

THE COURSE & WORKBOOK



Building a Business Around Your Brain

A neurodivergent entrepreneur's
companion — the foundations

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Why I wrote this

Hi — I'm Emma Wallace.

I work with creative and founder-led teams when a business is ready to turn ambition into real operating structure. My focus is strategic operations, growth and cross-functional execution — helping founders work out what needs to happen first, build the plan, put the systems around it, and keep things moving. I've done that across lifestyle, fashion, wellbeing, sustainable and brand-led businesses. I'm strongest where strategy meets delivery, and I'm especially drawn to working with creative and neurodivergent founders, because that's where I do my best work.

But this workbook didn't come from my consulting practice. It came from my own journey.

The guide I couldn't find

When I set out to build my own business, I went looking for a guide. What I found was conventional advice — and conventional advice didn't work for me. It assumed a brain that ran on other people's deadlines, other people's definitions of discipline, other people's idea of what productivity looks like. Following it didn't make me more effective. It just made me feel like I was failing at something everyone else found straightforward.

So I stopped looking for the guide and started building it. I went deep into the research on neurodivergence — how these brains actually process, focus, tire, recover, connect and create — and slowly uncovered the elements that make up this workbook.

Where the thinking comes from

Alongside the research, I took a master's in organisational leadership. Its first modules are about understanding yourself — before you attempt to lead anyone else — and that principle runs through everything here. It's why this book starts with who you are rather than what you should do.

I then trained as a mentor and gained a qualification in the foundations of business mentoring, and began working with neurodivergent founders. What struck me was how familiar their patterns were: the same ways of working, the same energy cliffs, the same needs, the same sense that the standard advice was written for someone else. My research and insights helped them. That's when I knew this wasn't just my story.

How it was tested

I pulled it all together into a programme and put it in front of real people — delivering it as workshops and mentoring students in my role as Entrepreneur in Residence at University of the Arts London. I tested the content, saw what landed and what didn't, and revised it into the workbook you're holding.

So this isn't theory, and it isn't a list of hacks. It's research, lived experience and tested practice, in the order I wish someone had given it to me.

My whole job — with clients, and here — is getting your thinking out of your head and into something you can actually use. That's what this book is for. I'm excited to share it with more people.

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How to use this

This is a course and workbook in one. It blends the teaching that helps you understand your neurodivergent brain with the reflective exercises that turn that understanding into something you can use in your business and your life.

Each part teaches a topic, then gives you space to reflect on it. The aim is simple: **to get the thoughts out of your head and onto paper** so you can reflect deeply. You don't have to write — record voice notes, type elsewhere, or work by hand. Use whatever gets the thinking out.

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU START

- **There are no right answers.** These exercises are for you — be honest rather than 'correct'.
- **You don't have to do it all at once.** Each part stands alone. Follow the order, or jump to whatever is most relevant right now.
- **This takes energy.** Deep reflection is real work. Give yourself a quiet stretch of time, take breaks, and keep yourself hydrated and fuelled.
- **Come back to it.** Your strengths, challenges and needs evolve. Revisiting these pages over time is where the value compounds.
- **Pair it with an AI thinking partner.** The next page gives you a prompt you can paste into whichever AI tool you use, so it works the way your brain works.

Tip: date your entries. When you look back in a few months, the patterns you spot will tell you more than any single exercise.

Your AI thinking partner

Throughout this book you'll see moments where it helps to think out loud with someone — to go deeper on a reflection, rehearse a difficult conversation, or work out what to do next. An AI assistant can be a genuinely useful partner for that: it's available at 2am, it never gets bored of your questions, and it won't sigh when you ask the same thing a third way.

But out of the box, most AI tools give you the same conventional advice this book exists to replace. The fix is to tell it how your brain works. Below is a prompt to do exactly that. Paste it into whichever tool you use — ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot or anything else — at the start of a conversation. Better still, save it as a custom instruction, project or saved prompt so it applies every time.

COPY THIS PROMPT

You are my thinking partner for my business and my working life. I am a neurodivergent entrepreneur.

[Optional — add if you want to: I am autistic / I have ADHD / I am dyslexic / I am dyspraxic / I have dyscalculia / I am still working out where I sit. Add anything else that matters, e.g. my energy is unpredictable, I struggle to start tasks, I think in pictures.]

How I want you to work with me:

- Treat my neurodivergence as a given, not a problem to be fixed. Don't default to conventional productivity advice built for a neurotypical brain.
- Work with how I think. Help me find the route that suits me, rather than the route that is supposed to suit everyone.
- Be direct and concrete. Break things into clear steps and tell me what to do first.
- Ask me one question at a time. Check what I actually need before offering solutions.
- Keep your answers short unless I ask you to go deeper.
- Build on my strengths, not just manage my challenges.
- Factor in my energy and capacity, not just my time. If something I'm planning is going to cost me a lot, say so.
- Be honest with me, kindly. Don't be relentlessly positive.

What I might bring you: business decisions, planning and prioritising, drafting a difficult message, preparing to advocate for myself, thinking through an exercise from my workbook, or processing a hard day.

Start by asking me what I'm working on today.

MAKING IT YOURS

- **Fill in the brackets.** The more specific you are, the more useful it gets. You don't need a diagnosis to describe how you work.
- **Add to it as you go.** As this workbook surfaces things about your strengths, energy and communication, feed them back into the prompt.
- **Change what doesn't fit.** If you want warmth rather than bluntness, or longer answers, say so. It's your prompt.

- **Use it for the exercises.** Several exercises here suggest working with an AI partner — especially the role-plays, where it can play the other person.

Two things worth remembering. An AI assistant is a thinking partner, not a therapist, an accountant or a lawyer — for those, find the real thing. And be mindful about what you share: assume anything you type may be stored.

Part 1 · Fundamentals of Neurodiversity

Learning Outcomes

By completing Part 1, you will:

1. Understand Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence:

- Have a clear definition of what neurodiversity means and recognise the spectrum of neurodivergent conditions and traits.
- Appreciate the concept of neurodivergence as a natural and valuable form of human diversity.

2. Recognise Common Entrepreneurial Paths:

- Identify various paths neurodivergent entrepreneurs may take, understanding how different strengths and challenges play out in each journey.
- Be inspired by real-life examples of neurodivergent entrepreneurs who have successfully leveraged their unique traits.

3. Acknowledge the Importance of Self-Understanding:

- Understand the significance of self-awareness in harnessing neurodivergent strengths and navigating the challenges of entrepreneurship.
- Begin the process of identifying your own neurodivergent traits and how these can be viewed as assets in your entrepreneurial endeavours.

4. Build Confidence:

- Gain confidence in your identity as a neurodivergent entrepreneur, ready to embrace your unique perspectives and contributions to the business world.
- Feel empowered to start or continue your entrepreneurial journey with a deeper appreciation of how your neurodivergence can be a source of innovation and strength.

What neurodiversity and neurodivergence are

We are going to start this course with an overview of neurodiversity and neurodivergence. If you are here you probably already know a lot but just in case you don't, we are going to briefly cover the essentials.

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a concept that recognises and values the diverse range of human brains and mindsets. It's an approach that views neurological differences not as deficits but as variations of the human genome. Neurodiversity encompasses a variety of neurological conditions, including but not limited to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, and Tourette Syndrome. This perspective promotes the understanding that these differences should be acknowledged and respected just like any other form of human diversity, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, or cultural background.

The neurodiversity paradigm shifts the conversation from one of pathology and impairment to one of acceptance and inclusion. It suggests that the challenges often associated with neurodivergent conditions are not solely the result of individual neurological differences but are also significantly influenced by societal structures, attitudes, and environments. By embracing neurodiversity, we acknowledge that every brain works differently and that these differences are a vital aspect of human variation.

Understanding Neurodivergence

Neurodivergence refers to the condition of having a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal." Being neurodivergent means that an individual's cognitive functioning, learning styles, social interactions, and sensory experiences are distinct from what is considered typical.

Common Traits and Conditions:

- **ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder):** Characterised by differences in attention regulation, impulsivity, and, in some cases, hyperactivity. Individuals with ADHD might excel in creativity, problem-solving, and innovative thinking.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** Encompasses a range of neurodevelopmental conditions characterised by differences in social interaction, communication, interests, and sensory sensitivities. Autistic individuals often have unique strengths in pattern recognition, attention to detail, and deep focus on subjects of interest.
- **Dyslexia:** Primarily affects reading and language processing abilities. People with dyslexia often demonstrate strengths in areas requiring spatial reasoning, creative thinking, and big-picture conceptualisation.
- **Dyspraxia:** Affects motor coordination skills and can impact tasks requiring physical coordination. Individuals with dyspraxia may have strong verbal skills and excel in strategic and creative thinking.

Places to get additional information on the different neurodivergent profiles:

[ADHD UK - Homepage - ADHD UK](#)

[National Autistic Society](#)

[Ambitious about Autism](#)

[British Dyslexia Association](#)

[International Dyslexia Association](#)

The Spectrum of Neurodivergence

It's important to recognise that neurodivergent conditions exist on a spectrum, with each individual experiencing a unique set of strengths and challenges. This spectrum nature means that there's no one-size-fits-all description for any neurodivergent condition. Embracing this variability is crucial for understanding and supporting yourself on your journey.

Embracing Neurodiversity and Neurodivergence

Understanding neurodiversity and neurodivergence is the first step towards creating a more inclusive society and workplace. For neurodivergent individuals, self-awareness

and acceptance of your neurological differences can pave the way for self-advocacy, allowing you to seek out environments and opportunities that align with your unique strengths and needs. For society at large, embracing neurodiversity means advocating for structural changes that accommodate all kinds of minds, ultimately leading to richer, more diverse communities and innovative workplaces. As entrepreneurs you can lead the way to build better businesses and ways of working.

This section has laid the groundwork for appreciating the vast spectrum of human neurodiversity and understanding what it means to be neurodivergent. As we move forward, we will explore the specific paths that neurodivergent entrepreneurs often take, highlighting how their unique perspectives contribute to their entrepreneurial journeys.

Later on in the modules we will look at common strengths and challenges as well as exercises to identify and communicate your particular strengths and areas you need more support.

Neurodivergent entrepreneurs and their paths

As we delve into the world of entrepreneurship through a neurodivergent lens, it's both inspiring and illuminating to look at those who've paved the way. In this section, we'll explore the common paths taken by neurodivergent entrepreneurs to start their businesses. Understanding these journeys can offer you insights into leveraging your neurodivergent strengths and navigating the entrepreneurial landscape.

Let's look at some scenarios...

Necessity Entrepreneurs: When Starting Your Own Business is the Path Forward

For some neurodivergent individuals, traditional employment paths can be fraught with barriers. These barriers might stem from misunderstandings, a lack of accommodations, or simply because conventional work environments are not conducive to their way of thinking and working. This necessity, coupled with a drive to succeed and contribute meaningfully, can lead many neurodivergent individuals to entrepreneurship. (ref: <https://eiexchange.com/content/ADHD-can-affect-entrepreneurs-earnings-and-business-success>, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90878234/why-adults-adhd-thrive-entrepreneurs-freelancers>)

1. The Barrier Breaker: Imagine someone highly skilled and talented, yet consistently overlooked or undervalued in traditional job markets due to their neurodivergent traits. This person might struggle with aspects of conventional employment, such as rigid schedules, office politics, or environments that do not cater to their sensory needs. Out of necessity, they turn to entrepreneurship, where they can create a business that not only aligns with their skills and passions but also operates on principles of inclusivity and understanding.

Strengths: Resilience, creativity in problem-solving, and a deep understanding of the value of inclusive work environments.

Challenges: Overcoming initial barriers to entry, such as securing funding or navigating the logistics of starting a business, and the isolation that can come from working independently.

Visionary Entrepreneurs: Making the World Fit Their Vision

Then there are those who see the world through a completely different lens. These visionaries often find that existing structures, systems, and solutions do not align with their unique perspectives or meet their standards for efficiency, ethics, or innovation. For these individuals, entrepreneurship is not just a career choice; it's a necessity to bring their visions to life.

2. The Change Maker: This entrepreneur sees gaps and inefficiencies in the world and possesses the unique insight and creativity to fill them. However, their unconventional ideas might be met with skepticism or resistance in more traditional settings. Unwilling to compromise their vision, they embark on the entrepreneurial journey to build something from the ground up, according to their innovative principles. Whether it's developing a new product, service, or way of working, these entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to see their unique vision realised.

Strengths: Innovative thinking, determination, and a unique perspective can lead to groundbreaking solutions.

Challenges: Convincing others of the viability of their unconventional ideas, the loneliness of blazing a new trail, and the challenge of turning a vision into a practical, profitable business.

There is no one-size-fits-all all for being successful as an entrepreneur. Have a read-through of some examples of successful profiles and examples...

Profiles of Success

1. The Innovator

Imagine someone who sees the world differently, whose unique perspective leads to the creation of products or services that challenge the status quo. This person doesn't think in a linear fashion but instead connects dots in unusual ways, leading to groundbreaking innovations. Consider, for example, an entrepreneur with ADHD whose ability to hyper-focus and think outside the box led to developing a revolutionary tech platform that addresses a common but overlooked problem.

Example:

David Neeleman - Entrepreneur with ADHD

Achievements: David Neeleman, the founder of JetBlue Airways and several other airlines, has openly discussed his ADHD diagnosis. His ability to hyper-focus and think outside the box has been pivotal in his success in the highly competitive airline industry. Neeleman's innovative approach to customer service and technology has revolutionized air travel, making him a quintessential example of an innovator who leverages his neurodivergent traits for groundbreaking innovations.

2. The Problem Solver

Then, there's the entrepreneur whose dyslexia gives them the ability to visualise complex systems and problems in 3D, turning these visualisations into practical solutions. Their journey might include creating a startup that develops visual learning tools and transforming education for dyslexic students everywhere.

Example:

Richard Branson - Entrepreneur with Dyslexia

Achievements: Sir Richard Branson, the founder of the Virgin Group, is one of the most well-known entrepreneurs with dyslexia. His dyslexia didn't deter him; instead, it shaped his ability to think in unconventional ways, leading to the success of his global empire. Branson's ventures span multiple industries, from music to space travel, showcasing his diverse problem-solving capabilities and his knack for visualising complex business landscapes in unique ways.

3. The Detail Master

Picture an autistic entrepreneur whose attention to detail and deep focus on niche interests fuel the creation of a business that excels in its domain, perhaps offering specialised products or services that cater to a specific audience's nuanced needs.

Example:

Satoshi Tajiri - Entrepreneur with Autism

Achievements: Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of Pokémon, is reported to have been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. His deep interest in collecting creatures and attention to detail fuelled his creation of the Pokémon universe, a franchise that has become a cultural phenomenon worldwide. Tajiri's ability to focus intensely on his niche interest has led to a business that resonates with millions, demonstrating the strength that comes from a neurodivergent focus on detail.

4. The Social Visionary

Lastly, imagine an entrepreneur whose challenges with traditional social interactions led them to create an online platform that redefines networking, making it more accessible and meaningful for people who think and interact differently.

Example:

Greta Thunberg - Environmental Activist with Autism

Achievements: Greta Thunberg, diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome (on the autism spectrum), has become a global icon for climate activism. Starting with her solitary school strike for the climate in front of the Swedish Parliament, Thunberg's unwavering dedication and clear, fact-based communication have galvanised young people worldwide to take action for the environment. Her neurodivergent traits, including her intense focus on climate issues and her straightforward, impactful communication style,

have played a pivotal role in her effectiveness as an activist. Thunberg's work exemplifies how a deep personal commitment to a cause, coupled with a unique way of seeing the world, can lead to profound social impact.

Common Entrepreneurial Paths

1. Solopreneurship: Many neurodivergent individuals thrive as solopreneurs, where they can work at their own pace, set their own schedules, and pursue their passions without the constraints of a traditional workplace. This path allows for deep dives into specific interests and the flexibility to create work environments tailored to one's sensory and social preferences.

Strengths: Independence, focus on passion projects, and control over the work environment.

Challenges: Isolation, managing all aspects of the business alone, and navigating time management.

2. Tech Innovators: The tech industry, with its constant demand for innovation and problem-solving, is a natural fit for many neurodivergent entrepreneurs. Here, thinking differently is a prized asset, often leading to the creation of disruptive technologies and solutions.

Strengths: Innovation, problem-solving, and the ability to hyper-focus on complex projects.

Challenges: Fast-paced environments can be stressful, and team dynamics may require careful navigation.

3. Creative Enterprises: From design to digital media, neurodivergent entrepreneurs often excel in creative fields, leveraging their unique perspectives to produce original work that stands out in crowded markets.

Strengths: Creativity, originality, and a strong visual-spatial intelligence.

Challenges: Market saturation, the need for self-promotion, and managing business operations alongside creative work.

4. Social Enterprises: Some neurodivergent entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to effect social change, creating businesses that address societal challenges. Their personal experiences with being misunderstood or marginalized can fuel a deep commitment to inclusivity and advocacy.

Strengths: Passion for social causes, commitment to inclusivity, and innovative approaches to societal challenges.

Challenges: Balancing mission and profitability, navigating funding landscapes, and potential burnout from mission-driven work.

As you reflect on these profiles and paths, consider where you see yourself. What strengths do you bring to the table? What challenges resonate with you, and how might you navigate them? Your neurodivergent traits are not just obstacles to overcome but are also the very qualities that can drive your success as an entrepreneur. Embrace your unique perspective, and let it guide you as you carve out your path in the world of entrepreneurship.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Understanding your neurodiversity

REFLECT · UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

In your own words, describe what neurodiversity means to you. How do you understand the concept of a neurodivergent brain?

How has learning about neurodiversity changed the way you see yourself and your entrepreneurial journey?

REFLECT · YOUR PERSONAL PATH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Describe the path you've taken — or plan to take — towards entrepreneurship. How does it align with, or differ from, the common paths above?

How has your neurodivergence influenced your path so far — the challenges and the strengths?

Part 2 · Your Strengths

Learning Outcomes

In this part on the strengths of neurodivergent individuals, you will gain valuable insights into harnessing your unique capabilities for entrepreneurial success. This exploration will not only illuminate the array of strengths that neurodivergence brings but also provide practical tools for self-discovery and application.

By the end of this part, you will:

- **Understand Neurodivergent Strengths:** Gain insight into the diverse strengths neurodivergent individuals possess.
- **Identify Personal Strengths:** Learn strategies to uncover and articulate personal strengths using self-assessments and reflective exercises.
- **Boost Confidence in Applying Strengths:** Build confidence in leveraging your neurodivergent traits effectively within your entrepreneurial journey.

This part is designed to give you a deeper appreciation of your neurodivergent traits, and practical strategies to use these strengths to build innovation and authenticity in your entrepreneurial endeavours.

Neurodivergent strengths in business

Introduction to neurodivergent strengths

As a neurodivergent entrepreneur, your unique cognitive processing style is not just a part of who you are — when it is understood and leveraged correctly it's a powerful asset that can set you apart in the business world. The terms 'superpowers' often gets thrown around about successful neurodivergent people, but in these modules we will not use this term because it is often unhelpful and can diminish the huge challenges that come with having a neurodivergent brain. It is important to instead focus on strengths because we all have strengths and through identifying and leveraging what they are you can build a business and a life that is fulfilling and works for you.

Neurodivergence encompasses a spectrum of neurological differences, each with its own set of strengths. In this section, we'll explore some of these strengths, both general and specific to conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia. Understanding and embracing these strengths can empower you to harness your full potential.

This introduction to common strengths and not an exhaustive list. After this section you will be able to explore exercises and resources to dive deeper into understanding and working with your neurodivergent strengths.

General strengths across neurodivergent individuals

These show up across neurotypes. See which you recognise in yourself.

1

Innovative Problem-Solving

Neurodivergent individuals often approach problems from unique angles, leading to innovative solutions that might not occur to neurotypical thinkers. This ability can be particularly valuable in entrepreneurship, where innovation drives success.

2

Hyper-Focus

Many neurodivergent individuals have the ability to hyper-focus on tasks that interest them, leading to deep work and significant accomplishments in those areas. This intense focus can be a powerful tool when directed at your business goals.

3

Exceptional Memory or Expertise in Specific Areas

It's not uncommon for neurodivergent individuals to have exceptional memory or to develop a deep, expert-level knowledge in areas of interest. This expertise can be leveraged to create highly specialised businesses that stand out in the market.

4

Creative Thinking

Neurodivergent brains often think in non-linear, associative ways, leading to high levels of creativity. This can be particularly useful in fields that value original ideas and creative problem-solving.

5

Determination and resilience

Neurodivergent individuals often exhibit extraordinary levels of determination and resilience. We have faced adversity throughout our lives, constantly overcoming challenges and finding alternative paths forward. This resilience translates well into entrepreneurship and the new world of work that is changing very fast, where setbacks are commonplace, and the ability to bounce back and adapt is crucial for long-term success.

Common strengths by neurodivergence type

An introduction, not an exhaustive list — and most people recognise themselves in more than one card.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- ▶ **Attention to Detail:** Many autistic individuals possess an incredible attention to detail, which can be invaluable in fields where precision is key, such as data analysis, programming, and artistic pursuits.
- ▶ **Systemising Abilities:** The ability to understand, create, and operate within complex systems makes individuals on the autism spectrum excellent at tasks involving coding, system development, and logistics.
- ▶ **Analytical Thinking:** Individuals on the autism spectrum often excel in analytical thinking. Their ability to focus intensely on subjects of interest can lead to deep, comprehensive understandings of complex data sets, making them exceptional in roles that require data analysis, statistical review, and critical evaluation.
- ▶ **People Leadership:** Some individuals on the autism spectrum, particularly those who have focused on developing social and communication skills, can be highly effective leaders. Their dedication to fairness, attention to detail, and straightforward approach can inspire trust and respect in their teams.

ADHD

- ▶ **Energetic Enthusiasm:** The high energy levels associated with ADHD can be a boon in entrepreneurship, fuelling long hours and intensive work on projects that are engaging.
- ▶ **Adaptability and Spontaneity:** The ability to think on one's feet and adapt quickly to changing situations is a common trait among those with ADHD, making them well-suited for the fast-paced nature of startup environments.
- ▶ **Analytical Thinking:** While not traditionally associated with analytics, entrepreneurs with ADHD who have developed coping mechanisms and strategies can excel in dynamic analytical environments that require quick thinking and adaptability. Their ability to make rapid connections between disparate pieces of information can be a unique analytical strength.
- ▶ **Fast Learning:** Entrepreneurs with ADHD may display an ability to quickly absorb information that interests them, particularly in high-stimulation environments. Their curiosity and capacity for hyperfocus can result in rapid acquisition of new skills and knowledge.
- ▶ **Future Thinking:** Both autistic and ADHD entrepreneurs may excel in future thinking — autistic individuals through their deep, focused interest in specific subjects leading to profound insights and predictions, and those with ADHD through their creative, out-of-the-box thinking that identifies future trends and opportunities.

Dyslexia

- ▶ **Visual Thinking:** Many individuals with dyslexia have strong visual-spatial skills, excelling in fields that require visual creativity and the ability to think in pictures, such as design, architecture, and engineering.
- ▶ **Entrepreneurial Mindset:** Research suggests that individuals with dyslexia are more likely to start their own businesses. Their ability to see the bigger picture, think strategically, and innovate are key factors in their entrepreneurial success.
- ▶ **Resourcefulness:** Dyslexic individuals are known for their resourcefulness. They develop creative strategies and workarounds to overcome challenges related to reading, writing, and organisation. Their ability to find alternative approaches and adapt to different situations is a valuable asset in problem-solving, navigating obstacles and managing with limited resources.
- ▶ **Fast Learning:** Dyslexic individuals often develop enhanced learning strategies that compensate for challenges with traditional reading and writing. These strategies can include a strong reliance on auditory learning and visual aids, making them fast learners in environments where information is presented in diverse, inclusive formats.

Dyspraxia

- ▶ **Creative Problem-Solving:** Individuals with dyspraxia often develop highly creative problem-solving skills as they find alternative ways to accomplish tasks that might be challenging due to their coordination differences. This creativity can be a significant asset in business, enabling innovative solutions to complex problems.
- ▶ **Strategic Thinking:** Because tasks may require more planning for those with dyspraxia, they often become excellent strategic thinkers. Their ability to anticipate obstacles and plan accordingly can be invaluable in the planning and execution of business strategies.
- ▶ **Verbal Communication:** Many individuals with dyspraxia have strong verbal skills. Their ability to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively can be a key strength in negotiations, sales, and marketing.
- ▶ **People Leadership:** Individuals with dyspraxia often develop strong verbal communication skills, as they may rely more on spoken language to express themselves clearly. This strength can translate into effective people leadership, where clear communication, empathy, and the ability to articulate vision and direction are key.

Dyscalculia

- ▶ **Innovative Numeracy Strategies:** Individuals with dyscalculia often develop innovative strategies to understand and work with numbers, despite challenges in processing mathematical information. This innovative thinking can translate into unique approaches to data analysis, financial planning, and problem-solving in business.
- ▶ **Big-Picture Thinking:** People with dyscalculia tend to be big-picture thinkers, focusing on overall concepts rather than getting bogged down in numerical details. This ability can be crucial for strategic planning, leadership, and ensuring that a business stays aligned with its vision and goals.

- ▶ **Empathy and Understanding:** Living with dyscalculia can foster a deep sense of empathy and understanding for others who face learning differences or challenges. Businesses led by individuals with this empathetic perspective are often more inclusive, customer-focused, and adaptive to the needs of diverse clients or teams.
- ▶ **Future Thinking:** People with dyscalculia, who often focus on big-picture thinking due to challenges with numerical and detailed analysis, can excel in future thinking and strategic planning. Their ability to conceptualize broad outcomes and envision long-term scenarios plays a critical role in business strategy and innovation.

Strengths of neurotypical individuals

It would be wrong not to include these. Including the full spectrum of neurodiversity is how you maximise the benefits of diverse thinking — in business and in society.

Neurotypical strengths

- ▶ **Adaptability in Social Interactions:** Neurotypical individuals often naturally navigate social cues and adapt their communication styles to different contexts with ease. This adaptability can be advantageous in networking, negotiations, and building relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders.
- ▶ **Multitasking:** While multitasking can be challenging for some neurodivergent individuals, many neurotypicals can juggle multiple tasks effectively, especially in environments where rapid task switching is required. This can be beneficial in fast-paced business settings where handling various duties simultaneously is necessary.
- ▶ **Linear and Sequential Thinking:** Neurotypical individuals often excel at linear and sequential thinking, making them adept at tasks that require systematic planning and execution. This approach can complement the more associative and non-linear thinking patterns of neurodivergent partners, leading to well-rounded strategic planning and problem-solving.
- ▶ **Consistency in Routine Tasks:** The ability to perform routine tasks with consistency and reliability is another strength that neurotypical individuals often exhibit. In a business context, this consistency is crucial for maintaining operational stability and ensuring that day-to-day activities run smoothly.
- ▶ **Emotional Regulation:** Neurotypical individuals may find it easier to regulate their emotions in stressful situations, allowing them to respond to business challenges with a balanced perspective. This emotional regulation can contribute to effective leadership and decision-making under pressure.

Collaboration Across the Spectrum

The most successful entrepreneurial endeavours often arise from teams that blend a variety of strengths, perspectives, and problem-solving approaches. By cultivating an environment where both neurotypical and neurodivergent strengths are recognised and valued, you can build a resilient, innovative, and inclusive business capable of navigating the complexities of today's marketplace.

Remember, the diversity of human thought and experience is one of our greatest assets. Embracing this diversity, and understanding how to harness the strengths it brings, is key to creating a dynamic and successful entrepreneurial journey.

Your own blend

It's important to reiterate that the strengths and neurodivergent profiles mentioned here do not comprise an exhaustive list. Neurodivergence encompasses a wide spectrum of experiences, and each individual's journey is unique. The strengths outlined in this module are meant to serve as a starting point for recognising the valuable perspective that you as neurodivergent individuals can utilise to make the most of your entrepreneurship journey.

We encourage you to view this as the beginning of a deeper exploration into your own blend of neurotypes and associated strengths. Every neurodivergent entrepreneur possesses a unique set of skills, talents, and perspectives that may extend beyond the common strengths discussed. By engaging in further research and self-reflection, you can uncover additional strengths that are specific to your neurotype and learn how to leverage them effectively in your entrepreneurial endeavours.

Embrace the journey of discovering and harnessing your full potential. The diversity of thought, creativity, and problem-solving abilities within the neurodivergent community is vast and varied. As you continue to explore and understand your own neurodivergent traits, you'll not only gain a deeper appreciation for your individual strengths but also learn how to apply them in ways that drive innovation, leadership, and success in your business.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Identifying your strengths – self-assessments

You don't have to do all of these, but completing a range gives you a fuller picture of how you work — and makes it easier to communicate your strengths and needs. Record your results so they're all in one place.

Personality test: [take the test](#)

Your personality type and natural preferences, and how they shape your approach to entrepreneurship.

RECORD YOUR RESULT

Team roles test: [take the test](#)

The role you naturally lean towards in a team — useful for how you contribute as a founder.

RECORD YOUR RESULT

Work values test: [take the test](#)

Your core work values, to help align your business with what matters most to you.

RECORD YOUR RESULT

Competencies test: [take the test](#)

Your key competencies and areas for development.

RECORD YOUR RESULT

Learning styles: [take the test](#)

Your preferred ways of taking in new information and skills.

RECORD YOUR RESULT

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Reflective practice — strengths

Turn those results into self-awareness. Answer the prompts relevant to the tests you completed — these are options for your benefit, not a checklist.

Understanding your strengths.

Which strengths commonly associated with neurodivergence do you see in yourself?
How have they shown up in your personal and professional life?

Insights from your personality test.

How do your natural preferences align with your entrepreneurial goals? Were there surprises? How do these insights challenge or affirm how you see yourself?

Team role and collaboration.

How do you see yourself contributing in a team? What roles do you gravitate towards, and how might that shape the team you build?

Values and alignment.

How do your core work values align with what you're building, and how can you make sure your operations and culture reflect them?

Competencies and development.

Which competencies are your key strengths, and how can you use them? Which development areas do you agree with, and how might you address them?

Learning and knowledge.

How does your learning style shape how you pick up new skills? When has it helped or hindered you, and what will you do with that awareness?

Integration and application.

What three actions can you take to better leverage your strengths? How could you build an environment or team that complements your mix of strengths, values and learning styles?

Part 3 · Common Challenges

Welcome to this next module, where we delve into understanding and managing the common challenges you may face as a neurodivergent entrepreneur. This module is designed not just to introduce these challenges but also to explore why they occur and how you can effectively manage them to ensure your business thrives alongside your neurodivergent traits.

Importance of understanding Your Challenges as a Neurodivergent Entrepreneur

As an entrepreneur, your journey is uniquely challenging and rewarding. Recognising and addressing the specific challenges related to your neurodivergence is essential for several reasons:

- 1. Enhanced Business Management:** Your ability to run your business effectively is closely linked to how well you can manage and work around your neurodivergent challenges, particularly your wellbeing and energy levels. By understanding these challenges, you can devise strategies that enhance your productivity and overall business operations.
- 2. Preventing Burnout:** It's crucial to identify stressors and potential burnout triggers early. Understanding your challenges helps prevent situations where you're forced to cope in ways that are unsustainable, which can lead to exhaustion and burnout.
- 3. Creating a Supportive Work Environment:** Many neurodivergent individuals have experienced environments that aren't conducive to their success. By understanding what environments and work practices best support your neurodivergence, you can create a workspace that not only accommodates your needs but also enhances your strengths.

Common Challenges and Insights:

We'll start by introducing common challenges such as issues with focus, self-organisation, managing wellbeing, executive function and communication. You'll learn not only about these challenges but also why they might be more pronounced due to your neurodivergence.

Management Techniques:

Throughout the sections there will be some reflective prompts and exercises to help you identify some self management practices. We'll explore some practical techniques to manage these challenges effectively but the majority of these will be in the following modules in 'building a business around your brain'. These sections are designed to provide you with tools and strategies that align with how your brain works, ensuring that your business practices enhance your neurodivergent strengths.

Suggested Learning Approach

To ensure you get the most out of this module without feeling overwhelmed:

- **Broad Overview:** Initially, skim through all the content to understand the breadth of challenges covered. This will help you see that you are not alone in experiencing these issues.

- **Focused Learning:** Choose one or two challenges that are most relevant to you at this moment. Focus your efforts on these areas using the strategies discussed.
- **Reflective Exercises and AI Mentorship:** Engage deeply with reflective exercises and utilise your AI tools to explore personalised suggestions for improving how you handle your specific challenges. This tailored guidance will help you apply what you've learned directly to your entrepreneurial endeavours.
- **Iterative Learning:** Return to other challenges as needed. This module is designed for you to come back to at different points in your entrepreneurial journey, especially when facing new or evolving challenges.

Understanding and managing your neurodivergent challenges is not just about making day-to-day tasks easier; it's about transforming your work environment into a space where you can flourish. By the end of this module, you'll be equipped with the knowledge and tools to create an optimal setup for your unique needs, empowering you to lead your business to success.

The reflective exercises are situated within each focus area on this module.

Memory, attention & focus

- Overview of attention and focus challenges
- How sensory stimulation affects your concentration and focus. What are the barriers for you and what are the places/ways that you can focus and this most clearly?
- metacognition - using self awareness techniques to improve working memory and
- Strategies and tools to enhance concentration, including sensory management and workspace optimisation (more to come on time management etc in next section)
- support with a video of other content

Overview of Attention, Focus, and Memory Challenges for Neurodivergent People

For neurodivergent individuals, challenges related to attention, focus, and memory can significantly impact both daily functioning and professional performance. These challenges are not only common but also vary widely in how they manifest, influenced by each individual's neurodivergent profile and the demands of their environment. Understanding these challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage them.

Attention and Focus Challenges

Neurodivergent individuals often experience difficulties with maintaining consistent attention and focus, which can be attributed to several underlying factors:

- **Hyperfocus vs. Distractibility:** While some neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with ADHD, may have the ability to hyperfocus intensely on tasks that interest them, they might also struggle with distractibility when tasks are less engaging. This inconsistency can lead to challenges in completing tasks that require sustained, general attention.
- **Sensory Sensitivity:** For many, especially those on the autism spectrum, sensory sensitivities can greatly affect concentration. Overwhelming environmental

stimuli — such as loud noises, bright lights, or certain textures — can make maintaining focus difficult.

- **Interest-Based Performance:** Neurodivergent individuals often perform best when tasks align with their interests. This can be a double-edged sword; tasks that fall outside these areas of interest may see a marked decrease in attention and engagement.

Memory Challenges

Memory challenges among neurodivergent individuals typically involve aspects of working memory and short-term memory, which are crucial for tasks such as following instructions, retaining information during conversations, and managing daily responsibilities:

- **Working Memory:** Many neurodivergent people struggle with working memory, which affects their ability to hold and manipulate information in their mind over short periods. This can impact complex task execution and problem-solving.
- **Recall Issues:** Difficulties in retrieving information from short-term memory can pose challenges in environments that require quick recall of facts or procedures, such as fast-paced meetings or while performing tasks under pressure.
- **Organisational Memory:** Challenges in organising memories in a retrievable way can make learning new processes or following sequences of tasks problematic.

Importance of Addressing These Challenges

As neurodivergent entrepreneurs, these challenges can have direct implications on the efficiency and effectiveness of your business operations. Tasks such as planning, meeting client expectations, and managing day-to-day business activities can become more difficult. However, by acknowledging and addressing these challenges, you can implement practical strategies to improve their focus, optimise your work environment, and enhance memory retention, thereby supporting your overall entrepreneurial success.

In the following sections of this module, we will explore specific strategies and tools that can help mitigate the impact of attention, focus, and memory challenges through the process of metacognition (thinking about how you think).

Additional Resources on Working Memory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAVPDbIhy1s>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HszXKZO_H18

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh2Z2hSgFIY>

Embracing Metacognition: Mastering Self-Awareness for Success

As a neurodivergent entrepreneur, developing a deep understanding of your own thought processes — known as metacognition — is crucial. This skill of "thinking about your thinking" is more than just a reflective practice; it's a strategic approach to enhancing your business and personal growth. By mastering metacognition, you gain

invaluable insights into how you learn, solve problems, and respond to challenges, allowing you to adapt more effectively to the demands of entrepreneurship.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urNcjYyalvY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h68bS4c4kw0>

How Metacognition Helps You

1. Tailoring Your Work Environment: Understanding your cognitive processes enables you to identify the conditions under which you work best. For instance, if you notice that you're more productive in quiet, structured environments, you can arrange your workspace to suit this preference, thus enhancing your focus and efficiency.

2. Overcoming Personal Challenges: Metacognition allows you to pinpoint why certain tasks are difficult and to strategise accordingly. For example, if you struggle with maintaining attention, recognising this through self-reflection can help you implement specific strategies, such as breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps or using timers to create focused work periods.

3. Improving Decision-Making: By regularly assessing how you make decisions, you can identify patterns that lead to success or setbacks. This awareness can help you refine your decision-making processes, making you better equipped to handle complex business decisions.

4. Enhancing Emotional Regulation: Metacognitive skills also involve monitoring and regulating your emotional responses. Recognising the early signs of stress or frustration enables you to take proactive steps, such as implementing relaxation techniques or adjusting your workload, which can prevent burnout and maintain your overall well-being.

Practical Steps to Develop Metacognition

To truly benefit from metacognition, it's important to integrate it into your daily routine. Here are some practical steps to enhance your metacognitive abilities:

- **Engage in Daily Reflection:** Dedicate time each day to reflect on your thought processes, the decisions you made, and the strategies you used. Consider what was effective and what could be improved.
- **Set Clear, Reflective Goals:** When setting goals, be specific about what success looks like and reflect on the strategies that will help you achieve these outcomes. Regularly assess your progress and adjust your approaches as necessary.
- **Seek Constructive Feedback:** Regular feedback from trusted colleagues or mentors can provide external perspectives on your cognitive and emotional strategies. This feedback can be invaluable in refining your self-awareness and adjusting your approaches.
- **Use Journaling:** Keep a journal to document your reflections, strategies, successes, and challenges. Reviewing this journal can provide insights into your cognitive patterns and growth over time.

Mastering metacognition isn't just about improving how you think; it's about using that knowledge to create a better, more tailored approach to your entrepreneurial journey. By

becoming more self-aware, you can optimise your strengths, compensate for your weaknesses, and navigate the complexities of running a business with greater confidence and clarity.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Reflective prompts — attention, memory & focus

Each prompt has a reflection and an action. Revisit them periodically; a dedicated journal helps you see patterns over time. If it helps, work through them with your AI thinking partner.

Identifying patterns of attention and focus

Prompt. Think about a recent workday. When did you feel most and least focused? What were you doing, and what was around you?

Action. Note the common factors that affect your concentration, and one change you could make to support your focus.

Analysing challenges with attention

Prompt. Reflect on a task you recently struggled to finish. What made it hard — complexity, length, interest, time of day?

Action. Plan how you'd modify a similar task in future, e.g. breaking it down or scheduling it at a peak-focus time.

Memory strengths and weaknesses

Prompt. Recall a time you forgot something important — what was the context? Now a time your memory served you well. What was different?

Action. Outline practical supports for your memory, e.g. reminder tools or mnemonic devices.

Emotional impacts on thinking

Prompt. Think of a time your emotions clearly affected your focus or memory, for better or worse. What was happening?

Action. Plan ways to manage your emotional state in similar moments — breaks, mindfulness, adjusting your workload.

Evaluating your current strategies

Prompt. Which of your current strategies for attention, focus and memory actually work — and which don't?

Action. Decide what to adjust or replace, and one new approach or tool to try.

Setting goals for improvement

Prompt. Which one or two cognitive areas would you most like to improve, and why does it matter for your work?

Action. Set a measurable, achievable goal with steps, a timeline, and how you'll track progress.

Executive functioning & self-organisation

Executive Functioning and Self-Management in Entrepreneurship

In the dynamic and often unpredictable world of entrepreneurship, effective self-management and strong executive functioning skills are critical. This section explores the importance of these skills and provides a foundational understanding of executive functioning within the context of running a business.

Self-organisation and executive functioning are essential for any entrepreneur, but they pose unique challenges for neurodivergent individuals. These challenges are often magnified when transitioning from structured organisational environments to the more fluid, self-directed world of entrepreneurship. The fluid and self-directed work are often important features of the work that drive neurodivergent people into entrepreneurship

but for neurodivergent individuals, who might naturally struggle with various aspects of executive functioning such as planning, time management, and prioritisation, the new lack of external structure compared to experiences in a workplace or school can be particularly daunting and difficult to navigate without the right support tools and skills.

Importance of Self-Organisation in Entrepreneurship

Self-organisation is a vital skill for any entrepreneur. It involves the ability to manage your time, resources, and responsibilities efficiently. In the absence of typical corporate structures, entrepreneurs must rely on their self-organisation skills to maintain productivity, meet deadlines, and manage the day-to-day operations of their business. This skill directly impacts business growth and success, as it helps to:

- **Ensure Reliability:** By keeping organised, you can ensure that all aspects of the business operate smoothly, from order fulfilment to customer service and beyond.
- **Boost Productivity:** Effective self-organisation minimises time wasted on searching for information or deciding what to work on next, thereby maximising productivity.
- **Enhance Decision Making:** When you have a clear overview of their business and its needs, you can make faster, more informed decisions.
- **Reduce Stress:** Good organisation reduces the chaos and stress that can come from managing multiple aspects of a business, helping to prevent burnout.

What is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning refers to a set of cognitive processes that regulate, control, and manage other cognitive abilities and behaviours. These include:

- **Working Memory:** The ability to hold and manipulate information in one's mind over short periods, such as remembering and using important information during tasks.
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** The ability to switch between thinking about two different concepts, or to think about multiple concepts simultaneously.
- **Inhibitory Control:** The ability to suppress impulses and habitual responses, allowing the individual to produce a more considered behaviour that is well-suited to achieving long-term goals.
- **Planning and Prioritisation:** The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands, effectively planning and prioritising tasks and projects.
- **Task Initiation and Follow Through:** The ability to start projects efficiently and follow through to completion despite distractions or competing interests.

Understanding Executive Function Challenges

Many neurodivergent individuals face unique challenges related to executive functioning, which can affect your ability to manage and grow your business. These might include difficulties with:

- **Starting and Completing Tasks:** Challenges in task initiation and follow-through can lead to procrastination or incomplete projects.
- **Managing Time:** Difficulties in estimating how long tasks will take and planning accordingly can disrupt workflow and deadlines.

- **Organising Tasks and Materials:** Struggles with organising tasks, paperwork, or digital files efficiently can lead to inefficiencies and increased stress.
- **Prioritising Work:** Challenges in prioritising tasks can result in focusing on less critical tasks at the expense of more urgent or important ones.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4YIHrEu-TU&t=43s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2G8dMvXMaQ>

Exploring Solutions and Strategies for Executive Functioning Challenges

The internet is awash with tips on improving executive functioning skills, but for neurodivergent individuals, many of these generic strategies may not hit the mark. Given the unique challenges and needs of neurodivergent entrepreneurs, it's crucial to sift through this information and focus on strategies that can genuinely support your specific circumstances. With this in mind, we'll outline broad areas for consideration, and in the later section of "Building a Business Around Your Brain," we will delve into more targeted approaches that can help manage your executive functioning challenges effectively.

Take a look at some suggestions on YouTube here and feel free to go and explore some others.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QiMx5RleJZ8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAC-5hTK-4c&t=161s>

Broad Areas to Consider for Enhancing Executive Functioning:

1. **Goal Setting and Prioritisation:** Establishing clear, attainable goals can create a sense of direction and urgency, which can be particularly beneficial if you struggle with prioritisation and task initiation. Setting goals that are meaningful and aligned with your personal and business values can also increase motivation and engagement.
2. **Structured Routines and Schedules:** Developing tailored routines that accommodate your neurodivergent needs can help mitigate difficulties with time management and task transitions. Routines reduce the cognitive load associated with planning each day anew and can provide a framework that enhances focus and productivity.
3. **Technological Tools and Supports:** Embracing technology that supports organisation and time management can compensate for challenges in memory and task management. Tools like digital calendars, project management software, and reminder apps can help keep you on track and ensure that nothing slips through the cracks.
4. **Environmental Adjustments:** Modifying your work environment to reduce distractions and increase comfort can have a substantial impact on your ability to focus and work effectively. This might include organising your physical space, optimising lighting and noise levels, or incorporating elements that help reduce stress.

5. Feedback Systems: Establishing regular feedback mechanisms, whether through mentors, peers, or reflective practices, can provide the external oversight needed to stay aligned with your goals and make necessary adjustments in your strategies.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Tracking your executive functioning

Rather than one-off reflections, this works best as tracking. Aim for at least a week — start small and keep what helps.

Daily journal

Each day, note what strategies you tried, what worked, what didn't, and anything you noticed in how you felt.

Date	Strategy I tried	What happened (worked / didn't)	How I felt / noticed

Goal tracker

For each goal, track the strategy, the outcome, the challenges and your next step.

Goal	Strategy used	Outcome	Challenges	Next step

Routine evaluation

Periodically review your routine. When are you most productive? What helps, and what gets in the way?

Time of day	Activity	Energy (1–5)	What helped	What hindered

Managing wellbeing

Wellbeing for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

Introduction to Wellbeing in Entrepreneurship

Wellbeing is a critical factor in the performance and sustainability of any entrepreneur, but it holds particular importance if you are neurodivergent. Due to various traits, you may experience burnout more quickly and intensely compared to your neurotypical peers. This section delves into the integral link between well-being and entrepreneurial performance, emphasising why maintaining mental, emotional, and physical health is not just beneficial but essential for neurodivergent entrepreneurs.

Getting the most out of this module and content

- The aim of this section is to introduce to you the importance of self care and managing your wellbeing by highlighting some key areas to be aware of that are common and prominent in the neurodivergent community.
- The content will be top level as it can be overwhelming to go into these areas in detail all in one go. This section will then go on to introduce you to some reflective practices that you can do regularly to begin recognising the patterns of when you are operating well or when you are dysregulated.
- Managing your well-being is best seen as a daily practice and awareness exercise. Start small and address one area at a time until it becomes less effort before moving on to another element to improve.
- As addressing your well-being is such a personal and unique thing for everyone, the reflective tools are general guides and insights that have been researched and recognised as helpful to the neurodivergent population. In this module, there are suggestions of areas to go and research further through podcasts and other resources to develop these into highly personalised tools that will be most effective for you.

Understanding the Link Between Wellbeing and Entrepreneurial Performance

Wellbeing directly influences cognitive function, emotional stability, and overall energy levels — all crucial for the day-to-day demands of running a business. For neurodivergent individuals, challenges such as sensory sensitivities, difficulties with executive functioning, and social communication can amplify stress, leading to quicker burnout if not properly managed. Recognising these factors and addressing them proactively is crucial to sustaining your performance and achieving long-term success.

Managing Energy, Not Just Time: Spoon Theory

The Spoon Theory is a useful metaphor for energy management, particularly relevant to individuals with chronic illness or neurodivergence. It posits that each person has a limited number of 'spoons' representing energy, which they can spend on various activities throughout the day. For neurodivergent entrepreneurs, it's important to plan your day not just around the time you have, but around the energy required for tasks, conserving 'spoons' to prevent exhaustion.

Navigating Overwhelms, Shutdowns, and Meltdowns

Overwhelm, shutdowns, and meltdowns are common experiences for many neurodivergent individuals, often resulting from sensory overload, emotional stress, or unexpected changes. Recognising the signs that lead to these states is the first step in managing them. Developing strategies to reduce overwhelm — such as creating quiet, controlled work environments or having clear routines — can help mitigate these intense responses.

The Critical Role of Self-Care

Self-care is not just about relaxation; it's about creating a lifestyle that supports your neurological needs and reduces stress. For neurodivergent entrepreneurs, regular self-care practices can make the difference between thriving and burning out. This includes adequate sleep, nutrition, exercise, and downtime, as well as engaging in hobbies or activities that rejuvenate your mind and spirit.

Emotional Regulation Challenges

Neurodivergent individuals often experience heightened emotions or difficulty regulating them, which can complicate business interactions and personal well-being. Techniques like mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral strategies, and emotional literacy training can be invaluable tools for improving emotional regulation, helping you respond to business pressures more effectively.

Reflective Exercises

Understanding Spoon Theory: A Guide for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

Spoon Theory is a metaphorical concept used to explain the limited energy reserves available to individuals with chronic illness or disability, including those who are neurodivergent. It was developed by Christine Miserandino as a way to articulate how energy can be a finite resource that must be carefully managed. This theory is particularly relevant if you find that managing day-to-day tasks depletes your energy, or if you're sensitive to becoming overwhelmed due to cognitive or sensory overloads.

How Spoon Theory Works

Imagine that every day, you start with a set number of spoons. Each activity you undertake, from waking up, taking a shower, and making breakfast to more demanding tasks like attending meetings or managing your business activities, costs you a certain number of spoons. Once you've used up your spoons, you can't do anything else until you've had a chance to replenish them.

This analogy helps explain the need for meticulous energy management and why rest and recovery are not just beneficial but essential.

Why Spoon Theory is Important for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

For neurodivergent individuals, the cognitive and sensory efforts involved in navigating what might seem like 'simple' tasks for others can be particularly draining. This can lead to exhaustion more quickly than it might for neurotypical individuals, affecting productivity and, crucially, wellbeing. Understanding and applying Spoon Theory can help you:

- 1. Plan Your Day Efficiently:** By recognising that your energy is a limited resource, you can prioritise tasks more effectively, ensuring that critical tasks are handled at times when your energy (or spoon count) is highest.
- 2. Communicate Needs and Boundaries:** Spoon Theory provides a framework for explaining your energy limitations to others, helping set and manage expectations with colleagues, partners, or employees.
- 3. Prevent Burnout:** By avoiding the depletion of your spoons, you can manage your energy proactively, incorporating necessary breaks and restorative activities into your schedule to maintain a sustainable work pace.

How to Use Spoon Theory Effectively

- 1. Track Your Energy:** Keep a diary for a week to note down how many spoons each activity costs you. This will help you identify high-cost tasks and plan your schedule around when you typically have the most energy.
- 2. Prioritise Tasks:** Use your spoon count to help prioritise tasks. Tackle high-energy tasks when you have the most spoons available and save lower-energy tasks for when your spoon count is lower.
- 3. Adjust as Needed:** If you find yourself running out of spoons regularly, look for ways to reduce the cost of certain activities. This could involve automating certain business processes, delegating tasks, or finding quieter times or environments to work in.
- 4. Communicate:** Use the concept of spoons to help others understand your energy limitations, making it easier to set expectations and request support when needed.
- 5. Incorporate Recovery Time:** Always include recovery time in your schedule. This is time specifically set aside to do activities that replenish your spoons, whether it's resting, engaging in a hobby, or spending time in nature.

By adopting Spoon Theory as part of your daily routine and strategic planning, you can better manage your energy throughout the day, enhancing both your productivity and your overall quality of life as a neurodivergent entrepreneur.

More resources:

www.youtube.com - spoon theory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpYBM5cdDxw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIW5rZZqVYo>

Understanding Emotional Regulation for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in a way that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to allow spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed. For neurodivergent individuals, mastering emotional regulation can be particularly challenging, yet it's critically important, especially in the high-stakes environment of entrepreneurship and running your own business.

Challenges with Emotional Regulation

Neurodivergent individuals may experience emotions more intensely, or may struggle to modulate their responses to emotional stimuli. This can be due to several factors:

- **Sensory Sensitivity:** Overstimulation can occur from sensory environments, leading to emotional overwhelm or distress.
- **Communication Differences:** Difficulties in expressing needs or emotions effectively can lead to frustrations and misunderstandings in professional settings.
- **Cognitive Processing:** Differences in how information is processed may affect how emotions are experienced and expressed.

These challenges can affect various aspects of running a business, from interacting with clients and colleagues to managing stress and making balanced decisions.

Importance of Emotional Regulation in Entrepreneurship

For entrepreneurs, emotional regulation is key to:

- **Maintaining Professional Relationships:** Effective management of emotions helps in building and maintaining healthy working relationships, which are crucial for networking, collaboration, and customer relations.
- **Decision-Making:** Being able to regulate emotions contributes to clearer thinking and more rational decision-making, avoiding impulsive decisions based on transient emotional states.
- **Stress Management:** Good emotional regulation skills help in managing the stresses inherent in running a business, thus preventing burnout.

What can dysregulated emotions look like and how they affect your works

Understanding what dysregulated emotions might look like in a business context can help neurodivergent entrepreneurs identify when their emotions are impacting their professional interactions and decisions. Here are some examples of how emotional dysregulation can manifest in the workplace:

1. Overreacting to Feedback

- **Example:** Receiving constructive criticism from a client or colleague and responding with disproportionate anger or defensiveness. This might lead to strained relationships or missed opportunities for improvement.

2. Difficulty Handling Stressful Situations

- **Example:** During high-pressure situations, such as meeting tight deadlines or dealing with a financial setback, you might experience panic attacks or overwhelming anxiety that prevents effective problem-solving and decision-making.

3. Impulsive Decision-Making

- **Example:** Making quick decisions without fully considering the consequences, such as abruptly terminating a contract, investing in a high-risk opportunity without adequate research, or making large purchases that aren't financially prudent.

4. Struggles with Team Management

- **Example:** Being overly harsh or unfairly lenient due to mood swings, leading to confusion and inconsistency among team members. This can undermine leadership credibility and team morale.

5. Withdrawal from Responsibilities

- **Example:** Feeling so overwhelmed by day-to-day challenges that you start avoiding emails, meetings, or decision-making responsibilities, potentially leading to business stagnation or loss of client trust.

6. Conflict Escalation

- **Example:** Regularly finding yourself in conflicts with partners, suppliers, or employees due to miscommunication or an inability to regulate emotional responses during disagreements.

7. Inconsistency in Customer Service

- **Example:** Interacting with customers in a manner that varies significantly depending on your mood at the time, which may lead to inconsistent customer experience and potential damage to your business's reputation.

Each of these examples not only affects the immediate situation but can also have long-term impacts on the business's success and sustainability. Recognising when emotions might be influencing your actions can help you take steps to manage your responses more effectively. This is where developing strategies for emotional regulation, seeking professional support, and implementing structured feedback mechanisms can be invaluable in maintaining professional conduct and decision-making integrity.

Strategies to Enhance Emotional Regulation

Now that we have covered what emotional regulation is and what dysregulation can look like and do to you and your business, let's look at some approaches to improve your emotional regulation.

1. **Mindfulness and Meditation:** These practices can help increase your awareness of emotional states and provide techniques to calm the mind and body, enabling more deliberate responses to emotional triggers.
2. **Structured Feedback Systems:** Regular feedback from trusted colleagues or mentors can provide insights into your emotional responses and help you adjust your behaviour in professional settings.
3. **Emotional Literacy Training:** Learning to better identify and articulate different emotions can improve communication and reduce misunderstandings or conflicts.
4. **Therapeutic Support:** Therapy, can be very effective in improving emotional regulation. Working with a therapist can provide strategies for managing emotions and improving interpersonal skills.
5. **Physical Activity:** Regular physical exercise can play a significant role in managing emotions, reducing stress, and improving overall mental health.

6. Setting Clear Boundaries: Knowing and setting personal and professional boundaries is crucial. It helps manage expectations and interactions, preventing situations that might lead to emotional overwhelm.

7. Routine and Predictability: Establishing a routine can provide a sense of control and predictability, which can be comforting and reduce emotional volatility.

Reflective Exercises for Emotional Regulation

1. Emotional Awareness Journaling: Keep a daily journal of your emotional experiences and the contexts in which they occur. Reflect on what triggered intense emotions and how you responded.

1. Role-Playing Different Responses: Practice responding to hypothetical business scenarios that might elicit strong emotions. This can prepare you for real-life situations where emotional regulation is required.

2. Relaxation Techniques Practice: Regularly practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or guided imagery to reduce emotional reactivity.

Understanding and improving emotional regulation can significantly impact the success and sustainability of your entrepreneurial endeavours. By employing these strategies, neurodivergent entrepreneurs can better navigate the emotional demands of running a business, leading to more robust professional relationships and a healthier work-life balance.

Seeking Support for Emotional Regulation Techniques

Emotional regulation can be particularly challenging, especially for neurodivergent individuals who may struggle to identify their feelings in the moment — a common experience for many, especially those who are autistic. Recognising and managing emotions effectively when they arise isn't always straightforward. It requires not only self-awareness but also an ability to apply strategies that might not come naturally.

Given these complexities, it's often beneficial, and sometimes necessary, to seek additional support. Working with a therapist or coach who has experience with neurodivergence can provide significant advantages.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Wellbeing exercises

You don't need to do all of these at once. To see whether something helps, track one at a time for a week or a month.

Daily spoon allocation diary

Start each day with a set number of 'spoons' (units of energy). As you go, record what each activity costs you.

Spoons I started today with: _____

Activity	Spoons used	Notes / how it felt

END-OF-DAY REFLECTION

- Did you run out of spoons before the end of the day?
- Which activities cost the most spoons? Did any replenish them?
- What would you allocate differently on a similar day?

Shutdowns, overwhelms & meltdowns trigger tracker

Over about a month, log moments of overwhelm, shutdown or meltdown — the context, what happened just before, your sensory environment and how you felt. Then look for patterns.

Date	What was happening before	Sensory environment	How I felt	Type

Date	What was happening before	Sensory environment	How I felt	Type

COMMON TRIGGERS I'M NOTICING

MY PLAN — HOW I'LL AVOID OR MANAGE THESE

Weekly self-care audit

List the self-care you engage in across a week — sleep, nutrition, movement, hobbies, rest — then assess how each leaves you feeling and what's missing.

Self-care activity	How often this week	How I feel after — physically	How I feel after — mentally

AREAS I'M NEGLECTING / CHANGES I'LL MAKE

Emotional regulation reflection

Each day, note moments when emotions felt hard to regulate, what caused them, how you responded, and any technique you tried. Review weekly.

Date	Moment emotions felt unregulated	Cause / how I responded	Technique tried & how it worked

WEEKLY REVIEW — PATTERNS AND WHAT TO TRY NEXT

Communication

Introduction to Communication Challenges for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

Communication is a fundamental aspect of business success, and it presents challenges for virtually all businesses, not solely those led by neurodivergent individuals. Effective communication often flows most naturally among people who share similar traits and styles, fostering a comfortable exchange of ideas. However, this comfort can sometimes lead to groupthink, where the desire for harmony or conformity results in an inefficient decision-making outcome. It is crucial, especially for entrepreneurs, to master clear communication and set explicit expectations with people of diverse backgrounds and thinking styles. This diversity can prevent groupthink and instead can promote richer ideas and more effective implementations.

While communication challenges are universal, neurodivergent individuals often experience specific differences that can impact their business interactions. These may include a tendency towards literal interpretation, a direct manner of speaking, difficulties in reading body language, tendencies to monologue, discomfort with eye contact, and challenges in identifying when to take turns during conversations. It's important to note that these traits do not apply to every neurodivergent individual but are common enough to be recognisable patterns.

Getting the most out of this module

It's important to be aware that you cannot force anyone to communicate in a certain way. Solving the challenges of business communications is a multi billion dollar industry and this module cannot solve this in one short session!

What we can address here is some theories and communications styles so that you can become more aware of how you can improve your communication with people. Communication is not a subject you can master in one go and requires continual learning throughout life!

The Double Empathy Problem

A critical concept to understand within the realm of neurodivergent communication is the **Double Empathy Problem**. This theory, developed by psychologist Damian Milton, posits that the communication breakdowns between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals are not due to a deficit in the neurodivergent individual but rather a mutual lack of understanding between two different types of minds. The theory argues that just as neurodivergent individuals might struggle to empathise or communicate effectively with neurotypical individuals, so too do neurotypical individuals struggle to connect with and understand neurodivergent perspectives.

This mutual empathy problem highlights that effective communication requires effort from both parties, not just the adaptation or change from the neurodivergent side. Understanding this can foster greater patience, open-mindedness, and effort towards developing effective communication strategies that are inclusive of all cognitive styles.

While The Double Empathy Problem is about the autistic experience in particular, you can use the basics of the theory to reflect on experiences where you may not have felt understood and also to think about how you can be more accommodating to others who are acting differently to how you expect them to.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpXwYD9bGyU>

Embracing Diverse Communication Styles

Recognising and adapting your communication style according to the situation and the goals of each interaction is a powerful skill for any entrepreneur. Neurodivergent entrepreneurs, in particular,

Learning to vary communication based on context is crucial for effective leadership and relationship-building. Sometime this can cross over into masking too much which can be exhausting if you don't have enough rest time or space to unmask everyday.

Additionally, setting clear expectations and providing explicit communication can benefit everyone, not just those who might communicate differently. Clearly articulated goals, roles, and feedback mechanisms can enhance understanding and efficiency across your entire team or client base.

Introducing Nonviolent Communication

What is Nonviolent Communication?

Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, is a communication approach that focuses on empathy and honest expression. It's structured around four key components:

- 1. Observation:** Clearly observing what is happening in a situation without introducing evaluation or judgement.
- 2. Feelings:** Identifying and expressing feelings that arise from the observed situation.
- 3. Needs:** Acknowledging the needs, values, or desires that create the feelings.
- 4. Requests:** Formulating clear requests to meet the identified needs without demanding.

NVC aims to cultivate compassion and understanding in interactions, and it is particularly effective in resolving conflicts by focusing on mutual human needs and building an empathetic connection.

Why is NVC Beneficial for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs?

Neurodivergent individuals often experience communication challenges that can complicate business interactions. These can include difficulties with interpreting non-verbal cues, managing emotional responses, or being misunderstood due to atypical expressive styles. NVC can be particularly beneficial as it:

- **Enhances Clarity:** By focusing on clear, judgment-free observation, NVC helps clarify the communication, reducing misunderstandings that can arise from ambiguous expressions or interpretations.
- **Promotes Emotional Understanding:** NVC encourages explicit communication about feelings and needs, which can be particularly helpful for those who struggle with emotional regulation or understanding others' emotional cues.
- **Supports Assertive Expression:** NVC provides a framework for expressing needs assertively and making requests without aggression, aligning well with the direct communication styles often preferred by neurodivergent individuals.
- **Builds Empathy:** By focusing on empathetic listening and understanding the needs of others, NVC can help you navigate social interactions more effectively, contributing to better business relationships.

Applying NVC in Daily Life

To integrate NVC into your daily life, start by practicing its four components in both personal and professional interactions:

- 1. Practice Observing Without Evaluating:** When a situation arises, try to describe it to yourself without using evaluative language. For instance, instead of saying, "The meeting was chaotic," observe, "There were many people talking at once."
- 2. Express Your Feelings:** Learn to identify and express your feelings related to specific situations clearly. Instead of saying, "I'm fine," say, "I feel overwhelmed when I have back-to-back meetings."
- 3. Acknowledge Your Needs:** Connect your feelings to your underlying needs. If you feel overwhelmed, acknowledge that you need more time between meetings to gather your thoughts.

4. Make Clear Requests: When you express a need, follow it with a clear, actionable request. For example, "Could we schedule a 15-minute break between meetings?"

Find out more about Non Violent Communication on their website and see this video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sjA90hvnQ0>

<https://www.cnvc.org/>

An alternative conversation on communication

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/5jawJbYcx1iURrj5hKhF2r>

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Communication exercises

DAILY REFLECTION · NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC)

Each day, write down one conversation where you felt a disconnect. Apply the NVC steps: what did you observe, feel and need — and how could you have made a clearer request?

ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS TO PRACTISE

Practise aloud, with someone you trust, or with your AI thinking partner playing the other person. Note your reflections afterwards.

1. Handling delays in deliverables. A supplier has repeatedly delayed. Express your observation, feeling, need and a specific request.
2. Receiving critical feedback. A client gives critical feedback. Respond by naming your feelings and needs, and making a constructive request.
3. A conversation of your own. Pick a real situation you're facing and work it through the NVC steps.

MY REFLECTIONS AFTER PRACTISING

Part 4 · Communicating Your Neurodiversity

Now that we have worked on the fundamentals, understanding strengths and challenges - we can now look at the approaches we can use to communicate our neurodiversity with others in a way that is beneficial to us and for running our businesses.

Benefits of Communicating Neurodiversity

Openly communicating about neurodiversity offers several benefits, not just for the neurodivergent individuals but for the broader business community:

- **Fostering Understanding:** When neurodivergent entrepreneurs share their perspectives, it educates others, breaking down myths and misconceptions. This understanding promotes a more supportive environment where everyone's contributions are valued.
- **Creating Inclusive Environments:** Knowledge about neurodiversity encourages businesses to adapt, creating workspaces and practices that accommodate diverse needs. This inclusivity not only benefits neurodivergent individuals but also creates a more adaptable and innovative business culture.
- **Leveraging Neurodivergent Strengths:** Neurodivergent individuals often possess unique strengths, so communicating about neurodiversity allows these entrepreneurs to showcase how their unique traits can be a valuable asset to their business ventures.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the benefits, communicating about neurodiversity comes with its set of challenges:

- **Stigma and Misunderstanding:** One of the primary hurdles is the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding neurodivergence. Misconceptions can lead to prejudice, making it daunting for entrepreneurs to disclose their neurodivergence.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Deciding to disclose your neurodivergence is deeply personal. You must weigh the benefits against the potential for privacy invasion and unwanted scrutiny.
- **Fear of Professional Repercussions:** There's often a fear that disclosing neurodivergence might lead to being underestimated or overlooked in professional settings. This concern can make neurodivergent entrepreneurs hesitant to communicate their needs or advocate for accommodations.

Navigating Communication About Neurodiversity

For neurodivergent entrepreneurs, navigating the landscape of communication requires a balance between authenticity and strategic disclosure. It involves making informed decisions about when, how, and to whom to reveal their neurodivergence, always with the aim of fostering understanding and leveraging their unique perspectives for entrepreneurial success.

Creating an environment where neurodiversity is openly discussed and valued starts with brave conversations. By communicating about neurodiversity, we not only empower

neurodivergent individuals but also enrich the entrepreneurial ecosystem with authenticity, empathy, diverse viewpoints and innovative solutions.

Additional resources

Have a read through this report of Neurodiverse founders. It does highlight the stigma and challenges of being a neurodivergent person in entrepreneurship but should also be insightful as to how to work towards a positive experience with disclosing and advocating for yourself.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58ed40453a04116f46e8d99b/t/65f1ac6a778bd0012dc8350f/1710337134267/Neurodiverse+Founders.pdf>

Alternative link to more reading formats:

<https://www.tenentrepreneurs.org/research/neurodiverse-founders>

You can explore each subject in some more detail in these next pages:

Disclosure

Strategies for Communicating Neurodiversity

Navigating the conversation around neurodiversity in professional settings involves careful consideration. This section provides strategies for disclosing neurodiversity, employing effective communication techniques, and requesting accommodations — all tailored to support neurodivergent entrepreneurs in balancing transparency with privacy.

Disclosure Strategies

When to Disclose: Deciding when to disclose your neurodivergence is a personal choice and may depend on various factors, including the need for accommodations, the level of understanding and inclusivity in your work environment, and your comfort level. It's often helpful to disclose when you believe doing so will enhance your ability to succeed or when accommodations are necessary for you to perform your best work.

How to Disclose: Be clear, concise, and positive. Focus on how your neurodivergence is an asset to your entrepreneurial journey. Prepare a brief explanation of your neurodivergence, how it impacts your work, and what accommodations or adjustments might help you thrive.

To Whom to Disclose: Consider disclosing to those who directly impact or are impacted by your work environment — potentially a business partner, a key team member, or someone in a position to make accommodations. The level of detail you share can vary based on your relationship and trust level with the individual.

Communication Techniques

Scripting: Prepare scripts for different scenarios, such as requesting accommodations or explaining your work processes. Scripts can help you communicate more confidently and ensure you cover all necessary points.

Visual Aids: Use visual aids or diagrams to explain complex ideas or how your neurodivergence affects your work. Visuals can help others understand your perspective more clearly.

Digital Communication Strategies: Leverage email, messaging apps, or project management tools to communicate your needs and preferences. Written communication can provide clarity and a record of requests and responses.

Requesting Accommodations

Identify Your Needs: Before requesting accommodations, clearly identify what adjustments or supports will help you work more effectively. This might include flexible scheduling, a quiet workspace, or specific tools and technologies.

Prepare Your Request: Articulate your request clearly, focusing on the accommodations' practical aspects and how they will improve your work performance. Provide suggestions for possible solutions.

Follow Up: After making a request, follow up to discuss implementation and any adjustments needed. Open dialogue ensures that accommodations are effective and meet your needs.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Disclosure — self-reflection

Disclosure decision-making

Reflect on situations where you might need or want to disclose your neurodiversity. What factors would influence your decision in each?

Communication scripting

Write a short script for explaining your neurodiversity to a colleague or partner — what you'll say, how, and responses to likely questions.

Visual aid

Think of a concept or challenge that's hard to put into words. Sketch a simple visual that could help you explain it.

Accommodation request

Identify a specific accommodation you might need. Draft the request, focusing on how it helps you perform, and how you'd address any concerns.

Self-advocacy

Self-Advocacy for Neurodivergent Entrepreneurs

Self-advocacy is a powerful skill that enables you to articulate your needs and boundaries effectively, ensuring that you can navigate the entrepreneurial landscape with confidence and authenticity. As a neurodivergent entrepreneur, mastering self-advocacy can empower you to create an environment where you can thrive, leveraging your unique strengths and perspectives.

Understanding Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy involves understanding your rights, recognising your needs, and communicating those needs to others. It's about setting boundaries and asking for accommodations or changes that allow you to work more effectively. It also means representing your interests in a proactive and positive manner.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74G_Zpz-7Bk

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/5WRTQBsXNpnF3XJOhwqNBY>

Strategies for Effective Self-Advocacy

- 1. Know Your Strengths and Needs:** Start by clearly understanding your neurodivergence and how it impacts your work. Identify your strengths, challenges, and the accommodations that help you mitigate those challenges. This self-awareness is the foundation of self-advocacy.
- 2. Communicate Clearly and Confidently:** Practice articulating your needs and the rationale behind them. Whether you're requesting a specific accommodation or setting a boundary, clear and confident communication is key. Consider preparing scripts for common scenarios you might encounter.
- 3. Educate Others:** Part of self-advocacy may involve educating others about neurodiversity and how certain accommodations or adjustments can lead to better outcomes for you and your business. Share resources or anecdotes that illustrate the benefits of accommodating neurodivergent individuals.

- 4. Seek Allies:** Build a network of allies — mentors, peers, or collaborators who understand and support your needs. Allies can offer advice, support your requests for accommodations, and advocate on your behalf.
- 5. Document Your Needs and Requests:** Keep records of your requests for accommodations and any discussions related to your neurodivergence. Documentation can be helpful if you need to follow up or reference previous conversations.
- 6. Know Your Rights:** Familiarise yourself with any legal protections and rights related to neurodiversity in the workplace. Knowing your rights can provide a solid foundation for your self-advocacy efforts.
- 7. Practice Negotiation Skills:** Self-advocacy often involves negotiation, whether securing accommodations or setting terms that consider your working style. Practice negotiation strategies that allow you to articulate your needs while being open to compromise.

Self advocacy in different environments you may face:

When Working Solo at Home

Self-Accommodation: Identify what accommodations make you most productive and implement them in your home workspace. This could include setting a structured schedule, using noise-canceling headphones, or organising your workspace to minimise distractions.

Self-Reflection Exercise:

- List the accommodations you've made or can make in your home workspace. Reflect on how these adjustments have impacted your productivity and well-being.

Building a Team

Communicating Your Neurodiversity: If you decide to disclose your neurodiversity to potential team members, focus on how it influences your work style and strengths. Emphasise the value of diverse thought processes in fostering innovation within your team.

Scripting for Disclosure: Prepare a brief explanation of your neurodivergence, focusing on your unique strengths and how you work best. Also, be clear about the kind of work environment you're striving to create — one that values inclusivity and diversity.

Self-Reflection Exercise:

- Draft a script for how you would introduce the concept of neurodiversity to your team, highlighting the benefits of diverse thinking.

Talking to Investors

Highlighting Your Unique Perspective: When discussing your business with investors, highlight how your neurodivergent perspective contributes to your unique value proposition and problem-solving abilities.

Strategic Disclosure: Consider carefully whether and how to disclose your neurodiversity to investors. Focus on your strengths and how they have shaped your entrepreneurial vision and strategy.

Self-Reflection Exercise:

- Create a list of questions investors might ask and how you can incorporate your strengths into your answers, demonstrating the unique insights and advantages your neurodivergence brings to your venture.

Joining an Incubator or Accelerator

Application Strategy: In your application, emphasise the unique aspects of your entrepreneurial journey and how your neurodivergent perspective has influenced your approach to building your MVP or business model.

Requesting Accommodations: Research the accommodations offered by the incubator or accelerator and be prepared to request any specific needs you might have during the program, especially if these accommodations will help you participate more fully in the program.

Self-Reflection Exercise:

- Reflect on what you hope to gain from an incubator or accelerator program and how your neurodivergence might influence your participation. Write down any accommodations you might need and how you can communicate these needs effectively in your application or interviews.

Tailoring Communication Across Contexts

Remember, the way you communicate about your neurodiversity should be tailored to each context and audience. Always focus on your strengths and how your unique perspective as a neurodivergent entrepreneur adds value. Whether you're building your MVP, assembling a team, seeking investment, or applying to an incubator, your neurodiversity is a part of what makes you a compelling and innovative entrepreneur.

Self-Reflection Exercises to Support Self-Advocacy

- 1. Identify Your Advocacy Goals:** Reflect on what self-advocacy means to you. What specific accommodations or changes would help you thrive? Write down these goals.
- 2. Scenario Planning:** Think of a few scenarios where you might need to advocate for yourself. For each scenario, write down how you would describe your needs, the potential challenges you might face, and how you would address them.
- 3. Role-Playing:** Practice self-advocacy through role-playing exercises with a trusted friend or mentor. This can help you refine your approach and gain confidence in your ability to advocate for yourself.
- 4. Feedback Loop:** After advocating for yourself, reflect on the experience. What went well? What could you improve? Use this feedback to refine your self-advocacy strategies.

Self-advocacy is a skill that develops over time, with practice and reflection. As a neurodivergent entrepreneur, embracing self-advocacy can empower you to navigate

your entrepreneurial journey on your own terms, leveraging your unique strengths and ensuring that your needs are met.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Self-advocacy role-play

Try each aloud, with a trusted person, or with your AI thinking partner playing the other side. An example opening is given — adjust it to sound like you.

1. Requesting accommodations from a co-working space

Example opening: “I work best somewhere quiet with minimal distractions — do you have quiet zones or private booths?”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

2. Discussing your work style with a potential partner

Example opening: “I tend to be detail-oriented and may need some flexibility around communication methods — how do you feel about building that in?”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

3. Pitching to investors, leading with neurodivergent strengths

Example opening: “My approach to problem-solving is shaped by my neurodivergent perspective, which helps me see solutions that aren't always obvious.”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

4. Requesting deadline flexibility

Example opening: “I've found that slightly extended deadlines let me do my best work — could we look at adjusting the current timeline?”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

5. Explaining your need for written communication

Example opening: “I perform best with written summaries of our meetings to refer back to. Could we summarise our discussions by email?”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

6. Navigating a networking event

Example opening: “I find smaller, focused conversations more productive — would you be up for a quick chat about what we each do?”

HOW IT WENT / WHAT I'D CHANGE

Your personal brand story

Personal Branding

Your personal brand is how you present yourself to the world, encapsulating your values, strengths, and the unique qualities that set you apart. Integrating your neurodivergence into your personal and professional brand isn't about highlighting differences for the sake of it; it's about embracing your authentic self and showcasing how your unique perspective contributes to your entrepreneurial vision.

Crafting Your Neurodivergent Brand:

- 1. Embrace Your Authenticity:** Your neurodivergence is a part of your identity that shapes how you see the world. Embrace it fully. Authenticity resonates with people, whether they're customers, partners, or employees.
- 2. Highlight Your Unique Perspective:** Use your personal story and experiences to illustrate how your neurodivergent traits have contributed to your problem-solving skills, creativity, or resilience. This not only humanizes your brand but also demonstrates the value you bring.
- 3. Communicate Your Value Proposition:** Clearly articulate how your neurodivergent traits enhance your business offerings. Whether it's innovative product design, meticulous attention to detail, or a fresh approach to customer service, let your audience know why your perspective matters.
- 4. Advocate for Inclusivity:** Position yourself as an advocate for neurodiversity and inclusivity within your industry. This not only strengthens your brand but also contributes to creating a more understanding and accommodating business ecosystem.
- 5. Seek Feedback:** Regularly seek feedback from trusted peers or mentors on how your personal brand is perceived. This can provide valuable insights into how effectively you're communicating your message and areas for improvement.

Remember, your personal brand is not static; it evolves with you. As you grow as an entrepreneur, continuously refine how you integrate and express your neurodivergence within your brand. This ongoing process is not just about personal development; it's about shaping the narrative around neurodiversity in entrepreneurship, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse business world.

A Note on Disclosure and Sharing Your Story

As an entrepreneur, the decision to disclose your neurodivergence is deeply personal and entirely yours to make. It's essential to remember that while sharing your journey can be powerful, you are under no obligation to share aspects of your personal or medical history that you prefer to keep private. What's most valuable, especially in the context of collaboration and building relationships with partners, customers, and your team, is communicating your strengths and the challenges you navigate.

Communicating Your Strengths and Challenges

Transparency about what you excel at and where you might face challenges is crucial, not just for neurodivergent entrepreneurs but for all individuals in leadership positions. This openness helps set the stage for effective collaboration, as it enables your team and partners to understand how best to work with you and support the collective vision.

- **Focus on Your Skills and Needs:** Instead of centering the conversation on neurodivergence, you can discuss the specific skills and unique perspectives you bring to the table, as well as any support you might need to perform at your best.
- **Build a Narrative Around Overcoming Challenges:** People are drawn to stories of resilience and determination. If you choose, you can share how overcoming personal challenges has shaped your approach to entrepreneurship and problem-solving, without necessarily disclosing the details of your neurodivergence.

Leveraging Your Founder Story

In the early stages of a startup, the founder's story plays a crucial role in attracting customers, investors, and employees. People are often more interested in why you're doing what you're doing, rather than what or how you're doing it. This is where your journey, including the challenges you've faced and overcome, becomes a powerful tool in building connection and trust.

- **Share Your 'Why':** Whether or not you choose to disclose your neurodivergence, focus on the 'why' behind your business. If your entrepreneurial journey is motivated by a personal challenge you've encountered or a problem you've observed, share this motivation. It helps people connect with your brand on an emotional level and understand the passion driving your business.
- **Inspire Through Resilience:** Everyone faces challenges, and sharing how you've navigated yours can be incredibly inspiring to others. Highlight the resilience, creativity, and determination that have helped you on your entrepreneurial path. This can resonate deeply with collaborators, customers, and the broader community, creating a strong foundation for your brand.

Remember, your journey is unique, and how you choose to share it is entirely up to you. The most important thing is to stay true to yourself, focusing on building authentic connections and communicating in a way that aligns with your comfort level and values. Your story, including the challenges you've overcome and the strengths you bring, is what makes your entrepreneurial journey compelling and relatable.

REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

Crafting your personal brand story

This final exercise pulls everything together — a narrative that is uniquely yours, and, if you choose, shareable. Build it over a few days, one part at a time, then review so it sounds like you.

Two short examples for inspiration. “I thrive on creativity because of my ADHD — my ability to hyper-focus turns what some see as a challenge into my greatest professional strength.” / “The detail-focus that comes with my autism lets me excel at work that demands precision, and I’ve turned a clear, concise communication style into an asset.”

Introduction — who are you, and what do you do?

Introduce yourself and your neurodivergence, and what it means to you. Keep it brief and engaging.

Middle — challenges into strengths

The challenges you’ve faced, how you’ve turned them into strengths, and moments where your neurodivergent traits led to success.

Conclusion — where you are now, and where you’re heading

Your current state and aspirations — and how your neurodivergence will keep shaping your growth.

Well done — and thank you

You made it to the end. You should be proud of yourself.

Reflective work is not easy work. It asks for honesty, and energy, and a willingness to look at the parts of yourself that conventional advice told you to fix. Getting here took real effort — and that effort doesn't stay on the page.

The rewards of doing work like this keep showing up. Not all at once, but in your everyday actions and in what you believe about yourself: in the moment you name what you need instead of pushing through, in the decision you make because you know how your energy works, in the strength you lead with rather than apologise for. That's where it lives.

And remember this isn't a one-time exercise. Your strengths, challenges and needs will keep evolving — so come back to these pages, re-take the assessments, and update your answers as you grow. The patterns you notice over time are where the real insight lives.

Thank you — and stay in touch

Thank you for working through this. It genuinely means a lot that you gave it your time.

I'd love to hear from you. Feedback on how to improve it is always welcome — and so is hearing how it's benefited you. Your story might be the thing that helps me help the next person.

Ways to work with me

If this resonated and you'd like more than a workbook, there are a few ways we can carry on together.

One-to-one mentoring. Working through this material with someone alongside you is a different experience to doing it alone. I mentor neurodivergent and creative founders — on the thinking in this book, and on the business you're building around it.

Workshops. This started life as a live programme, and I've delivered it as workshops — including as Entrepreneur in Residence at UAL. I can run it, or tailor a version, for your team, cohort or organisation.

Bringing me into your business. Beyond mentoring, I work with creative and founder-led teams on strategic operations, growth and execution — as a consultant, fractional operator or chief of staff, depending on what you need.

If any of that sounds useful, just get in touch. I'm always happy to have a conversation.

WHERE TO FIND ME

Email: emma@work-with-emma.com

Newsletter: [Thriving Threads on Substack](#) — regular insights and musings.

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/ekhwallace](https://www.linkedin.com/in/ekhwallace) — where I share most of my thinking.

Website: work-with-emma.com

This one's on me

This workbook took years of research, testing and lived experience to put together, and I've made it free — because I'd rather it reached the people who need it than sat behind a paywall. If it helped you and you'd like to say thanks, you can [buy me a coffee](#). It's entirely optional, it genuinely makes a difference, and it keeps work like this coming.

Keep going,

Emma