

WHITE PAPER

**NEURODIVERSITY
&
THE WORLD**

BY THE OCTOPUS MOVEMENT

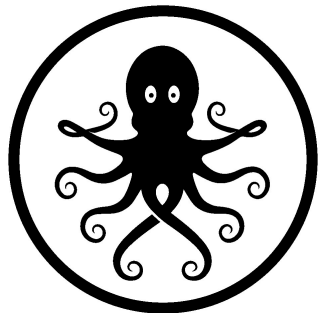
NONLINEAR THINKING

NEURODIVERSITY

&

THE WORLD

BY THE OCTOPUS MOVEMENT



© the Octopus Movement, april 2023

Throughout human history, our society has been shaped by diversity, whether that diversity has been cultural or even genetic.

Diversity in self-expression and approach has also informed not only the human experience but the development of industry, markets, and cultural focus. Some of the greatest examples of diversity, however, aren't cultural or even genetic. They're cognitive.

The term 'neurodiversity' has evolved to describe, recognize, and embrace the differences in how people's brains are wired, how they solve problems, or how they process the world.

Nonlinear thinkers work differently and capably. We are **uniquely** interested and able to focus on and acquire expertise in, many areas. We are multi-specialists who sometimes defy the norms of a nine-to-five world.

WHO ARE WE?

The Octopus Movement is a **global** coalition of nonlinear thinkers united by a desire to create positive change in the world.

We are here to drive acceptance and **awareness** of the awesome abilities of atypical thinkers and embed our diverse experience, expertise, and polymathic skills inside institutions ready and willing to tackle the trickiest challenges of today and tomorrow.

1.

STATEMENT

Just as there is a range of physical differences among people, human thought and internal processing also falls on a spectrum. These differences can include conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurological conditions that affect how individuals process information, communicate, and interact with the world around them, but it can also describe highly nonlinear thinkers, who find their own passion in solving and processing the human equation using their own unique approach.

Many of the innovations and world-changing ideas that have created the unique global community we live in today are here because of those willing to take the risk of approaching problems differently, often while struggling through their own challenges.

While the concept of neurodiversity has been important in raising awareness about the ways in which people with neurological differences experience the world, it can also be limiting in its focus. By emphasizing neurodiversity, we risk pigeonholing people into categories based on their diagnoses, which can perpetuate stereotypes and overlook the uniqueness of each individual's experiences and contributions. It also fails to address the struggles of those with nonlinear processes and ideas.

Accommodating a particular diagnosis in a hiring program often feels easier than accommodating people who don't 'fit in'.

“NEURODIVERSITY IS NATURE'S WAY OF ORGANIZING EVOLUTION, PLACING THE VAST ARRAY OF COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE US HUMAN AT THE TAILS OF THE MEDIAN BELL CURVE.

SINCE THE START OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION THE WORLD HAS VALUED CONFORMITY MORE AND MORE, AND HAS FORGOTTEN THE FORCES OF MERGING COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES WHICH HAVE PROPELLED THE HUMAN RACE FORWARD.

NEURODIVERSE INDIVIDUALS EXIST ON THE EDGE'S OF THE "NORMAL"

DISTRIBUTION, CHALLENGING SOCIETY TO EMBRACE AND CELEBRATE THE UNIQUE STRENGTHS AND PERSPECTIVES THAT ARISE FROM HUMAN COGNITIVE DIFFERENCES.

THIS UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE OFFERS A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR EXISTENCE AND CHALLENGES THE IDEA THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE "RIGHT" WAY OF THINKING AND BEING.

BY RECOGNIZING AND EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY, WE CAN UNLOCK ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES FOR INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND REINVENT THE CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL TRUTH. TO

FULLY APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF NEURODIVERSITY, WE MUST RECOGNIZE EACH PERSON AS A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL WITH THEIR OWN STRENGTHS AND PERSPECTIVES.

THIS MEANS ABANDONING FIXED SOCIETAL NORMS AND BEING OPEN-MINDED IN OUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS.

EDUCATION IS KEY IN PROMOTING NEURODIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY, STARTING WITH TEACHING CHILDREN THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGINATION, TIME, AND THE CELEBRATION OF DIFFERENCES. BALANCING

INDIVIDUALITY AND SUPPORT FROM THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS IS KEY IN STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES.

WE MUST APPRECIATE EACH PERSON'S UNIQUE UPBRINGING AND LIFE STORY, AND BE SENSITIVE TO THEIR BOUNDARIES AND NEEDS.

ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUALS TO EXPLORE AND EXPRESS THEIR UNIQUE TALENTS AND STRENGTHS CAN CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF CURIOSITY AND PURPOSE. DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN PERSPECTIVES ON IDENTITY IS IMPORTANT, AND RECOGNIZING THAT

THERE IS NO GOOD OR BAD WHEN IT COMES TO NEURODIVERSITY, ONLY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND WAYS OF THINKING.

BY PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY, WE CAN CREATE A SOCIETY THAT VALUES AND CELEBRATES INNOVATION AND DIFFERENCE. AS A WRITER, WE URGE US ALL TO BE OPEN-MINDED, EMPATHETIC, AND RESPECTFUL OF EACH PERSON'S UNIQUE TALENTS AND PERSPECTIVES, WHILE ALSO RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING.”

The barrier isn't money, interest, benefits, or procedure, it's people. The way we psychologically regard those different from ourselves is part of the human equation, and it's not always a voluntary part of our internal processing.

New ideas and novel approaches can feel threatening to established systems, and leaders don't always know how to properly integrate those that are different and their ideas so they can benefit from them.

In 1610, Galileo published "Sidereus Nuncias", a book detailing his observations of the moons of Jupiter; it also provided strong evidence that the Sun, not the earth, was the center that so many recognizable distant bodies seemed to orbit. This heliocentric model was threatening to established belief systems and teachings, however, and so because of it Galileo was placed on house arrest for the remainder of his life. In many ways, neurodivergent and nonlinear thinkers feel much the same way about their approaches and ideas, feeling excluded or even attacked for being different. When a disability physically manifests itself, those of us with enlightened ideas about the human experience and who have learned the value of those who are physically challenged are quick to accommodate them, but the experience of those with disabilities that are not as readily apparent can be wildly different.

How prevalent are these experiences? 85% of autistic adults are unemployed, according to a study done by the National Autistic Society. Eighty-five percent. Roughly half of those adults do not possess intellectual disabilities, but are still excluded from the workplace because of other barriers, ranging from hiring approach to integration to transportation. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in the UK, only 12% of organizations have neurodiverse-specific hiring programs, even though the National Bureau of Economic Research has released studies indicating that hiring individuals on the autism spectrum statistically increases productivity and reduces labor costs,

depending on the industry. There is a pressing need to celebrate and embrace the unique approaches and perspectives that people bring to the workplace and our global community, regardless of whether they fit into any particular diagnostic category. Diversity, when properly supported, lends itself to strengthening ideas and approaches, just as genetic diversity strengthens the resilience of all life on the face of this planet. To integrate these ideas into the business world, we need to move away from a model that rewards conformity and penalizes deviation. Too often, organizations focus on fitting people into predetermined roles, rather than recognizing and celebrating the unique skills and perspectives that each individual brings to the table. This can lead to a culture of sameness, in which everyone is expected to think and act the same way, stifling innovation and limiting the potential for growth and success. Often, those that create and dwell in existing systems can be highly resistant to change, and that natural effect desperately needs a countersink. Disabilities like autism and ADHD often impact our ability to separate symptoms from character traits. It's one thing to install a ramp for those who cannot easily use stairs, but it's another to change our impression of what seems to be contextless criticism or behavior that we usually take as a form of communication. Most of us would never fault a friend or coworker for not helping when they're bound to a wheelchair, but without the right education and context may punish many neurodivergent and linear approaches and symptoms in the workplace. This isn't only an issue of education, however, it requires the buy-in of hiring managers, leaders, and the community in general to reframe these kinds of experiences.

There is a clear need to create work environments that value and encourage diversity of thought and approach. This means recognizing and rewarding the unique contributions that each individual can make, rather than trying to fit them into a predetermined mold. It means creating opportunities for people to collaborate and share ideas, and encouraging

experimentation and risk-taking. By doing so, we can tap into the full potential of our workforce, and create a culture of innovation and creativity that benefits everyone.

That's the easy part, it's an extension of how we already recognize status and achievement in the neurotypical world; the only challenge is in adopting a wider view of how excellence is measured. There is another challenge, however, and that's the rigidity of sameness in approach and resolution of problems, conflicts, and solutions, where feelings and reactions often take hold before our higher brains have a chance to object. Moving away from the rigid hierarchical structures that have benefited the early development of the business world and embracing more flexible, adaptable models is the real challenge. It means moving from the known and being willing to fail. The challenge of trying new approaches while still holding onto the reins of an organization creates more challenges and disharmony at first, and many individuals and organizations are concerned about the short-term obstacles this will create, rather than focusing on the long-term benefits. Integrating these ideas means flattening hierarchies, creating cross-functional teams, and empowering individuals to take ownership of their personal contributions to the environment that currently can feel so challenging. It also means creating a culture that values and rewards experimentation and risk-taking, and that recognizes failure as an opportunity for growth and learning.

However, this also means that neurodiverse and nonlinear individuals must learn to let go of their past negative experiences and be willing to wipe the slate clean with respect to their linear counterparts. A new culture of cooperation and collaboration requires compromise, understanding, and patience on both sides of the equation. Holding onto the fear of judgment and experience of mistreatment in trying to fit into linear social groups will only make this budding change more difficult for everyone involved.

There are broader social implications to valuing diversity of thought and approach. As a society, we have tended to view neurological differences as a problem to be solved or a challenge to be overcome, rather than as a natural variation in human cognition. This has led to stigmatization, discrimination, and a lack of understanding and support for those who think differently. Human beings actively gauge temperament and approach in their evaluation of others; making room for learning that the behavior in neurotypical people that is often negatively perceived can be symptomatic in many conditions is part of broadening that understanding, but this also requires that nonlinear and neurodivergent individuals self-advocate as part of their effort to join the community. To overcome these barriers, we all need to invest in a culture that recognizes and celebrates the value of diversity in all its forms, but it also means taking accountability for what isn't working and why. That requires a type of listening and understanding that allows us to see a different story behind the behavior and communication we have all been taught by experience to receive a certain way. A clear social need for the appreciation of neurodiversity and what it offers to the world at large has started the conversation, but we should use this unique opportunity to have a broader discussion on celebrating all our differences, and what being open to new ideas, perspectives, and non-linear solutions has to offer the future. These aren't questions we can answer in an echo-chamber, and that means inviting the discussion and examination of experiences we'll need to draw from to create lasting change. The National Business and Disability Council found that only 3% of employees in the United States choose to disclose their disability to their employer. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development learned that 60% of organizations in the UK didn't know if any of their employees were neurodivergent.

These statistics clearly indicate the problem, is your team working on the solution?

2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Teachers:

1. Use varied teaching strategies: Utilize a variety of teaching methods and approaches to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences.
2. Create a welcoming and inclusive environment: Display posters or other materials that promote diversity and inclusivity, and take steps to ensure that all students feel welcome and valued.
3. Assess each student's strengths and weaknesses: Develop an understanding of each student's unique strengths and weaknesses, and tailor your teaching approach to their individual needs.
4. Provide individualized learning: Offer personalized support and resources to students who need extra help, such as providing accommodations, extra time, or additional materials.
5. Encourage creativity and exploration: Provide opportunities for students to explore and express their unique talents and perspectives, and encourage creative thinking and problem-solving.
6. Incorporate play and movement: Start each class with 10 minutes of play, dancing, or other movement activities to help students regulate their emotions and focus their attention.
7. Use nature as a teaching tool: Incorporate nature into your teaching and learning activities by having half or more of your classes outside, and utilizing outdoor environments as teaching tools.
8. Eliminate stigma and punishment: Do not punish kids who break the rules, but instead create opportunities for them to investigate and think outside of boundaries, and work to eliminate the stigma attached to neurodivergence.
9. Celebrate diversity: Remove the idea that everyone needs to be held to a "norm," and start with the idea that all people are different and we all learn differently. Celebrate the unique strengths and perspectives of each student.

10. Provide ongoing education and support: Educate yourself on neurodiversity and best practices for teaching diverse learners, and seek out ongoing support and resources to continue improving your teaching practice.

Recommendations for Parents:

1. Celebrate and embrace your child's differences. Recognize that neurodiverse children have unique talents and perspectives that should be celebrated.
2. Be open-minded and empathetic in your interactions with your child. Understand that their experience and level of awareness is unique.
3. Hug your child more, and let them play more. Encourage them to explore and express their unique talents and strengths.
4. Be an example of humanity that your child can learn from. Remember that kids earn what they see and hear, so be a positive role model.
5. Understand that normal is just a setting on the dryer. Don't try to force your child to fit into societal norms, and instead embrace their individuality.
6. Have faith that your child knows best. Listen to their needs and wants, and support them in their journey.
7. Encourage your child to be themselves, not like someone you want them to be. Help them develop their own identity and sense of self.
8. Accept your past failures as a parent, and allow room for growth and learning for both you and your child.
9. Learn and understand what works best for your child, and let them lead the way. Don't force your own expectations onto them.
10. Find ways to get educated about neurodiversity and connect with other families in similar situations. This can create a supportive community and help to alleviate some of the challenges of raising a neurodiverse child.

Recommendations for Spouses:

1. Focus on understanding the person, and try to empathize with their unique perspective and challenges.
2. Recognize that your partner is your mirror, and use the relationship as an opportunity to reflect on your own behaviors and attitudes.
3. Work on understanding yourself, and recognize how your own experiences and biases may impact your interactions with your partner.
4. Investigate how humans interact, and seek out resources or support groups for neurodiverse relationships.
5. Create boundaries on the treatment of others, and discuss what behaviors are acceptable and unacceptable in your relationship.
6. Recognize that everyone's experience tints the lens through which they perceive the world, and be patient and understanding with your partner's unique perspective.
7. Set an intention between the two of you to give each other the gift of being fully human and expansive, and allow each other to grow and learn.
8. Avoid using labels to categorize your partner, and instead focus on their unique talents and strengths.
9. Understand the value of unconditional love in your relationship, and prioritize compassion and empathy.
10. Allow partners to clarify what they need from each other, and communicate openly and honestly about emotional stress and unhealed wounds. Remember that a neurodivergent partner is not inherently stressful, and strive to let go of flawed expectations of what a "good relationship" looks like.

Recommendations for HR:

1. **Prioritize self-development:** Encourage employees to develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence to better understand themselves and others.
2. **Foster an environment of seeking to understand:** Encourage open dialogue and active listening to create an inclusive workplace where employees feel valued and heard.
3. **Offer leadership training:** Provide leaders with tools to reflect on themselves and their team, and better support neurodiverse individuals in the workplace.
4. **Diversify communication methods:** Offer multiple lines of communication, including written and visual communication, and ask clarifying questions to ensure all employees feel included and understood.
5. **Respect unique experiences:** Be sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of neurodiverse individuals, as everyone's experience tints the lens through which they perceive the world.
6. **Prioritize human potential:** Value the individual strengths and talents of each employee, beyond their role within the organization.
7. **Offer accommodations:** Provide support and accommodations to meet the needs of neurodiverse individuals, such as flexible working hours or other work arrangements.
8. **Look beyond neurodiversity:** Focus on the individual's abilities and potential, rather than solely on their diagnosis or condition.
9. **Encourage exploration of unique talents:** Offer opportunities for neurodiverse individuals to explore and express their unique talents and strengths, cultivating a culture of curiosity and purpose.
10. **Celebrate diversity and inclusivity:** Promote inclusivity and diversity to create a workplace that values and celebrates innovation and difference, while recognizing the importance of education and individualized learning.

3.

URLS

Judy Singer (born April 12, 1951) is an Australian sociologist, known for coining the term neurodiversity.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judy_Singer

More about the Octopus Movement:

<https://www.theoctopusmovement.org/manifesto>

Sources:

85% of autistic adults are unemployed, according to the National Autistic Society in 2016.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/outcomesfordisabledpeopleintheuk/2020>

Only 22% of working-age adults with autism in the US have full-time jobs, according to Drexel University's Autism Institute in 2017.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/news/new-data-on-the-autism-employment-gap>

In the UK, only 16% of autistic adults are in full-time employment, according to the National Autistic Society in 2016.

[https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1228&context=education_articles#:~:text=The%20National%20Autism%20Society%20\(2016,et%20al.%2C%202004\).](https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1228&context=education_articles#:~:text=The%20National%20Autism%20Society%20(2016,et%20al.%2C%202004).)

A survey by the National Autistic Society found that 77% of autistic adults feel that they face barriers in the workplace, including discrimination and a lack of understanding about their condition, in 2018.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3356150/>

In a study by the Center for Talent Innovation, 48% of employees with ADHD reported feeling that they had to hide their condition at work in order to avoid negative consequences, in 2018.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5005387/>

The same study found that 85% of employees with ADHD reported that their condition has an impact on their work performance, in 2018.

<https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/autismoutcomes/publications/National%20Autism%20Indicators%20Report%20-%20July%202015.ashx>

A survey by the National Business and Disability Council found that only 3% of employees in the US disclose their disability to their employer, in 2018.

https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf

According to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, hiring individuals with autism in tech roles can lead to increased productivity and cost savings for employers, in 2017.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/denisebrodey/2022/10/18/only-4-of-employees-disclose-a-disability-but-new-hr-tools-and-training-could-upend-that-trend/?sh=37e0767678c7>

A report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that just 12% of organizations have a neurodiversity-specific recruitment program in the UK, in 2018.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7564237/>

The same report found that 60% of organizations in the UK did not know if any of their employees were neurodivergent, in 2018.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/media/press/150218-neurodiversity#gref>



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

As part of the global mycelium of amazing out-of-the-box thinkers, we embody the spirit of the octopus - a symbol of adaptability, creativity, and resilience. We are a dynamic network of individuals from different cultures, religions, genders, and educational backgrounds, who have come

together to form a united force of change. Our writing and artistic creations serve as a reflection of our unique perspectives, exploring the challenges faced by our world with a fresh lens. Whether it be through poetry, prose, visual art, or musical expression, we seek to communicate the complexities of our global challenges in a way that is both thought-provoking and accessible.

In our work, we celebrate the beauty of diversity and seek to bridge the gaps between cultures and communities. We believe that by collaborating across boundaries, we can arrive at solutions that are more innovative, equitable, and sustainable. Together, we are pushing the boundaries of conventional thinking and creating new narratives for a better world. So, let us continue to explore, create, and engage in meaningful discourse, as we strive towards a brighter future for all.

With boundless creativity and a commitment to positive change, thank you for reading.

Text by:

Anshar Seraphim & Perry Knoppert

Nonlinear Thinkers:

Yoka Brouwer

Kimberly Butler

Janice Campbell

Michelle Cheyne

Daphne D

Dutch DeVries

Mikki Gaffen Stone

Linda Giangreco

Daniel Herrera

Daniël Hoogstraat

Perry Knoppert

Stephanie Kunkel

Marnix Langstraat

Clif P. Lewis

Michaell Magrutsche

Katherine McCord

Dane McCormack

Chris Michel

Kate Proykova

Han Rijndorp

Ria San Gabriel

Snjezana Sredojevic

Scott Swan

Roy Vella

Melissa Warner

For more information:

thinktank@theoctopusmovement.org

© the Octopus Movement

Published by Nonlinear Publishing