The difficulties faced by neurodivergent people are often caused by the way society and infrastructure are designed.

Disabilities cause all of the problems for neurodivergent individuals.

Models of Disability

**Medical Model**
- Prejudice, Stereotypes, & Discrimination
- Badly Designed Buildings
- Poor Job Prospects
- Inflexible Services & Procedures
- Inaccessible Information or Communication
- Segregation: Isolated Families & Lack of Social Network

**Social Model**
- Problems face by neurodivergent people are often caused by the way society and infrastructure are designed.

(The Democracy, Disability and Society Group, n.d.; Dwyer, 2022)
Common Challenges of the Neurodivergent

**Filtering sensory stimuli and processing information**
Some neurodivergent people struggle with focusing on one environmental stimulus at a time. Multiple stimuli may cause them trouble processing information and lead them to experience sensory overload.

**Multi-tasking and planning**
Neurodivergent individuals may have trouble making plans for the future and performing multiple tasks at once.

**Self-determination**
Neurodivergent individuals may struggle with making choices and advocating for themselves.

**Understanding social norms**
Neurodivergent individuals may experience difficulties understanding neurotypical social interactions and communication (body language, eye contact, figurative language, and humor).

**Being viewed as impaired**
Neurodivergent individuals may encounter people with a deficit-focused view, who see neurodiversity as a weakness. Additionally, neurodivergent individuals may be judged by others for appearing disorganized, fidgety, or accident-prone.

**Social inclusion and self-disclosure**
Self-disclosure may lead to discrimination against neurodivergent individuals.

**Maintaining employment/material well-being**
Neurodivergent individuals are more likely to experience difficulties securing and maintaining employment and locating compatible housing/living options.

**Lack of support in higher education**
Without adequate assistance in higher education, neurodivergent individuals may struggle with personal development. However, they may be hesitant to disclose their condition due to fear of stigma.

**Physical and emotional well-being**
Due to difficulties with healthcare accessibility and comorbid conditions, neurodivergent individuals may experience more problems maintaining their physical and emotional well-being.

*(Day-Duro, n.d.; Robertson, 2010)*
What Helps Neurodivergent People?

Many neurodivergent people can benefit from:

- Meaningful and understanding support systems that advocate for them and encourage their resilience.

  Making connections and engaging within their community, work, home, school, and other areas of their life.

  Participating in activities that they enjoy.

  Discovering their innate strengths and understanding their own challenges.

  Being informed about their diagnosis and advocating on their own behalf.

- Viewing themselves as more than their disability.

  Developing reasonable expectations and goals for themselves and not focusing on societal expectations.

- Having a strong sense of control over their life, self-understanding, and acceptance.

(Wilson & Savery, 2013; Ghanouni & Quirke, 2022; Scheffers et al., 2022)
Supporting People who are Neurodivergent

General Accommodations in Any Setting

- Utilize dimmed lighting
- Reduce the use of strong smells (perfume, cologne, etc.)
- Have quiet spaces without loud/sudden noises
- Adjust the environment to provide accessible services to the client
- Minimize clutter and distracting patterns
- Ensure settings are easy to physically navigate
- Utilize directional signs and signs that clearly identify the purpose of the area
- Offer physical devices that increase the individual's comfort (e.g., technology, sensory soothing objects, etc.)
- Provide conversational accommodations (e.g., visual aids, etc.)
- Offer alternative ways to schedule appointments
- Provide online and/or text reminders of appointments

(Clarke & Westmore, 2022; Davis, 2020; Simpson, 2016)
Neurodivergent people experience higher levels of:

- Social exclusion & isolation
- Suicidal ideation
- Comorbid neurodevelopmental disorders
- Mental & physical illness
- Poverty & unemployment
- Bullying & discrimination
- Abuse

(Brotman et al., 2021; Kölves et al., 2021; Mosner et al., 2019; Quadt et al., 2020; Anderson et al., 2020; Saleh et al., 2022; Ballantine et al., 2022; Zero Abuse Project, 2022)
Introduce yourself and explain your role at the beginning of the interaction.

Ask them how they would prefer to communicate.

Ask them how they would like to be referred to, including their preferred name, personal pronouns, and preference in people-first or identity-first language.

Be prepared for de-escalation intervention as some neurodivergent survivors of trauma may experience sudden intense emotions.

Understand that body language is important in building trust.

Avoid intimidation by not standing over them. Give them personal physical space.

Refrain from touching them because they may feel threatened or overstimulated.

Recognize that silence is sometimes a form of communication.

Listen attentively to ensure that you understand what the individual is saying.
Be Kind!
Remember that many disabilities are invisible!