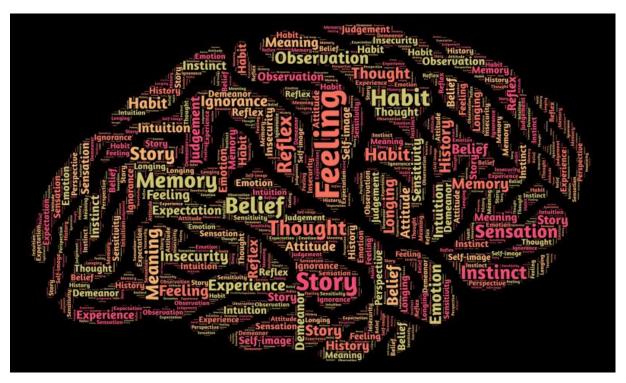
## Adapt the society, not the person



What is "the normal function" of the brain?

At least since the end of the 20th century, this has been debated in the disability community. Much of the debate began with discussions on neurodiversity by people on the autism spectrum. The term neurodiversity itself was coined by sociologist Judy Singer. And in 1998, Harvey Blume wrote a few lines about neurodiversity in The Atlantic that are widely quoted today: "Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for humans as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment?"

The implication is that different brains, functioning in different ways, are needed at different times and that the different functions are not right or wrong. They just are. In this context, society's goal should not be to correct or cure what is different. The aim should be to ensure that as many barriers as possible are removed so that we can realize the potential of everyone. For example, if we let people freely choose the way they present something they will use lots of different ways. Consequently, we will hear, read, and see presentations that we would have missed by forcing everybody to do a written presentation.

Today, more disability groups in society have embraced the concept of neurodiversity, especially people with dyslexia, ADD and ADHD. Among those who have embraced the notion, some (but not all) largely avoid the term disability. Instead, they argue that different brains create a diversity that we must embrace. They see advantages and disadvantages to each function and ability. For example, having ADHD and thus having difficulty concentrating, need not be only a disadvantage but may also entail advantages (sometimes called "superpowers").

No matter if you see superpowers in differently wired brains or not, the term 'neurodiversity' alludes to the fact that all of us have different characteristics. We all have traits like height, skin color, intelligence and weight, and abilities to consume text, produce text, or concentrate. If society only focuses on somebodies' different behavior or lack in some regard it won't recognize talents within the group.

Article: <a href="https://signaturereports.net/adapt-the-society-not-the-person/">https://signaturereports.net/adapt-the-society-not-the-person/</a> June 2022

In a nutshell: some of us are tall and some of us are good at writing, but few have it all. We do need to adapt society to make everyone flourish.

Read Harvey Blume's article on neurodiversity in The Atlantic here.

By Sara Rydin