

Oooh, squirrel!

Teaching neurodiverse students

Luis Diego Granera, PhD

Villanova University



Demo: Changes in demand

(Board work)

Neurodiversity

“The **neurodiversity** paradigm is a framework for understanding human brain function that considers the diversity within sensory processing, motor abilities, social comfort, cognition, and focus as neurobiological differences.”

–your friend, Wikipedia

Who is neurodiverse?

- Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia

Why is this important to know?

- 1 in 5 neurodiverse
- 1 in 4 undiagnosed ADHD
 - + Women under-diagnosed

ADHD: What you see

Easily distracted

“Spacing out”

Difficulty motivating
yourself

Executive dysfunction!

Strive for novelty but thrive with structure

ADHD: What works?

- Motivators: Passion/interest, novelty, urgency/hurry, and challenge (competition or cooperation)
- What that can look like:
 - + Movement (Interest)
 - + Body doubling (Cooperation)
 - + Gamification! (Novelty)



What you can do: Your Syllabus (1 of 2)

- Be clear and consistent
 - + Share syllabus ASAP for deadlines -> planning/structure
 - + Be literal/as clear as possible
 - Including how to communicate with you
 - + Clarify purpose of office hours

What you can do: Your Syllabus (2 of 2)

- Be structured but allow for flexibility
 - + Flexible deadlines
 - + Dropping lowest grade
 - + Zoom AND in-person office hours

What you can do: In-class logistics (1 of 2)

- Awareness for sensory issues
 - + Plan for breaks
 - + Movement
- Outline for the day
 - + 2-4 points
 - + Check off as you go

What you can do: In-class logistics (2 of 2)

- Say, write, repeat
- Not too long uninterrupted:
 - + “Talk to your neighbor” -> Set a timer.
 - + Instrumental music
- Take a pause

What you can do: You

- Your class: a safe learning space
 - + Have teachers made them feel dumb?
- You want people to ask questions
- You don't have to get it perfect; you just have to do *something*
 - + Universal design!

Wrapping up

This presentation itself used the formatting and principles recommended!

- Outline
- Say, write, repeat
- Not too long uninterrupted

Remember: be nice to yourself!

(Re)sources

- Prevalence of neurodivergence: <https://today.yougov.com/health/articles/50950-neurodiversity-neurodivergence-in-united-states-19-percent-americans-identify-neurodivergent-poll>
- ADHD: <https://www.newsweek.com/adhd-suspected-american-adults-survey-1967030>
- Different rates of ADHD diagnosis: <https://www.newsweek.com/doctor-overlooked-adhd-girls-1924555#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Institute%20of%20Mental%20Health%2C,percent%20of%20women%20with%20the%20condition%20are%20undiagnosed.>
- Syllabus design: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/06/15/advice-teaching-neurodiverse-students-opinion>
- In-class logistics: <https://teaching.washington.edu/inclusive-accessible/addressing-needs/neurodiverse-students/>
- Techniques: <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/adhd-teaching-strategies>