

Your Health

 Health Partners

MARCH 2025 NEWSLETTER



THE POWER OF NEURODIVERSITY & TRUTH BEHIND HEARING LOSS

In this issue of **Your Health** we look at embracing neurodiversity and the various neurotypes, in support of Neurodiversity Celebration Week. Additionally we focus on hearing loss, providing advice for people of all ages to protect their hearing.

Embracing Neurodiversity: From Stigma to Celebration

NEURODIVERSITY CELEBRATION WEEK

At just 16 years old, Siena Castello founded Neurodiversity Celebration Week with the aim of transforming the narrative surrounding neurodiversity. The event has flourished into a global initiative that challenges stereotypes and recognises the unique strengths of neurodivergent individuals. As we approach this year's Neurodiversity Celebration Week, running from the 17th to the 23rd of March, it is the perfect time to reflect on the rich tapestry of human cognition and how embracing neurodiversity can enrich our professional lives.

According to the World Economic Forum, 'neurodiversity offers a vast, untapped



resource of talent, creativity and innovation'. Studies support this view, suggesting that teams including neurodivergent members can be up to 30% more productive. In this edition of Your Health, we shed light on the concept of neurodiversity, explore prevalent forms of neurodivergence and highlight the specific skills and strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to the workplace.

WHAT EXACTLY IS NEURODIVERSITY?

The term neurodiversity refers to the many different ways our brains work, emphasising that all brains are natural, valid and important. This inclusive perspective recognises a range of

neurodivergences, also known as neurotypes, which describe minds that are not considered 'typical' or significantly differ from societal norms. This spectrum of neurodivergence includes, but is not limited to autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia. It's essential to understand that each person experiences neurodivergence in their own unique way, shaped by their life experiences and context.

By recognising and celebrating neurodiversity, we challenge traditional notions of what is 'normal' and help reduce stigma. With this in mind, let's take a closer look at the most prevalent neurotypes as well as their unique traits and strengths.

STATS

- ▶ An estimated 1 in 7 (more than 15% of the UK population) are neurodivergent
- ▶ Approximately 25% of CEOs are dyslexic.
- ▶ 96% of employers think there are benefits to having a neurodiverse workplace.
- ▶ 35% of organisations have had one or more senior leaders share that they are neurodivergent.

AUTISM

Autism is a neurotype that describes a natural variation in how some individuals communicate and experience the world around them. There are various characteristics and traits which can be associated with being autistic. Some autistic individuals may have a preference for predictability and structure, a passion for focused interests, regulate their emotions differently and experience over or under-sensitivity to sensory inputs, such as sound, light, taste and smell.

Understanding the unique experiences of autistic individuals helps us appreciate their strengths in the workplace. Research shows that autistic people often excel in areas such as focus, attention to detail and long-term memory. They also tend to possess personal qualities like honesty, loyalty and dedication, which can be valuable attributes in any role.



“Autism is not a processing error. It’s a different operating system”

As autistic author Sarah Hendrickx aptly puts it, “Autism is not a processing error. It’s a different operating system”. By embracing this different operating system, employers can leverage the unique strengths of autistic individuals, creating a more equitable environment that benefits everyone.

In the UK only 29% of autistic individuals are in some kind of paid employment, yet 77% of unemployed autistic individuals want to work. This highlights the importance of neuroinclusive workspaces, especially as research shows autistic professionals can be up to 140% more productive than an average employee when properly matched to a job that fits their skills.



ADHD

ADHD is a neurotype, linked to differences in the brain’s structure and chemicals. ADHD individuals, or ADHDers, exhibit diverse traits, including differences in attention, memory, organisation, time perception and sleep, along with emotion management and sensory processing. Contrary to the popular belief that ADHD is just a lack of focus, many ADHDers experience periods of hyper focus, during which they can maintain intense concentration and be highly productive. Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian to date and an ADHDer, encapsulated this experience when he said, “When I’m focused, there is not one single thing, person, anything that can stand in the way of my doing something”.

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In addition to hyper focus, ADHD individuals possess unique strengths that can be incredibly valuable in various settings. They often thrive in high-pressure situations, where other common attributes such as passion, creative problem solving and adaptability can shine. By fostering inclusive environments that highlight these qualities, we can enable ADHDers to truly excel.

DYSCALCULIA

Dyscalculia is a specific learning difference that affects how the brain processes numbers and mathematical ability. There is sometimes a misconception that dyscalculia is just another name for ‘maths anxiety’. Unlike maths anxiety, which is an emotional response to math-related tasks, dyscalculia is a neurological difference.

There are many strengths associated with dyscalculia, including creativity, strong verbal skills and innovative thinking. These strengths can be particularly valuable in fields that require out-of-the-box thinking and creative solutions.

DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia is a specific learning difference that affects reading, writing and spelling. However, it is less well known that dyslexia also affects working memory and how the brain processes auditory and visual information. It is crucial to understand that dyslexia does not affect intelligence; this is a common misconception. Dyslexic individuals often have average to above-average intelligence and possess unique strengths that are highly valuable in various settings.

Many dyslexic individuals excel at visualising ideas, are highly creative and have a talent for storytelling and effective communication. Additionally, the distinctive information processing style of dyslexic individuals, also known as dyslexic thinking, can bring a unique and enriching perspective. A compelling example of this is Ingvar Kamprad, IKEA’s founder. When Kamprad found that using numeric codes for furniture was inaccessible for his dyslexia, he innovatively used names of people, Swedish islands and Norwegian places instead, making it easier for customers to navigate. This innovative system became an iconic part of the brand, illustrating how dyslexic thinking can drive success and have a significant impact.

DYSPRAXIA

Dyspraxia is a neurotype that affects movement and coordination. Dyspraxic individuals often experience impacts in their fine motor skills, such as writing and buttoning a shirt and gross motor skills, such as running. As well as physical coordination, traits of dyspraxia include differences in balance, social communication, emotional regulation and organisational skills.

Dyspraxic individuals possess unique strengths that stem from their distinctive way of thinking. As Florence Welch from Florence and The Machine said, “We dyspraxics think in a different way.” This different perspective often translates into exceptional creativity, problem-solving abilities and innovative thinking. Additionally, dyspraxic individuals often have strong verbal skills, are highly empathetic, honest and have a keen intuition, making them valuable contributors in various professional settings.



“We dyspraxics think in a different way”



Hearing Loss and Protection

World Hearing Day (3rd March 2025) is an annual global advocacy event coordinated by the World Health Organisation. The theme this year is changing mindsets: empower yourself to make ear and hearing care a reality for all! With 1 in 3 people affected by hearing loss, we've put together advice for people of all ages to protect their hearing and helpful guidance to support yourself and the people around you.

WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?

Hearing loss is quite common, it can be present from birth, develop with normal ageing or after a health condition, injury or repeated exposure to loud noise. Hearing loss is categorised as conductive, sensorineural, or mixed. Conductive means that structures within the ear are not transmitting sound properly. Sensorineural means that a part of the hearing system that converts sound information to electrical signals and transmits these to the brain isn't working properly. Mixed hearing loss is a combination of both types.

Hearing loss is a general term that describes a spectrum of hearing ability, from mild, through to moderate, severe and profound loss or deafness. Treatment to correct the underlying cause, for example medication or surgery, is only possible in some circumstances. Although preventable, noise-induced hearing loss is permanent once it has developed.



THE IMPACT OF HEARING LOSS

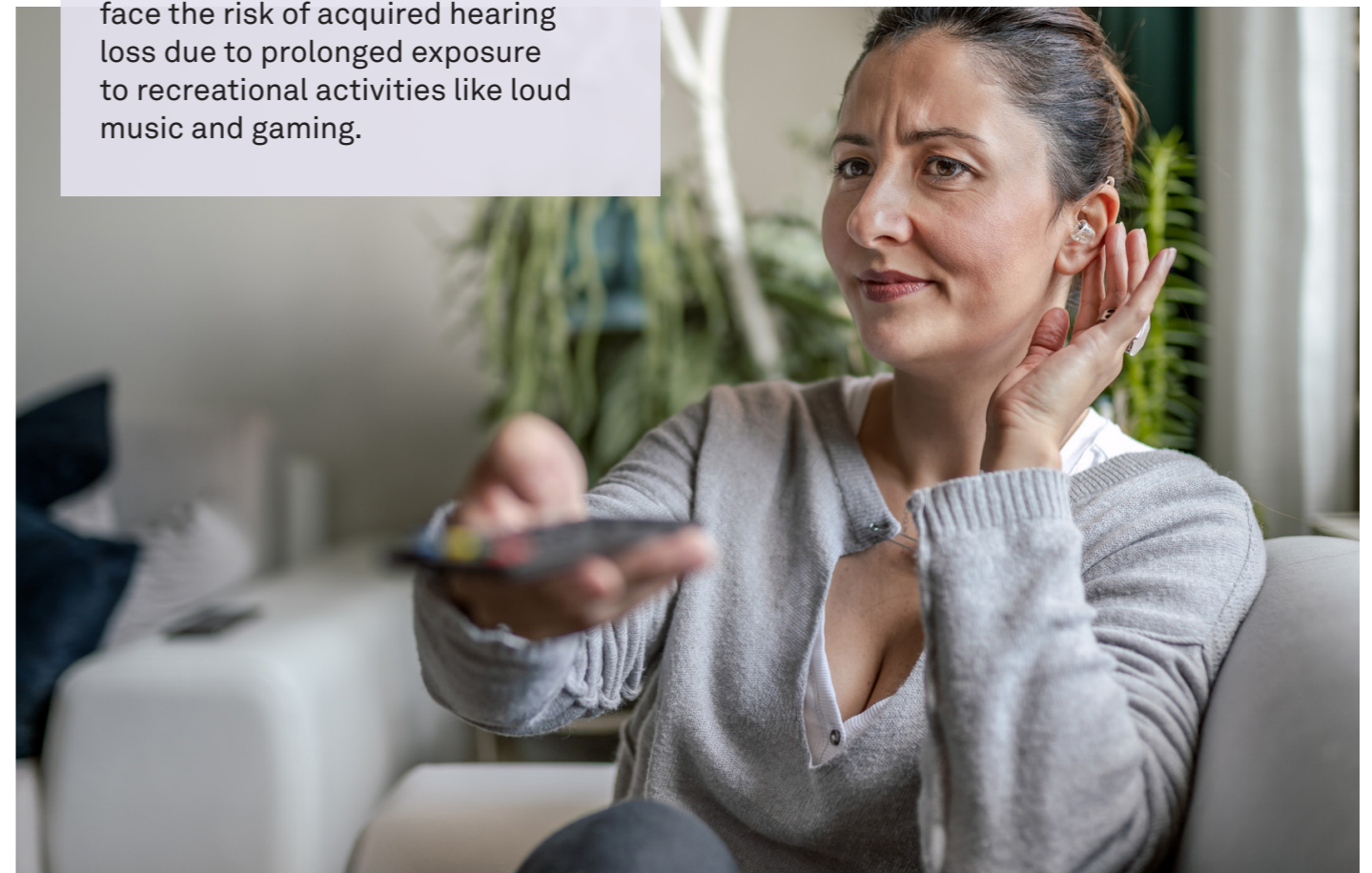
Hearing loss that develops over time often presents difficulty hearing conversations, it may sound like people are mumbling, misunderstanding verbal communication and having to ask others to repeat themselves. You might notice that you require higher volumes on the television and struggle to hear your phone ringing, timers going off, or the doorbell.

There is a high co-occurrence rate for individuals who experience hearing loss to also experience tinnitus, characterised by additional noises such as ringing or buzzing. Extra listening effort is often tiring and stressful. Hearing loss can affect social confidence and lead to feelings of isolation if not addressed. It can place your or others' safety at risk if you are unable to hear emergency alarms.

HOW COMMON IS HEARING LOSS?

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) estimates that hearing loss affects 1 in 3 adults in the UK to some degree. By 2030, worldwide, over 500 million people are expected to have significant hearing loss and over one billion young people face the risk of acquired hearing loss due to prolonged exposure to recreational activities like loud music and gaming.

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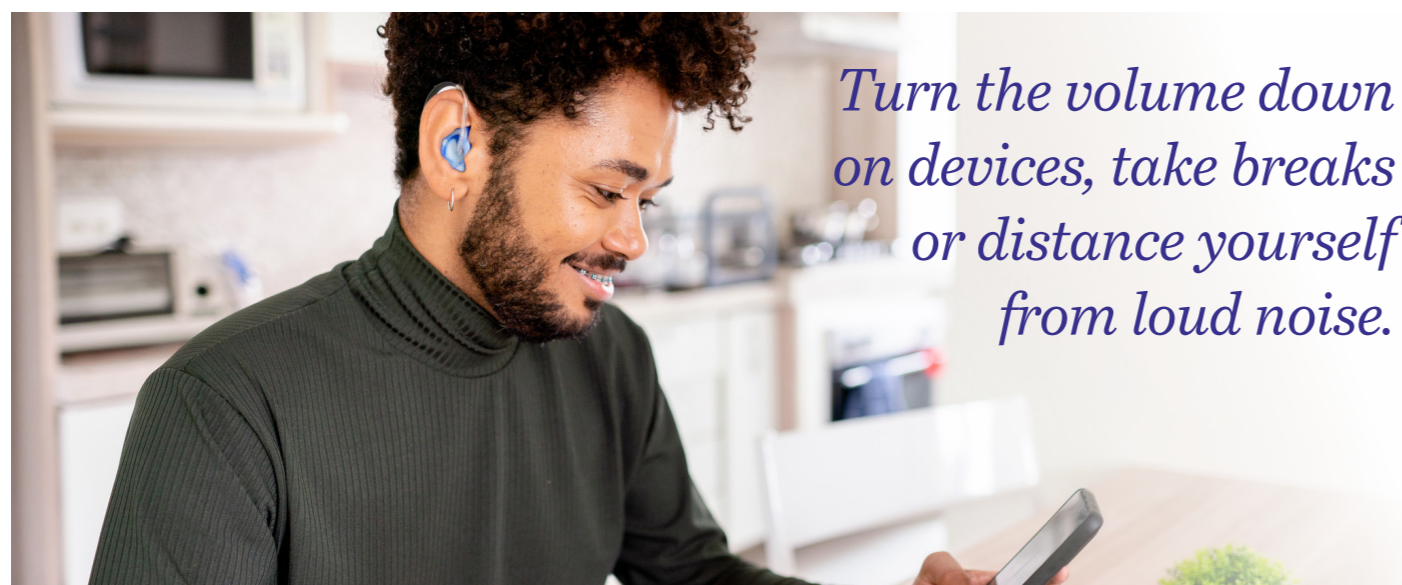


STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO PROTECT HEARING

Your future hearing can be protected by actions you take today.

- ▶ The impact of noise depends on the intensity and the duration. A general rule of thumb is that noise has the potential to cause damage if you need to shout or raise your voice at 1-2m away to be heard.
- ▶ Turn the volume down on devices, take breaks, or distance yourself from loud noise.
- ▶ Loud concerts can be harmful to hearing. Try not to be positioned too close to the speakers, and if you spend lots of time at events, consider protecting your hearing with high fidelity musician earplugs that ensure that you can enjoy the music and experience, but reduce the sound intensity without any distortion. Little ears are more vulnerable to noise damage, so if you take children to festivals or music events, ensure they wear ear defenders to protect them.
- ▶ The UK Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 require employers to implement control measures to prevent or reduce risk arising from loud noise at work, such as reducing noise generation and transmission, demarcating hearing protection zones, providing hearing protection and arranging regular hearing checks for employees when deemed necessary following a risk assessment. It is important to use your hearing protection consistently and understand how to use it correctly. Report any issues (for example discomfort, wear and tear, incompatibility with your glasses, struggling to hear with use) promptly and make sure you attend all hearing checks that are offered.
- ▶ You can assess your own hearing by undertaking a quick online test (Hearing test - 3 minutes, free, online, easy and reliable | RNID) or arranging an in-person hearing test (audiology) free on the NHS with referral or at many opticians or pharmacies (sometimes for a charge).
- ▶ Speak to your GP if you develop hearing loss (without delay if this is sudden) or symptoms suggestive of an ear problem. You might be referred for a hearing test or occasionally, for an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) opinion.
- ▶ Assessment identifies any treatable causes and informs the next steps. Early identification and access to support will help you to achieve your best level of functioning.

Turn the volume down on devices, take breaks or distance yourself from loud noise.



HEARING DEVICES AND SUPPORT

Simple face to face measures

- ▶ Try asking others to ensure they are close when they speak to you, their face is visible, they approach you from your better side if you have one, they speak loudly and enunciate clearly. Ask for important information to be emailed or written.

Hearing support technology

If you need additional support or technology at work, then disclosing your hearing loss, any difficulties you are having and personal communication preferences to your employer is the first step.

- ▶ Hearing aids are helpful for many struggling with hearing loss, and can also help some people who struggle with tinnitus.
- ▶ They come in different shapes and sizes but all work by digitally modifying detected sound in a way that suits the individual user. They can be worn behind or in the ear, on the body or by surgical implant. Most have a Telecoil, or T-setting, that can be used with an induction loop (an assistive sound system that produces a magnetic signal, often found in public places) and some have wireless and Bluetooth technology.
- ▶ Some types of hearing loss can be improved by cochlear implants, which directly stimulate the nerve that transmits sound information to the brain.

Use a phone that is volume-adjustable and ideally compatible with any hearing aids or, alternatively, try video calling so that you can also lip read (ask colleagues to keep their cameras on during group meetings).

Making use of speech-to-text software, for example captioning/subtitles or transcription during meetings, or recording

meetings with others' consent, avoids having to listen with accuracy under time pressure.

Support and services

- ▶ Consider consulting RNID, a reputable source of advice on assistive devices and support networks for those with hearing loss (rnid.org.uk).
- ▶ Large employers may have dedicated resources in place with advice on how specific work can be more accessible to colleagues with hearing loss.
- ▶ Access to a British Sign Language interpreter, lip speaker, speech-to-text reporter or note-taker can make meetings and training accessible.
- ▶ If you can't hear workplace alarms or warning signals then you will need to be alerted another way to work safely, for example by vibrating pager or reliable visible signal.
- ▶ Ultimately, you might require a workplace needs assessment, undertaken by a practitioner with specific expertise, to advise on tailored adaptations.

Understanding from others and access to adjustments, if required, help people to thrive and overcome any impact of hearing loss in daily life and at work.

There is further information about World Hearing Day and how to get involved here: worldhearingday.org

Health Partners offer neurodiversity workplace needs assessments to support employee wellbeing, productivity and inclusion within the workplace.

Resources

- ▶ [Neurodiversity Celebration Week](#)
- ▶ [How neurodiversity in the workplace drives business success | World Economic Forum](#)
- ▶ [Neurodiversity in the workplace | Deloitte Insights](#)
- ▶ [The Strengths and Abilities of Autistic People in the Workplace | Autism in Adulthood](#)
- ▶ [Successful relationships: an interview with Sarah Hendrickx](#)
- ▶ [Michael Phelps - No Limits The Will to Succeed](#)
- ▶ [Entrepreneurs who learn and think differently | Ingvar Kamrad](#)
- ▶ [Dyspraxia has good points - Florence – The Irish Times](#)
- ▶ [Preventing Noise-Induced Hearing Loss | CDC](#)
- ▶ [Hearing loss | NHS inform](#)
- ▶ [HSE - Noise: Hearing protection](#)
- ▶ [Understanding hearing loss and hearing aids - RNID](#)



NEXT ISSUE:

- ▶ Stress Awareness Month
- ▶ World Health Day

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.