

Making Teams more
Productive through
Neurodiversity--

References & More!!!!



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20 Famous People with Autism, *Autism Parenting Magazine*, Jun 6, 2024, available [here](#).

Celebrities with Bipolar Disorder, *WebMD*, Aug. 28, 2023, available [here](#).

Prominent Neurodivergent Lawyers & Groups

Brooke Rowland, J.D. – former DA and now a licensed clinical social worker. https://ibpf.org/team_members/brooke-rowland/

Terri Cheney – *The Bipolar Lens* and *Manic*

Elyn Saks – associate dean and Orrin B. Evans Professor of Law, Psychology, and Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences at USC Gould School of Law

Lawyers with Attention Deficit Disorder - <https://www.attorneyatwork.com/lawyers-with-add-problem-or-advantage/>

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The Lawyers Depression Project - <https://abovethelaw.com/2018/12/the-lawyers-depression-project/>

FAMOUS NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE

ADHD

Simone Biles

Michael Phelps

Woody Harrelson

Ryan Gosling

James Carville

Walt Disney

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Albert Einstein

Leonardo Da Vinci

Dyslexics

Sir Richard Branson

Albert Einstein

Steven Spielberg

Oprah

Paul Orfalea (Kinko's CEO)

Steve Jobs

Schizophrenia

Brian Wilson, Beach Boys

John Nash

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Dan Aykroyd

Jerry Seinfeld

Sir Anthony Hopkins

Elon Musk

Bill Gates

Steve Jobs

Albert Einstein

Thomas Jefferson

Bobby Fisher

Emily Dickinson

Satoshi Tajiri

OCD

Charlize Theron

Howard Hughes

Bipolar Disorder

Mariah Carey

Carrie Fisher

Selena Gomez

Demi Lovato

Kanye West

Britney Spears

Ted Turner

Catherine Zeta-Jones

Vivien Leigh

Frank Sinatra

Ernest Hemingway

Winston Churchill



ADHD

- In 1994, doctors decided that Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) would be covered by the umbrella term Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
 - ADHD predominantly inattentive presentation (what used to be called ADD)
 - ADHD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation
 - ADHD combined presentation (both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms)
- ADHD is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects approximately 4.4% of adults in the general population.
 - Common myths are that ADHD is a sign of laziness or that ADHD is only a childhood disorder.
- Research suggests that the prevalence of ADHD is significantly higher in the legal profession, with one survey citing 12.5% of lawyers reporting ADHD symptoms.
 - This disparity is likely due to the unique demands and pressures of the legal profession, which can exacerbate ADHD symptoms and co-occurring mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.
- Lawyers with ADHD often encounter difficulty concentrating, hyper-focus, and impulsivity, which can impact their ability to manage their workload, meet deadlines, and interact with clients and colleagues.
- Despite these challenges, many lawyers with ADHD have found success in the legal profession by leveraging their unique strengths, such as creativity, innovative thinking, and quick decision-making.

Sources:

Mueller L., "Masking Only Works For So Long": Working with ADHD," *World Intellectual Property Review*, 1 Aug. 2024, available [here](#).
Healy S., "Lawyers With ADD: A Problem or an Advantage?" *Attorney at Work*, Feb. 20, 2023, available [here](#).



ADHD

- Law school can be a challenging and demanding environment for students with ADHD.
 - The intense academic pressure, long hours of studying, and high-stakes exams can exacerbate ADHD symptoms, making it difficult for students to focus, organize their time, and complete assignments.
 - Research suggests that law students with ADHD are more likely to experience academic difficulties, such as lower grades and decreased academic achievement, compared to their non-ADHD peers.
 - Additionally, law students with ADHD may struggle with time management, procrastination, and self-regulation, which can impact their ability to complete assignments and meet deadlines.
- However, with the right support and accommodations, law students with ADHD can succeed in law school and go on to have successful careers in the legal profession.
 - Law schools can provide accommodations, such as extended time on exams, a quiet room for studying, and access to ADHD coaching, to help students with ADHD manage their symptoms and achieve their academic goals.



Sources:

Mueller L., "Masking Only Works For So Long: Working with ADHD," *World Intellectual Property Review*, 1 Aug. 2024, available [here](#).

Healy S., "Lawyers With ADD: A Problem or an Advantage?" *Attorney at Work*, Feb. 20, 2023, available [here](#).

ADHD

- The following techniques can help address some common challenges lawyers with ADHD face:
 - **Develop routines** – Can help cut down on needless decisions and reduce wasted time.
 - **Reduce distractions** – Close your door when you need to focus on work, turn off your phone ringer and email notifications, and minimize unnecessary noise where possible.
 - **Use technology** – Appointment and deadline reminders, time-tracking apps, timers, lists, automatic bill pay options, scheduling emails to arrive at certain intervals and the like.
 - **Practice meditation** – Note that meditation isn't about achieving some unrealistic period of prolonged calm; when your mind wanders off, notice that wandering and redirect your attention back to your breathing. Success occurs in the attempt and the trying again.
 - **Declutter your space** – Piles of disorganized paperwork will not only distract you, they can also prompt your brain to engage in random evaluations of the importance of such paperwork, leading to a huge mismanagement of your time and energy.
 - **Set good boundaries** – Saying “no” is something that needs to be practiced every day — from small tasks to large ones. Setting boundaries cuts down on unnecessary tasks and prioritizes what is most important to you.
 - **Prioritize sleep** – Prioritize a healthy sleep routine (known as sleep hygiene), ensuring a consistent bedtime, a regular wake-up time and improved quality of sleep.
 - **Exercise and eat healthy** – Those with ADD/ADHD might benefit even more than others from reducing their sugar and caffeine intake. Exercise can burn off extra energy and give your body what it needs to activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps you calm down, digest, rest and build up your immune system.



Sources:

Mueller L., ““Masking Only Works For So Long”: Working with ADHD,” *World Intellectual Property Review*, 1 Aug. 2024, available [here](#).

Healy S., “Lawyers With ADD: A Problem or an Advantage?” *Attorney at Work*, Feb. 20, 2023, available [here](#).

ADHD

- Examples of how you can be an ally include:
 - When conducting a meeting that includes ADHD colleagues, make certain to schedule periodic breaks.
 - Long meetings are extremely challenging for individuals with ADHD.
 - The longer the meeting, the more likely an individual with ADHD will become distracted and/or have trouble sitting still.
 - Schedule meetings in rooms that encourage movement or standing.
 - Consider eliminating laptops and/or cell phones to reduce the number of distractions and/or interruptions.
 - When working with ADHD colleagues on deadline-driven projects, set milestones and check in with your colleagues to make certain they are focused on relevant deadlines.
 - Consider repeating calendar reminders to help reinforce deadline dates.
 - Encourage note-taking to remember tasks and to stay engaged.
 - Provide distraction free work areas and encourage your ADHD colleagues to request any necessary accommodations such as noise-cancelling headphones and/or timers to avoid distractions.



Source:

Mueller L., ““Masking Only Works For So Long”: Working with ADHD,” *World Intellectual Property Review*, 1 Aug. 2024, available [here](#).

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave. People with ASD often have:
 - Difficulty with communication and interaction with other people.
 - Restricted interests and repetitive behaviors.
 - Symptoms that affect their ability to function in school, work, and other areas of life.
- **Selected signs and symptoms:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ○ Making little or inconsistent eye contact | match what is being said | echolalia) |
| ○ Infrequently sharing interest, emotion, or enjoyment of objects or activities (including infrequent pointing at or showing things to others) | ○ Having an unusual tone of voice that may sound sing-song or flat and robot-like | ○ Having a lasting intense interest in specific topics, such as numbers, details, or facts |
| ○ Having difficulties with the back and forth of conversation | ○ Having trouble understanding another person's point of view or being unable to predict or understand other people's actions | ○ Becoming upset by slight changes in a routine and having difficulty with transitions |
| ○ Often talking at length about a favorite subject without noticing that others are not interested or without giving others a chance to respond | ○ Difficulties adjusting behaviors to social situations | ○ Being more sensitive or less sensitive than other people to sensory input, such as light, sound, clothing, or temperature |
| ○ Displaying facial expressions, movements, and gestures that do not | ○ Repeating certain behaviors or having unusual behaviors, such as repeating words or phrases (a behavior called | |
- **Strengths:**
 - Being able to learn things in detail and remember information for long periods of time
 - Being strong visual and auditory learners
 - Excelling in math, science, music, or art

Source:

Autism Spectrum Disorder, *National Institute of Health*, Feb. 2024, available [here](#).

BIPOLAR DISORDER

- Sometimes referred to as the bipolar spectrum:
 - Bipolar I disorder most severe – periods of major depression last about 4 times longer than mania.
 - Bipolar II disorder – periods of major depression about 40 times longer than hypomania.
 - Cyclothymia – hypomania alternating with periods of less severe and shorter depression.
- On one end is major depression, which is characterized by symptoms that include:
 - feelings of extreme sadness, failure, worthlessness, and hopelessness
 - sleep disturbances (insomnia or sleeping too much)
 - withdrawal from family and friends
 - low energy and motivation
- On the other end is mania, which is characterized by symptoms that include:

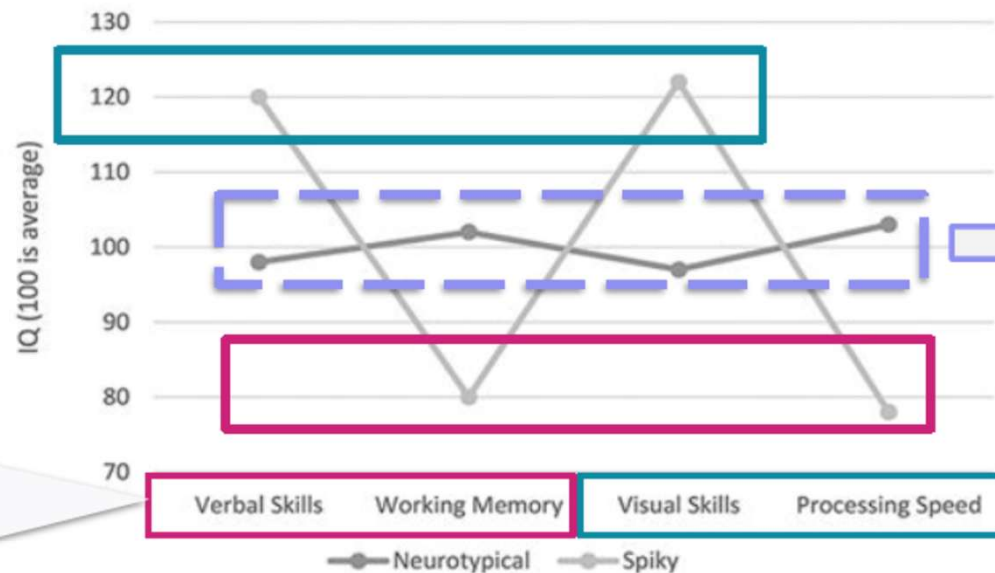
| | |
|--|---|
| ○ extreme elevations in energy and mood | ○ inability to concentrate and easily distracted |
| ○ a decreased need for sleep | ○ flight of ideas and taking on too many projects at once |
| ○ agitation, irritability, emotional intensity | ○ risky behavior |
| ○ racing thoughts and speech | ○ psychosis |
- **Strengths:**
 - Creativity
 - High verbal IQ (associated w/ creativity, abstract reasoning, and comprehension through spoken and written words)
 - Empathy
 - Resilience



What can neurodiversity look like?

“Spiky” Skills

There are more pronounced differences between areas of **strengths** & **challenges** in an ND skills profile; cognitive tests can indicate unique features of a divergent neurotype



“Neurotypical” individuals have cognitive profiles where disparities between strengths & challenges are less pronounced

See: Doyle, N. (2020). Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults. *British Medical Bulletin*, 135(1), 108–125.

Medical Model of Disability



Attribution

Disability viewed as a defect;
Focus is placed on limitations
emanating from individual's
disability-related symptoms

Priority

Treatments and cures that
mitigate or eliminate disabilities



Message

"Individuals should change to fit
in with society"



Impact

Medical professionals are the
source of power; People with
disabilities internalize the message
that they are "less than"



Social Model of Disability



Attribution

Interactions between the individuals and restrictive environments are viewed as disabling

Priority

Addressing barriers emanating from systems-level design



Message

"Systems must be flexibly designed to meet the needs of as many use-cases as possible"



Impact

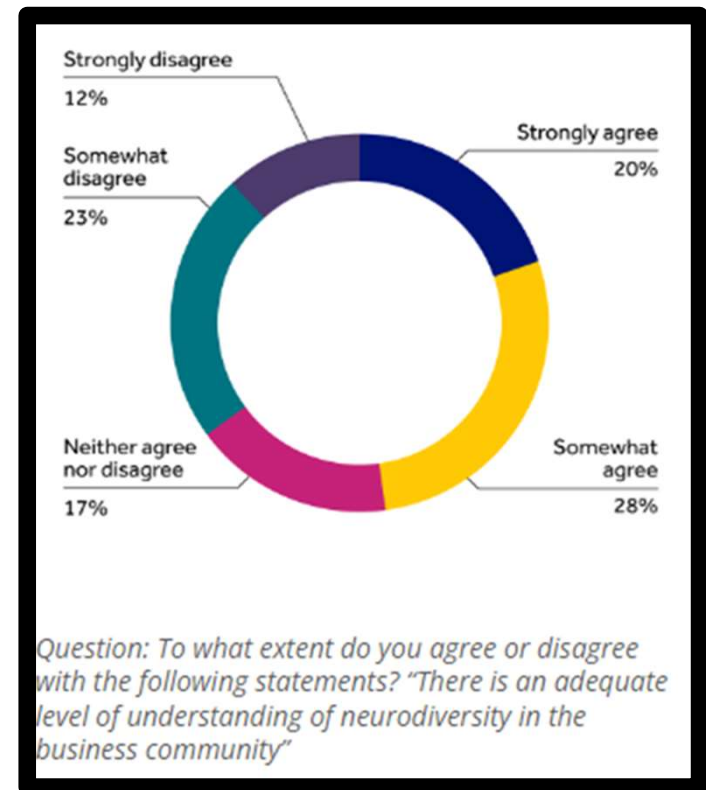
Neurodivergent people are viewed as distinct; Disability results from an interaction between the person & environment



REFRAMING

It's not how smart you are – It's HOW you are smart

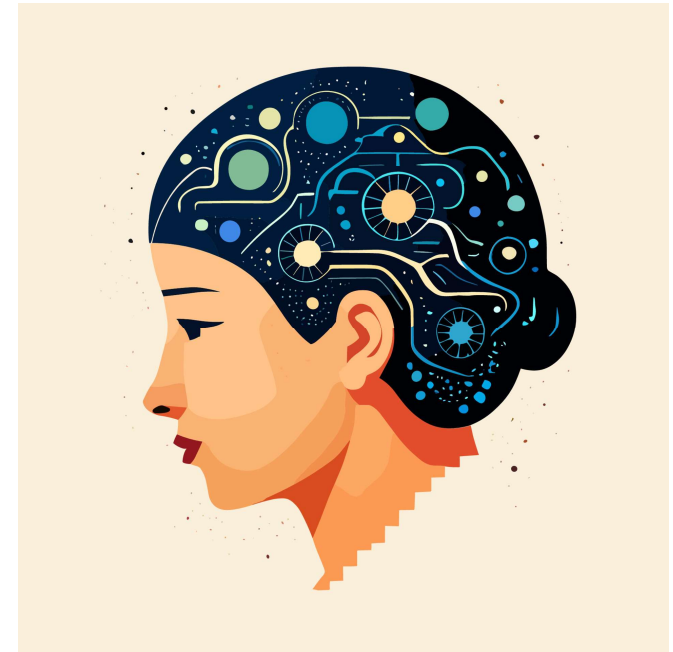
- **Linguistic intelligence** – sensitivity to the sounds, structure, meanings and functions of words and language
- **Logical-mathematical intelligence** - capacity to discern logical and numerical patterns
- **Spatial intelligence** – the capacity to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations on one's perceptions.
- **Bodily kinesthetic intelligence** – ability to control body movements
- **Musical intelligence** – ability to produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch and timbre.
- **Interpersonal intelligence** – capacity to discern and respond appropriately to moods, temperaments and motivations
- **Intrapersonal intelligence** – to access one's own feeling of life and discriminate among emotions
- **Naturalist intelligence** – distinguishing among species.



BENEFITS

Prioritizing workplace neurodiversity significantly benefits key business metrics like:

- **Team productivity and performance.** A Deloitte report: “research suggests that teams with neurodivergent professionals in some roles can be 30% more productive than those without them.”
 - Neurodiverse employees’ unique skills and cognitive abilities allows them to solve problems and approach tasks differently than their team members.
- **Retention.** With support and allyship, neurodiverse employees are generally quite loyal and have significantly lower turnover rates than neurotypical employees. EY, SAP, JPMorgan Chase, and Microsoft – which run four of the largest U.S. autism hiring programs – report a retention rate of more than 90%.
- **Engagement.** Hiring neurodiverse employees can improve employees’ perceptions of DEI and company culture, which in turn helps boost employee engagement.
- **Innovation.** Because they think differently from their neurotypical peers, neurodiverse employees can help drive innovation among their teams.
- **Talent attraction.** A 2022 Glassdoor study found that DEI “matters for the majority of employees and job seekers across age groups, but it matters more for younger employees, women, and people of color.” As a key aspect of diversity, prioritizing neurodiversity is essential for companies hoping to attract the next generation of talent.



Challenges of Allyship in Law Firms

Traditional, conservative culture can resist change

High-pressure environment may not prioritize inclusivity

Lack of awareness about neurodiversity among colleagues

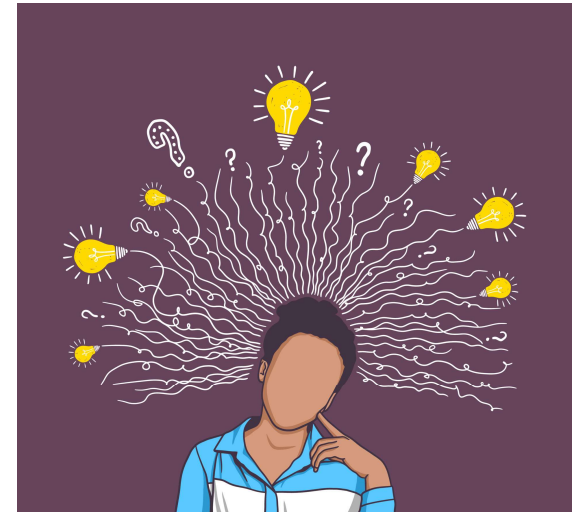
Fear of making mistakes or offending neurodivergent individuals

Time constraints in a billable-hours focused profession

Balancing client expectations with inclusive practices

BENEFITS

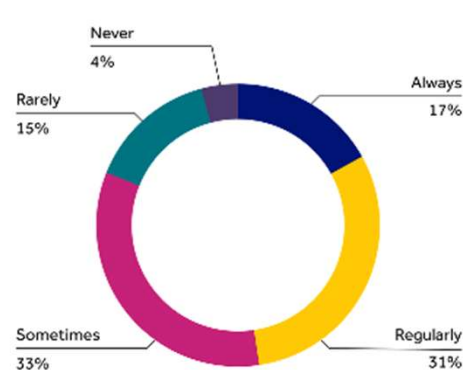
- Neurodivergent individuals have been found to possess some of the most sought skills in today's world of work, including:
 - **Greater than normal ability to process information.** Research has found that autistic employees “have a greater than normal capacity for processing information even from rapid presentations and are better able to detect information defined as ‘critical.’”
 - **Creative thinking.** Many of the symptoms of ADHD – creativity, risk-seeking, high energy, and the desire to multitask – can become key strengths when leveraged the right way, in the right job, and in the right organization. Meanwhile, individuals with dyslexia are “often capable of seeing connections that others cannot and create narrations which can simplify complex tasks or products.”
 - **Elevated productivity.** A case study by JPMorgan Chase found that professionals in its Autism at Work initiative made fewer errors and were 90% to 140% more productive than neurotypical employees.
 - **Ability to take a different perspective.** Because neurodiverse people are “wired” differently from neurotypical people, they often bring innovative ways of thinking and problem-solving to their teams and organizations.
- However, organizations must avoid hiring neurodiverse employees expecting them to, for example, fit the stereotype of an “autistic savant” who exhibits exceptional, genius-level abilities in one or more domains.



Source: “Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Why It Matters,” *Culture Amp*, Feb. 1, 2024, available [here](#).

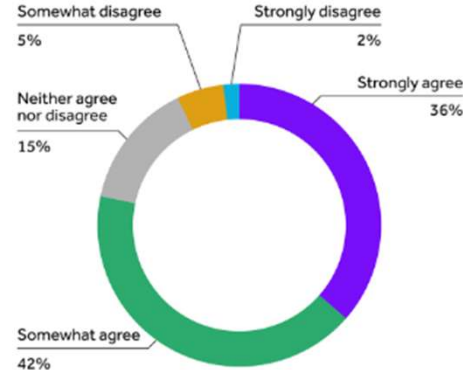
Implications of Masking....

- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health problems
- Delayed or lost opportunities
- Retention / Advancement



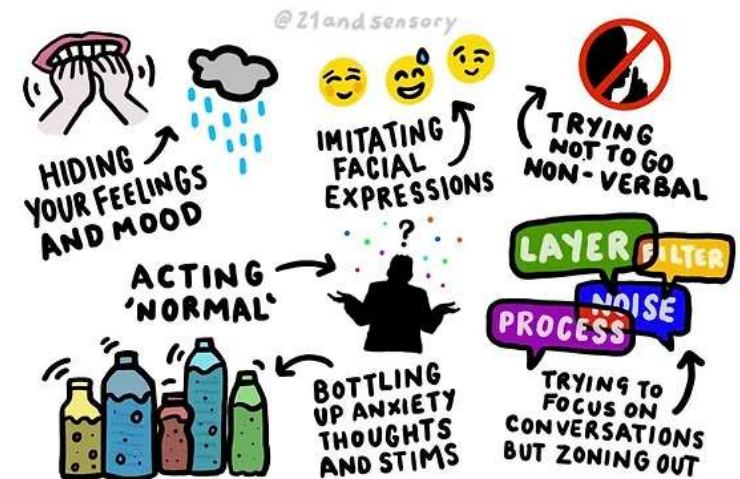
Question: How often, if ever, do you face discrimination as a founder because of your neurodiversity?

<https://www.tenentrepreneurs.org/neurodiverse-founders-1>



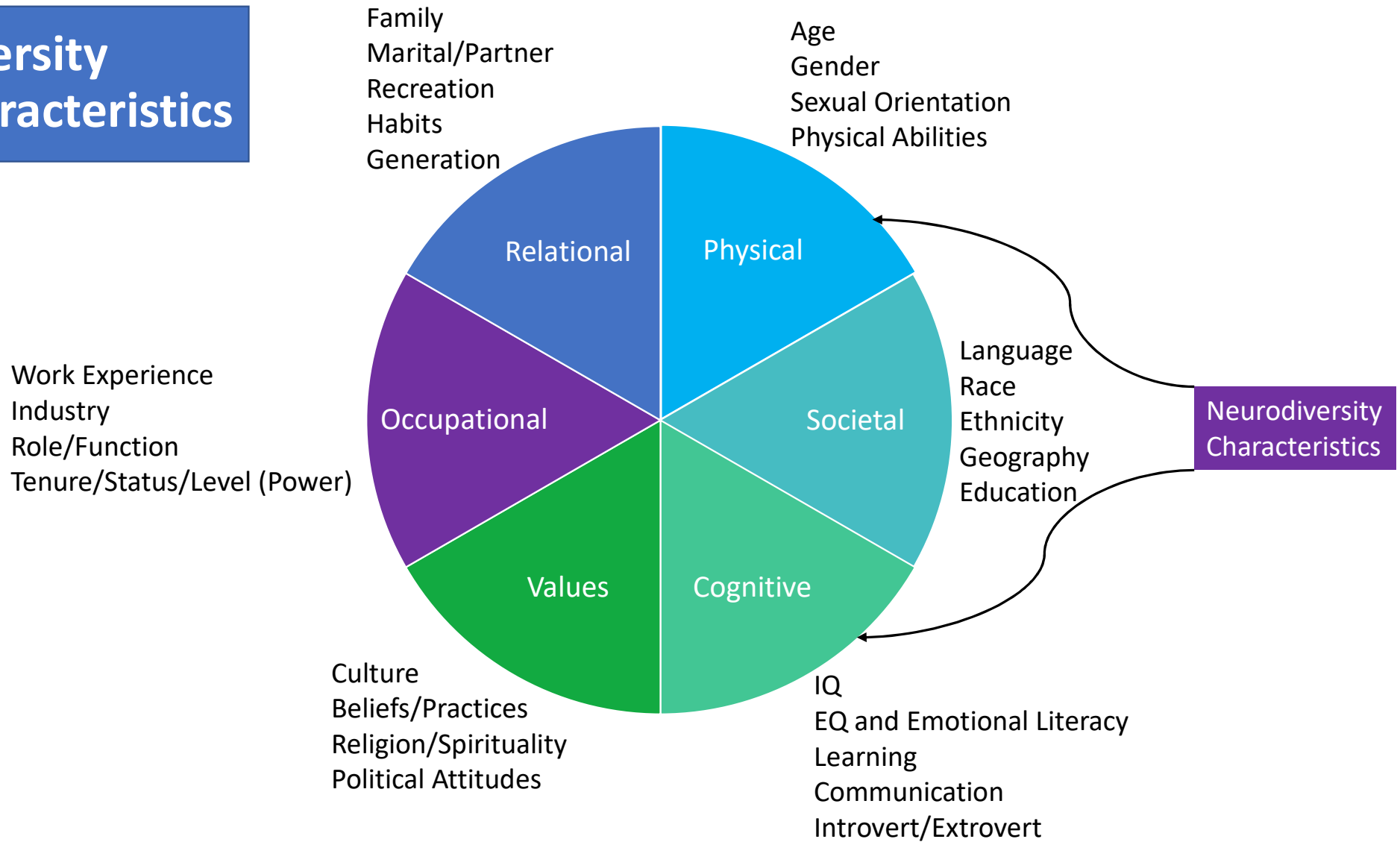
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "I have 'hidden' my neurodiversity in business situations"

WHAT IS 'MASKING'?



THIS CAN LEAD TO AUTISTIC BURNOUT+SENSORY HANGOVER.

Diversity Characteristics



Tools & Considerations

Educate!

Organize Talent Based Teams

- Sharing team preferences regardless of status

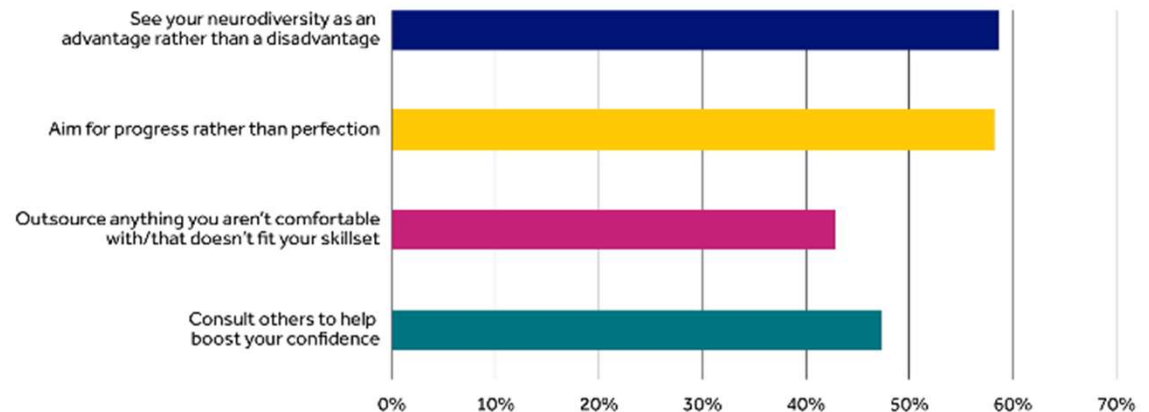
Space Design & Flexibility

- Workplaces that are universal in design
- Flexible work schedules / virtual work

Improve Communication Skills & Methods

Use Tools

- Grammarly
- Fonts / Sizing
- Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG)
- Noise Cancelling Headphones



Question: What, if any, advice would you give to a neurodiverse individual who hasn't started a business yet, but might be interested in doing so? (Tick all that apply)

F-shaped Emails

Horizontal eye pattern on first 1-2 lines before transition to vertical tracking mode

First word of each line receives the most attention

Keep it short and to the point –
how much time does a CEO have?

