



STRATEGIC
CURIOSITY

Unlocking the Superpowers of Your Neurodiverse Team

Presented by:

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Created for

Professional Women's CONFERENCE
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Session Goals

- ❑ Explore what neurodiversity means & why it matters in the workplace.
- ❑ Understand common neurodivergent variations.
- ❑ Learn how neurodiverse teams fuel innovation, creativity, and performance.
- ❑ Discover strategies to foster psychologically safe environments for all.
- ❑ Reflect on your own leadership style and team dynamics to help unlock untapped potential.
- ❑ Apply actionable tools to reduce stigma, build belonging, and elevate neurodivergent voices at work.

Show of hands: Who is left-handed?





Let's start with Lefties

- In the Middle Ages, **left-handedness** was associated with the **devil**, being **unlucky**, and **evil**
- “Sinister” is derived from the Latin word for “left”

Yikes.

And clearly not true.



Let's start with Lefties

Did you know...

- Left-handed people made up only 2-3% of the population in early 1900s America
- Lefties now make up more than 10% of the population

... So what happened?

- Society **stopped punishing people** for being left-handed
- Being left-handed **became more accepted**
- Left-handedness was **reframed as a naturally occurring trait** - a human difference - not something to be fixed



Barack Obama signs at his desk. [Credit: Pete Souza]



Where are you going with this, Jen...?

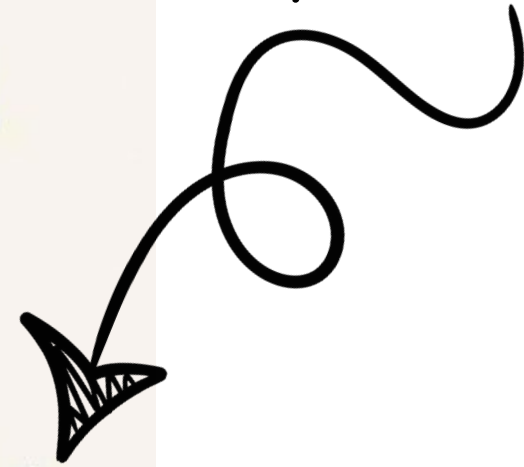
Anyone: “Why are there suddenly so many ADHD diagnoses?”

@drjenwolkin

Dr. Jen: Same reason there are suddenly more stars after we built telescopes.”

xo, Dr. Jen

Nope, not me... yet!

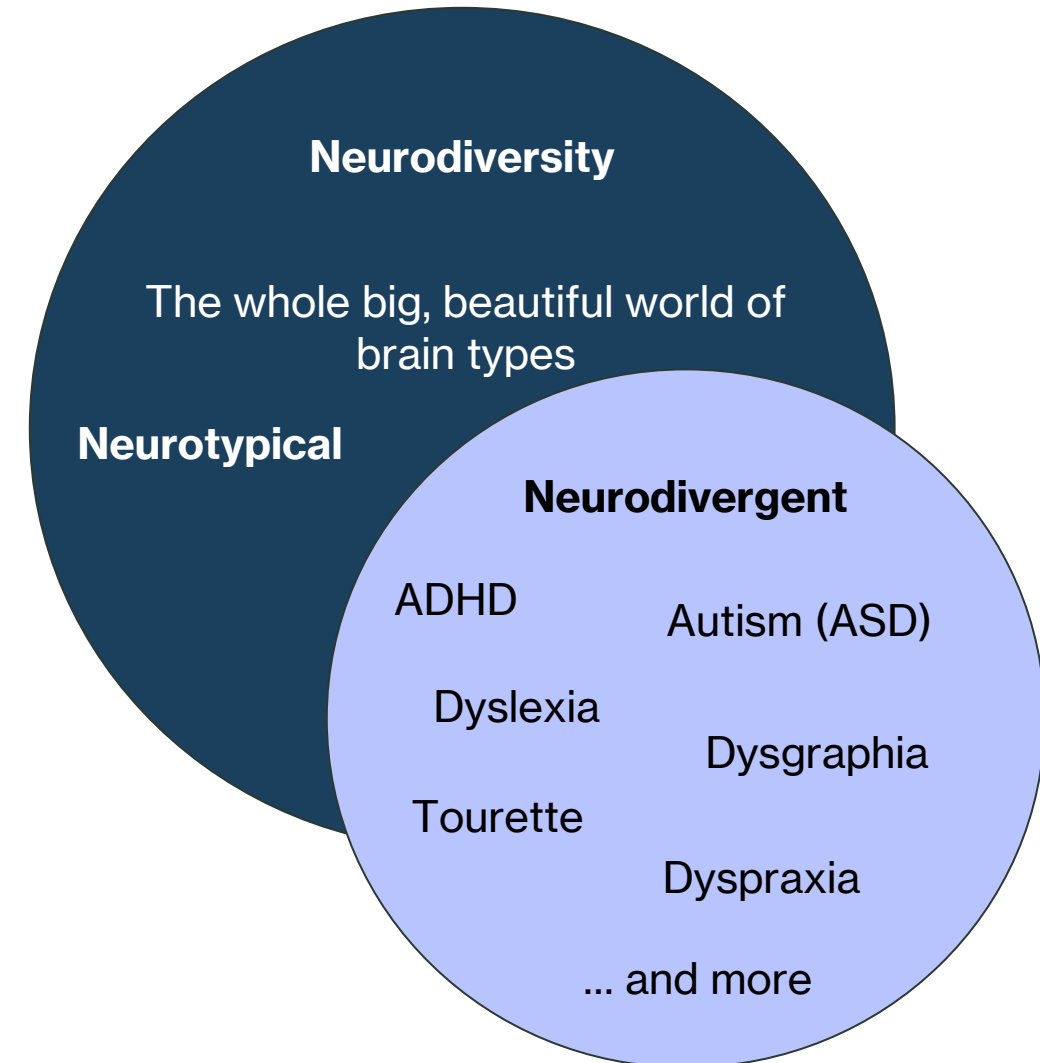


The World of Neurodiversity & Neurodivergence



- Just like the world was designed for the right-handed majority, **the world was designed for the neurotypical majority**
- 15-20% of the world's population is estimated to be Neurodivergent
- More than 10% of American children have been diagnosed with ADHD

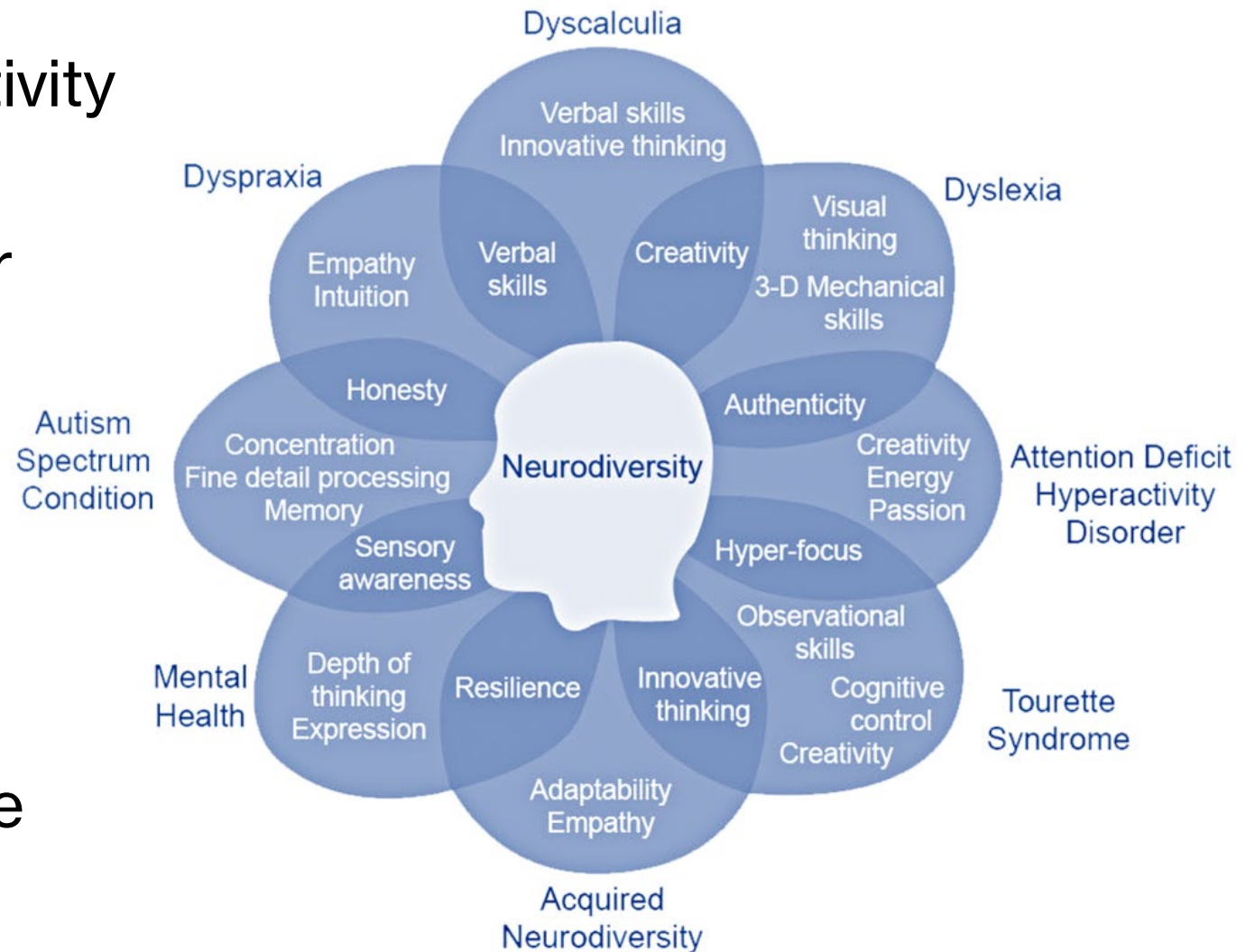
Neurodivergence comes with both **challenges and strengths.**





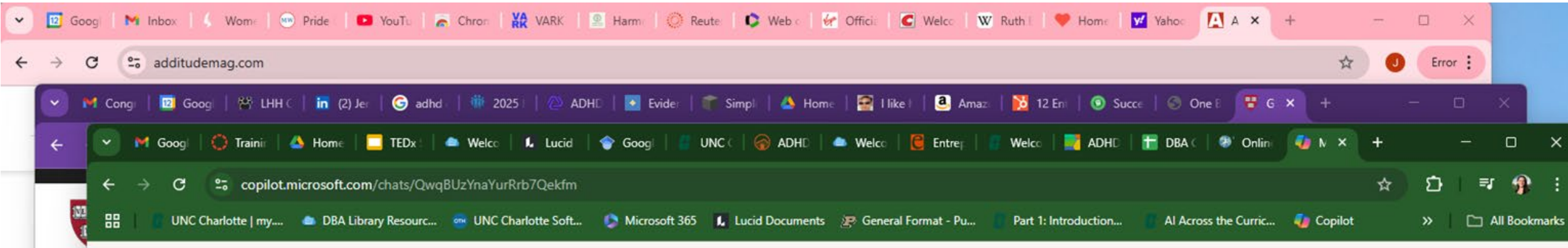
Neurodivergent Conditions

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyspraxia
- Tourette Syndrome (TS)
- Acquired Neurodivergence





Neurodivergence is often misunderstood



“A person with **ADHD** has **the power of a Ferrari engine** but with **bicycle-strength brakes**. It's the mismatch of engine power to braking capability that causes the problems.”
- Dr. Ned Hallowell



This image was created with the assistance of DALL·E 2

Source: Hallowell, E. M., & Ratey, J. J. (2021). *ADHD 2.0: New science and essential strategies for thriving with distraction - from childhood through adulthood*. Ballantine Books.



The Power of Finding What Works for YOU



This image was created with the assistance of DALL·E 2

Starts with YOU!

Supporting Challenges to Unlock Superpowers



Different things work for different people.

For my challenges with my working memory, I...



**Write it
down!**



**Need visual
reminders!**



**Use timers
and alarms!**



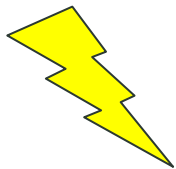
**Automate &
delegate!**



The Value of Inclusive Work Cultures

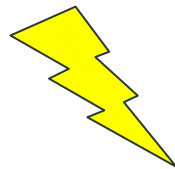
Diverse teams fuel innovation, creativity, and performance.

Organizations supporting **inclusive cultures** are:



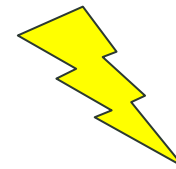
2x

as likely to meet
or exceed
financial targets



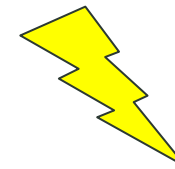
3x

as likely to
be high-
performing



6x

as likely to
be agile and
innovative



8x

as likely to achieve
better business
outcomes

Unlocking neurodiversity superpowers at work



01

Creating
environments of
**psychological
safety**

02

Supporting
diverse, **inclusive
teams**

03

Embracing
universal design



01

Creating Psychological Safety

“It’s felt permission for candor.” - Dr. Amy Edmondson

Can lead to:

Better decision-making Higher team performance
Innovation Creativity Learning
Resilience



02

Supporting Diverse, Inclusive Teams

Diverse, inclusive teams are:

- ✓ More likely to have financial returns above industry
- ✓ More innovative
- ✓ Better at making decisions



03

Embracing Universal Design

Just like the world was designed for the right-handed majority, the world was designed for the neurotypical majority.

This can be challenging.

Can we please talk about the lighting?

Universal design can benefit **everyone**.



Creating environments for success





Embracing Universal Design Example

An example we can all appreciate: **meeting culture**

How can we make meetings better and more productive *for all*?

- Sharing agendas in advance
- “Cameras off” option
- Options to contribute in different ways (chat, follow-ups, etc...)
- Pausing to make space for all voices
- Proactive accessibility
- Note taking rotation
- *What else?*



Communication and Working Styles

- Think about your absolute BEST day of work.
- What did that feel like while you were in it?
- How did it feel when the day ended?
- What created that environment for you?



Communication and Working Styles

The Golden Rule:

Do Unto Others as You Would
Have Them Do Unto You.

Treat others
the way
YOU want to
be treated.



Communication and Working Styles

PLATINUM

RULE:

Treat
others
as **THEY**
want
to be
treated.

“In a diverse world, the ‘Platinum rule’ replaces the ‘Golden rule’: we should treat others as they’d like to be treated, not as we’d like to be treated.”

Thais Compoint

Author of “Succeed as an Inclusive Leader”



www.declinternational.com



“I work best when...” exercise

Categories to consider

- ☐ Working Style
- ☐ Meeting Preferences
- ☐ Communication Style
- ☐ Collaboration Preferences
- ☐ Work Management / Organization
- ☐ Boundaries
- ☐ *What else?*

Things to think about...

- What does this look like for you?
- What does this look like for members of your team?
- Do we all have the same styles, preferences, and needs?



Creating spaces where everyone can thrive

Congratulations! You've already taken the first steps!

You're HERE!

- Think about what thriving looks like for you
- Think about what thriving looks like for your team

“It starts with me.”



From Symptoms to Strengths to Superpowers

Together, we have the power to...

- ✓ Embrace inclusive practices
- ✓ Reframe mindsets
- ✓ Reduce stigma
- ✓ Create great working environments



What's **one thing you'll apply or do differently**
in the next 24 hours based on this workshop?



Feedback is a Gift... and I would appreciate yours



Give feedback to Jennifer

Scan this QR code



Or go to

<https://talk.ac/jenniferadelhardt>

and enter this code when prompted

NCACPA



Still Curious?



Let's connect!

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Meet Jen

Jennifer Adelhardt is a dynamic presenter, TEDx speaker, and doctoral candidate with nearly 20 years of experience leading high-performing teams in digital transformation and product strategy. She is the founder of Strategic Curiosity LLC and serves as adjunct faculty at UNC Charlotte, where her research focuses on leadership, neurodiversity, and psychological safety in the workplace. Jen is passionate about helping professionals at all levels create environments that foster innovation, cultivate belonging, and drive strong business results.

