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Member Webinar

Managerial Strategies for Supporting Neurodiversity 2pm

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Aim

In today's diverse work environments, understanding and appreciating the different ways people think, learn, and process information is critical to building strong, adaptable teams.

The session will help learners better understand neurodivergence, the various neurodivergent conditions, the strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to the workplace and the practical steps you can take to create a more inclusive and understanding work environment

Agenda

What is Neurodiversity

Understanding Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent Employees

Creating an Inclusive Work Environment

Communication & Collaboration Strategies

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity describes differences in brain function from person to person that affect daily mental functions. Neurodiversity embraces differences in brain function and behaviour as a natural manifestation of humanity's variety, rather than viewing them as wrong or problematic.

As autism has become more recognised, psychologists have lobbied for it to be considered a different way of functioning rather than a disorder. The concept of neurodiversity was introduced during the fight for autism awareness and rights. Sociologist Judy Singer (who is autistic) coined the term in 1998

What is Neurodiversity?

The term neurodivergent is a non-medical term that refers to a person with neurological development that is considered atypical or extreme.

Examples of neurological conditions that are recognised under the Neurodiversity Movement include Autism, Asperger's syndrome, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Hyperlexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, OCD, Language delay, Tourette syndrome, Dysgraphia among others.

Disorder	Description
Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorders. Asperger's Syndrome.	Developmental disabilities characterised by restrictive, repetitive behaviours, rigid thinking, social communication difficulties and sensory sensitivity
Dyslexia	Learning difficulty that impacts language development and literacy
Dyscalculia	Learning difficulty that impacts the ability to understand numbers
Hyperlexia	Characterised in children by the ability to read letters and words at a level much higher than expected for their age
Dyspraxia	Developmental disorder that impacts movement, motor skills and coordination
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder, refers to neurological conditions caused by malfunction of the neurotransmitter chemicals, dopamine and noradrenaline. They are characterised by poor focus and attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity

Disorder	Description
OCD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	Condition that causes obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.
Tourette Syndrome	Neurological condition characterised by involuntary movements and noises, called tics
Dysgraphia	Neurological condition characterised by difficulty with writing and copying information.
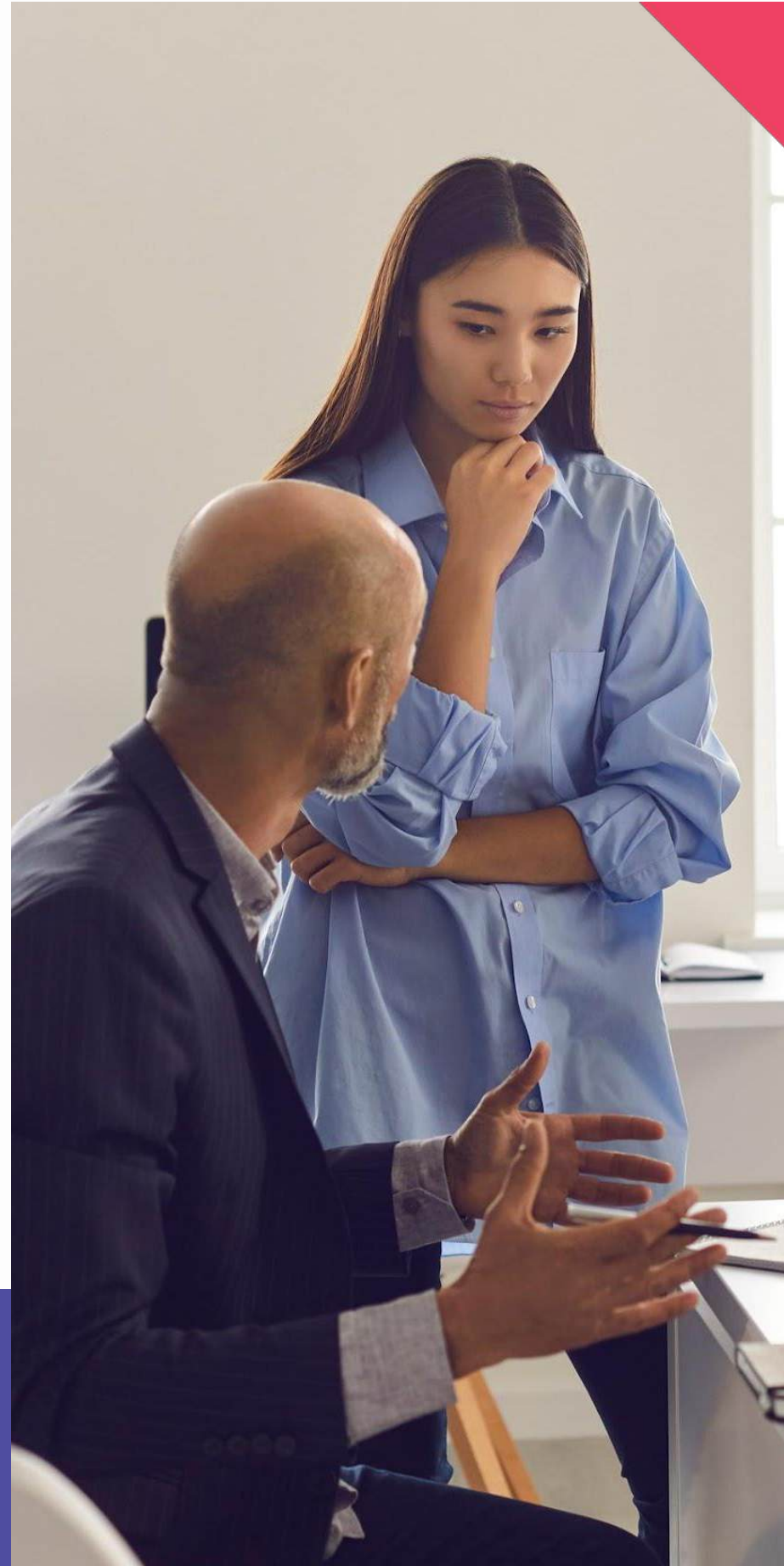
Neurotypical

People with standard brain processing and functioning
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Neurotypical people often do not know that they are neurotypical

Seen as "normal"

Neurodivergent

People whose brain functioning and processing deviates from what is considered "typical"

Neurodivergent people are usually made aware that their brains function differently

Seen as "abnormal"

Understanding Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Approximately 20% of the global population have a neurodiverse condition, with higher reported levels among males than females
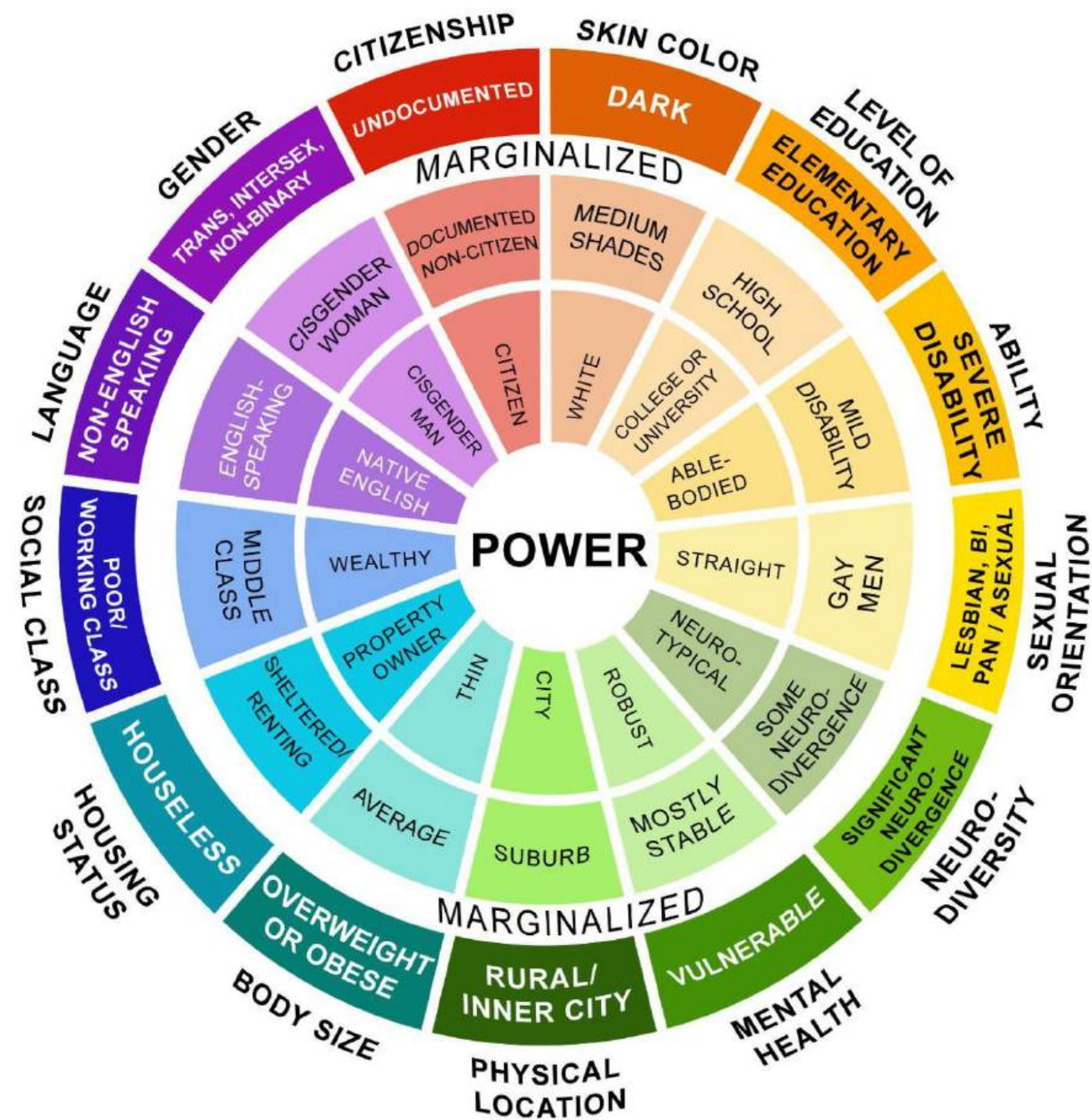
There are two models used when describing neurodiversity and disabilities in general, the Medical Model and the Social Model.

The Medical Model assumes these differences in neurological development to be disabilities, non-adaptive deficits to be treated.

The Social Model assumes that these differences are normal variations of human neurology and that society should adapt to facilitate these differences.

Social Location: Power and Privilege

Challenges faced by Neurodivergent Employees

Job Applications

Interview Process

Disclosure Anxiety

Lack of consistency

Open plan offices

Mismatch between tasks and abilities

Difficulty managing communication

Difficulty with standard office equipment

Understanding Inclusive Environments

- Everyone has the right to feel valued and respected
- In an effective workforce it's important that all employees have a sense of self-worth and feel appreciated by their team and leaders.
- A sense of dignity can be achieved with a supportive network in place
- Compromising an employee's dignity can have detrimental effects on individuals, as well as on entire teams and the reputation of a whole organisation in general
- Employers have a duty to ensure a safe and respectful working environment, where no member of staff feels threatened, intimidated or discriminated against for any reason
- The aim of any inclusivity / neurodiversity policy is to remove barriers to access to employment, minimise distractions or discomfort, enhance comfort, focus and performance and facilitate transition into and through work

- It's not just neurodivergent people who can benefit when society accommodates neurodiversity. The understanding of neurodiversity allows us to appreciate how each of us functions differently. Instead of thinking in terms of "right" and "wrong" ways of functioning, we can embrace these differences

- In workplaces this means accommodating the atypical needs and playing to the unique strengths of each neurodivergent person. This might look like:

- Allowing a person who is neurodivergent the freedom to accomplish tasks in their own way
- Educating employees on neurodiversity
- Fostering an atmosphere of inclusion and acceptance
- Providing noise-blocking headphones for a person who finds noise overstimulating
- Following inclusive hiring practices

Communication and Collaboration Strategies

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01 Neurodiversity awareness programmes

02 Open dialogue

03 Should be incorporated into the hiring process from job application stage to employee induction

However, employees should not feel labelled or 'othered'
Organisations that are not inclusive may find it difficult to retain neurodivergent employees

What can be done to accommodate Neurodivergent Employees?

Video and image based communication

Additional time given to read/prepare for meetings

Assistive technology

Access to mentors/more frequent appraisals

Flexible work schedule and hybrid options

Separate work station

Recap

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS?

Ask Away.

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