

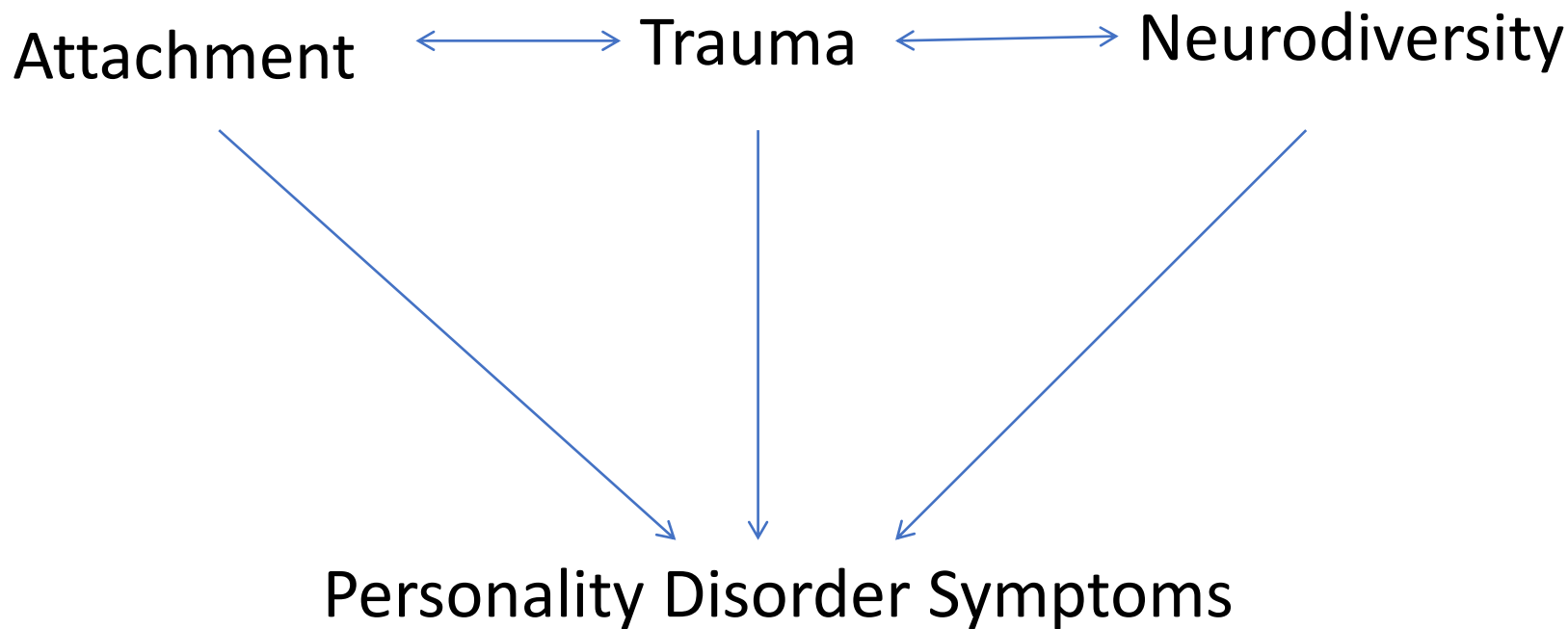


Autism and personality expression

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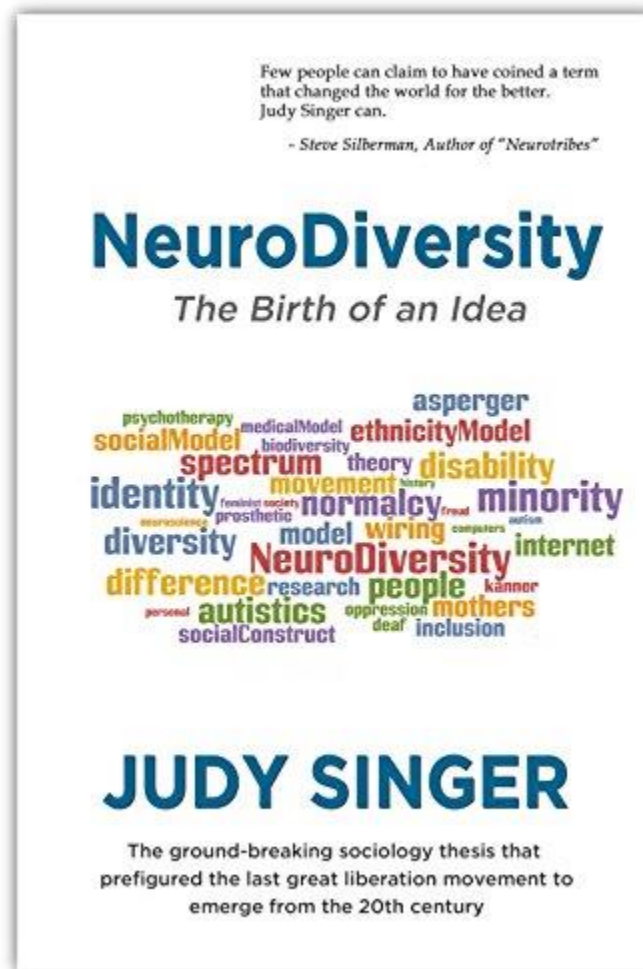
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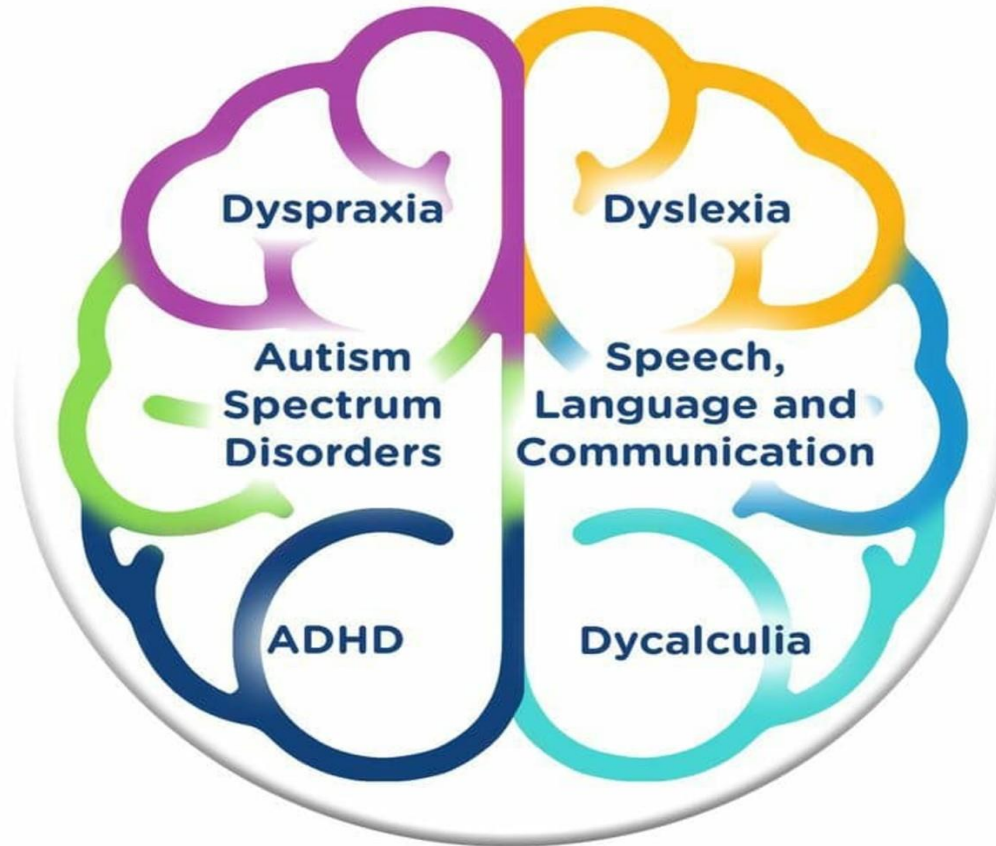




What is neurodiversity?

- Variation in the human brain
 - Social function
 - Learning
 - Attention
 - Mood
 - Sensory experiences
 - Other mental functions
 - Non-pathological
 - Non-diagnostic



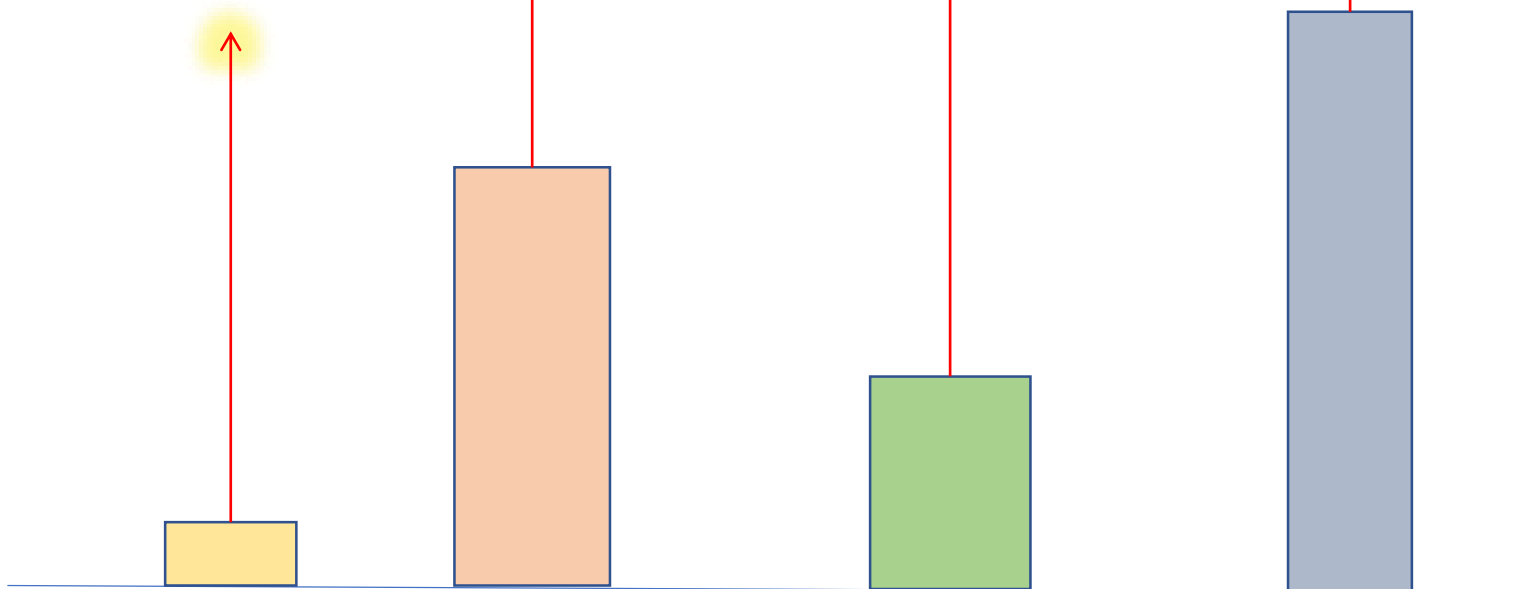
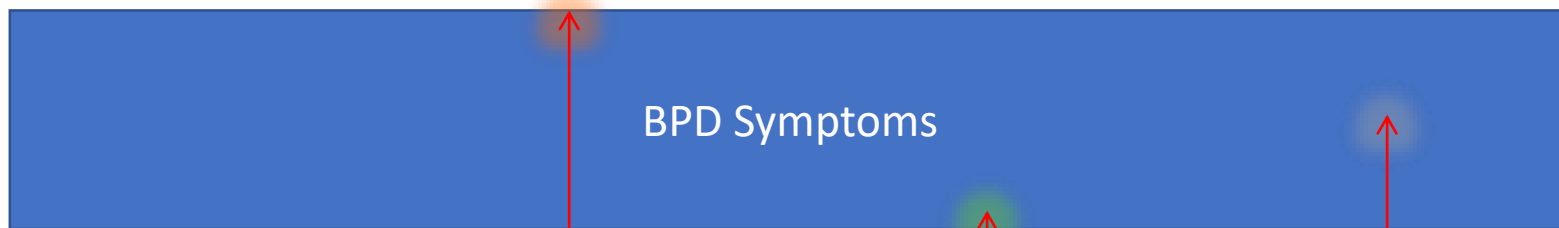




Attachment

Trauma

Neurodiversity



Baseline Level of inherited risk



What is autism?

- Developmental disorder in about 1% of population
- Difficulties in 3 areas
 - Social interaction
 - Communication
 - Behavioural flexibility
- Difference between Asperger's and Autism was no language delay or ID
- Diagnosis is defined by behaviour and is reliant on current presentation and developmental history
- Often co-occurring with ADHD, OCD and eating disorders



Autism

- More often diagnosed in boys (3:1)
- Even more often when there is no cognitive or language impairment (6:1)
- However, females suffer disproportionate social impairment
- Females identified as having particular difficulty with social understanding and attention
- Concern that current diagnostic tools and methods are biased towards male presentation



Characteristics of female presentation

- Aware of need for social interaction
- Desire to interact with others
- Tendency to imitate others
- Tendency to be “mothered” by peer group in primary school but bullied in secondary school
- Better linguistic skills
- Restricted interests involve people/animals
- Perfectionistic, controlling and very determined
- High demand avoidance – sometimes “pathological”
- Tendency for episodes of eating problems



Suicide risk in ASD

- 7 times higher risk of death by suicide
- No evidence-based treatment for suicidal thoughts in ASD



Overlap of BPD and ASD

- Little research, but study from 2018 found considerable overlap in BPD and ASD traits
- Associated with increased risk of suicide, prominent negative self-image and absence of substance use
- Increased ASD traits in people with more than 5 suicide attempts
- Suggestion that ASD enhances suicidality
- People with ASD more vulnerable to abuse and traumatic experiences. May have difficulty processing these experiences.



Neurocognitive deficits in ASD

- Common areas of difficulty
 - Mentalizing
 - Impulse control
 - Empathy
 - Communication – non-literal speech
- These impairments can also be present in sub-threshold ASD
- People with ASD may also learn to mask these areas of difficulty, particularly females
- Also evidence that people with ASD may not have insight into their difficulties


Theory of Mind

- Crucial for success in human social interactions
- Levels of ToM
 - 1st order – I think she thinks that (4 years old)
 - 2nd order – he thinks that she thinks that (6 years old)
- Subtle deficits can emerge in higher level tasks involving innuendo, abstraction, sarcasm and subterfuge even if proficient in 2nd order tasks
- These deficits are not universally correlated with IQ
- Distinct from BPD mentalising?



Issues with IQ in autism

there is a large gap between IQ and adaptive behaviors in real life, suggesting that estimates of IQ “alone are an imprecise proxy for functional abilities when diagnosing autism spectrum disorder, particularly for those without intellectual disability”



a little quirky definitely autistic tragic autistic

How people think the spectrum looks

<https://neuroclastic.com/its-a-spectrum-doesnt-mean-what-you-think/>



| Pragmatic Language | Social Awareness | Monotropic Mindset | Information Processing | Sensory Processing | Repetitive Behaviors | Neuro-Motor Differences |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| Tends to miss subtle social cues, tends to interrupt or accidentally bore people. | Forgets to say hello or goodbye, doesn't think to ask for help when having difficulties. Doesn't reach out to friends. | Prone to "obsessing" over special interests, difficulty with task switching, cannot multitask, struggles with executive function. | Absorbs written word easily, excellent memory, but cannot follow verbal instructions. Struggles to navigate unfamiliar environments, easily confused. | Dislikes certain sounds, sensitive to light. Dislikes Notoriously "picky" about tastes and textures. | Tends to tap fingers on desk or spin ring on finger, especially when stressed. Sucks thumb in private. Loves to rock. | Somewhat clumsy, has trouble with coordination and manual tasks. May enjoy one particular sport such as swimming or horse riding. |

NeuroClastic.com



Why neurodiversity is important

1. Can improve therapeutic alliance through process of investigation and developing understanding
2. Can help a person come to terms with the difficulties and challenges they have faced
3. Can change the opinions and approaches of clinicians and support workers
4. Can tailor provision of services to the person's specific needs
5. Can facilitate more appropriate disability services

Thank you

• References

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