

EFFECTIVE FACILITATION: ENSURING SUCCESS FOR NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS

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JUNE 2023



PRESENTATION

- Rachel's Story
 - Her Capabilities
 - Her Masters journey
- What the literature says
- What were the themes that transpired
 - Tools and Strategies
- The role of facilitation in promoting successful outcomes for neurodivergent learners
 - Key qualities and attributes facilitators need to have
 - The facilitator (Glenys)-learner(Rachel) relationship
- Questions?





RACHEL'S STORY

- The majority of adults with neurodiversity work extremely hard to hide the fact that they have learning challenges and have also become adept at devising strategies in order to mask the condition or to avoid its effects.
- A student who has failed years of schooling may be lacking self-confidence - usually as a result of failure in regular school settings.
- For Me - undertaking the Test was the “light bulb moment”



“WORK AROUNDS”

- Thinking/talking out loud
- Self-talk – lots of it
- Repeat sentence back and forth
- Notetaking, scribbling
- List writing
- Make daily/weekly processes
- Routine
- Pattern searching- looking for ways to make information connect
- Finger counting

MASTERS OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE JOURNEY

- What I wanted to know, find out more about, and develop so that learners, educators and support staff could better support each other in the learning journey.
- Other than my own 'lived experience' I was keen to gain insights into what other neurodivergent learners thought



Qualitative

- Dynamic approach to research
- Generates multiple “truths” from real world settings
- Used to understand concepts, opinions and experiences

Autoethnography

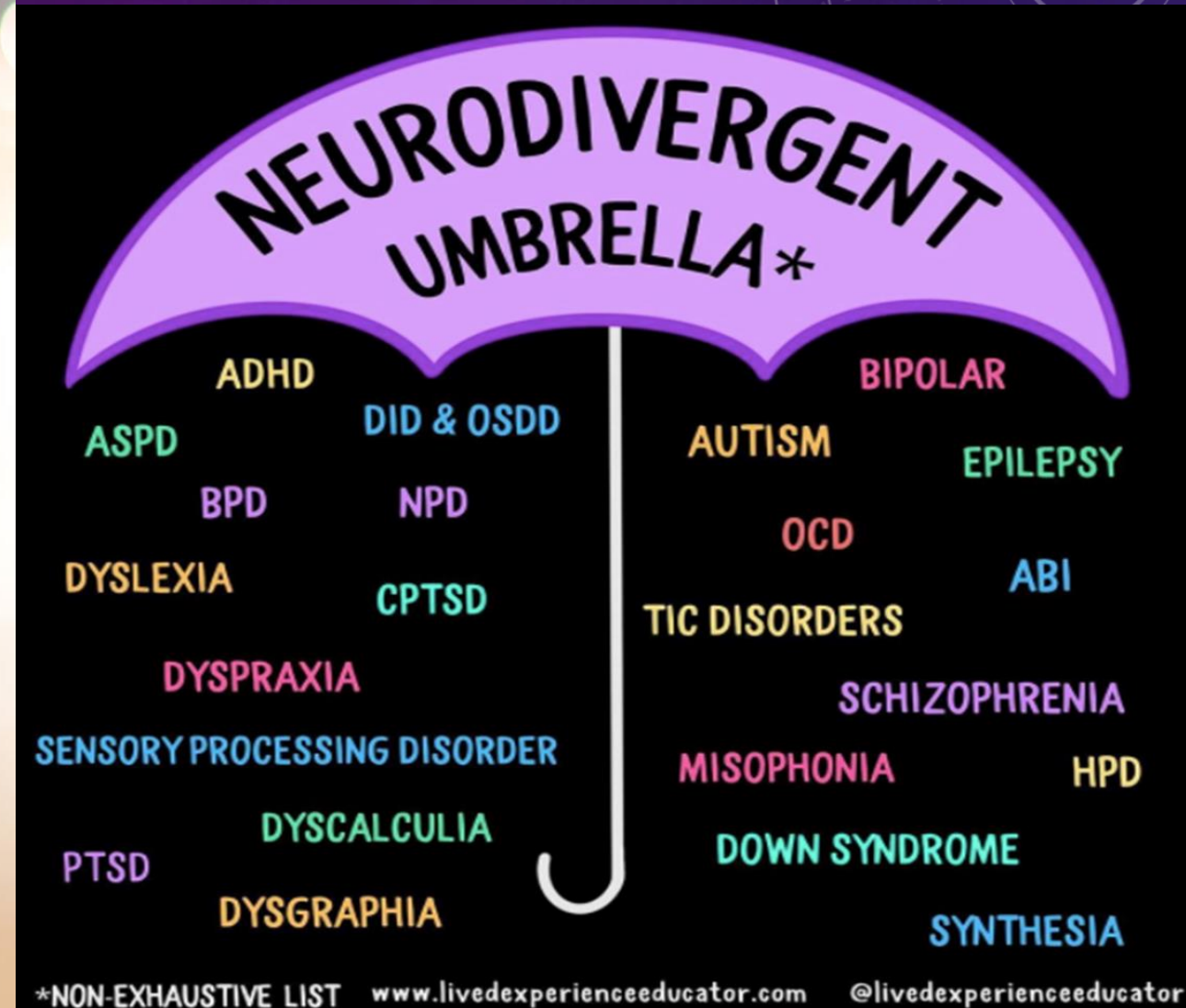
- Writing about a topic of great personal relevance
Requires deep reflection on own unique experiences

Searching for Themes

- Interviews, transcribing, listening and learning
Focus on ways to support learners, educators and support staff

RESEARCH

WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS





THEMES

The themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews:

1. Early disclosure - identifying needs at the earliest point is essential for both learner and staff
2. Challenges - facing a neurodiverse learner in HE.
3. Building relationships and support with neurodiverse learners - making connections and acknowledgements to build an inclusive environment.
4. Strengths neurodiverse learners bring to the learning and teaching environment - encourage the discussion about the strengths of neurodiversity.

SOLUTIONS LEARNER PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED SUGGESTED

"... should encourage neurodiverse people to access student support, and have access to Grammarly Premium as it's fantastic"

"... alternative assignment methods...oral ones"

"... extra time and support to read and write"

"... should have someone to advocate for neurodiverse learners..."

"Speaking more about it in the classroom... at the start of the year..."

"... invite Student Success to class to introduce themselves"

"...lecturers can tell their learners... come and see me ..."

"...keeping up to date... keep adapting"

TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Provide an inclusive environment for all learners
- Make connections from Day One – relationships are crucial
- Need to be equipped with strategies and tools and understandings with regards to supporting neurodiverse learners (keep up-to-date)
- Neurodiverse Centred – every learner must be at the centre of everything we do
- Currency – stay current and abreast of evidence-based practice (what others know and write about, attending conferences, undertaking own research and sharing with others).





HELPFUL HINTS FOR LEARNER SUCCESS

CARE about our neurodiverse learners, and we can do this by: -

C - Creating an environment so all learners can thrive

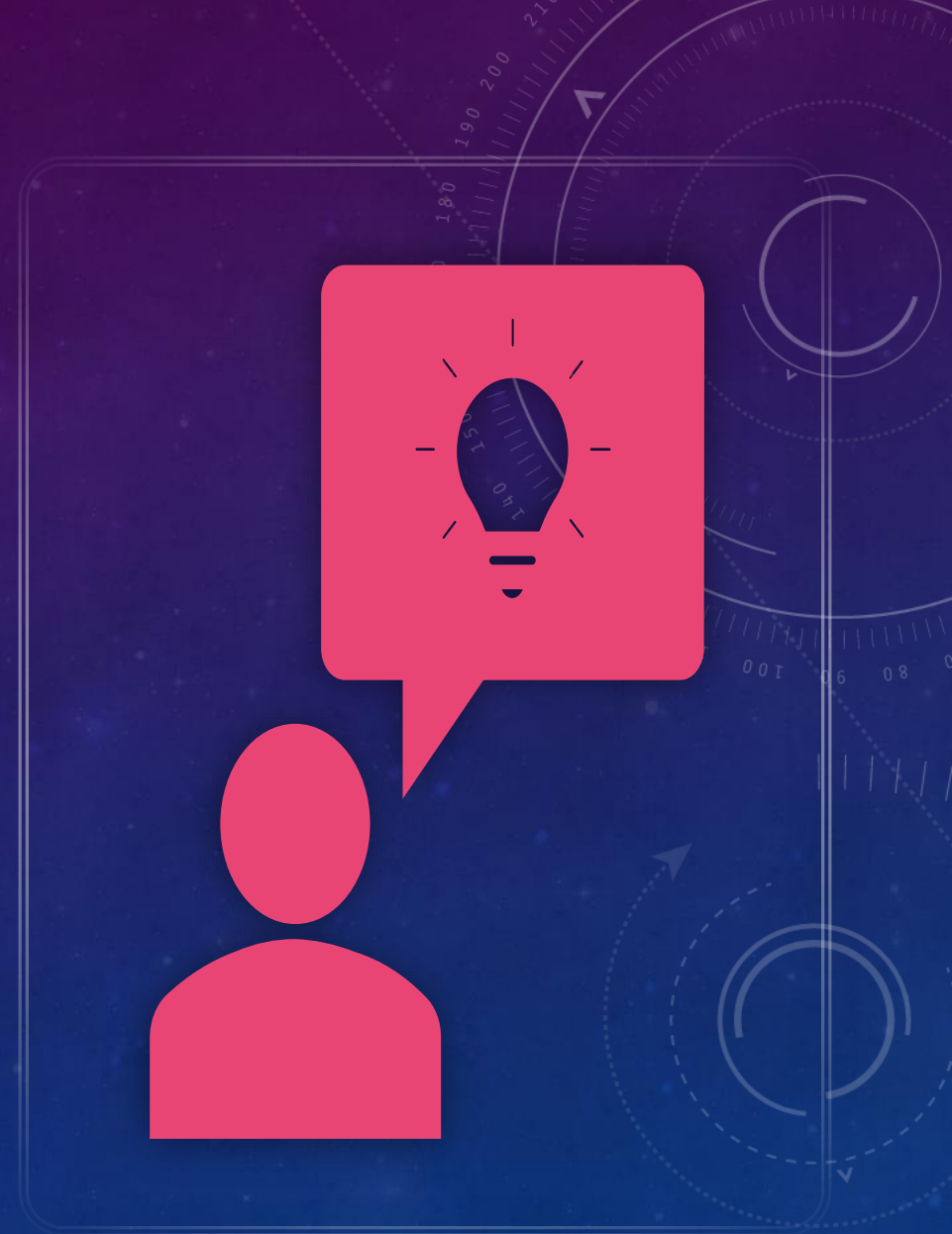
A - Acknowledge challenges that face a neurodiverse learner in higher education

R - Relationships and support with neurodiverse learners – making a connection and acknowledgement to build an inclusive environment

E - Encourage the discussion about the strengths and uniqueness of the neurodiverse

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY — AUTONOMY, COMPETENCE AND RELATEDNESS

- Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of motivation. 'Self-determination' is the sense that we are in control of our own lives and choices, are motivated, and can meet our potential.
- Educators need to create an environment that allows for flexibility and choice, supports skill-building and mastery and fosters a sense of connection and belonging.





THE ROLE OF FACILITATION IN PROMOTING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES FOR NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS

- When neurodiverse learners feel supported and understood, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated in the learning process.
- Different approaches to access and process information can enhance their understanding and retention of information, leading to improved learning outcomes.
- Ker's (2017) Model of Effective Facilitation – stresses the importance of understanding the nature of learners and acknowledging every learner presents with their own unique challenges and understandings.

The learners are all unique individuals who present with individual challenges

Learners need to be supported by facilitators who have well-developed diagnostic and analytical skills, who recognise when challenges are interrupting the learning process, and who are capable of exercising sound judgments in the interests of the learners.

Facilitators are expected to acquire a repertoire of specialised techniques and knowledge

Ultimate goal – the promotion and enhancement of learning

Workman and Helyer (2016: 43) suggest that a facilitator of learning should “do whatever you can to develop your own understanding of the learning theories, learning styles and approaches, therefore enabling learning that is ‘fit for purpose’”.

FACILITATION AS A PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

FACILITATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS

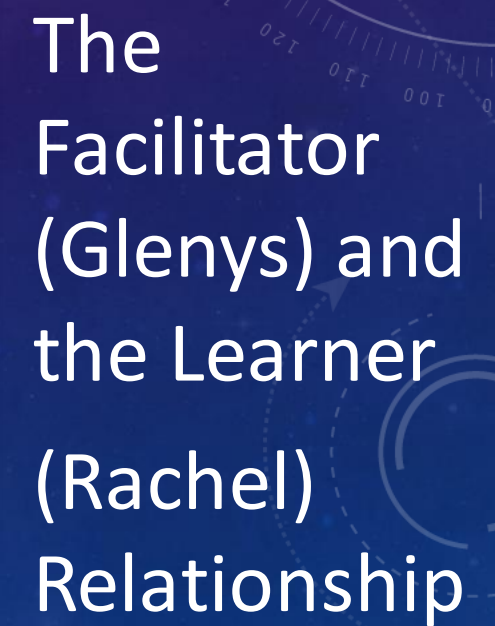
- *“The realisation of credibility. The Facilitator helped me understand my own credibility in my field”.*
- *“My facilitator created a relationship built on trust and respect which made it easy for me to engage and be comfortable about my vulnerabilities and limitations”.*
- *“My facilitator guided me to think about other ways which I hadn’t thought of, nor believed I could do. This was hugely beneficial to me”.*
 - *“Great teacher, perfect, answers questions patiently”*
 - *“Engages students to discuss and exchange ideas and practical knowledge. Her classes are enjoyable, and she is open to questions and assists learners to the best of her ability”*
 - *She is a very kind person, very useful and helpful. She provides appropriate support and advice and involves herself in our issues to find better solutions. She is patient with us and keeps her attention on anything that could impact us during in and out of class. I enjoyed the learning experience and I really appreciate her efforts with us.*
 - *She ensures to apply ideas and concepts in real-life situations and using her personal experiences which helps me understand better.*





NEURODIVERSE LEARNERS BRING UNIQUE STRENGTHS TO THE LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

- Shift from deficit-based thinking to asset-based thinking
- Celebrate and leverage the strengths of neurodiverse learners and integrate them into the curriculum
- Foster a positive mindset
- Promote a culture of inclusivity that recognises and values the contributions of neurodiverse learners in the learning and teaching environment
- Neurodiverse learners are often creative, self-aware, reflective, have unique talents and abilities and can bring diverse thinking and perspectives to the learning and teaching environment which can enrich discussions and interactions





QUESTIONS

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