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CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

TITLE: “Use of Machine Learning in Assessing the Predictive Validity of a Gender-Nuanced ADHD Screening Tool”

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The Couch, a multidisciplinary practice, invites you to participate in this research which aims to support the development of a more inclusive, data-driven ADHD screening tool, powered by machine learning.

This study helps validate the NEARD Scale—a gender-sensitive tool created by Clinical Psychologist Yumna Zubi to detect emotional, attentional, and sensory patterns often missed in traditional ADHD assessments, especially in women and gender-diverse individuals.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Age 18+
- Either formally diagnosed with ADHD **OR** no ADHD diagnosis (control group)
- Open to all gender identities

PARTICIPATION:

- An **anonymous**, short, online questionnaire.
- You’ll rate statements on a scale of 1-5.
- Your answers will help us build a better understanding of ADHD across genders.

RESEARCH LINK: <https://forms.gle/h3vSAmLYf6eYMLcC8>

ADHD AND WOMEN – WHY IT’S TIME TO REDEFINE THE NARRATIVE

by Clinical Psychologist, Yumna Zubi

For decades, the ADHD narrative has been shaped by symptoms traditionally associated with young boys: hyperactivity, impulsivity, and behavioural disruption. This male-centric lens has left generations of women underdiagnosed, mischaracterised, or entirely unseen.

But today, the conversation is evolving. And as we move towards a more nuanced understanding of neurodiversity, one truth becomes clear:

ADHD doesn’t look the same in everyone. And in women, it often hides in plain sight.



FROM DEFICIT TO DIFFERENCE: A NEW LENS ON ADHD

Let’s consider Sofia: a creative, high-achieving executive known for her visionary thinking and magnetic leadership. But behind closed doors, she’s overwhelmed. She frequently loses track of time, forgets commitments, and feels emotionally dysregulated, especially around hormonal shifts.

What Sofia doesn’t realise is that her symptoms aren’t “quirks.” They’re the hidden signatures of ADHD, masked by years of social conditioning and self-blame.

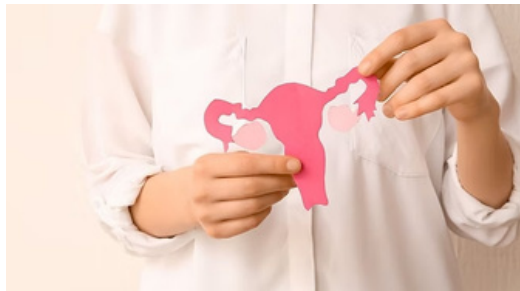
We’ve long misunderstood ADHD as a deficit in attention. But in truth, it’s a regulatory difference, affecting how we manage energy, emotion, time, and information. In women, this difference is compounded by hormonal cycles, perfectionism, and the relentless pressure to appear “together.”

This isn’t dysfunction. It’s a different neurological rhythm that deserves recognition, not rejection.

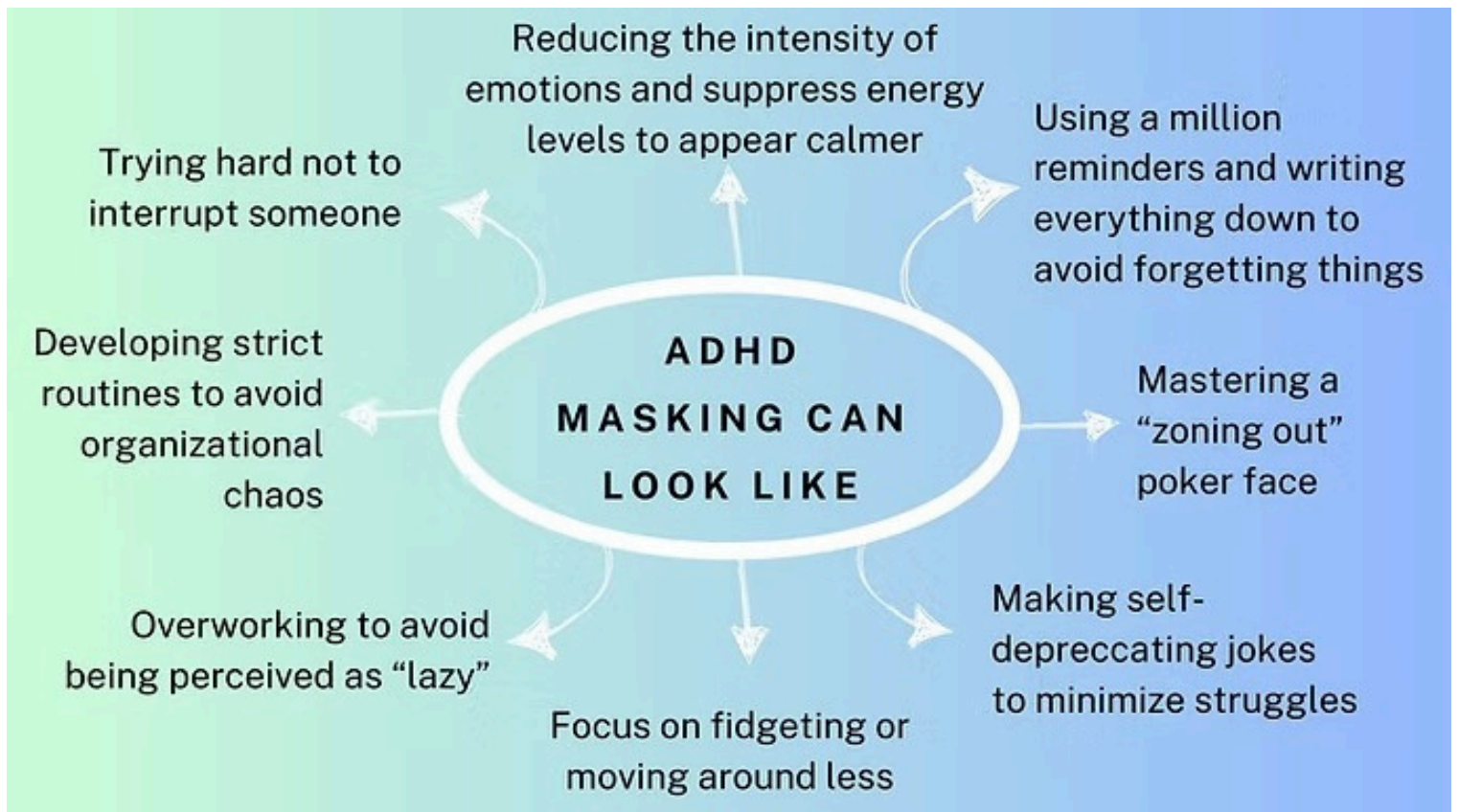
“ADHD isn’t disordered—it’s divergent code. Fast, nonlinear, and built for pattern recognition the world doesn’t always recognize yet.”

THE ADHD KALEIDOSCOPE: WHY THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT

Imagine looking into a kaleidoscope—constantly shifting patterns, dynamic and layered. That’s ADHD in women: ever-evolving, multifaceted, and shaped by an interplay of biology, identity, and culture.



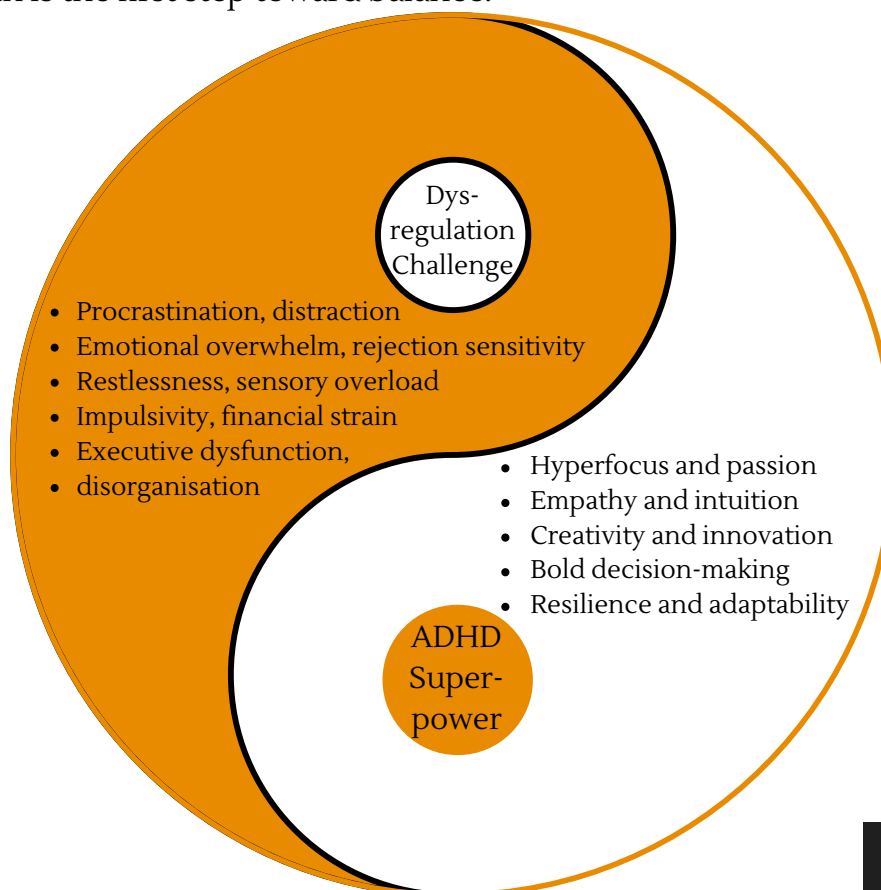
- The hormonal influence: Estrogen plays a powerful role in regulating dopamine—the neurotransmitter closely linked with ADHD. Hormonal fluctuations across puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause cause ADHD symptoms to appear and disappear. This unpredictability often leads to misdiagnosis or internal confusion.
- The masking effect: Women with ADHD often adapt to social norms by “masking” symptoms, presenting as organised, composed, or high-achieving, while internally struggling. Over time, masking leads to burnout, identity erosion, and delayed diagnoses.
- The inner critic: Unlike the externalised behaviors often seen in boys, girls with ADHD internalise. They experience chronic self-doubt, rumination, and shame. These invisible symptoms are often mistaken for anxiety or depression.
- Emotional dysregulation & RSD: Women with ADHD often experience emotional intensity, including Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD), a deep emotional pain triggered by perceived criticism or failure. This heightens relationship challenges and emotional exhaustion.
- The social disconnect: Social struggles may not be obvious, but they’re real. ADHD-related impulsivity, forgetfulness, and sensory sensitivities can make friendships and group dynamics difficult, leading to withdrawal or isolation.



STRENGTHS INTERTWINED WITH STRUGGLES

“We live at the intersection of too much and not enough—too intense, too sensitive, too scattered, too slow. But in truth, we are just profoundly attuned to a world that runs on overload.” — Neurodivergent Women’s Reflection Journal

The ADHD experience in women is not a story of limitation—it’s a story of paradox. Many possess powerful strengths: creativity, emotional intelligence, intuition, and rapid problem-solving. But when unsupported, those gifts can be entangled with overwhelm, inconsistency, and burnout. Understanding both is the first step toward balance.



STRATEGIES FOR THRIVING WITH ADHD

Thriving with ADHD isn't about "fixing" yourself. It's about building a personalised, integrative framework that supports regulation across the emotional, cognitive, and somatic systems.

Just as every neurodivergent mind is unique, so is the path to healing. Therapy isn't one-size-fits-all—and the path to learning, healing, and growing may look different for you. The key is to discover the approaches that meet your nervous system, your lived experiences, and your emotional rhythms where they are.



Evidence-based and integrative approaches include:

- Psychodynamic therapy: Explores unconscious patterns and the roots of identity, shame, and emotional conflict—often shaped by years of feeling misunderstood.
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT): Offers powerful tools for emotional regulation, distress tolerance, and improving interpersonal dynamics—critical for navigating ADHD's emotional landscape.
- Somatic work: Reconnects body and mind through awareness-based practices like grounding, breathwork, and movement—ideal for those who feel disconnected from their bodies.
- TRE (Tension & Trauma Release Exercises): Supports nervous system regulation by releasing deep-held tension and stress through gentle tremoring exercises.
- Neurofeedback: A non-invasive technique that helps the brain self-regulate in real time, enhancing focus, sleep, and emotional balance.
- Art therapy: A creative, sensory-based modality for processing emotions nonverbally—especially helpful for those who think in images or struggle to articulate their experience.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Targets executive function and negative thinking loops with practical, structured tools that support daily functioning.
- Lifestyle anchors: Movement, rest, nutrition, time-blocking, and screen hygiene help support nervous system health and create a foundation for sustainable well-being.

A CALL TO BUSINESS LEADERS: EMBRACE NEURODIVERCITY

In an era where innovation is currency, businesses must stop overlooking neurodivergent talent.

Here's how leadership can cultivate ADHD-inclusive environments:

- Flexibility over rigidity: Empower autonomy and self-paced productivity.
- Visual tools and clear structures: Aid focus and time orientation.
- Empathetic feedback: Understand emotional regulation differences.
- Celebrate cognitive diversity: Recognise that divergent thinking is an asset, not an anomaly.

Creating inclusive spaces isn't just ethical; it's economically smart.

VISIBILITY IS NOT ENOUGH – WE NEED STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Social media platforms and podcasts have ignited a cultural shift, allowing women to share long-silenced stories. Many are connecting dots, finding language for their experiences, and finally accessing diagnoses.

But awareness without action leads to stagnation.

Medical systems, educational frameworks, and workplaces must evolve. We need policies, language, and leadership that support—not suppress—neurodivergent women.

IT'S TIME TO REWRITE THE NARRATIVE

For too long, women with ADHD have contorted themselves to fit into a neurotypical world: overcompensating, masking, and questioning their worth. But as awareness grows, so does the opportunity for transformation.

When women with ADHD are seen, understood, and supported - they don't just survive. They rise. They innovate. They lead.

Let's build a world that makes space for their brilliance.

If you're reading this and recognize your own experience, or something new you hadn't named before, you're not alone. At [The Psychology Couch](#), we are continually researching, learning, and committed to improving the lived experiences of women with ADHD. We're here to understand your unique needs with compassion and curiosity.

If you feel called to share your journey with us, we'd be honoured to hear your story. Your voice contributes to a more inclusive, informed, and supportive future for all women navigating neurodiversity. [Click here to share your story.](#)

COMPOUND TRAUMA AND RECOVERY

Exploring the Paths to Healing and Resilience

Kgomotso Siwelane – Clinical Psychologist



What is Compound Trauma?

Compound trauma, often used interchangeably with multiple trauma, refers to the cumulative impact of experiencing several traumatic events. These events can be interconnected or separate, occurring over time or in quick succession. The complexity of recovery arises from the overlap and interaction of these traumatic experiences, each potentially intensifying the impact of the others.

Such events can include, but are not limited to:

- Physical abuse or assault
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse or assault
- Natural disasters
- Accidents or life-threatening illnesses
- Witnessing violence or tragedy

Each traumatic event can exacerbate the effects of previous experiences, complicating the recovery process.

Compound trauma involves layers of trauma that can create a complex psychological landscape for the survivor. This layering effect can make it difficult to isolate and address individual traumas. The effects of compound trauma are often interrelated, meaning that one trauma can exacerbate the impact of another. For example, a person who has experienced childhood abuse and later encounters a natural disaster may find that the latter event triggers unresolved feelings from the former. The stress from multiple traumatic experiences can accumulate, leading to a heightened state of tension and anxiety. This can affect a survivor's ability to cope with everyday stressors. In turn, causing a myriad of feelings that are difficult to overcome. The following phrases may come up:

"I feel like I am floating through life."

"I feel stuck, I don't know where I'm going with my life."

These statements are often lingering responses to the trauma that can be linked to the fight, flight, or freeze response. The fight, flight, or freeze response is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived threat. This automatic response is a part of the body's survival mechanism, preparing individuals to either confront or escape danger or, in some cases, become immobilised.

The fight, flight, freeze response has a biological basis

When a threat is perceived, the amygdala, a part of the brain responsible for processing emotions, sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus. This triggers the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary body functions, to initiate the fight, flight, or freeze response. The adrenal glands release hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, preparing the body for immediate action.

Fight Response

This response is characterised by an aggressive or combative reaction to the threat. The body prepares to confront the danger, which may involve an increase in strength and focus, increased heart rate and blood pressure, tensed muscles and rapid breathing. There would be heightened focus and determination and increased irritability or anger.

Flight Response

This reaction involves fleeing from the threat to ensure safety. The body mobilises energy to escape the danger as quickly as possible. Physically you may notice; a quickened pulse and respiration, sweating and dilated pupils, followed by an urge to escape or avoid the situation and/or feelings of panic or anxiety.

Freeze Response

In this response, the individual becomes immobilised or "frozen" in the face of a threat. This can be an adaptive response when neither fighting nor fleeing is possible. Presenting in sudden stillness or inability to move, decreased heart rate, numbness or dissociation, feelings of helplessness or paralysis, and/or disconnection from the environment. These responses are natural and part of the body's instinctive defence mechanism. It is important to highlight that whatever the reaction, it is automatic, and done without conscious thought.

Effects of Compound Trauma

The effects of compound trauma can be profound and multifaceted, influencing emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioural domains:

- **Emotional Complications:** Survivors may experience intense emotions such as anger, guilt, or shame, as well as increased anxiety, depression, or emotional numbness. Trust issues and difficulties in forming relationships are also common. Emotional regulation can become challenging, leading to mood swings or emotional outbursts.
- **Cognitive Challenges:** Cognitive processes such as memory, attention, concentration, decision making and problem-solving can be impaired. Survivors might find themselves overwhelmed by hyper-vigilance, intrusive thoughts or flashbacks.
- **Physical Manifestations:** The body often bears the burden of trauma, with survivors experiencing symptoms like chronic pain, fatigue, headaches, digestive issues, or cardiovascular problems. These symptoms can be persistent and may require medical intervention.
- **Behavioural Patterns:** To cope with the overwhelming nature of compound trauma, individuals may engage in maladaptive behaviours such as substance abuse, self-harm, or withdrawal from social interactions. Survivors may develop avoidance behaviours, or experience alterations in eating and sleeping patterns as coping mechanisms.

Approaches to Healing from Compound Trauma

Therapeutic Interventions:

Engaging in therapy tailored to address complex trauma, such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT) or dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR), or prolonged exposure therapy can be beneficial. These approaches help survivors process trauma and develop coping mechanisms.

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): This type of therapy helps individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns and behaviours related to trauma, promoting more adaptive coping strategies.

Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT): DBT focuses on developing skills in areas like mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness, which can be particularly helpful for individuals with complex trauma.

Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR): EMDR is a technique that uses guided eye movements to help individuals process traumatic memories and reduce their emotional intensity.

Prolonged Exposure Therapy: This therapy helps individuals gradually confront traumatic memories and situations they have been avoiding, which can help reduce anxiety and fear associated with the trauma.



Holistic Care:

Incorporating holistic practices like yoga, meditation, or art therapy can support healing by fostering a connection between mind and body.

Community Support:

Building a community of understanding individuals can provide essential emotional backing and reduce feelings of isolation.

Resilience Building:

Focusing on strengths and fostering resilience can empower survivors to navigate their healing journey. Techniques such as setting realistic goals and practising gratitude can be effective.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques: Practices such as deep breathing, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation can help regulate the autonomic nervous system.

Grounding Exercises: Activities that help connect with the present moment, like grounding exercises, can be effective in managing the freeze response.

Addressing Co-occurring Issues: Individuals with complex trauma may also experience other mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, or substance use disorders, which should be addressed as part of the treatment plan.

Medication:

In some cases, medication may be used to manage symptoms like anxiety or depression.



Coping Strategies for Survivors

While the healing journey from multiple traumas is uniquely personal, several strategies can facilitate recovery:

- **Recognise the Experience:** The first step is to acknowledge and accept that you have experienced trauma and that it has had an impact on your life.
- **Validate Your Feelings:** It's important to allow yourself to feel the emotions associated with the trauma, whether it's sadness, anger, fear, or numbness.
- **Don't Minimise or Blame Yourself:** Avoid minimising your experiences or blaming yourself for what happened.

Seeking Professional Help

- **Building a Support Network:** Connecting with supportive friends, family members, or support groups can provide emotional strength and understanding.
- **Practicing Self-Care:** Regular physical activity, nutritious eating, and adequate rest and sleep are essential for both physical and mental well-being. Mindfulness and relaxation techniques can also enhance recovery.
- **Setting Boundaries:** Learning to say no and establishing personal boundaries can empower survivors to regain control and alleviate stress.
- **Be Kind to Yourself:** Remember that healing from trauma takes time and patience. Be kind and understanding to yourself throughout the process.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Don't expect to heal overnight. Set realistic goals and celebrate your progress along the way.
- **Forgive Yourself:** Learn to forgive yourself for past mistakes and challenges.
- **Explore Your Values and Interests:** Trauma can sometimes lead to a loss of identity or a sense of disconnection from oneself. Take time to reconnect with your values, interests, and passions.
- **Redefine Your Strengths:** Identify your strengths and build upon them to regain a sense of self-worth and empowerment.
- **Find Meaning and Purpose:** Look for ways to find meaning and purpose in your life, whether through work, relationships, or volunteering.

Supporting Multiple Trauma Survivors

Providing support to individuals who have experienced multiple traumas requires empathy, understanding, and a comprehensive approach. Here are ways to effectively support these survivors.

Listening Without Judgement: Create a safe space for survivors to express their feelings without fear of judgement or dismissal. Ensure that the survivor feels safe and secure, both physically and emotionally. A stable environment can help them relax and begin to open up about their experiences. Practise active listening by giving your full attention, acknowledging their feelings, and responding with empathy. Avoid interrupting or offering unsolicited advice. Acknowledge the survivor's emotions and experiences without judgement. Validation helps them feel understood and accepted.

Educating Yourself: Understanding the nature of trauma and its effects fosters empathic support.

Encouraging Professional Support: Gently suggest that survivors seek professional assistance if they have not yet done so.

Being Patient: Recovery is a long-term process, and exercising patience is vital as survivors navigate their healing journeys.

Practical assistance: Offer support with everyday activities like grocery shopping, cooking, or housekeeping. These tasks can be overwhelming for trauma survivors. Assist in finding and accessing resources such as therapy services, support groups, or financial aid. Navigating these systems can be daunting, especially when dealing with trauma.

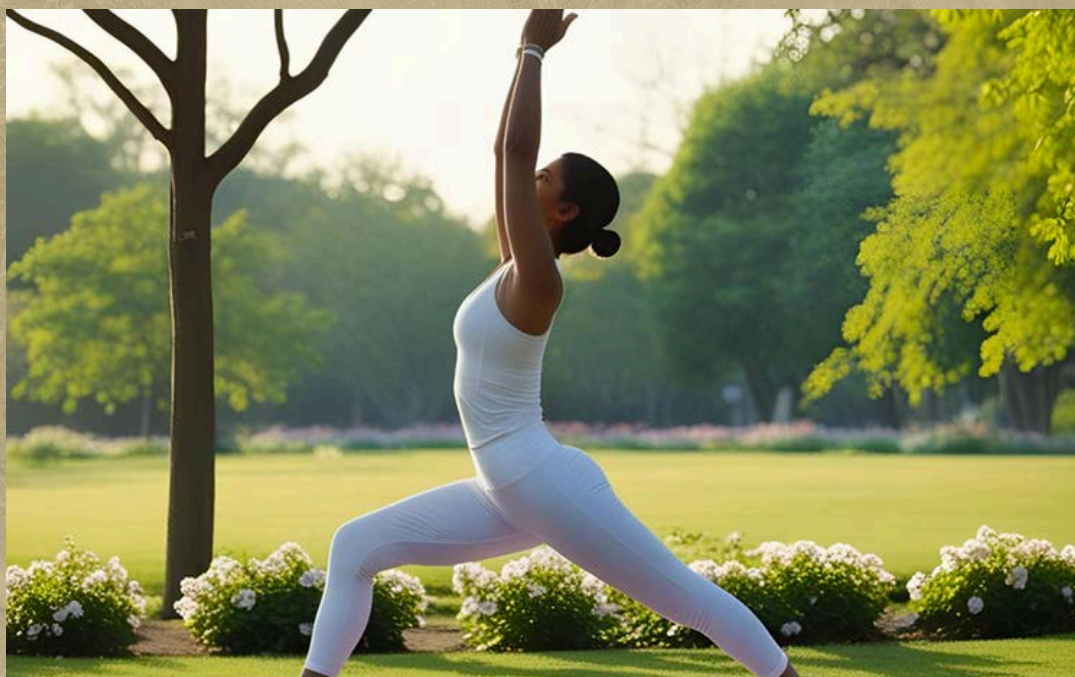
Encourage Self-Care: Support survivors in developing self-care routines that include regular physical activity, healthy eating, and relaxation techniques like meditation or journaling.

Foster Independence: Encourage survivors to set small, achievable goals that can help rebuild their confidence and sense of control over their lives.

Provide Hope: Reinforce the potential for healing and recovery. Share stories of resilience and recovery to inspire hope and motivation.

Raise Awareness: Educate others about the impacts of multiple traumas and advocate for policies that support trauma survivors. Increasing awareness can lead to more compassionate and informed communities.

Challenge Stigma: Work to break down stereotypes and stigma around mental health and trauma, fostering an inclusive environment where survivors feel safe to share their stories.



Overcoming complex trauma involves acknowledging the experience, seeking professional help, building a strong support system, and developing healthy coping mechanisms, while embracing patience and self-compassion throughout the healing journey.

Understanding Autism: Myths, Facts and Advocacy

Phindile Xulu, BA(Hons) Psychology Student

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neuro-developmental condition that affects communication, social interaction, and behaviour. Individuals with ASD may experience challenges in social reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviours, and developing, maintaining and understanding relationships. Additionally, they might exhibit restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities.

Despite these challenges, many individuals with autism possess unique strengths and abilities. It's essential to recognise that autism is not a disease that needs to be cured but rather a different way of experiencing the world. By promoting awareness and acceptance, we can create more inclusive environments for individuals on the spectrum.



MYTH VS. FACT: REDUCING THE STIGMA

There are several misconceptions about autism that contribute to misunderstanding and stigma. Let's clarify a few:

- **Myth:** People with autism lack emotions.
- **Fact:** Individuals with autism experience emotions deeply but may express them differently.

- **Myth:** Autism is caused by vaccines.
- **Fact:** Extensive research has shown no link between vaccines and autism. This myth has been debunked by numerous studies.
- **Myth:** All autistic individuals have intellectual disabilities.
- **Fact:** Autism is a spectrum, and cognitive abilities vary widely among individuals. Some may have intellectual disabilities, while others have average or above-average intelligence.



REFLECTION

As we work towards a more inclusive society, it is important to reflect on how we interact with neurodiverse individuals. How can we make schools, workplaces and communities more accommodating for people with autism? Share your thoughts and ideas with us at The Psychology Couch.

PROMOTING AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

Supporting individuals with autism requires a collective effort. Whether through advocacy, education or simply fostering understanding—small actions can make a significant difference. Let's continue to educate ourselves and build environments where everyone, regardless of neurological differences, feels valued, included and supported.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: SELF REGULATION AND SELF MANAGEMENT

THEPSYCHOLOGY COUCH.COM

BY: TUMI MANANA BSOCSCI HONS STUDENT

'Emotional Intelligence' is the ability to accurately and efficiently notice, process, and control emotional information in oneself and others, and to use this knowledge to direct one's own and others' thoughts and actions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Unlike the intelligence quotient, emotional intelligence is a dynamic part of the psyche that comprises behavioural attributes that, when improved, can lead to a variety of positive outcomes, from increased success in the workplace to personal happiness and wellbeing. It can facilitate progress in both personal and professional contexts, making it a fundamental element. According to Salovey & Mayer (1990), regardless of IQ, those with greater EI generally do better in life than those with lower EI. Higher emotional intelligence is typically associated with more meaningful relationships, improved stress management in daily life, social competence, improved wellbeing, and optimal psychological functioning.

SELF-MANAGEMENT, SELF-REGULATION, AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

A significant element of having high emotional intelligence is being able to control and manage your emotions, inner resources, and yourself. Self-management - the ability to take control of your emotions and guide them towards your ideals and objectives (NeuroLaunch.com, 2024). Self regulation- The ability to control your feelings, desires, and behaviours (B, 2024). Self-regulation and self-management are intimately linked in the development of emotional intelligence. Self-regulation allows you to be able to respond wisely rather than impulsively (Grewal et al., 2006). For example, being calm during a heated dispute exhibits self-regulation. Self-management expands on this by channelling your emotions in productive ways to achieve your objectives, such as remaining motivated and adaptive under pressure.



Together, these abilities allow you to successfully control emotions, make better decisions, and sustain resilience, laying the groundwork for greater interpersonal connections and personal development.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in teamwork, communication, and effective leadership in work environments. By being aware of their wants and feelings, individuals with strong emotional intelligence are able to motivate and work well with others. Personal relationships benefit from emotional intelligence by boosting communication and developing deeper connections. Empathy (one of the foundations of emotional intelligence) enables people to perceive things from other people's viewpoints, fostering mutual understanding and trust. If you are frustrated at work (self-regulation), you may acknowledge your emotions without allowing them to take control of you. Then you use that energy to effectively solve problems or collaborate with others (self-management).

Creating A Healthy Workplace Culture Where People Thrive

By Cassie Quiterres, BA(Hons) Psychology Graduate

A healthy workplace culture includes various elements that promote a collaborative and efficient work environment. It isn't just a "nice-to-have", it's the heartbeat of a thriving team. It's what turns a group of employees into a connected, motivated, and purpose-driven community. In today's fast-paced world, where burnout is high and engagement can be low, fostering a culture where people feel valued, heard, and supported is more important than ever. Studies have demonstrated that a positive workplace culture results in higher employee loyalty, improved job performance, and reduced stress (Norman, 2024).

Cultivating a healthy workplace culture involves several key elements, including psychological safety, inclusivity and diversity, recognition and growth opportunities, as well as strong collaboration and teamwork, among others (Radu, 2023).

Psychological safety refers to how safe and comfortable employees feel sharing their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fearing criticism, retaliation, or negative consequences. (Ghaleb, 2024). Teams perform best when individuals feel safe to speak up without fear of judgement or backlash. A healthy workplace invites open dialogue, encourages questions, and celebrates diverse thinking.



If you get the culture right, most of the other stuff will just take care of itself.

- Tony Hsieh

Incorporating diversity and inclusion into the organisational culture creates a more dynamic and innovative workplace. Diverse teams bring different perspectives and ideas, enriching problem-solving and decision-making processes (Ghaleb, 2024). A healthy workplace that fosters an inclusive culture experiences higher employee morale and a lower turnover of staff. Employees feel valued and respected, regardless of their backgrounds or past experiences.

Recognising and rewarding employee contributions, whether formal or informal, is a key aspect. Consistent appreciation and acknowledgement of their efforts help strengthen a positive culture. Celebrating achievements boosts motivation and improves employee satisfaction and well-being (Radu, 2023). Lastly, promoting collaboration and building strong teamwork is vital. Employees should feel integrated into a cohesive and supportive team. Research shows that managers who practise transformational leadership actively encourage and cultivate collaboration and teamwork (Radu, 2023).



These elements collectively play a role in creating a thriving workplace where employees are motivated, engaged, and aligned with the organisation's mission and purpose. It is more likely individuals will go the extra mile to exceed expectations simply because the culture is healthy, positive, and reflects the key aspects fostering a healthy workplace mentioned above.

A healthy workplace culture doesn't happen by chance. It's built, nurtured, and lived daily. Whether you're a leader or a team member, you have the power to influence the environment around you. Start small by listening more, appreciate loudly, and lead with empathy. When people feel valued, they do great work and that's a win for everyone.

Referencing:

Ghaleb, B. D. S. (2024). The importance of organizational culture for business success. *Jurnal Riset Multidisiplin Dan Inovasi Teknologi*, 2(03), 727–735. <https://doi.org/10.59653/jimat.v2i03.1098>

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Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Reducing the Stigma

Likeleli Mokoena, Master of Arts (with specialisation in South African Sign Language) Graduate

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in human brain function, including conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and other cognitive differences. While these variations offer unique strengths, neurodivergent individuals often face challenges in traditional workplace environments (Rosqvist, Chown & Stenning, 2020). Despite growing awareness, many organisations continue to struggle with implementing inclusive practices that accommodate neurodiverse employees, leading to stigmatisation and limited opportunities (Burrell et al., 2025). Addressing these barriers is crucial for fostering a more equitable and innovative workforce.



Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent Individuals

1. Workplace Bias and Discrimination

Many neurodivergent employees face hiring and promotion biases due to common misconceptions about their abilities. Traditional recruitment methods, such as structured interviews, may disadvantage individuals with conditions like ASD, who may struggle with eye contact or social norms (Santuzzi et al., 2014). Employers often misinterpret these differences as a lack of competence or leadership potential, reinforcing workplace inequities.

2. Sensory Overload and Environmental Barriers

Neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with ASD, can experience sensory sensitivities that make traditional office spaces overwhelming (Verywell Health, 2024). Factors like bright lights, background noise, and constant interruptions can reduce productivity and well-being. A lack of awareness and accommodations in workplace design further exacerbate these challenges (Bruyère & Colella, 2022).

3. Social and Communication Differences

Social interactions in the workplace can be challenging for neurodivergent employees, especially in environments that emphasise teamwork and networking (Fattoracci & Wang, 2024). Many neurodivergent individuals process information differently and may struggle with indirect communication, sarcasm, or unspoken workplace norms. Without proper training, managers and colleagues may misinterpret these differences, leading to social isolation or exclusion.

Strategies for Inclusive Work Environments



1. Adapting Recruitment and Hiring Practices

Organisations can make hiring processes more inclusive by offering alternative interview formats, such as practical work trials or structured questionnaires. Providing clear job descriptions with defined expectations can also help neurodivergent candidates better assess their fit for a role (Bruno & Routh, 2024).

2. Creating Sensory-Friendly Workspaces

Flexible workplace policies, such as remote work options, noise-canceling headphones, or quiet spaces can accommodate neurodivergent employees' sensory needs (Cambridge, 2024). Adjusting lighting, seating arrangements, and break schedules can significantly enhance comfort and productivity.

3. Implementing Neurodiversity Training

Educating employees on neurodiversity fosters an inclusive culture and reduces stigma. Training sessions should emphasise understanding different communication styles, recognising strengths, and addressing unconscious biases (Rosqvist et al., 2020). Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can also provide a safe space for neurodivergent employees to share experiences and advocate for necessary changes.

4. Offering Reasonable Accommodations

Employers should proactively offer accommodations tailored to neurodivergent employees' needs. These may include flexible deadlines, structured task lists, or mentorship programs. Creating a culture where disclosure is met with support rather than discrimination is essential.

Benefits of Embracing Neurodiversity



1. Increased Innovation and Problem-Solving

Neurodivergent employees often excel in areas such as pattern recognition, logical reasoning, and creativity (Rosqvist et al., 2020). Companies like Microsoft and SAP have implemented neurodiversity hiring programs that leverage these strengths, leading to significant advancements in technology and business strategy (Financial Times, 2024).

2. Enhanced Employee Retention and Engagement

Workplaces that prioritise inclusion report higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates among neurodivergent employees (Burrell et al., 2025). A supportive environment enables individuals to perform at their best, benefiting both the employee and the organisation.

3. A More Diverse and Equitable Workforce

Diversity initiatives that include neurodivergent individuals contribute to a more dynamic and representative workforce. Emphasising inclusion aligns with corporate social responsibility goals and strengthens employer branding in competitive job markets (Santuzzi et al., 2014).

Breaking the stigma surrounding neurodiversity in the workplace requires intentional changes in hiring practices, work environments, and corporate culture. By fostering inclusivity, organisations can unlock the full potential of neurodivergent employees, driving innovation and equity in the modern workforce. Embracing neurodiversity is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage for forward-thinking businesses.

The Power of Reading

AND COMMUNITY

Reading has long been celebrated as a cornerstone of personal growth, knowledge acquisition, and mental well-being. When paired with the social and intellectual engagement of a book club, the benefits multiply, transforming a solitary habit into a vibrant, communal experience.

The Transformative Power of Reading

Immersing yourself in a book offers a mental escape from daily stress, providing relaxation and even reducing anxiety, it exercises the brain, stimulating mental activity and helps keep the mind sharp. It hones your own writing abilities and fosters critical thinking skills. Books also offer endless entertainment and inspiration, often at little or no cost.

The Unique Benefits of Book Clubs

While reading is often a solo activity, joining a book club can transform it into a journey shared with people from many different backgrounds.



"A good book is a best friend, and a book club is a community of shared stories and laughter" - Unknown

This fosters a space for people to share their thoughts on their favourite books and be met with perspectives which can challenge their own assumptions, deepen their understanding and broaden their worldviews, incorporating the spirit of lifelong learning. These conversations enable readers to not only curl up in a book but create opportunities to socialise as they motivate one another to continue reading and learn from each other, and in an age where people struggle with loneliness, book clubs are a meaningful source of friendship, networking and community.

In our effort to create and grow a community with a shared interest for reading, we have created a new page for our book club. We will be sharing our current reads and weekly discussions on there, so if you would like to join us as we unpack this month's read, follow us. All details will be shared there.



Follow our book club page on Instagram using the link below:

https://www.instagram.com/thecouchbookclub?igsh=NXBpdWQ3dHNrbWdv&utm_source=qr

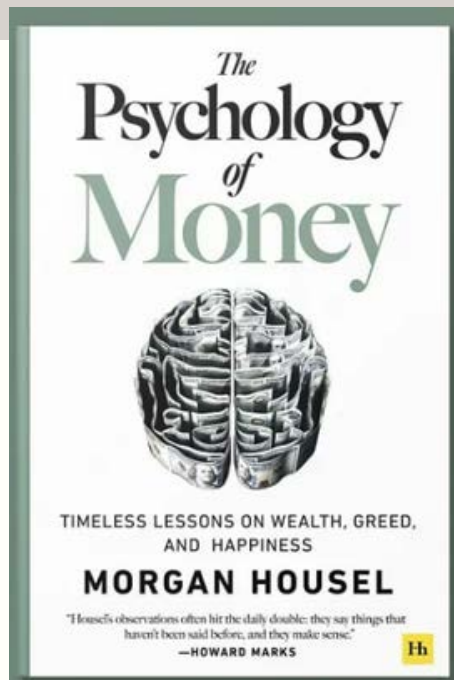
**KHANYISILE MSIBI
SACAP BSYCH STUDENT**

Our Next Book Club Book!

stay tuned for
discussions
by *Yumna Zubi*
as we begin to unpack
the psychology of
money.



Clinical Psychologist, CEO
& Founder of The Couch



Reflection Questions :

How did your
upbringing influence
your view of money?

What's one 'crazy'
financial move you've
made that paid off?

Do you think most
people make rational
or emotional decisions
about money? Why?

REWRITE YOUR
FINANCIAL STORY
THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY,
SOCIOLOGY, AND
SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Follow our book club page on
Instagram using the link
below:

[https://www.instagram.com/thecouchbookclub?](https://www.instagram.com/thecouchbookclub?igsh=NXBpdWQ3dHNrbWdv&utm_source=qr)
[igsh=NXBpdWQ3dHNrbWdv&utm_sourc](https://www.instagram.com/thecouchbookclub?igsh=NXBpdWQ3dHNrbWdv&utm_source=qr)
[e=qr](https://www.instagram.com/thecouchbookclub?igsh=NXBpdWQ3dHNrbWdv&utm_source=qr)

Thank you for being a part of our Couch Community. Stay tuned for our next newsletter - the May 2025 edition of the Psychology Couch Newsletter.

Until next time, as always, our wish for you is to heal, learn, and grow.

Get involved and stay in touch via our social media platforms:

 @the_psychology_couch	 @The Psychology Couch	 The Couch	 @The Couch .(Practice of Psychology and Psychiatry).
 @the_psychology_couch	 011 234 0741	 admin@thepsychologycouch.com	 www.thepsychologycouch.com

