

# Neurodiversity in the Workplace





**Neurodiversity is the recognition that people's brains work in different ways**  
**It's a natural variation in how we think, learn and process the world**

# Some Definitions...

**Neurodivergent** – An **individual** whose brain performs differently than what society considers the norm

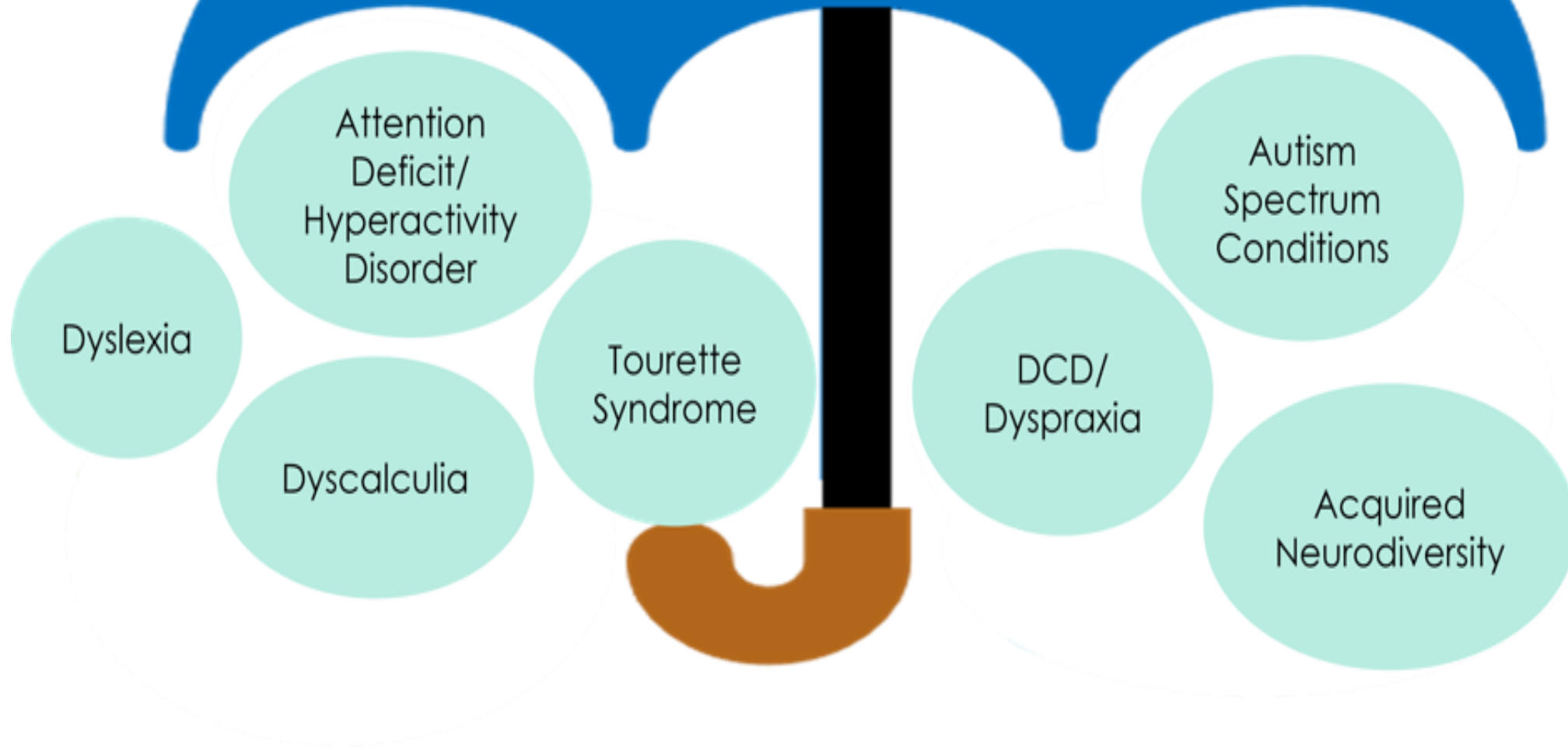


**Neurodiverse** – A **group-level concept** referring to the natural variation in human brains and how they process information



**Neurotypical** – Someone whose brain functions in the way expected by society

# Neurodivergent conditions





# How Common is Neurodiversity in NZ?

**Around 20% of people in NZ are neurodiverse**

**ADHD – 6%** (Impacts planning, impulse control, task execution)

**Autism - 1%** (Affects thinking, communication, behaviour, and sensory perception)

**Dyslexia - 10%,** 75,000 school children (Difficulty reading, writing, spelling, speaking)

**Dyspraxia – 10%** (Difficulty with coordinated movement)

**Dyscalculia – 6%** (Difficulty understanding numbers and numerical information)



# Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A neurodevelopmental condition that affects attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity

Affects approx 6% of population  
Likely to be much higher as many don't get diagnosed



**Attention:** Refers to how well you are able to **concentrate and focus**

**Hyperactivity:** Refers to being **overactive and restless**

# What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

A **lifelong neurodevelopmental condition** (not an illness or disease and cannot be 'cured') NB: term Aspergers is no longer used

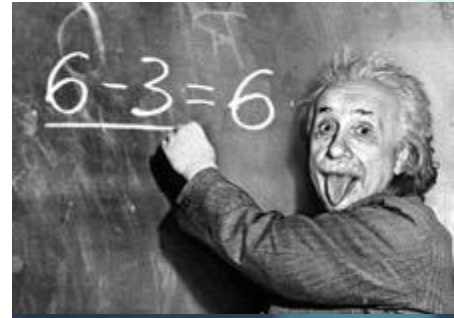
## Affects how people:

- Perceive the world
- Think and behave
- Communicate and interact with others

Autistic people **see, hear and feel the world differently**. An autistic brain **feels intensely, empathises profoundly, thinks deeply, observes precisely** (can be exhausting)

**"If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism"**

Immense diversity within the spectrum – each individual's experience and presentation of autism are unique





## Being neurotypical is NOT better

While some people learn, think and behave in less common ways, these are simply **differences** - they are often **strengths** and **not deficits**

Neurodiverse people have tremendous strengths that we need in order to fulfil the business needs of the future...



# Key Skills for 2030

## Cognitive Skills (Higher-order thinking)

- **Critical thinking and problem solving**
- **Creativity and innovation**
- **Cognitive flexibility** – ability to switch between different modes of thinking and adapt
- **Digital literacy** – understanding and using digital tools confidently



**Neurodiverse people have a lot of these strengths**

# Requires a Safe Environment

Many people are hesitant to divulge their neurodiversity due to fear of stigmatism and being labelled

International research shows:

- Most **do not feel safe disclosing** their neurodivergence at work
- Takes on average **3 years** to disclose their condition
- 43% **do not feel comfortable to approach their employer** to ask for change
- 80% of neurodivergent people are **undiagnosed** (huge unrealised potential)
- **Negative attitudes** are a problem - many use masking to fit in





resilient  
negotiator ambitious intuitive  
smart entertaining persistant  
explorers spontaneous divergent fun  
unique entrepreneurs curious  
ADHD resourceful  
limitless inspiring  
risk-taker  
dreamers  
passionate imaginative  
sensitive innovators motivated  
inspired tenacious  
creative



# Resources - ASD

1. **Altogether Autism** <https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz>
2. **Autism New Zealand** <https://www.autismnz.org.nz>
3. **Workbridge** <https://workbridge.co.nz>
4. **Spectrum Care – Transition and Employment Services** <https://www.spectrumcare.org.nz>

## Reading:

*Neurodiversity at Work: Drive Innovation, Performance and Productivity with a Neurodiverse Workforce* by Theo Smith and Amanda Kirby – includes practical leadership strategies

*"Employing Autistic People in Aotearoa: A Guide for Employer (2022)* – Altogether Autism

*Including People with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Workforce* – AUT NZ Work Research Institute

*I Am Autistic (2022)* by Chanelle Moriah

*Autism Working: A Seven stage plan to Thriving at Work (2024)* by Michelle Garnett

*The Autistic Experience: Silenced Voices Finally Heard (2023)* by Joe James

# Resources - ADHD

1. ADHD New Zealand (ADHD NZ) <https://www.adhd.org.nz>
2. Workbridge <https://workbridge.co.nz>

## Reading:

*"Thriving With ADHD at Work"* by ADHD New Zealand

*"This is ADHD"* (2023) by Chanelle Moriah

*It's Not a Bloody Trend: Understanding Life As an ADHD Adult"* (2023) by Kat Brown

*"ADHD 2.0: New Science and Essential Strategies for Thriving with Distraction—from Childhood through Adulthood"* (2021) by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey