

Addressing Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent Students



1

Introduction



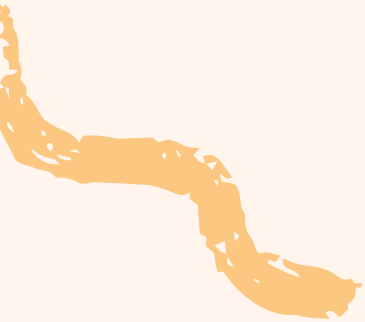
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Introduction: Our Experiences with Neurodiversity



The background features several abstract brushstrokes. On the left, there is a large, textured orange shape. Above it is a green, hand-drawn oval. In the top right corner, there is a brown, wavy line. In the bottom right corner, there is a solid orange shape. In the center, there is a light pink circle containing the number 2.

2

**What is
neurodiversity?**

Definition

Neurodiversity is defined as differences or variations in brain function that affect how someone's brain works. These differences in turn affect behavior, learning abilities, interactions with the environment and peers, etc.

We are emphasizing how classrooms designed for neurotypical brains pose challenges to neurodivergent students' success.

Here is a list of common neurodivergent conditions, most of which were found in our survey and/or mentioned in our interviews. We also reviewed the definitions of each provided in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (2013)

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)- this includes both Inattentive and Hyperactivity/Impulsivity presentations
- Intellectual Disability (Intellectual Development Disorder)
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyslexia
- Bipolar I and II Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Social Anxiety
- Tourette's Disorder



3

What does it affect?



Focus

Many neurodivergent students struggle to focus on tasks for long periods of time, especially if they are not interested in or comfortable with the topic.



Environments

Neurodivergent people may interact with their environment differently than neurotypical people. This can create struggles with focus, concentration, and performance.



Collaboration

Neurodivergent students may struggle with collaborating more than their neurotypical peers for a variety of reasons.



4

Activity

Sample Student

You have a student who talks in class and derails lectures, quickly gives up on taking notes, and consistently turns in papers that do not meet the page requirements.



5

Accomodations

Accommodations



Sample Student

- Allow access to fidget toys.
- Suggest they come to office hours.
- Give access to lecture notes/recording.
- Make the topic relatable for them.
- Suggest they visit the UWC.
- Adjust the page requirement to fit their needs.



Environments

- Find spaces with natural light if the writer is sensitive to the fluorescents.
- Keep the space organized and uncluttered.
- Be sensitive to the students sensory needs.
- Look for alternative spaces if needed.



Focus

- Allow short breaks and movement.
- Give students access to things such as fidget/stim toys.
- Make it interesting/fun.
- Apply topics/assignments to the student's life/experiences.
- Use visuals.
- Allow students to listen to music.
- Give access to lecture slides.



Collaboration

- Educate neurodivergent and neurotypical peers alike on the definition of neurodivergence.
- Be available to help groups overcome obstacles.

Extra Sample Student

Your student consistently gets frustrated during in class reading/writing exercises. Every noise distracts them, and they often restart their reading/work.

When taking notes, they often rewrite sentences multiple times until they are perfect. This gets in the way of them taking good notes, completing assignments on time, and participating in class. They also show distress when near disorganized classmates.

Accomodations

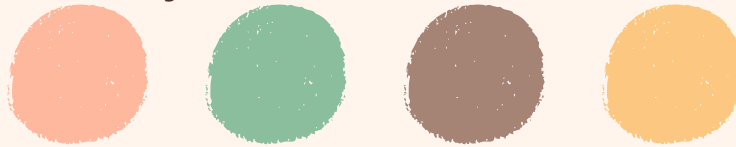
- Talk to them about what triggers their OCD.
- Place them next to students who generally keep their space uncluttered.
- Allow them to complete in class exercises outside of the classroom if a quieter space is available
- Allow them to access in class exercises before or after class so they have time to complete it in an environment more conducive to their completing it.
- Be flexible with due dates (if they spend a lot of time perfecting sentences, they might struggle getting whole assignments done on time).
 - If they are redoing entire assignments, you could suggest that they turn it in each time (if they are comfortable with it) so you can see their progress. That way, you have what you need in a more timely manner and they are able to do what they need to without it affecting their grade.



Thanks!

**Do you have any questions or
comments?**

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