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# Neurodiversity: A Journey of Understanding and Support

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# Where we'll go...

- What is neurodivergence?
  - Tina's ADHD story
  - Rachael's Autism story
  - Challenges and tips
  - Tools & resources
  - Questions
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# What is neurodivergence?

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# ADHD & Autism

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# Autism

# ADHD

## Seeks Familiarity

Finds comfort in repetitive behaviors and routines

## Preference for Routines

Adheres to routines for comfort and predictability

## Difficulty with Allistic Social Cues

Brain doesn't subcortically process social cues, requiring prefrontal cortex analysis and decoding

## Need for Verbal Context

Benefits from clear, detailed verbal explanations and context

## Monotropism

Tendency to focus intensely on a single interest or activity

Stimming & fidgeting

Sensory differences

Impulse control difficulties

Higher rates of substance abuse, suicide, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, bipolar, & OCD

ND communication patters (info-dumping, connecting over shared interests, story swapping)

Executive functioning difficulties

Passionate focus

Task-switching difficulties

ND Masking

Social differences

Eye contact differences

## Seeks Novelty

Motivated by new and exciting experiences

## Attention Regulation

Persistent trouble focusing, except when highly interested

## Difficulty with Social Cues

Challenges with focus and attention can cause missing social cues or impulsivity can lead to disregarding them

## Hyperactivity & Impulsivity

Restlessness & difficulty regulating impulses

## Interest-Based System

Motivation and focus driven by personal interests

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# Tina's ADHD Experience





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# Tina's ADHD Experience





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# **ADHD Misconceptions**

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ADHD is just  
laziness. You  
can try  
harder.

False.

Unwilling vs.  
Incapable.

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You grow out  
of ADHD.

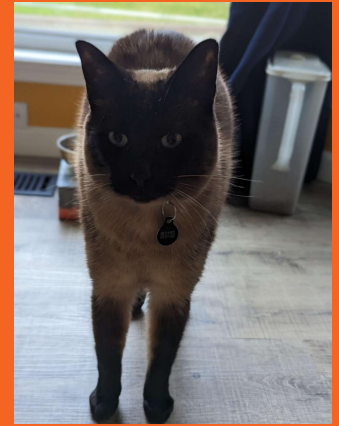
False.

Developmental  
Differences  
from Birth.

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# Rachael's Autism Experience



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# Autism Spectrum Misconceptions

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Aren't we all  
a little on the  
spectrum?

No.

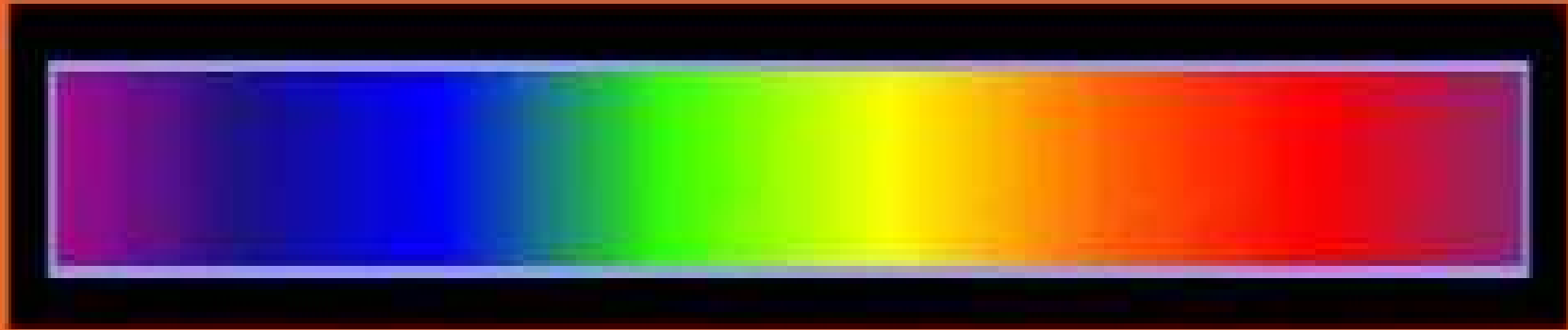
Autistic individuals experience the world in a fundamentally different way, not just to a greater or lesser degree than neurotypical people. It's about the nature of the experience, not just the intensity.

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# What it's not:

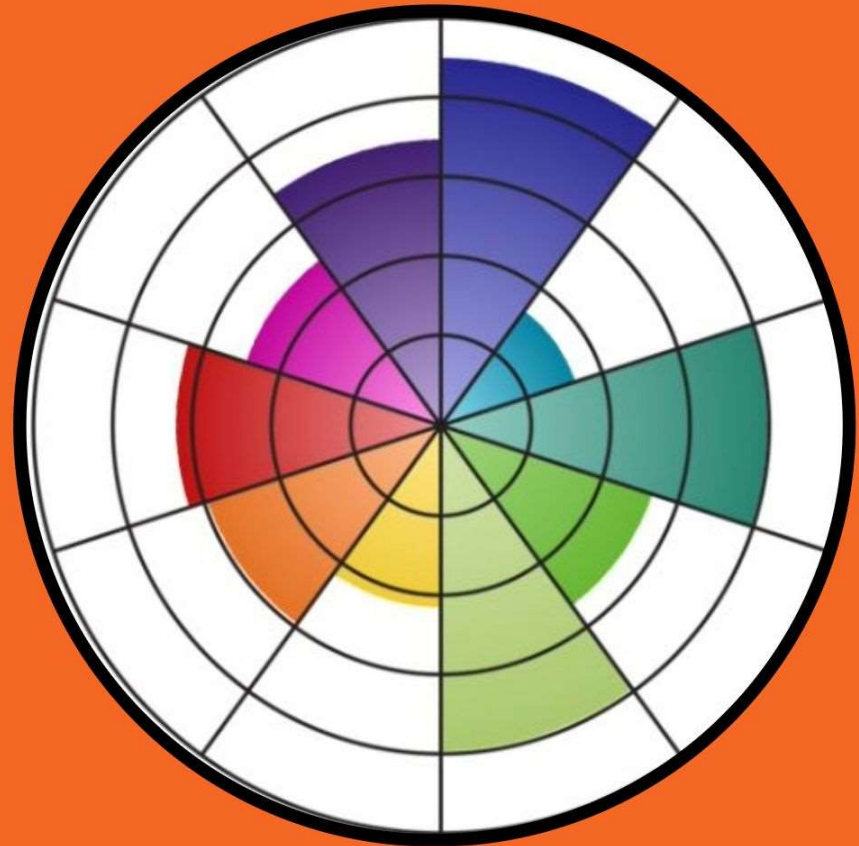
*Less autistic* —————→ *More autistic*



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# What it is:

- Routines
- Social difficulty
- Repetitive behavior
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sensory processing
- Literal thinking
- Emotional regulation
- Aggression
- Fixations
- Executive functioning
- Proprioception
- Interoception





# Challenges in the workplace

Distractibility

Sensory Processing

Rejection Sensitivity

Emotional Regulation

Time management

Social skills

## How you can help

\*Explicit written instructions - more detail than you think!

\*Allow space for extra questions

\*Try to always give the 'why'

\*Maintain stable environment

\*Frequent feedback with critique in private

\*Clear deadlines and expectations

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# Tools we use:

- Goblin Tools: <https://goblin.tools/>
  - Job Accommodation Network: <https://askjan.org/>
  - Digital Calendar with reminders
  - Keeping notes
  - Timers/alarms
  - Random choice generators
  - ChatGPT/Gemini/AI
  - Mantras
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# Resources to Learn More

- Autism Society: <https://autismsociety.org/>
  - Autism Society of Oregon: <https://autismsocietyoregon.org/>
  - Embrace Autism: <https://embrace-autism.com/>
  - Unofficial self-tests: <https://embrace-autism.com/autism-tests/>
  - Unmasking Autism (book) by Devon Price
  - CHADD: <https://chadd.org/>
  - Additude Magazine: <https://www.additudemag.com/resources/>
  - ADDA: <https://add.org/>
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# Questions



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