Belonging at Work with Dyslexia and Neurodiversity...

Donna Stevenson Head of Training and Assessment

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Our Session today...

Part One:

Neurodiverse characteristics, talents, gifts and challenges

Part Two:

Neurodiverse Friendly Practice

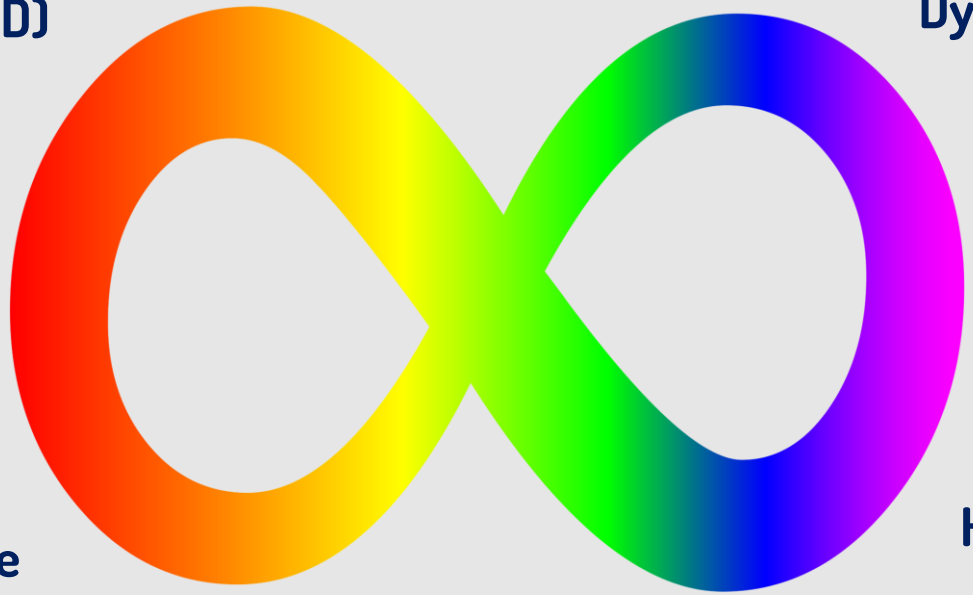
Part Three:

Belonging at Work – Top Tips and Key Considerations.

Part One

What is Dyslexia and Neurodiversity?

The range of neurodiversity?



Dyscalculia

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Dyslexia

Dyspraxia (DCD)

Dysgraphia

Autism Spectrum

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Tourette Syndrome

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

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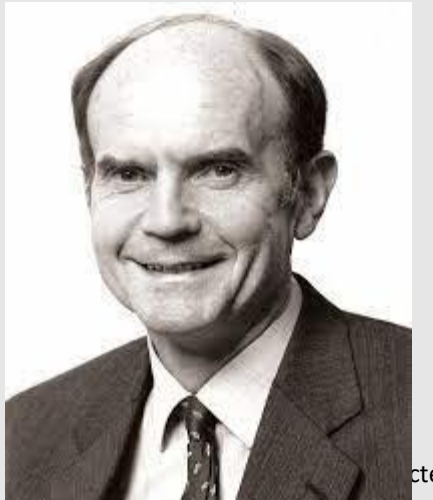
Dyslexia – Definition **The Rose Review 2009**

Dyslexia is a **learning difficulty** that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word **reading** and **spelling.** Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in **phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed**. Dyslexia occurs across the range of **intellectual abilities**. It is best thought of as a **continuum**, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points…

Sir Jim Rose CBE



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Dyslexia – The statistics?

- 6.3 million people with dyslexia in the UK
- 40 % of those unemployed are thought to have dyslexia
- 40% Millionaires have dyslexia
- **The Highest Incidence Disability – 10-15% of the population.**
- About 5/6 individuals in a workplace of 30 will experience some form of dyslexia

The Equality Act 2010

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Linkedin: Dyslexic Thinking

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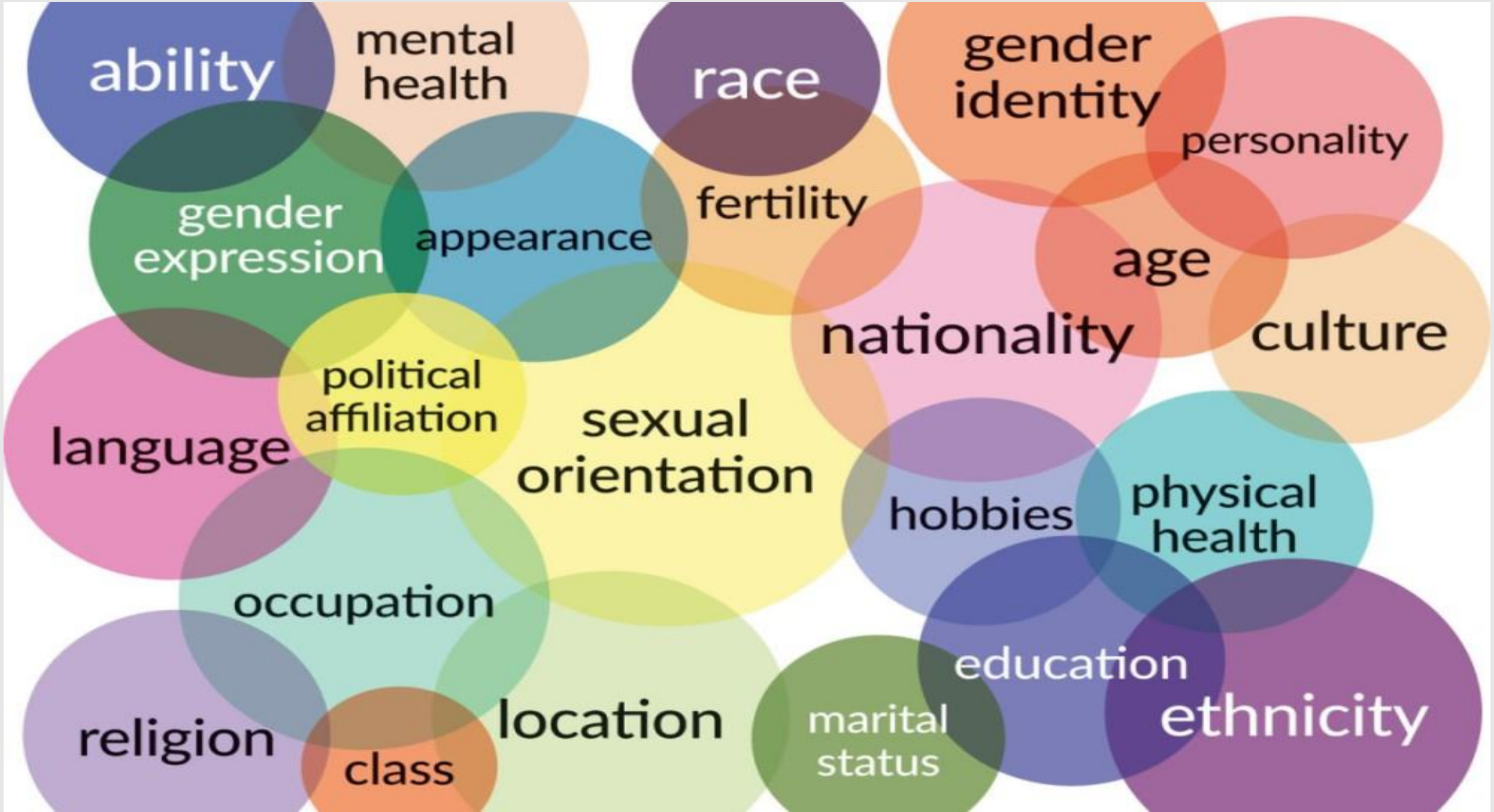
Neurodiversity and Intersectionality...



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B:M2023

DIG DEEPER, LOOK CLOSER, THINK BIGGER

According to expert Jannett Morgan, the majority of young Black British people in the UK do not acquire a diagnosis until they are in university and are pushed to their limits. I did not receive assistance until I was in college because I did not want to be further identified and labelled as dyslexic on top of the label of Black, of being a woman and from a Nigerian background. I decided to stay silent for as long as I could.

“When so many things can hold you back, for nothing more for being Black,

Who would want another label that says you are not able”

Neurodiversity, Race and Culture with Jannett Morgan on Diverse Minds

Potential Strengths...

- Determination – keep on keeping on!
- Truth Teller
- Disruptor!
- Skilled in Atypical problem solving – unusual connections can be made due to brain patterns
- Creative
- Good procrastinators – incubating the best solutions
- Exceptional in the right niche
- Confident, good social skills
- Empathic – good with people
- Effective use of coping strategies

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Potential Challenges…

- **Literacy Issues** – reading, writing, spelling, how the information is presented, issues with accuracy – especially if under pressure.
- **Numeracy Issues** - mental maths, time, money calculations, measuring, ability to estimate, recording information
- **Sensory Sensitivity**

Executive Functioning…

- **Organisation** – time management, 'multi-tasking', sequencing
- **Memory: working memory, short term memory** - appear forgetful, often 'loses thread' of conversations/ instructions.
- **Processing skills** – Visual and/ or Auditory processing

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Part Two

What is Dyslexia and Neurodiversity Good Practice?

Dyslexia and Neurodiverse Friendly Road Map

- Value and celebrate Neurodiverse Strengths
- Respectful and Inclusive Language
- Recruitment, Onboarding, Appraisals
- Communication Style
- Policies
- Neurodiverse Allies and Champions
- Peer support groups
- Signposting for colleagues
- Celebrate Dyslexia and other Awareness Times
- Audit and lists of potential Reasonable Adjustments (including Assistive Tech)

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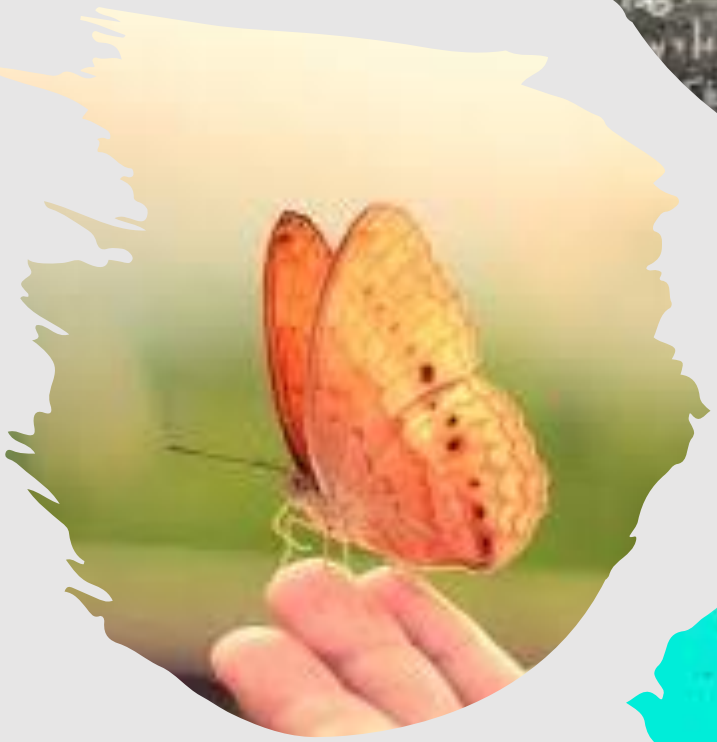
My Top 5!

1. Time
2. The ability to record
3. Speech to Text / Text to Speech Software
4. ‘Structure’ and ‘Bitesize chunks’
5. Attitude – work with me!

You can't be...
what you can't see!

Celebrating Dyslexia and being **positive** about neurodiversity **reframes** how dyslexia and other learning differences are **perceived** by us all!

We can often unwittingly give the impression that dyslexia is always associated with **challenges** and '**problems**' we must be positive about difference!



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Part Three

What is Belonging and Why is it Important?

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What is Belonging?

- An employee's sense that their **uniqueness** is accepted and even **treasured** by their organisation and colleagues.
- You feel **comfortable**, to share your opinions, to feel truly cared about and **accepted**, and **not afraid** to be yourself.

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5 Pillars of Belonging

Welcomed

Known

Included

Supported

Connected

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The Messages Shared by the 5 Pillars of Belonging...

- We are listening and you have a voice
- You are an important part of our team
- We value you and your work
- We care
- We acknowledge your experiences
- We are Inclusive
- We 'get it!'

Welcomed

- Inclusive language and culture
- Comfortable to disclose without negative repercussions
- Dyslexia Friendly communication style as standard
- Recruitment process
- Onboarding process
- Good practice as standard
- Taken on a journey that is specific to the individual
- Person-Centred approach

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The Lived Experience…

‘When my manager shared that she too had ADHD it made me feel understood and I thought ‘yes! you get me’ I hope she stays my manager for a long time, because her experiences mean that she knows intuitively how to get the best out of me and be a great ally’

Emma

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Known

- Being listened to…
- A clear path through for support?
- Champions and Allies
- I am understood – colleagues have knowledge of differences
- Lived experience is valued
- Awareness times are celebrated

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The Lived Experience...

‘I look around my organisation and I just don’t see anyone else like me... I am a black, neurodiverse woman, totally proud of who I am but it would be so powerful if there were more colleagues like me around... sometimes I can feel incredibly isolated and I get tired of always being a lone voice’

Mia

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Included

- My voice matters...
- My barriers are understood and strategies in place to remove them
- My needs are understood and met
- Barriers have been removed
- Neurodiverse Friendly approach is standard
- Policies mention my community

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The Lived Experience...

Was really pleased in work when they had a call out for neurodiverse colleagues to volunteer as Champions, it's made such a difference as I know I have someone I can go to for a chat and they always bring the neurodiverse perspective to our work – to be honest it's made a lot of us now more confident to speak up, a total win-win!

Stefan

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Supported

- Reasonable Adjustments are in place
- I am respected
- Extra time may be provided
- Support network may be in place
- Training provided
- Assistive technology is available
- Different ways of working are accepted

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The Lived Experience…

‘Before working here I used to leave a job after every couple of years, I just used to think that was what I did, I realise now it was because the adjustments I had in place in previous jobs weren’t a good fit for me. This organisation is totally different, they actually worked with me to discuss what I needed to get the best out of me. My job has changed since Covid, they even checked in with me then too, to make sure what I had in place was working – brilliant!’

Ravi

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Connected

- I feel supported
- I have a support network
- Signposting information is available
- Line manager understands me and is knowledgeable
- Champions and Allies

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The Lived Experience...

'Having the Neurodiversity Network has made such a difference, you don't feel so alone and isolated, I know there are others like me here, we keep it real and value honesty too... Can't begin to tell you the positive impact that has had on me, we also have some laughs along the way too, which helps!'

Paul

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Is the Opposite of Belonging 'Fitting in'?!

"Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are."

Brene Brown 2023

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When we don't value Belonging but Encourage 'Fitting in'...

- Isolation
- Misunderstood and feeling like an 'other'
- Fear
- Imposter Syndrome
- Not sure of the way ahead
- Feel invisible and under-valued
- Masking

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Masking and Camouflaging…

Important to be Uniquely You

How this can Manifest?

- Rehearsing conversations and scripting them, giving 'expected' answers
- Copying a person's tone of voice, faking smiles and facial expressions and maintaining eye contact
- Perfectionism and fear of mistakes – Imposter Syndrome and/or Rejection Sensitivity Disorder
- Presenteeism – there in name only
- Camouflaging the impact of sensory overload
- Hiding stimming behaviours
- Exhaustion - both physical and mental, can lead to absence from work
- Emotional overload, find it tough to self-regulate

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The Lived Experience...

'I never realised that I changed who I was to fit in at work, I guess it's called 'Masking' and it was exhausting for me not just emotionally, but I actually used to feel physically tired by the end of the day too. Since my identification and the journey that has followed I am actually the real me at work now, it's been tough finally getting to this place, but so worth it...'

Charlee

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The Benefits of Developing Belonging at Work

- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Encourages self-advocacy
- You can't be what you can't see...
- Avoids 'Inclusion – Wash'! Makes practice real and honest
- Clear pathways through
- Safe and secure environment
- Raises awareness
- Challenges unconscious bias
- Wisdom and lived experiences which resonate with colleagues

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The Lived Experience…

Now I'm in my 50s I finally feel confident to stand up for those of us who have dyslexia, since I have spoken out there have been so many colleagues who have approached me to thank me or who want to stand with me! We now have a bit of an army going on and it's fantastic! Me speaking up has caused ripples of hope'

Mohammed

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Any Questions and Keep in Touch...

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