

Welcome!

Dear **ND&D Readers**,

We are so excited to welcome you to the launch of our new bi-monthly newsletter!

Neurodiversity & Disability Nexus – or **ND&D Nexus** – is set to bring you a regular selection of news, updates, support, resources, links, and inspiration to your inbox! Designed for QA Apprentices, ND&D's goal is to keep you informed, inspired, and connected.

We recently launched the **QA Apprenticeships Neurodiversity Network** and here at ND&D we will provide a review from the previous month's session and discussion topic as well as all upcoming links to keep you connected.

We're committed to making this newsletter a valuable resource for you, including opportunities for your contributions so we really would **value your feedback** and ideas for future editions! Please use this Form to share your thoughts -

<https://forms.office.com/e/9r7CxhyVcK>

We're really looking forward to embarking on this journey with you, and hopefully bringing you some great content! So grab a cuppa, and keep on reading!



In this first issue you can look forward to:

- **Meet The Team**
- **Spoon Theory** by Kayleigh
- **The '5 minute' tool:** study and work recommendation from Vix
- **"Life Through My Lens":** a short article from a personal perspective. This month's author is Sarah
- **A Good Read:** book recommendation from Micha
- **ND&D in Focus:** the spotlight this month is on diabetes
- **Events:** Upcoming events and opportunities to connect
- **Helpful Links:** Further resources and support available to help you

We hope you enjoy this new way to stay connected and engaged with your Learning Support Team!



Meet Your Learning Support Teams!

Both our Teams have had growth over the last few months with further expansions planned! As well as our QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network launch and this new monthly publication, we have a new curriculum offering coming in the next few months – exciting times! It's always nice to put a face to a name, so here we all are!



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Spoon Theory

by Kayleigh

Think of Mary Poppins and her spoonful of sugar



Spoon theory was originally thought of for people with chronic pain conditions and has now been adopted by the neurodiverse community.

Imagine you have **12 spoonfuls of energy** for one day. Everyone has 12 spoons but how you use each is individual and different tasks may cost more spoons than they cost others.

For example, cooking dinner - cooking from scratch may cost 4 spoons, but throwing something easier in the oven may only cost 2. 2 spoons can then be saved for another task.

You can borrow spoons from other days but remember that leaves you short for another day and can eventually lead to minus spoons and burnout.

How can this theory help me?

Think about how many spoonfuls of energy you're giving to any task and then consider...

- Is there a way I can shorten the task? (*I need to shower but a shower is 3 spoons, could I have a sink wash instead at 1 spoon?*)
- If not, can I plan a rest/recuperation day to replenish? (*I have to attend a wedding on Saturday, I will plan a rest day on Sunday*)
- What tasks do I need to prioritise before I run out of spoons? (*I need to prioritise making the kids lunches before I go for a run*)

Managing chronic illnesses and neurodiversity is difficult: remember to be kind to yourself and don't let those mean thoughts invade your headspace!

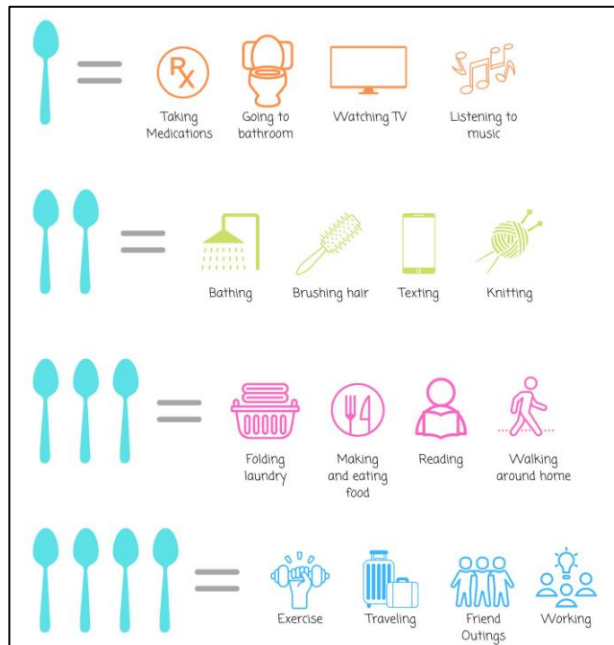


Image Credit

App Recommendation



Molehill Mountain
Autistica apps
£ free

This free app "has been developed by Autistica and King's College London to support autistic people understand and self-manage their anxiety".

Based on CBT principles, this app allows you to track any worries, and then identify triggers and certain situations which may induce anxiety. Using daily check-ins you can see visual patterns and trends, and receive hints and tips to help you manage.

The app has interactive CBT activities, and has tips on managing hypersensitivities, social difficulties, and common causes of stress - [Link](#)

The '5 minute' Technique

by Vix



When I was studying my husband always knew when I had an assignment due. How? Because I would Hoover the stairs! Not that the stairs particularly needed hoovering but it was my go-to tactic for task avoidance.

You too may find that you **struggle with procrastination** and **task avoidance**, especially starting and finishing tasks.

When in this situation, I highly recommend the '5 minute' tool that was shared by my colleague, Kayleigh Dachtler. It was an instant game changer for me when it came to completing my uninteresting admin tasks



The '5 minute' Work Tool

- Tell yourself you aim to do 5 mins on a particular task.
- After 5 mins take a 5 min break and repeat.
- If you get into the flow of work, continue.
- If you get 10 mins done you have managed to do 100% more than you initially intended – feel good about that!



Image Credit

Why does this strategy help?

Many people with a neurodiversity, such as ADHD, struggle with dopamine hits. We often get dopamine when a task is completed but many tasks take weeks, if not months to finish. In addition, a part of us often wants to set a whole day aside to complete a task successfully but then find that amount of time overwhelming, meaning we get very little done and then beat ourselves up over a lack of achievement.

Breaking tasks down into manageable chunks, helps us get a dopamine hit sooner as well as helping us recognise progress, which we might otherwise miss.

Further Reading:

[The Role of Dopamine in ADHD | LinkedIn](#)



Life Through My Lens

by Sarah

So I am kindof hoping that in future editions this will be filled by a **student's voice**! It would be **amazing** to have some of your stories and to hear from you guys! But for this first issue you get me! 😊

I work in the DA Space, when I started at QA I came with a heap of conditions, and I now officially have the labels of Autism and ADHD. Those "streaks" which I always knew I had in me were enough to get me a formal diagnosis - a lot of the reason for me going for assessment was my work with my learners!

Walking alongside you guys, seeing things from "this side of the desk" and recognising in myself traits that those with a formal diagnosis had - sometimes it was like looking in a mirror! It got to the stage when I couldn't just ignore the difficulties I was continuing to experience daily, and the fact that I was needing to work differently to others in order just to manage my day job (*why can't I ever get my paperwork done on time!?*) and I needed to know if there was a reason.

So I now have the official "labels", and I'm spending a lot of time trying to get to know myself better and how I 'tick'. I mean, you'd think being in this job it would be easy right!? I have a wealth of knowledge and resources available to me - but it's hard when it's you!! I love saving things that I read online, I love a good neurodiversity meme or a good gif! And I love sharing things to friends which can inspire or give a little dopamine "hug" in the day!

A Good Read

ADHD: A Hunter in a Farmer's World
by Thom Hartmann

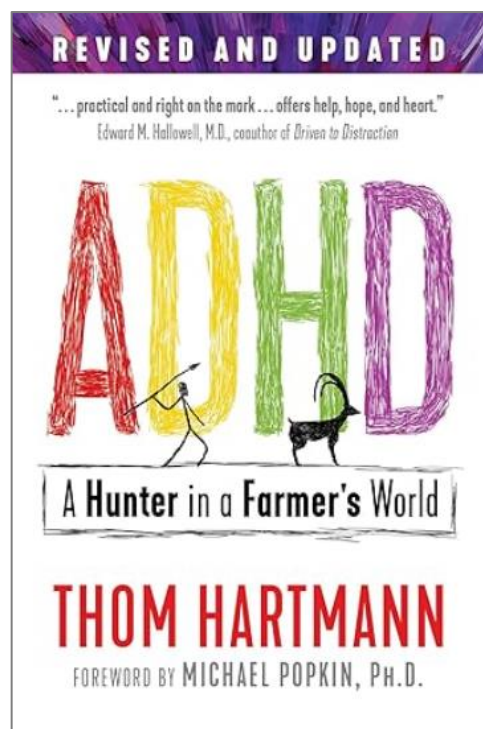


"It's such a cool book - it essentially presents ADHD as a leftover hunter genetic - it explains the hyper focus, risk taking behaviour, sensitivity to sounds and intense bursts of energy that a hunter would experience when on the hunt, followed by periods of inaction. This is as opposed to neurotypicals being like farmers, slowly pruning and nurturing their patch of land over time."

It really helped me to see ADHD in a positive light and work with my energy peaks and flows rather than struggling to try live like a farmer.

We're don't tend to make good farmers - so be a good hunter instead!"

by Micha



[Book Link](#)

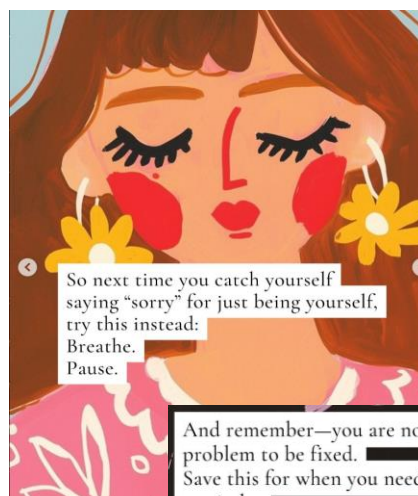
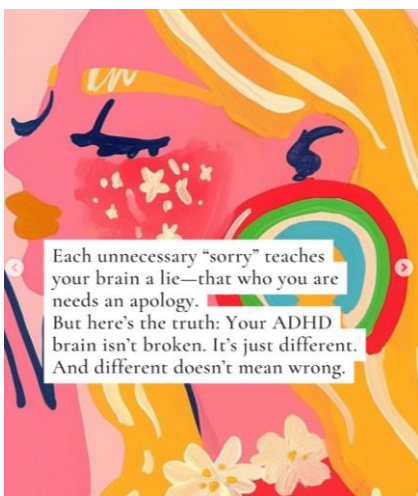
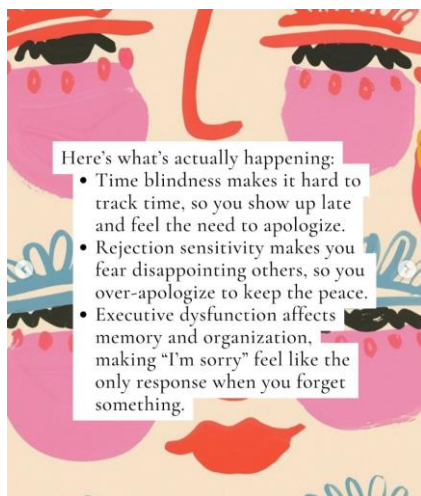
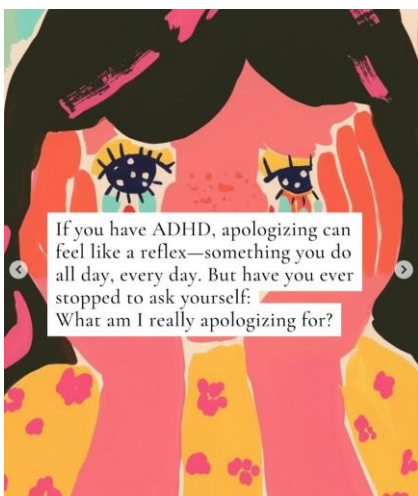
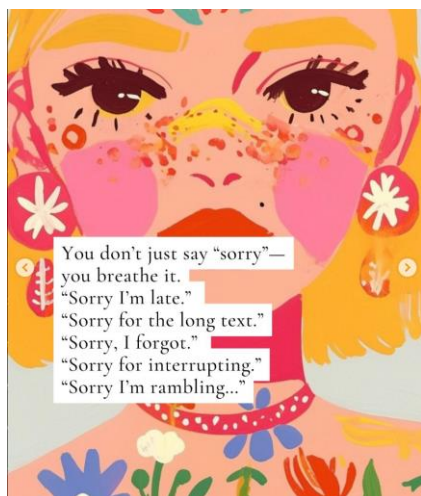
Creativity Corner

A selected piece of neurodiversity inspiration!

To the ADHD Woman: Why "Sorry" Is
Your Most Overused Word ~



@superskillsadhd



And remember—you are not a problem to be fixed. Save this for when you need the reminder

ND&D In Focus: Diabetes

Each issue we'll be doing a dive into a neurodiverse condition or a disability to raise awareness

Diabetes is a serious condition where your blood glucose level is too high. Your body may not produce enough insulin, any insulin, or the insulin it does produce is not effective. There are many types of diabetes, the most common being **Type 1** and **Type 2**.

Diabetes causes people to have too much **glucose** (sugar) in their blood. When we eat or drink our body breaks down carbohydrates producing glucose, which is released into blood giving us energy. The pancreas produces the hormone **insulin**, which allows the glucose into our blood, and is delivered across the body as energy fuel. For someone with diabetes this system does not work.



Although diabetes affects a person physically it can also have significant impact on someone's **emotional wellbeing** – it's a huge lifestyle adjustment.

Individually may become anxious about having a **hypo** (hypoglycaemia – when blood sugar drops), or experience stress around food and eating.

Needing somewhere to check your blood levels, keeping snacks with you at all times, and pre-planning becomes part of everyday life; it can feel isolating.

Diabetes UK estimates that there are currently 5.8 million people in the UK living with diabetes



For people with **Type 1** diabetes their body cannot produce insulin; it is a **lifelong** condition requiring ongoing and daily monitoring of blood sugar levels, treated with insulin injections or using an insulin pump.

Type 2 diabetes is when your body does not make enough insulin, or the insulin it makes is not working properly. Type 2 may go undiagnosed for years so it is important to know the signs and symptoms. There are many reasons why people may develop Type 2 diabetes, it mostly affects people over the age of 25 and can have a genetic link. There is no cure for Type 2 diabetes, but people can put their diabetes into remission by making lifestyle changes.

For more information or support around diabetes please check out these links:

- [Diabetes UK](#)
- [Diabetes – NHS](#)
- [University and diabetes](#)
- [Work and diabetes | Life with diabetes](#)

You are entitled to reasonable adjustments in both work and your studies if you are living with diabetes. You may benefit from an [Access To Work](#) assessment if you need additional support accessing adjustments in the workplace.



QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network

Since the launch of the ND Network in February, we have had **two** networking sessions – join us for the next one!

Our first session coincided with Neurodiversity Celebration Week in **March** where our discussion topic was **“my neurodiversity is my superpower!”** We went into breakout rooms to discuss the topic, and there were engaging conversations and differing points of view, which was great! Although a lot of people seemed to dislike the “superpower” angle discussing the struggles that being neurodivergent can bring, some people prefer to embrace the “super” aspects, gifts, and skills their diagnosis equips them with. We had 83 participants, which was fantastic!

April’s session was slightly quieter as it coincided with many people’s annual leave, but we still had 72 participants which was great! Our discussion topic this month was **“labels are for jars, not for people”**. Again we went into breakout rooms and then fed back key discussion points together at the end. We looked at both the positive and negative aspects of labelling, considered diagnostic labels, the labels that we can give ourselves, and labels that we may have had given to us when we were young and/or undiagnosed.

We have a **Parent’s Corner** which is a great opportunity for parent’s who are supporting SEND children, or who are themselves neurodivergent, to come together for mutual support – it’s been a lovely session both months! We also run **Ask The Specialist** which is your opportunity to pop in to this room and ask a specific question, or for 1:1 advice about getting a neurodiversity diagnosis, or accessing any additional support for either your studies or in the workplace.

Feedback includes: *“a brilliant way to connect with others struggling with the same as myself”; “informed and clear start to the discussion – clear pros and cons given”; and “this has been a brilliant session and has inspired me to try and set up a Neurodiversity meeting in the work place for colleagues to express their struggles, but also to learn other peoples”*

Why Have We Created This Network?

We have enjoyed delivering neurodiversity awareness sessions to our apprentices over several years now, but we thought it was time to hear less from us and more from you! This is your space to discuss your experiences, learn from your peers and to grow together. You can participate as much or as little as you like.

Who Will Be Supporting You in the Networks?

We have 35 QA Apprenticeships Neurodiversity Champions and 10 specialists who will help facilitate each network and ensure your safety and security is maintained throughout.

Do I Need to be Neurodivergent to Attend?

No. This network is for everyone. So, whether you are attending to share or to learn you are welcome.

So, How Can You Join Our Monthly Network Events?

Scan the QR code to book your place

All sessions will take place from 12:30-13:45.

Sessions will not be recorded.



Upcoming Events:

Join us on **Wednesday May 21st** for our next **QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network**; our discussion topic is “are you a masking ninja”? In this session, we will explore our ND masks, the pros and cons of masking and how the behaviour of others affects our behaviour - book [here](#)

Loneliness Awareness Week is a campaign created by the Marmalade Trust, a UK charity that helps people who experience loneliness. The campaign's goals are to: Raise awareness of loneliness, empower people to make connections, and create supportive communities. Join us on **Wednesday June 11th** this live session so we can discuss this topic. So, grab a brew and let's connect - book [here](#)

Our June **QA Apprenticeship Neurodiversity Network** session is **Wednesday 18th June** where we will be focussing on a “summer skillshare”. In this session, we encourage you to come along with all of the hints and tips that have helped you either in work or in study - book [here](#)

Mental Health Awareness Week



Taking place **12-18th May 2025**, this year's Mental Health Awareness Week theme is 'community'.

“Being part of a safe, positive community is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. We thrive when we have strong connections with other people and supportive communities that remind us, we are not alone. Communities can provide a sense of belonging, safety, support in hard times, and give us a sense purpose.” (Mental Health Foundation, 2025)

Join our QA Safeguarding Webinar ([here](#)) on **Wednesday June 11th** and check out social media to get involved with other events that week.

Thursday 15th May is 'wear it green' day – turning the world green for good mental health! #MentalHealthAwarenessWeek #ThisIsMyCommunity

Contributions

We have a great Team here who will be collaborating on content for ND&D ... but you know what will make us even better? **YOU!!!**

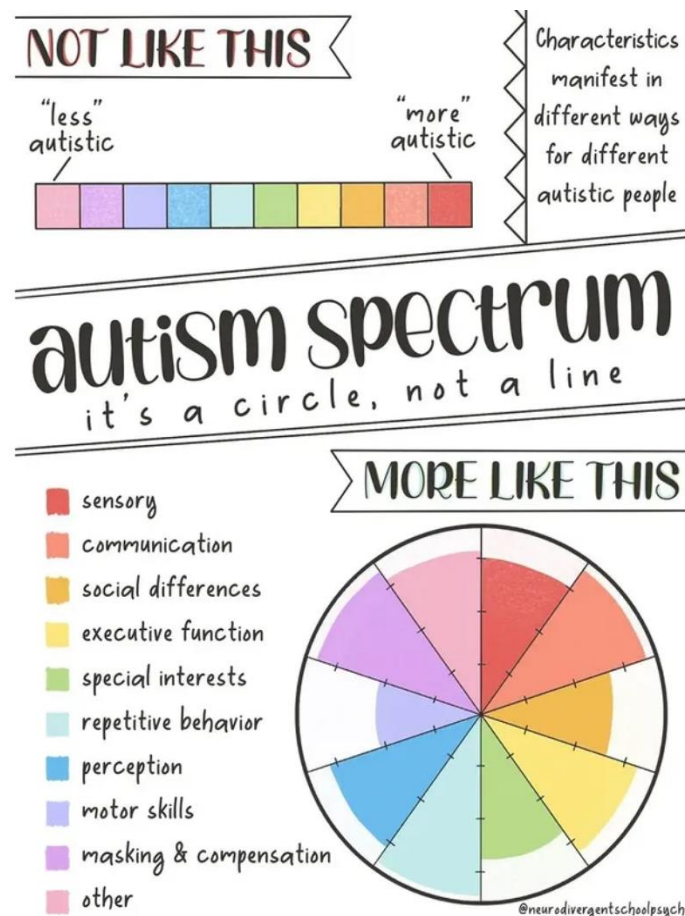
We would LOVE your contributions - feedback, articles you've found, books you've read, recommendations, strategies which are helping you, stories about being an apprentice, your journey to getting a diagnosis, something you've written or created – anything!

You can be credited or remain anonymous – but we'd love to start featuring some of your ideas and content!

Please **complete this [Form](#)** or **email** any content to DASpecialist.LearningTeam@qa.com



www.instagram.com



Feedback

Here at ND&D we REALLY want this new bi-monthly publication to be beneficial, interesting, inspiring, and a POSITIVE addition to people's inboxes!

So we would absolutely LOVE your feedback! In fact, it's going to be **vital** in helping us make this content relevant to you!

Please can you spare 2 minutes and complete this Form to share your thoughts on our first issue?
<https://forms.office.com/e/9r7CxhyVcK>

Thank you!

Feel you need ND&D Support?

If you are currently a QA Apprentice **without** learning support in place and you have a formal diagnosis, disability, or think you may be neurodivergent please complete a **self-referral form** (links below)

You need to have a disability or learning difficulty in line with **The Equality Act 2010** to receive support with us but are not required to have a formal diagnostic report for us to put reasonable adjustments in place. Watch our **Learning Support Team Video** [here](#)

You may have a formal diagnosis, disability, long-term medical condition, long-term mental health difficulties, have adjustments in the workplace, have received support in the past, or just be exploring a potential neurodiversity – **please link in with us!**

If you would like to discuss receiving learning support please complete the correct **self-referral form** for your Apprenticeship and we will be in touch!

QAA Learning Support (Levels 3-5)

[Self Referral Form](#)

Email – Specialist.LearningTeam@qa.com

DA Learning Support (Levels 4-7)

[Self Referral Form](#)

Email – DASpecialist.LearningTeam@qa.com

Helpful Links:

Check out the [Apprentice learner's portal](#) for information and support around your Apprenticeship. Access information on **your wellbeing, your success, your experience, your future,** and **your programme** and engage with everything QA can offer you on your journey!

If you feel that you'd benefit from pastoral or welfare support, then check out our incredible **Safeguarding Team**; they provide all kinds of support from crisis intervention, regular check-ins, mental health support, and both short and long term mentoring support. **Self-referral Form:** <https://forms.office.com/e/JvT11s63Xz>

QA has partnered with the **Association of Apprentices (AoA)** a membership organisation that connects apprentices across the UK. In working with AoA, QA provide access to social and professional networks, learning, guidance, and support to enhance the apprenticeship journey. All apprenticeship learners are eligible for free AoA membership. Find out more [here](#)



DA Only:

The Academic Community of Excellence (ACE) team provide guidance for **Degree Apprentices** alongside regular classes on topics such as academic style, critical analysis, relating theory to practice, research skills, reflective writing, referencing, and much more - [ACE DA Learner Portal](#)