

Not a Checklist: Designing Assessments for Neurodivergent Learners

DR. ANN GAGNÉ

**SENIOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPER,
ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION**

BROCK UNIVERSITY

HOST OF ACCESSAGOGY PODCAST

Land Acknowledgement And Positionality Statement

- ▶ Joining you from the traditional Land of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. Land covered by the Upper Canada Treaty and land protected by Dish With One Spoon Wampum Agreement
- ▶ Born and raised on traditional land of the Abitibiwini Aki in land covered by James Bay Northern Quebec agreement
- ▶ “our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.”

Access Check

I encourage you to check, identify, and question your learning environment for any of the following and I welcome comments if there are elements that I can support to reduce barriers. Please message in the chat at any time.

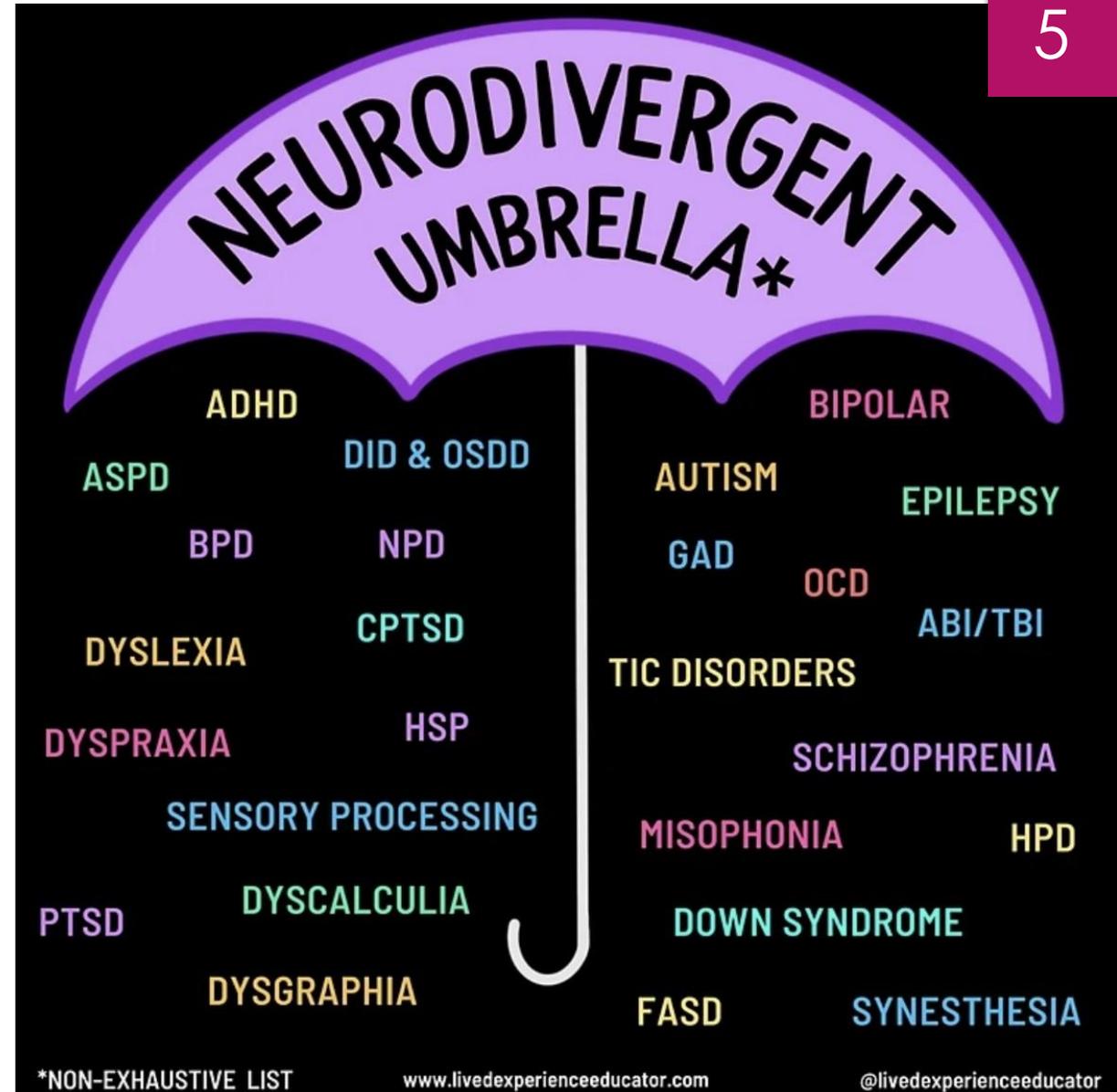
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Virtual Space
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Pace

Agenda

- ▶ Neurodivergent learners and awareness
- ▶ Assessment design
 - ▶ On-campus
 - ▶ Online
 - ▶ Hybrid
- ▶ Case example practice
- ▶ Reflection opportunity and next steps
- ▶ Questions

Neurodivergent: What Do We Mean?

- ▶ Term that is used often in different spaces
- ▶ Often distilled down to conversations only about ADHD or Autism
- ▶ There are in fact many lived experiences in neurodivergent space
- ▶ Strongly suggest you follow [Sonny Jane Wise](#) who created this image

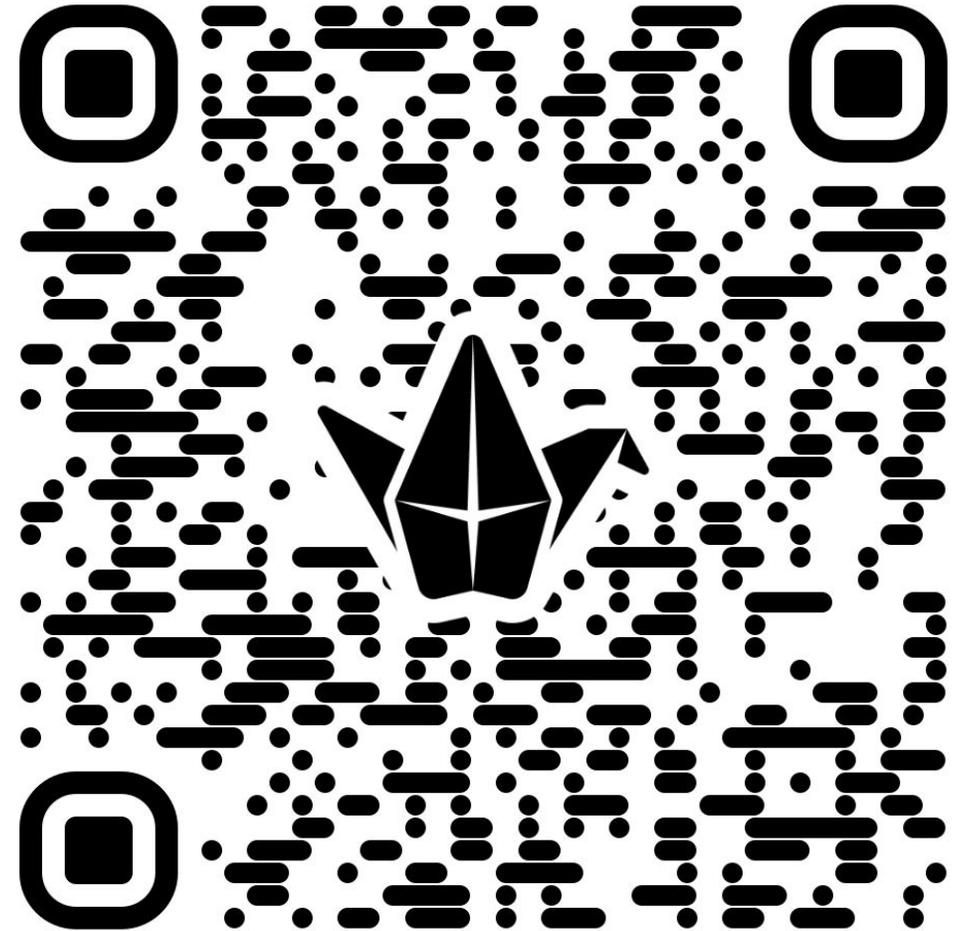


Important Things to Be Aware Of

- ▶ If you have met one neurodivergent person, you have met one neurodivergent person
- ▶ Generalizing needs is harmful
- ▶ Most disabilities or neurodivergent support needs are dynamic
- ▶ Assigning assignments to support neurodivergent learners means being open to choice, flexibility, scaffolding, and fluctuating impacts of the learning spaces.
- ▶ It **cannot** be a checklist

How Do I Design Assessments With Flexibility?

- ▶ Take a moment and think about the one area or areas of your assessment strategies where students or case managers have asked for more flexibility.
- ▶ Use this Padlet to identify areas of **flexibility**, but also **barriers** you felt impacted your ability to be flexible



Flexibility Within Systems of Rigidity

- ▶ Remember rigidity is not rigour.
- ▶ Inclusive and accessible assessment design is also knowing your limits and awareness of areas of access friction.
- ▶ You do not have to do this alone. Find the helpers:
 - ▶ Centres for teaching and learning
 - ▶ Educational developers
 - ▶ Instructional designers
 - ▶ People in me type roles at accessibility services

On-Campus Assessment Design Considerations

- ▶ Group work
 - ▶ How groups are formed
 - ▶ How groups work
- ▶ Sounds/noise
- ▶ Avoid the cult of immediacy
- ▶ Avoid “writing by hand is the only” way assessments
- ▶ Modelling inclusive design

Online Assessment Design Considerations

- ▶ Engagement opportunities
 - ▶ This will be different synchronously and asynchronously
 - ▶ Build in structure
- ▶ Accessibility of resources shared
- ▶ Clarity
- ▶ Choice and options
- ▶ Modelling inclusive design

Hybrid Assessment Design Considerations

- ▶ Just because your institution says you are in a hybrid delivery room don't believe them
- ▶ Test the tech
- ▶ Do not create power differentials between modalities
- ▶ Clarity of voice, but also of expectations
- ▶ Modelling inclusive design

Case Scenario Practice

- ▶ You are teaching in an “active learning classroom” that looks like the image here.
- ▶ The course you are teaching is hybrid or blended delivery so you have students on-campus and others joining via Zoom
- ▶ What are some areas of design of assessments that you traditionally use that you feel could impact students in such a scenario?



Debrief Of Case Scenario

- ▶ Even the most insightfully designed assessment or activity can be impacted by the modality, educational space, and context.
- ▶ High level questions to think about:
 - ▶ Have you taken the **sensory** into account?
 - ▶ Are you assuming **time** constructs that don't exist for everyone?
 - ▶ Are you forcing a **modality** when there is no need to force it?
 - ▶ Are the instructions **clear**, both on paper and orally?

Reflection Space

- ▶ What are some questions you still have or areas you would like to explore further based on our conversation?

Questions?

Thank you!

- ▶ **Website:** anngagne.ca
- ▶ accessagogy@gmail.com
- ▶ **On LinkedIn**