

Page 2: Personal Experience

Q6

What does being neurodivergent mean to you?

Being neurodivergent means to me that I might be different from the standard of what is expected mentally from people of my age stereotype, and it means I struggle or excel in different topics. It means I'm overly enthusiastic about some things or that I'm incredibly tired and bored by others. I love being neurodivergent, it makes me who I am, regardless of how much I struggle because of it.

Q7

How does your neurodivergence impact or intersect with other aspects of your identity? E.g. your gender, sexuality, race, location, experience as a parent etc.

My neurodivergence and particularly my autism makes me incredibly honest. I hate lying and I rarely do it, and because of this every aspect of my identity is ten times more obvious. I love being female, and I love being pansexual, and even if those parts of my identity might change or shift as I discover more of myself when I'm older, I still know who I am now and I show that and express that.

Q8

What's something you wish more people understood about your experience?

I wish people understood that there's good parts about being autistic, and I wish they also understood that when there's bad parts, it's seriously not just bad, it's horrific. It might just be my experience, but I've had autistic burnout for almost three years straight now, and it's so incredibly difficult to do anything at all. I'm already a sensitive person, so it's insanely overwhelming, and I've literally spent months and months at a time in my bed because I didn't feel like I could move. And when I don't feel like I can do something, it's so so so difficult to get through. My mind is so all or nothing that as soon as something goes wrong I give up. It impacts everything in my life- I don't see anyone, I barely talk to people, and unless I have a support worker helping me I pretty much do nothing. It's really really hard, and I need a lot of help to manage things. And while a lot of that is me, I know for a fact that my autism and adhd and neurodivergence makes it worse because I'm not the only person who does this or goes through it, and I'm definitely not the only neurodivergent person who's done this or gone through this.

Q9

What is your favourite thing about being neurodivergent?

My favourite thing about being neurodivergent is definitely how passionate I am about my interests. They make me so happy, and I don't need to try to get better at them

because in the end I enjoy it so much that I just do it all the time regardless. For example, fashion. I've been particular and specific about everything I wear since I was like four or something ridiculous, and I still absolutely adore it. Styling and design also really is a part of me that I was born with, and to be honest, the best way to explain that is like my little pony. They're all born with certain specific skills and passions that they discover when they're little and they continue to study and grow their talent in that field for as long as they live. Neurodivergent interests are exactly the same, and I love that because it's like we're born with magic powers or something.

Page 3: The Broader Environment

Q10

What challenges have you faced in accessing support? What supports have been most helpful?

I've been incredibly lucky in the way that I've had a ridiculous amount of support for my mental health since I was thirteen. I haven't had a huge amount of struggles or problems with accessing support such as therapy, but I do know that others do and that there aren't enough psychologists or support workers in Tasmania in the first place, which is awful. If I didn't get the help I needed I would've been in a very dark place mentally and honestly I don't know if I would've been able to handle everything I'm going through. It's crucial that support to neurodivergent people and neurotypical people too is possibly and easy to access and afford, because not getting or having the support that you need as a person is one of the big reasons people give up.

Q11

How have political changes (e.g., Autism Tasmania closing, NDIS reforms) affected you or made you feel?

To be honest, I'm not sure if it's because of my age or just because I'm not aware of anything outside of my bedroom but I had no idea that something called Autism Tasmania even existed. I don't really think I know enough about these things to speak on it.

Page 4: Looking Ahead

Q12

What would an ideal Tasmania look like for neurodivergent people?

I think ideally Tasmania would have more representation in general of neurodiversity, because we're everywhere regardless. I think it's important that people recognise everyone who is different from stereotypes and what they expect in a person. I also think that as I mentioned before, there isn't enough support for neurodivergent people who are struggling here or anywhere in the world. Just because I got lucky and managed to

receive what it is that I needed doesn't mean whatsoever that it's like for everyone, because it's not. The reality is that being both neurodivergent and healthy is expensive and difficult to manage and maintain. Health is difficult to maintain regardless of who you are, but I'd say it's almost impossible for neurodivergent people.

Q13

How should we be included in decision-making?

I think obviously in regards to healthcare we need to be seen and heard and considered, but something I don't see mentioned enough is how difficult it is for younger neurodivergents to get through school. As someone who is supposed to be going through school right now and who is neurodivergent, I got so exhausted and stressed in high schools that I've been to three different ones now and I've still stopped going entirely. Even in primary school I masked without knowing it up until I was eleven when I broke down because I couldn't hide how many panic attacks I was having every day anymore. The school system all around the world is so ridiculously old fashioned and close minded that I could honestly rant about it for hours because it makes me so angry. It's ridiculous, the school system ruined any chance I had of having a normal life throughout my teens. There's a reason so many of us are either closed off or dependant on our friends or parents. It's because the place we spend majority of our waking life at is terrifying, and it needs to be fixed. On another note, I don't see disabilities in general ever represented, particularly in politics, which obviously needs to be fixed too, that's ridiculous. Basically, we have a lot and a lot to work on as a society.

Q14

What is one thing you would like to see happen in the next month?

I'll be honest, there's a LOT that I'd like to see change that could happen in a month. As I mentioned before, representation of actual neurodivergence is pretty rare and I think it's important that it's shown that we're perfectly normal and that we'd have perfectly normal lives if the society we actually live in wasn't specifically built against anyone who isn't straight, white, neurotypical, cis-gendered and male, which is a pretty small amount of the population. It's also important that in representation, it's done properly (which isn't very difficult), and also is acted on. There's no point sticking rainbow infinity symbols on a poster if you don't give us the same respect as everyone else. It's the same with all minorities, there's no point putting one singular post on social media every year that's about black history month or pride month if you don't give everyone basic human rights and respect.

Q15

What is one thing you would like to see happen in the next year?

Same thing that I mentioned before, I want to see politics more about minorities rights and I want to see governments using what they say as something to show what they're doing, not just what they're potentially thinking. I know that's pretty generic, but there's a lot to work on and to change.