

A Pencilmarks & Scribbles Collection

*Telling the stories of neurodivergent
people one word at a time.*

*Communication, Relationships,
and Everything in Between.*

THE ND PAPERS

~ These are deeply flawed people but they made contributions.

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Welcome to the ND Papers!

The ND papers or the neuro divergent papers is a conversation held by young adults who are neurodivergent telling us their story and it is good habit to listen when people wearing the shoe speak. It is our hope for this independent project here at Pencilmarks that more light is brought into the reality of neuro divergence. We opened this project for collaboration in May 2023 and we got twenty one wonderful people to work with.

1. ON DIFFERENCE

When did you discover that you were different from neurotypicals?

Lala: Very early, probably when I was around 5 years old! I couldn't explain why I felt different and out of place, why it seemed like I am not quite like other kids, and why it felt so hard to fit in.

Zaynab: In my late teen years.

Daniella Ashi: When I was 11.

Vivian: Hm 10, 12 I'm not sure.

Amanda: When I was 12.

Milo: Around 300L (so like 2012). We had taken an exam and when I went to check my grade, it said to see the HOD so I was super fucking scared cause stuff like that doesn't happen EVER. But I went to see him, and he asked me if I realize I write differently and I was confused because I trained my handwriting to the point that boys would steal my notes go photocopy it and then give it to someone to pass it to me. Then he explained to me that I had issues with spelling, and I was like "oh yeah definitely. I've had that all my life but I'm trying to get over it" and he was like no. You spell words wrong but in a very consistent way. So, he showed me snippets of my script where I spelt "change" as "cahnge" CONSISTENTLY. And then he told me to be careful going forward. Luckily for me that same week, I watched this Bollywood movie, Taare Zaamen Par (Like Stars on Earth) about a little boy who was dyslexic and also had ADHD and for the first time in a very long long time, I felt understood.

Anna: I always knew I was somehow different from everyone even since kindergarten but I just copied what the other kids were doing and stayed quiet.. but at home I voiced out everything I was confused with or everything I disagreed with and all the grownups kept telling me that I'm not like anyone in this existence and why am i like this and that? Why can't I be like everyone else?

Iden: I noticed I was different when I was around 8 but wrote it off as me being unique.

Alpha: Hmm, I think I was around 8 years old. I just got into secondary school and it didn't feel like it. Everyone seemed to be doing so well with social interactions and cognitive functioning but I just didn't quite fit in so to say.

Irawo: Very early in my pre-teen years, but I sadly did not have the language to describe how I felt.

Divine Odigili: Late. I found out late.

Rosie: 8 years old

Oluwatofarati: Like 12/13

Ken: Since I gained consciousness to be honest

Abigail: I was about 18

Camela Etoruom: I think I always knew I was different, Every one pointed it out

Ife Olutayo: 10

M: Primary School

Titilayo: I've always noticed that I was different but I don't know what it was but later discovered the name for it in 2022

Jeremy: This is actually a really good question. I didn't feel I was different from anyone else till I entered high school and struggled to fit in. That was around age 11 or so, and the feeling stuck with me for most if not all of my secondary school life. Being the social outcast and all

2. ON DISCOVERY

When did you find out you were exactly neurodivergent?

Lala: When I was 19

Zaynab: Around the age of 21

Daniella Ashi: Three years ago

Vivian: 2022

Amanda: First started speculating when I was 14

Milo: I didn't know the word neurodivergent until like 2016 after taking an Asperger's syndrome test so I guess I knew then

Anna: 5 days ago

Iden: At age 13

Alpha: I'd say when I was 15 years old. I was in university already and it started to weigh in on me more.

Irawo: During the height of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020

Divine Odigili: Right before I turned 18

Rosie: 14 year old

Oluwatofarati: 13 years old

Ken: I suspected when I was about 19 but got diagnosed at 22

Abigail: Two years ago

Camela Etoruom: I knew for a while but I took a doctors test 2019

Ife Olutayo: Lots and lots of special interests and a whole lot of bullying

M: Although, I have not been diagnosed by a professional. I found out in 2020 during the pandemic. I spent a lot of my time on TikTok and came across contents related to ADHD. I made my research, then and there I knew I wasn't insane and was indeed different from most people around me. It felt really good that I am not alone and there are people who understand and experience something similar.

Titilayo: I was trying to find answers to my problem and I came across a fellow ND page and I read about it and I'm still reading about it

Jeremy: Well I'd heard of the spectrum before from Percy Jackson books in secondary school but I didn't think it was my reality. Wasn't until lockdown in 2020 that I got on TikTok and stumbled across an ADHD video and found myself relating to it a lot. I finally accepted it by 2021 or so.

3. ON INTERACTION

How has it been interacting with neurotypical people since you found out?

Lala: Still the same as it always has been (hard), but now I know how I am different at least.

Zaynab: An up and down ride sincerely, because I zone out/get overstimulated a lot! The mistake it for rudeness or me being cold

Daniella Ashi: Unnering

Vivian: Easier, I'm not as stressed also be perceived a certain way Amanda: Fairly normal, but kind of as if I am constantly explaining myself Milo: It's been increasingly difficult but also somehow easier.

Anna: Quiet.. not much has changed

Iden: It's been just as difficult but I'm kinder to myself now that I know certain issues are no fault of my own. That said, I've felt insecure now that I notice specific details about my interactions.

Alpha: Bruh!! It was a relief. Although it was about two years ago, it was so nice to see that I wasn't alone in the world that doesn't particularly understand me.

Irawo: It's been simultaneously easier and harder. Naming a thing makes it easier to handle, but then it's juxtaposed with a perpetual policing of self that is very exhausting

Divine Odigili: I don't think anything has changed, it's pretty much the same

Rosie: I don't really interact because they always try to overshadow me and make it seem like I'm being too "weird" so I interact with my friends and family who already know about me and accept me. Otherwise I'm a social shut in? I kinda always keep to myself

Oluwatofarati: Frustrating and lonely

Ken: Hard

Abigail: Weird I guess

Camela Etoruom: I usually mask, it's a case of dissonance so I either burnout later on or give off the "she's fleeting" vibe.

Ife Olutayo: Fair enough, it's gotten better over time

M: Certain things like being called lazy when I'm doing my best don't get to me(I still cry sometimes) . I also try as much as I can to not zone out while having conversations and I set reminders a lot.

Titilayo: Not easy, it hasn't always being easy even before I found out, I wanted to unmask and live as myself but it still wasn't easy

Jeremy: I'd say it's been the same? I've kind of figured out the ins and outs to navigate social interaction with them.

4. ON COMMUNICATION

What part of communicating with neurotypicals has been the most difficult for you?

Lala: The fact that they seem to never understand what I am trying to say, even though I am literally saying it as it is.

Zaynab: Staying in the conversation.

Daniella Ashi: Knowing when to talk and not interrupt a conversation. Trying to work through over stimulation without seeming like "a lot." Being forced to shake or touch people because people don't understand not liking physical touch.

Vivian: Every part, the constant misunderstandings because of my tone, lack of facial expressions that may come off as rude.

Amanda: Finding balance between being a pushover and being too forward when communicating.

Milo: I'd say tone and like second meanings. I would have a fight with a neurotypical and then they come back to me 2 hours later and ask if I want to do something and I say no and somehow it's said to mean I've not forgiven the grievance. Meanwhile I just don't want to do said things. Or when I talk very flat when I'm supposed to be excited or get over excited over little things.

Anna: I could never finish my thoughts and was constantly interrupted and immediately misunderstood.

Iden: They believe I'm shy and don't want to talk to them when in reality I just struggle socially. Also me not knowing how they really feel about me unless they say it (and they never do).

Alpha: I don't think it's been difficult, so far at least. We can all relate to one thing or the other and it all just makes it easier to do life each day.

Irawo: The need to present as “normal” and high-functioning. Also trying to explain my perspective and how that affects everything.

Divine Odigili: Making them understand that I’m actually doing my best to pay attention to them, even if I’m doing like 10 times at the same time in my head and it shows physically. Also, I get distracted mid sentence sometimes and forget what I’m talking about. Sometimes the whole rest of the sentence just vanishes from my head and I don’t remember the word I was going to say next. Also, I have this thing where I forget I’m supposed to do something with/for someone, deadass forget they exist sometimes, until I see them. Like I could get started on it and think of something random and it’s down a rabbit hole from there. Then I also have difficulty arranging sentences in a way to express my thoughts sometime its

Rosie: Trying to explain that my social battery runs out quickly and I'm not just trying to avoid them. I just get drained easily.

Oluwatofarati: The fact that they do not understand

Ken: The fact that they don’t take things at face value

Abigail: Trying to get them to understand that my brain works differently from theirs

Camela Etoruom: You see 6 and they see 9. 9 is the norm for them and what they don’t understand, they villainize

Ife Olutayo: I think flirting, cause I have issues with social cues and being awkward about it doesn’t help

M: Zoning out during conversations

Titilayo: When having a conversation and being unable to look at their faces when talking and it’s hard telling them about me being nd,most people don’t believe in such things

Jeremy: Their vague manner of communication. And how they don’t like being questioned because it “affects” their perception of authority.

5. ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

How has being neurodivergent affected your personal relationships?

Lala: I was lucky enough to form a strong relationship with 3 of my friends since kindergarten. But other than that, it’s been hard to maintain friendships/relationships. People usually leave me without any explanations and it always makes me feel like there is something wrong with me. And a lot of the times I get misunderstood.

Zaynab: Running away is always my first solution

Daniella Ashi: I am called “a lot”. I have been told I am the problem. Oh also aren't I tired of being like this.

Vivian: i have long last friendships because they treat me as a unique person instead of a weirdo

Amanda: I often forget to reach out to friends first, which has prevented me from maintaining some of my friendships

Milo: It's made me very difficult to understand and because I have very straight forward communication patterns I've been told I don't consider other people. Now I'm just closed off, sad and lonely because I don't want another relationship where I'm fighting for my life

Anna: negatively when i still didn't know i was ND.. everyone around me were irritated and i was hard to talk to or be confronted

Iden: It's led to me having very few friendships and my family frequently gets annoyed by me struggling with things they consider instinctual/that come naturally to them.

Alpha: Hmmmm, it's been challenging. In terms of my social interaction, it's been hard maintaining relationships. I'm always quick to run back into my shell if it's not comfortable for me. Emotionally it's been hard. Managing and finding the balance between feeling too much and not feeling anything at all too was crazy!

Irawo: It's mixed. It's made some better and it's made others end.

Divine Odigili: Well, most of my close friends know how I am and have accepted it. My family, well, not so much, they think I'm not applying myself.

Rosie: Hmm I don't really think it has impacted it so much? Oluwatofarati: Well, a lot of ways really. I'll think on it and answer again Ken: I literally have only one friend

Abigail: It hasn't

Camela Etoruom: It's tough, connections can be intense yet fleeting because they think I'm ghosting or I truly forget

Ife Olutayo: A lot of anxiety across the board.

M: I'm grateful for my friends. Even though I sometimes forget to reach out, I respond as soon as I remember and they've been understanding. I struggle with this "out of sight, out of mind " thing.

Titilayo: I avoid personal relationships,not being in a relationship for 2 to 3 years now and for friendships,I've lost a lot of friends and I get bored of people easily

Jeremy: It's been rough somewhat. Parents always complained about me hardly calling or texting and trying to explain that I forgot was hard. With me not being around a lot of them some have fizzled out because I forgot about them. And the ones I keep now are similar to me as they are ND so we have an understanding of ourselves.

6. ON HYPERFIXATION

As a neurodivergent person, what does hyperfixation mean to you?

Lala: Something I get sucked into easily and can spend hours doing research on it. Something I can learn from and which brings me joy, distracts me, gives me knowledge in the process. Or it could be something I like doing without thinking, and that relaxes me for some time.

Zaynab: Getting completely lost in activities. That I almost cannot pull my mind away from it until it is completed

Daniella Ashi: Completely engrossing myself in something to the point of unawareness. Usually something unnecessary as a way of distraction. I don't like the feeling of coming down from the high, sometimes.

Vivian: i don't think it means a lot to me

Amanda: Loving something so much that it takes away from my personal obligations or responsibilities (I have trouble doing schoolwork because of my hyper fixations or will sacrifice sleep to spend more time engaging with them)

Milo: It means the need to know and understand a particular topic or subject matter.

Anna: when i'm curious about something i look it up and spend days/weeks just thinking about, researching or watching content on the interest just so i can distract myself from everything that is stressing me out in real life

Iden: Hyperfixation to me means something I take deep interest in and tend to obsess over. I prefer to have conversations about them whenever possible and I could talk about these things for hours. These are also things I spend the majority of my time engaging with.

Alpha: This is it!! So I've got ADHD (Took me about two weeks to complete this form 🤔) but hyperfixation for me is just being focused or too involved in my activity that it becomes borderline obsessive. I become so intense and highly concentrated but once I'm off, Lord have mercy. There's the isolation that after I work that consumes a huge chunk of my energy, hence little or no motivation to socialize and even more, maintain friendships and all.

Irawo: An inability to remove myself from a task until my brain chooses to become bored with it.

Divine Odigili: I don't know how to define it, so I'll give an example: I was at the office last week, came out to throw some things in the trash, decided to yeet it from across the room like a basketball, first one entered, second one didn't, I spent like 10 minutes in that hallway trying to get it into the basket like a ball. Another instance, I draw, I can spend 30 minutes erasing and redrawing one part of a drawing just because I don't like the way it looks, like it'll look good generally, but if I'm not sure, I don't care if there's

a time constraint, I won't do the rest of the drawing until I get that part, and I never realize how much time has passed.

Rosie: BTS, baking, drawing, my mom, my health(things I hyper fixate in)
 Oluwatofarati: Being like..so fucking focused on one particular thing
 Ken: The reason I can live and be happy

Abigail: Binge watching shows without remembering that I am a student

Camela Etoruom: Escaping reality

Ife Olutayo: It means that I go down a rabbit hole whether it's Wikipedia articles or YouTube searches

M: Focusing on a particular task/activity/anything for an extended period of time. It mostly happens when I find something really interesting.

Titilayo: Being fully engaged in something, my hyper fixation has to be watching videos of toys I love it so much

Jeremy: Being completely absorbed in a particular task. Forgoing meals bathroom breaks and the like till I've reached an undefined checkpoint in the task.

7. ON CHALLENGES

What has been the most challenging part of being neurodivergent in your side of the world?

Lala: Realizing I will never get support where I live. The only thing is not being seen as a human being, but someone who has no autonomy whatsoever. Even finding my own community here is hard enough.

Zaynab: Getting people in my circle who fully understand me

Daniella Ashi: Social interaction, lack of awareness, being called possessed.

Vivian: Trying to figure out if a particular behaviour is me being bad or just one of my features

Amanda: The medical community and society not understanding the nuance of neurodivergence and that neurodivergent people don't have to act or look a certain way to be neurodivergent

Milo: Everything. I live in Nigeria. Going out is war because I have to take public transport and people touching me is very irritating. I'm constantly always masked because I want to have a good first impression. No meds. No therapy. No assistance whatsoever

Anna: No one understands my meanings and intentions. always being misunderstood so i'm tired of it and i try to let go .. to not let it bother me as much

Iden: I crave social interactions but I don't know how to talk to people. I wish I had friends or just anyone to be by my side but that looks to be out of the cards for me. Not to mention my sensory issues bother me when I'm out and about and people are often less than understanding about them.

Alpha: Well, it's crazy because there's a thin line between being a neurodivergent and being called lazy, or being possessed. It's challenging because little or no one actually understands us or it so it's hard, really hard.

Irawo: The financial cost

Divine Odigili: This is Nigeria, nobody cares if you have adhd or dyslexia, if you're not getting it right, you're not trying hard enough, so you go collect until you do better. Either that or they blame it on spiritual problems. I remember asking my parents for help with ADHD in school, my mom told me I wasn't sleeping, my dad had a virtual prayer meeting held on my head.

Rosie: Ableism. Just mentioning autism or ADHD in Nigeria and you're looked at like a freak.

Oluwatofarati: The people do not understand. Any little thing, you're dumb or you're lazy or you're possessed or your mothers cousin from the village has sent an evil spirit after you

Ken: Being taken seriously

Camela Etoruom: Miscommunication in every angle, relationship, self, emotions.

Ife Olutayo: The cost of therapy and antidepressants

M: Adulthood

Titilayo: Not being able to communicate, focus, short memory, being constantly burnt out, can't go out most times because of my anxiety unless I'm going with someone I feel very comfortable with and I can be clingy with and many more

Jeremy: In our side of the world it's not very prevalent. Hardly anything is known about it mainstream. And my first glimpse of neurodivergence was in primary school. They had people who were in a special needs class. So it's only taken seriously when the effects are outwardly visible. And even then depending on the family they attribute it to spiritual reasons. Which is ludicrous but not surprising given how superstitious we are here in Nigeria.

8. ON INEBRIATION

How does your high translate?

Lala: I've never taken drugs, so I don't know.

Zaynab: I don't think I quite understand this question. Also, I do not do recreational drugs or alcohol for any reason.

Daniella Ashi: It's amazing. I am able to glide through the webs in my mind. Communicate clearly with the voices ringing in my head.

Vivian: I don't have a high

Amanda: I take mmj capsules or tinctures for a neurological disorder I have (fnd, which gives me tics and seizures); if I accidentally get too high, I become even more imaginative and may even come up with scientific study ideas; I also have more trouble than usual remembering what I have or have not done in my routines

Milo: I've never been high

Iden: (apologies if I misunderstood the question) I get my high by engaging in sexual activities or by fantasizing about certain situations.

Alpha: Sugar! I consume a buttload of sugar; Cakes can ruin me for all I care 🤩 🤩

Irawo: It feels like being borne aloft on concrete clouds.

Divine Odigili: Weed, it slows me down, sort of. My brain is going at like 10000 mph, thinking of multiple things at once, when I'm high, it slows down and I'm able to focus almost like a normal person, sort of. I'm also able to articulate better. Coffee also calms too.

Rosie: Hmm I get opiates for my pain so they give me a sense of euphoria? Does that count?

Oluwatofarati: I do not understand. Like ways of escape? Does food count?

Ken: Very unmasked and philosophical

Abigail: Happiness I become unnecessarily happy

Camela Etoruom: I escape by reading or watching chick flicks. I think it's mostly nostalgia so i bask in it, it's the short bursts of colors I enjoy

Ife Olutayo: Watching a film or reading a good book.

M: Anything sweet

Titilayo: I don't understand this, I'm having a problem understanding it

Jeremy: For weed it's basically in different parts. The initial hit first slows my reaction time and body control. Like I'm using a controller with stiff buttons. Then come the jumpy thoughts I'm more impulsive when high so whatever I'm thinking I'm doing. And at this stage bkdy controls aren't as stiff but there's a slight disconnect. A floaty feeling. Then comes the crash after the high which depending on strain and method of ingestion (smoking/eating) and lighting of room will lead to some hallucination

9. ON DIAGNOSES.

Have you been able to get a full diagnosis or self diagnosed for now ?

Lala: Only self diagnosed. If I am to have a full diagnosis, that would mean I wouldn't be able to leave the country (+ many other things), which I want to do in the future. So until I am sure a diagnosis won't be something that restricts me, I am not going to have it.

Zaynab: Just on the basis of self diagnosis

Daniella Ashi: Full diagnosis for two. Self for one

Vivian: Yes and i'm glad

Amanda: Self-diagnosed for now Milo: Self diagnoses

Anna: Self diagnosed for now

Iden: Self diagnosed

Alpha: A little bit of both

Irawo: I have a full diagnosis. It was terribly expensive

Divine Odigili: Self diagnosed for now, read about it in a novel and someone pointed out the symptoms in me, so I did research.

Rosie: Self diagnosis

Oluwatofarati: Oh I got a full diagnosis. One of my fathers friends recommended it so I got one

Ken: Yes, I'm diagnosed

Abigail: Self diagnosed

Camela Etoruom: Full for some and self for some

Ife Olutayo: Self diagnosed. Also been called autistic to my face at functions. Nice times

M: Self diagnosed

Titilayo: Self diagnosed for now

Jeremy: For now I'm self diagnosed.

10. ON OVERBEARING ATTRIBUTES

What has been the most overwhelming attribute of your spectrum for you?

Lala: That unmasking for me is something hard to do even on my own, and if I am not home, unmasking would be something dangerous to do but after finding out I am ND, it has been getting harder to mask and suppress my stims.

Zaynab: Time management, low tolerance for frustration, inability to properly channel my emotions, crippling anxiety.

Daniella Ashi: I wrote something on it, a snippet is: "She has always been the supporting character in the script where she was cast as the lead. She acts it out to almost perfection, she's the facade main character" So basically, masking.

Vivian: Well i'm not quite sure

Amanda: Coping with rejection or perceived rejection

Milo: Meltdowns and executive dysfunction

Anna: sensory issues, highly sensitive, overthinking

Iden: I spent my whole life believing I'd grow out of "problematic" (in the eyes of neurotypical people) behaviors only to suddenly find out that I'd never become what I viewed as normal. No matter how much I try to accept myself there's still this nagging little voice telling me that I'll never be happy.

Alpha: Well, there's difficulty maintaining attention, there's me being easily distracted; one minute I'm thinking go hard or go home and the next, I'm thinking about the most beautiful butterfly to ever exist. Starting tasks can be exhausting; I'm a god at procrastination and would I stop, Nope! 🦴

Irawo: It has to be executive function and emotional dysregulation. Divine Odigili: The restlessness, impulsiveness and hyper or hypo focus Rosie: Sensory Overload

Oluwatofarati: The lack...of energy sometimes. The mood swings. Sometimes I even confuse myself. The daydreaming too

Ken: Sensory issues and socializing

Abigail: The constant forgetfulness

Camela Etoruom: The dissonance, the constant war of school of neurotypical socialization vs self. It's disconcerting how I think I know so much and so little so I'm either overwhelmed or underwhelmed

Ife Olutayo: Anxiety and depression.

M: Getting work done even when I have no motivation

Titilayo: Focusing and Short memory

Jeremy: Inability to complete tasks till the deadline is right in front of me. committing to a task and consistently working on it.

11. ON EXTERNAL HELP

How do the neurotypicals around you try to help with your Neurodivergence?

Lala: They don't. The only ones who I told about myself are my friends, but only one of them gets it, because they are also ND and studied psychology. The other ones are understanding, if I tell them something is too much or that I am not up for socializing, they don't push me. But I still feel like a burden anyway.

Zaynab: Nothing

Daniella Ashi: They don't.

Vivian: they typically don't, i'm currently in school and the few people that are aware do not acknowledge it and still treat me like i'm typical.

Amanda: My family tries to accommodate me by allowing me to regulate myself if I need to through watching videos of my hyper fixations and by stepping in if something I am doing is becoming too overwhelming

Milo: They don't

Iden: My family keeps my food aversions away when I'm around.

Alpha: Well, communication is underrated. Talking about these things and how they affect us really goes a long way to helping and sustaining my mental state. Also, they provide a lot of ice cream too which is also very underrated.

Irawo: It's mixed. Some people (bless their hearts) recommend self help literature that should only be used as kindling, others try to make themselves as available as they can, and some help by letting me know with their dismissal or eugenicist views that maybe existing in community with them is not a great idea

Divine Odigili: They mostly don't.

Rosie: Forcing me to socialize because apparently I'm just "shy"

Oluwatofarati: They're very understanding. And they help to push me. I have surrounded myself with success stories or stories that will soon be successful. So they're an inspiration for me

Ken: I don't interact with people much so I don't know

Abigail: They don't try

Camela Etoruom: Our communication style is honest, kind and fun

Ife Olutayo: My friends always ask whether I'm comfortable in particular spaces and the love is reassuring.

M: I haven't said anything specifically about being neurodivergent

Titilayo: They don't. They either tell me to get over it or I should try to make more friends

Jeremy: I don't think I have that many around me. But the few I think are try their best to understand my condition

12. *ON INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS*

Do you believe your friendship with other neurodivergents is easier to navigate?

Lala: Maybe, but I am friends with only one, at least that I know of.

Zaynab: No

Daniella Ashi: I don't have one. I really want friends that are ND

Vivian: Yes

Amanda: Not necessarily (I am not sure if some of my friends are neurodivergent or not)

Milo: Yes

Anna: Yes

Iden: Yes

Alpha: Yes it is

Irawo: Yes! It's like synchronized dancing with a person who hears the same beat after years of trying to tango while the rest of the world has chosen to waltz

Divine Odigili: Yes actually

Rosie: Yes we understand eo so it's quite easy

Oluwatofarati: It definitely is

Ken: yep, it is

Abigail: Yeah

Camela Etoruom: Oh it's a bit of both, it can be easy or foreign.

Ife Olutayo: Yeah it is. The amount of relatability is just too cute

M: Conversations with certain people go really smoothly and suspecting they could be neurodivergent too

Titilayo: Yes

Jeremy: Yes, much easier. Because it's from the same foundation

13. ON EVERYDAY LIFE

How has being neurodivergent affected your ability to keep up with everyday tasks?

Lala: It's actually the reason I found out I am neurodivergent in the first place. After dropping out of college, because I wasn't able to do anything by myself, I started to question why it has always been so hard for me to do things and what might be wrong with me. I still struggle so much even with daily tasks, and it's always a struggle. Especially when your family doesn't want to understand it, and makes you feel even worse for it.

Zaynab: I live in a constant state of tiredness

Vivian: It can be overwhelming really

Amanda: I get easily distracted when doing schoolwork for university so I find myself doing work late into the night; I also have many sensory issues that prevent me from doing tasks like cleaning tables and washing dishes

Milo: It's very so so

Anna: I have to pay more attention to my surroundings and actually look for it.. if I don't see it, if I won't pass by a certain task I will forget about it

Iden: Due to ADHD, I can't bring myself to do work no matter how close the deadline is.

Alpha: I can't lie, but when you think you get used to it and it becomes easier, it doesn't. Regardless of having a routine, it still doesn't match up. I have to reconfigure and restructure myself every morning for the task ahead.

Irawo: Yes lol but systems help.

Divine Odigili: Omo, issa struggle.

Rosie: Negatively. ADHD crash and burnout fucks me over Oluwatofarati: Omooooo. A lot. I'll analyze this question and get back Ken: It's hard I have chronic pain too

Abigail: I'm really struggling

It's either I'm too involved in the tasks or totally uninvolved

Camela Etoruom: I'm disorganized but I get my work done.

Ife Olutayo: Well, yeah. My attention deficit disorder is crazy as hell, so I find myself forgetting stuff and moving on to other things. Pretty sure I had something to do just now, before I opened this questionnaire up. Well, probably wasn't important.

M: I have some tasks I haven't completed, but I decided to fill out this form instead.

Titilayo: It's so hard. As someone who is combining tech with school work, I get burnt out almost every time and I find it hard to concentrate and focus and the memory isn't helping either

Jeremy: Consistency is hard. I have courses I'm meant to complete and I've started and stopped exercising on different occasions.

14. ON TOOLS

Is there a system you use to help you keep up with the tasks?

Lala: I tried, but still couldn't adapt any good working system. Nevertheless I'm working on it.

Zaynab: I set reminders and use a to-do

Daniella Ashi: No. I don't have one. Just vibes, and In Sha Allah

Vivian: I try to follow a schedule

Amanda: Not yet, unfortunately

Anna: I observe my surroundings and notice all the details and tick off one task done after the other

Iden: No

Alpha: Well, not really. I just go with the flow.

Irawo: Yup. I have a billion alarms and processes that are modular so it evolves depending on my needs

Divine Odigili: I have a to-do/reminder on the wall above my table, then set reminders on my phone to notify me every two hours of what I'm to do.

Rosie: Schedules and lists also timers

Oluwatofarati: Nope. As the universe leads. Although I do have a mental list of what I want to do that day. So I do it in any order

Ken: Yep I have a routine that I follow

Abigail: Nah I just try my best

Camela Etoruom: I gaslight myself

Ife Olutayo: I write it down in a book and try to remember to check it out. If it's important, my anxiety about it won't let me forget

M: Tried to use Notion but I am still trying to understand how it works. I write down what I need to do on the notes app on my computer and cross out the one I've completed

Titilayo: Unfortunately no

Jeremy: Nope, I take the day as it comes lol

15. ON ACCEPTANCE

Has discovering you're on the spectrum made it easier to understand yourself?

Lala: Definitely. Before I just felt like a weird little creature, that just can't be like "everyone else". Now I know there's nothing wrong with me and there are people out there just like me, having similar or even the same experiences as I do!

Zaynab: Certainly

Daniella Ashi: Yes. Self awareness is a bitch.

Vivian: Oh very much so, I now have all these memories I suppressed that I now have an explanation for, I now know my limits and to identify my stressors.

Amanda: Definitely.

Anna: Yes. I'm not guilting myself about thinking in a particular way. I hate myself less now that I know there's nothing to gaslight myself with excuses with.

Iden: Yes, behaviors I wrote off as being weird and irritating turned out to be a part of my autism and I've become a bit kinder to myself as a result. I now have answers as to why I did/do certain things.

Alpha: Yes it has.

Irawo: Yes, very much so. Divine Odigili: Yes, I guess. Rosie: Yes, so much easier. Oluwatofarati: It is

Ken: Yes

Abigail: Yes it is

Camela Etoruom: Yes and I don't feel so "lonely"

Ife Olutayo: Yeah, it has. I'm still trying to be kind with myself, but it doesn't come easy.

M: Yes, it has. I've been more kind and understanding towards myself.

Titilayo: Yes

Jeremy: Yes, I try to factoring in my styles of reading when studying and somewhat reduce the amount of blame I give myself

16. ON STIM TOYS

For autistic people, do you have a favorite stim toy?

Vivian: My fingers

Amanda: Toys with rubbery textures and weighted plushies

Milo: No. Music is mine. (sorry this is too long and I'm distracted)

Anna: I scratch myself, I spin my phone while holding the pop socket on the back

Iden: I have this cupcake squishy that pops back up after you squeeze it.

Alpha: Yeah! Stress balls, fidget spinners and titties when I can get my hands on them!



Rosie: My fidget spinner and slime stress ball. I sometimes use a yoyo (it weirdly helps)

Oluwatofarati: A boob ball. A stress ball. Same thing

Ken: Fidget rings and infinity cube

Ife Olutayo: I don't actually

Titilayo: No

Jeremy: For now playing with my rings or clicking them together work fine. My other stim toys were lost

17. ON SOCIAL MEDIA

How does social media affect you as a neurodivergent person?

Lala: If not for it, I don't think I would ever know I am neurodivergent. But sometimes it's a lot being online, but I do love it because it is the only place I can communicate with my people.

Zaynab: I don't think social media has any impact on me

Daniella Ashi: I love it, especially Twitter. I see similar traits in people, and I cry and feel sad and glad

Vivian: I get to interact with other neurodivergent people and get different insights and perspective

Amanda: Because of how difficult it is for me to stay on track, and how I easily get distracted during schoolwork. Social media is definitely distracting and far more appealing to me than my work since I follow my hyperfixations through social media.

Anna: i can mindlessly scroll through twitter while i can also learn new information

Iden: It can either make me feel seen or cause me to compare myself to neurotypical people.

Alpha: It's a little bit of here and there. There's the angle where you can read and learn and no more about yourself as well as meet people like you. There's also the other part where you have to deal with people who think we're lazy or just finding excuses to not work.

Irawo: I have periods when I delete it so that I don't spend my nights on it and my saying regretting my self imposed sleeplessness.

Divine Odigili: I don't know, sometimes I uninstall and go dark on impulse, sometimes I'm bored with it, sometimes it's exciting

Rosie: No comment. I'm sorry 😞

Oluwatofarati: It's a huge distraction Ken: It's one of my special interests

Abigail: Mixed feelings

Sometimes I want to be all in on sm, sometimes I hate being active

Camela Etoruom: I learn more, read more and escape from my reality

Ife Olutayo: It exacerbates my attention deficit.

M: It's like an escape from reality.

Titilayo: I love it but it is also very overwhelming ,so that's why I deactivate my account very often

Jeremy: Recently got really into twitter. But for other apps such as instagram and the like not so much. There was WhatsApp but that's somewhat reduced because the groups I was active in have died down

18. ON STEREOTYPES

Is there a stereotype about neurodivergent people that you absolutely hate?

Lala: Yes, that we inherently need to be "fixed." What needs to be fixed instead is the society we live in and how neurodivergent and disabled people are being portrayed.

Daniella Ashi: Using it as a way to excuse our 'laziness' or 'bad behaviour' or if we try harder, they'll say we are overreacting.

Vivian: That we are smart and geniuses who don't need help

Amanda: That "everyone has a little bit of neurodivergence or a certain disorder"

Anna: Hyperactivity.. not everyone is running around or jumping up and down while restless..

Iden: That people with ADHD are lazy and people with autism are rude geniuses (like the good doctor :/) some of us are just basic ass people (me) and there's nothing wrong with that

Alpha: People think neurodivergent individuals are intellectually impaired and lack social skills while the social part might be a bit true, it varies and we have meaningful and fulfilling relationships with people. There's also a lack of empathy and stigmatization which makes it hard to relate with others.

Irawo: Yes. The worst is the superpower myth, whoever came up with that needed to be punched in the teeth.

Rosie: We should look a certain way 😞

Oluwatofarati: All of them

Ken: That we are mean

Abigail: Yes. Once you mention being neurodivergent people assume you are dumb

Camela Etoruom: The condescending approach to it by neurotypicals- the subtle jokes, the infantilization and refusal to understand people as a whole

Ife Olutayo: That I have to be nonverbal because I am autistic.

Titilayo: Has to be that we are choosing to be neurodivergent because it looks cool and it's trendy and some think it's madness

Jeremy: That we are just lazy and looking for excuses

19. *ON FINANCE*

Is finance an issue for diagnoses and medication? If yes, please express yourself about it

Lala: Yes, the cost of it is too much for what we get in the end. I wish it was more affordable.

Zaynab: No

Daniella Ashi: Yes, I hate how expensive drugs are. I hate that I have to "be on my best behaviour" so I can get drugs.

Vivian: No

Amanda: Yes, I have avoided pursuing an official autism or adhd screening since they are extremely expensive and insurance will not cover them.

Milo: Yes Anna: No

Iden: Yes, getting a diagnosis is not covered by my insurance.

Alpha: Yes

Irawo: Yes, It's very expensive to get a diagnosis and the meds as well. Healthcare should not cost the GDP of nations

Divine Odigili: Yes, I'm not sure how to

Rosie: Yes, I already have an autoimmune illness, I was born with it, so the cost of keeping up with that alone is hectic. Pain meds, lots of tests, countless hospital visits. So I focus more on my that and try to do what I can to help my adhd without medical advice

Oluwatofarati: Yes, Well, I'm trying to wean myself off my parent's assistance. So drugs and all

Ken: Yes, It's expensive for me to keep up with all my medication and appointment needs so I'm usually always broke

Abigail: Yes, I haven't had access to get a diagnosis

Camela Etoruom: Yes, Nigeria is extremely poor and getting diagnosed is expensive, medication are expensive (if you see)

Ife Olutayo: Yes, Well, my family is the kind that believes that I'm either wishing myself evil or I'm not serious so support on that end is nahhh.

M: Yes, Currently Unemployed

Titilayo: Yes, I've been trying to get a diagnosis since last year but when I checked the various psychology centers, the finances are a lot. I've tried telling my parents about it but they don't believe in mental health issues

Jeremy: No

ON AWARENESS

Do you think there is enough awareness and understanding of neurodivergence in society presently?

EVERYONE: FUCK NO

(and thus the ND PAPERS)

20. ON ACCOMMODATION

Have you received adequate accommodations and support from educational institutions, such as schools or universities?

Lala: No

Zaynab: No

Daniella Ashi: No

Vivian: Not really

Amanda: They try to

Anna: No

Iden: No

Alpha: No

Irawo: No

Divine Odigili: No

Rosie: Not really

Oluwatofarati: No

Ken: They try to

Abigail: Not really

Camela Etoruom: No

Ife Olutayo: No

M: No

Titilayo: No

Jeremy: No

21. ON MEDICATION

Are you on medication? If yes, do you think they have improved your quality of life?

Lala: I wish I was! Because it keeps getting harder to live with my adhd without it.

Zaynab: No, I'm not

Daniella Ashi: Subtly. In an unpleasant way

Vivian: Yes I am, I'm a lot calmer and can navigate through social situations a lot better.

Amanda: Not for my neurodivergence, but for other disorders (depression, pots, asthma, etc). I feel that although these medications aren't designed for neurodivergence, they help somewhat since I do not get as overwhelmed by these symptoms and can function better with them than I can without them.

Alpha: I'm actually not on meds which makes it all the more fucked up.

Irawo: Used to be. It was a process finding the right combination

Divine Odigili: No

Oluwatofarati: Yes

Ken: Yep my adhd meds have really helped

Abigail: Nope

Camela Etoruom: I was on medication and it made me feel numb, I want to be alive. I want to experience living, not numbness

Ife Olutayo: Not currently. I'd hope that I'd never need to again, but man plans and the gods say fuck off.

M: No

Titilayo: No, I'm not

Jeremy: Not on any

22. ON COPING

What are some coping mechanisms you do to ease your mind?

Lala: I try to distract myself, get myself out of my head. Watch something regarding my special interest, even though at the worst times even that might not help.

Zaynab: I sketch/paint

Daniella Ashi: They aren't healthy so I can't share

Vivian: I watch cartoons, they're very calming. Currently obsessed with Bluey.

Amanda: Engaging in my hyperfixations, listening to music, and dancing; Negative: skin picking and hair pulling

Anna: Watching tv shows, dramas, etc or reading a fictional story.. absorbing myself into someone else's story instead of mine

Iden: Perhaps it's a bit unconventional (yeah ik therapy is needed lol) but I watch true crime and imagine myself in unfortunate situations, watch liminal space videos... And imagine myself in unfortunate situations, and listen to subliminals (do I even need to add the last part?)

Alpha: Well, speaking to someone who can always relate works, reading and writing also works. Video games too, although sometimes I can get fixated and well, it ruins the whole concept. Fidget tools too!

Irawo: I have fidget toys. Also, talking about how I feel and being honest with myself helps a lot.

Divine Odigili: I draw, YouTube too, learning new skills, teaching new skills(even if I suck at teaching), I shut people out too, I like to cook and clean, I walk(like, just randomly get up and start walking with no discernible visage)

Rosie: Listen to music, meditation, and boxing

Oluwatofarati: I write

Ken: Listen to music, go to my sensory cave, engage in my special interests

Abigail: Playing games helps ease and clear up my mind

Camela Etoruom: Writing, movies, music, talking to people i love.

Ife Olutayo: I watch a film, listen to a lot of music or just sleep.

M: Music, eating

Titilayo: Listen to music,watch movies,sometimes I just stare and don't say anything,I talk to myself also,playing with my hands

Jeremy: I read for hours on end

FINALLY.....

We are sorry for the long questionnaire, one final one, tell us anything at all that is unique about your experience.

Lala: Don't be sorry, it helped me reflect on myself which is good. I don't think my experience is unique at all. I have been struggling with school my whole life to a point where without help I wasn't able to do it anymore which still makes me feel inadequate and dumb. Feeling too sensitive and weird through childhood, too needy and "high maintenance" never feeling like I fit in, even when it's my friends I am with sometimes; never being understood.

Zaynab: I have the ability to focus on many things at once, and my lack of commitment has enabled me to build a long list of talents. People are always in awe and it makes me feel good.

Daniella Ashi: Hmmm

Vivian: I don't think there's anything unique about my experience, and I think I'll have to know about everyone else's experience to be able to tell.

Amanda: I never received any kind of diagnosis as a child but looking back, my family and I can see signs of autism, adhd and ocd tendencies as far back as two years old for me. Also, my pain tolerance is likely warped, since I am dramatic over cuts and scrapes but broke and dislocated my knee and kept dancing but only knew it was dislocated and kept dancing competitively on it for another 6 months before I found out I had broken it!

Anna: Struggling with people relationships but the few friends who acknowledge and accept me as myself without knowing of me being neurodivergent and even before I knew I was nd.. they helped me with communication and haven't made me feel like I was less intelligent and capable .. while unfortunately, I can't say the same about my parents and the rest of my family

Iden: This is probably pretty boring but I'm bad at everything but reading. Also babies and dogs LOVE me.

Alpha: I think perception of the world. The way I see the world and life differ and although sometimes it can be challenging, it's beautiful. I also love how my sensory perceptions are constantly heightened, lol. I also have an insane level of paying attention to details which I didn't like at first but I've come to love and appreciate.

Irawo: Honestly, it feels like nothing is and I love that. It means I get to navigate the world with people who if they cannot fully relate, they can at least understand and make living a tad easier.

Divine Odigili: Define unique. If I had to say something, probably my ability to pick up skills fast, and hyper fixation means that the harder the skill is, the more likely I am to take time learning it, take audio engineering for instance, I use FL studio, people say it's one of the most difficult DAWs to use, I learned it in under a week and I actually found it easy, same thing with Adobe Creative Suite softwares. I don't do well with

tutorials, especially long ones, but if I skim through the video and see some key points that just point out the basics, I figure the rest out myself from there. This doesn't apply to school shaaaaa.

Rosie: ❤️ ❤️

Ken: I don't think there's anything unique, I haven't figured it out yet

Abigail: Let me think, I remember things that happened when I was a child but I can't even remember where I dropped my bag after coming back from school Also I'm very good at keeping dates I don't forget the date something happened or people's birthday idk if it's unique but to me it is

Camela Etoruom: Humanity is a shared experience, I truly don't think anything is unique- Maybe the fact I occasionally forget how to handle adulthood then pretend I'm in an alternate reality?

Ife Olutayo: I'm better off than I was two years ago in understanding how to interact and all that. I also may not answer questions that are asked with the right answers. It happens a lot more than I would think it should

M: I don't know if it's related but people think I am smart and I don't know how I have managed to get good grades.

Titilayo: It's nice meeting someone like me who understands me for me, I've lost so many friendships because they don't understand even if I explained a million times

Jeremy: Nothing comes to mind. There's hardly anything that counts for a unique experience. The size pool of the world and in relation neurodiverse people is so large that you're not alone in your experiences.

One of the participants wrote an essay...

THE CONFLICTED CONTRADICTION

By Olaitan Fashawe

I was ten years old with a belt around my neck when I realized I was different.

I kept it a secret because I knew my mother would take it as an insult to her parenting skills. “What are you going through? Isn’t it your mates that are hawking on the streets?” I could hear the words clearly like she had spoken them aloud. Now, I have made my peace with her but then I despised her because I knew she wouldn’t have asked why I felt the need to see how much more I would have to pull to make the blood vessels in my brain pop.

I was fifteen when I learned the words ‘suicide ideation’.

I realized that knowing and understanding were two different things and I finally understood how not okay I was. I was quiet, still am. Everyone, even I accepted that I was an introvert. We were wrong. My parents and teachers tried to push me out of my shell and help me to live to the potential they saw in me. Unbeknownst to them, I saw the potential in myself too. Now I knew I wasn’t introverted or shy, what I was was in a constant struggle with debilitating anxiety. It was difficult to navigate society when I was blindly wading in what to my conscious mind were inconsequential what ifs and maybes. I was an outstanding student of course, forever the high achiever but I was also drowning with no lifeline. Nobody had just realized it yet.

I am twenty-one now and I am on a quest to find peace or at least some semblance of it.

There are good days, moments I think I can conquer myself then the world. There’s this incessant niggling reminder that soon, I will go to bed and not wake up as ‘me’ in days, sometimes weeks.

Depression to me is like a stifling fog. I know there is a chemical imbalance in my brain and I have to be more intentional about boosting my happy chemicals but I still can’t explain how I feel to those who ask because all the words I know so far cannot encompass the components of depression.

There is also the shame because I do want to get better but it seems like I’m not strong enough. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. A conflicted contradiction.

My personal relationships have suffered, the way I perceive myself. I have been unable to fully commit to a romantic relationship and I thank God for the friends I have because their understanding has done more than I think I deserve. I am about to make my debut into the corporate world in a male dominated field and I am not under any delusions that it will get better. I constantly feel like I have no mouth yet I must scream,

My mother named me Ashabi- The one chosen to be born. That has been my reassurance that my existence is intentional and I need not put an end to this ceaseless struggle because I am supposed to be here and I have a purpose. Why else would I been chosen?

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR IN CHIEF.

There are so many things to say but not enough ways for me to codify them, still I will try. At the publication we always try to do important work, and tell stories, this is our first independent project and compiling it was an experience. I have struggled with neuro divergence myself and more than half of my team does too so best believe that this is a project from the heart. Compiling it took us four months as it was heavy but necessary work. I don't need to re-instate what these twenty-one people have said, our experiences are interjected with difficulty everyday, and we need fairer and better living conditions.

We thank all our participants with a gratitude that is almost immeasurable as we could have never told this story without them Now it has been told, it should be listened to, referenced and mentioned. Life needs to be kinder to neurodivergents in every way and that is what the ND papers is asking. To listen to the people who have spoken and do what you can in your way to make the world fairer. We do not think this ask is too much or too naïve. We can and we will. Until the next Scribbles project, let us take care of one another and be well.

JACK, C.I