



A PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION

My Educational Experience

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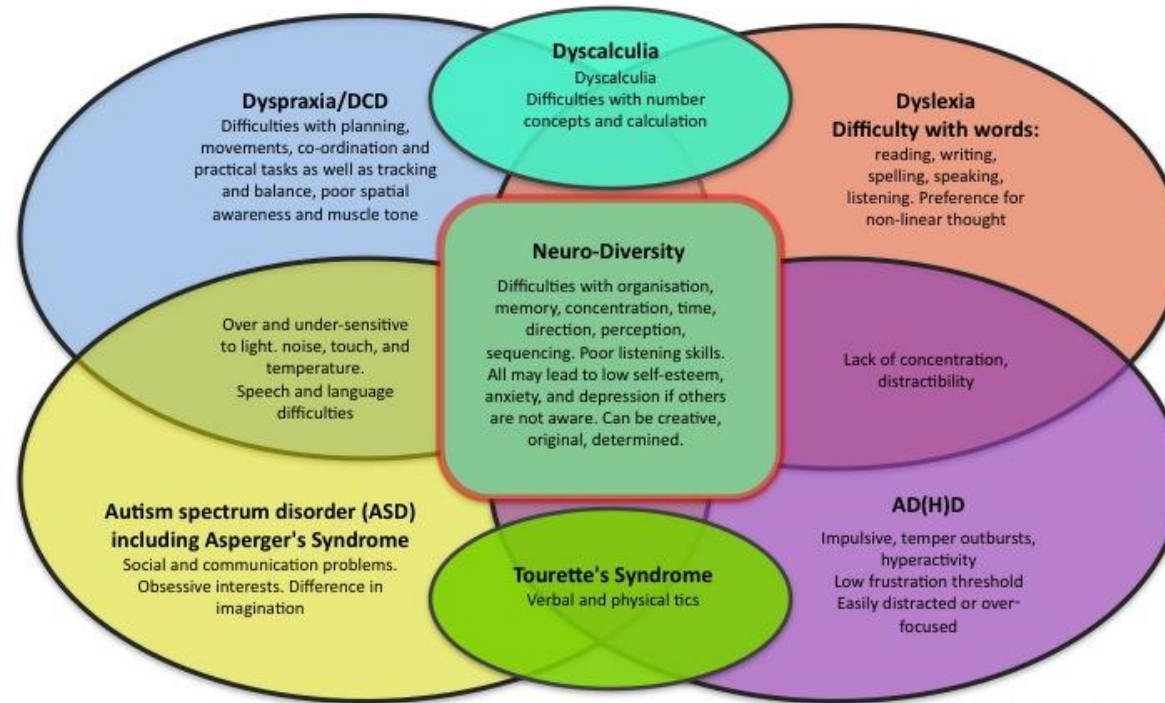
▶ Background

- ▶ Diagnosed with autism in 2010 at the age of 28.
 - ▶ I've been part of SWAN from its inception
 - ▶ Diagnosed following a history of mental health difficulties – treated for anxiety and depression throughout school
 - ▶ No recognition of anything of a neurological/neurodevelopmental nature going on
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- ▶ Medicated for Attention Deficit Disorder in 2004 following mental health crisis
 - ▶ Not officially diagnosed with ADD but medication made a difference
 - ▶ Also showed dyslexic traits when tested by Occupational Psychologist
 - ▶ Shows the complexity of autism and related conditions
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The Make-up of Neuro-Diversity

This is a document for discussion, concentrating mainly on the difficulties of those with neuro-diversity. It must however be pointed out that many such people are excellent at maths, co-ordination, reading etc . We are people of extremes.



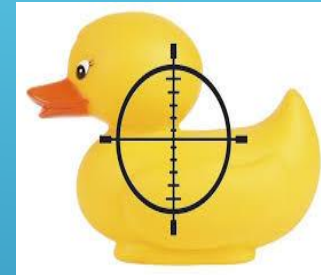
Created by Mary Colley


GRAPHICAL ILLUSTRATION OF OVERLAPPING CONDITIONS

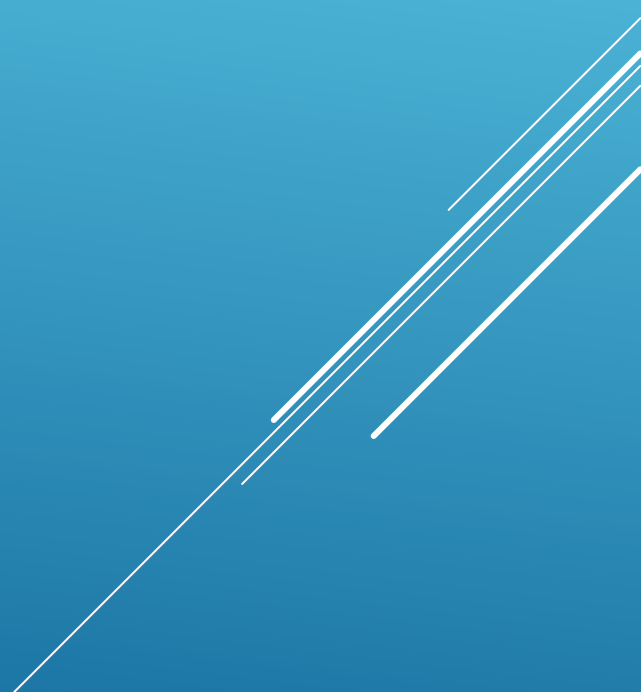
- ▶ Struggled to deal with social and interactive situations from very early childhood
- ▶ Felt overwhelmed with anxiety
- ▶ Lacked intuitive know-how
- ▶ Pervading sense of vulnerability





- ▶ Bullying a real concern when people are different
- ▶ The nature of ASD can lead to misunderstanding
- ▶ Not just by peers – attitudes misinterpreted by teachers too
- ▶ Susceptibility is something I feel really needs to be highlighted



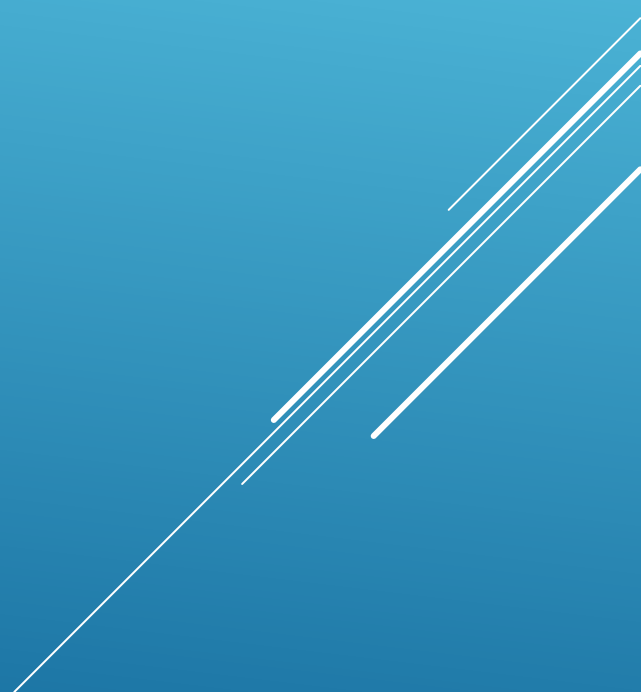
- ▶ Stress of environment and related anxiety made me feel unwell
 - ▶ Difficult to differentiate between being physically ill or result of stress
 - ▶ Diagnosis/diagnoses brought answers, and even a sense of validation as to why I was experiencing situations the way I was
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- ▶ Social challenges can leave long standing relational insecurities
 - ▶ Sensory issues result in barriers to learning and application of learning as well as discomfort and distress
 - ▶ Important to find ways to minimise and work around these
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- ▶ As mentioned previously many people – especially girls - are missed at school
 - ▶ I was one of these
 - ▶ My mum highlighted concerns early on but these were, to all intents and purposes, dismissed
 - ▶ Pupils who do not cause disruption are often overlooked
 - ▶ This ultimately means they do not receive any recognition, help or support
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- ▶ By high school I believe I had grown used to feeling the way I did, and had learned to compensate somewhat for social issues
 - ▶ Other challenges came into play however, with the increasing need to function independently
 - ▶ I gravitated towards subjects stereotypically popular with people on the spectrum – maths and science – concrete concepts
 - ▶ I learned to learn in a way that worked for me. Unfortunately this only worked so far for me.
 - ▶ I strongly believe in exploring a wide variety of learning approaches for those of us on the spectrum
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What else would help/have been helpful?

- ▶ A room to take refuge in – a ‘sanctuary’ room
 - ▶ Awareness and application of language differences present in autism – use of more literal language for information and instructions
 - ▶ Always try to focus on an individual’s strengths and never tear them down because they are different.
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**“There needs to be
a lot more emphasis
on what a child can do
instead of what
he cannot do.”**

- Dr. Temple Grandin

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!