terms of diagnosis as well.

Ellie: Yeah, thank you so much, Alice. Tracey, what strategies or tools have you found most helpful in managing your dyslexia at work, appreciating, as Alice says, everyone will be slightly different in what works for them?

Tracey: Yeah, so for me, I find that I can have spelling and typing mistakes and they can be more frequent and that can sometimes complicate communication. And I, since the pandemic, everybody just writes to you rather than picking up the phone or sitting opposite you and talking to you. I've got people who sit in the same room and type to me. So everyone uses emails, texts or social media. So I use a spell checker and I use Grammarly. But I also found the biggest thing for me is forgiving myself for not being perfect. So as long as everyone understands what I mean, it doesn't matter if it's not perfect. And I also asked for help from my colleagues. So I've got the same boss as Ashlea and he's fantastic. And Ashlea also helps me, we all help each other in our team. And I've got a fantastic colleague, Hayley, who when I can't find where something is on our shared drive, for example, she'll just send me a link and like today. So it's those little things like working as a team and try and just forgive yourself from the things that you get wrong and celebrate the things you get right.

Ellie: And we'll be looking at the legal considerations for employers to bear in mind when supporting people with neurodivergence, in particular, disability discrimination in part two next time. But for now, I'd be interested to hear your thoughts on whether you consider your neurodivergence to be a disability. So Ashlea, do you identify with the term disability? And how does that impact your self-perception and your interaction with others?

Ashlea: It's a bit of a tricky one to answer this one. And of course I can only speak for myself in this situation, but for me, I suppose currently I wouldn't identify myself as inherently disabled, but I do feel that neurodivergence can be disabling. So for many people, they would identify themselves as having a disability. It's just tricky one because if I'm feeling really great and comfortable and I feel like I'm doing a really great job, whatever it is I'm doing, you know, even if it's just socialising, I would hate for someone to be like implying that I'm experiencing disability in that moment because I would think that I'm, you know, absolutely thriving. But then if I was in the situation where I was really struggling in a perspective, then I would really hate it if someone was like, "But you're fine, you're alright". So I think it's something that I'm still trying to work out for myself at this moment in my life. But where I currently stand, I would say I don't identify as having a disability in a black and white sense, but I do recognise that neurodivergence can be disabling for me at times.

Ellie: Yeah, that does make a lot of sense. And Alice, how do you perceive the relationship then between neurodivergence and disability?

Alice: So to me, the relationship between neurodivergence and disability is very interesting because I think some of what I follow on social media is certainly framing this as a debate and everyone I speak to has a different perspective on this. And I see examples of the debate as such over whether neurodivergence is a disability. It's often framed as things like... One, autism is my superpower. Two, autism is a disability. Or three, autism is a feature of my personality. The first might highlight the person's unique strengths. The second might emphasise challenges and barriers. And the third would take a neutral stance, viewing autism or another neurodivergence as an integral part of one's identity without being inherently positive or negative, like hair colour. And other ways of framing this are things like a pathology paradigm versus a neurodiversity paradigm. So I think the bit that is interesting is where many people say, look, my autism, my ADHD, my dyslexia, my dyspraxia is not a superpower. It's awful to get painfully disregulated, to lose everything, to crash my car, to get lost, to lose my friends, to end relationships, to miss my flights, to triple book myself. Those things are really hard. And I think that sometimes the neurodiversity movement can sometimes forget quite how difficult it is, particularly at the end of the day when you are utterly exhausted by living in a neurotypical world. It could, however, be a superpower to have just the sensitivity as a lawyer, to be very skilled at hyper focusing,

to be highly empathetic or compassionate, to see things differently from other people. So I think this debate about whether or not it's...

Alice: a disability or not is going to be a deeply personal one but I wonder if sometimes we do forget quite how difficult it can be to be neurodivergent and it's important to be proud and celebrate and do all of those things too but without also recognising those difficulties and barriers, we're not going to change things and make things better for all neurodivergent people.

Ellie: And finally, Tracey, with your experience of having dyslexia and also with your work as a careers coach, what would be your top tips for employers who are really keen to put in place authentically effective neuro-inclusion?

Tracey: So I would say try to create an inclusive environment that supports and values people with diverse neurological conditions. And, you know, we've spoken about them all today. Tailoring training to accommodate diverse learning styles. So that might be visual aids, hands-on activities, or breaking information into smaller chunks. One of the best courses I did was when they spoke the words to me, and I could just listen to it rather than having to read loads and loads of paper. Use of assistive technology, so implementing tools like speech to text software. And we've spoken about sensory stuff, so adjusting the workplace to reduce sensory overload, such as noise cancelling headphones or allowing movement breaks can make such a difference. And earlier we spoke about how working from home can be so great. So flexible work arrangements, offering options like remote work, flexible hours, or the ability to take breaks as and when needed. I'm rubbish in the morning, so I usually start that little bit later and finish later. Clear communication. So like Ashlea said, using straightforward and unambiguous language, providing written instructions and ensuring that you follow up questions with written up summaries and creating quiet workspaces, so the noise cancelling headphones or allowing fidget tools and training, educate your employees and managers about neurodiversity and how you can foster an inclusive workplace culture. One of the best things that helped me was a support network. So I helped establish [ParliAble](#) in Parliament, which was our disability network and actually a support group or a network for neurodiverse individuals. can share experiences and resources. A strength-based approach, so looking at people's strengths and their abilities rather than their limitations and having a little bit of empathy and respect. So respecting their unique perspectives and contributions. And collaboration, so working together with individuals, their families and professionals, and that helps to create inclusive environments.

Tracey: So using all these little practices, organisations can create supportive and empowering environments where people can just achieve their full potential. The adjustments that you make for others don't just help neurodiverse individuals, but they help everyone. And you'll find if you make a few little changes, you'll notice a massive difference.

Ellie: Absolutely. I think that's a really important note to end on that this can help everyone at work, a genuinely neuro-inclusive work culture. Thank you so much to all of you for joining us today, for sharing your own experiences and importantly dispelling those myths and misconceptions around neurodivergence. So thank you for joining me today.

Ellie: For anyone listening who would like further information or support on neuroinclusion at work, a great place to start is [Auticon's website](#) where you'll find a series of freely available educational resources covering various neuroinclusion related topics for individuals and employers.

Well, that brings us to the end of part one in our neurodiversity mini-series. Do join us next week for part two when, as I mentioned, we'll be exploring the legal, HR and wellbeing considerations in relation to neurodivergence at work.

Ellie:

If you would like to revisit anything we discussed today, you can access transcripts of every episode of The Work Couch podcast by going to our website: www.rpc.co.uk/theworkcouch. Or, if you have questions for me or any of our speakers, or perhaps suggestions of topics you would like us to cover on a future episode of The Work Couch, please get in touch by emailing us at theworkcouch@rpc.co.uk – we would love to hear from you.

Thank you all for listening and we hope you'll join us again next time.



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