



Unleashing Potential

Applying a Neurodiversity Lens to Coaching

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Introductions

Who are you?
Who is this dog?



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Introductions

Who are you?
Who is this dog?
Who am I?



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Objectives

- 1 Define neurodiversity and identify common physiological and functional differences seen in neurodiverse populations.
- 2 Explain the relationship between interests and strengths in and their impact on brain wiring.
- 3 Describe potential challenges in a coaching partnership with a neurodivergent client.
- 4 Identify four types of strengths that support neurodivergent clients and demonstrate integrating the strengths and ICF competencies to help clients move forward.



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Neurodiversity

- 1990s by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, in reference to people with Autism
- Broadened to include ADHD, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, and other learning disabilities



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Neurodiversity

- "...the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways
- there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving
- differences are not viewed as deficits"

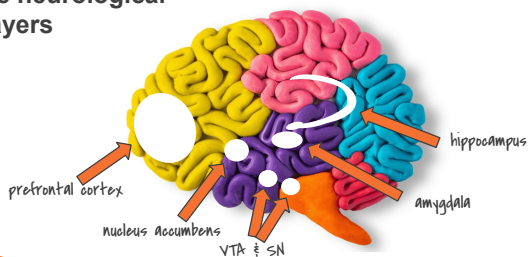


Nicole Baumer, MD, MEd, Julia Frueh, MD, Harvard Medical School (2021)



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The neurological players



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Variations in physiology

Differences in dopamine pathways result in:

- Interest-based brain vs importance based brain (Dodson)
- Situational variability
- Differences in the reward center of the brain
- DMN and TPN
- Reduced grey matter in area of the brain that connects information areas that controls cognitive functions, including memory.

Results in executive functioning challenges
Physiological, not behavioral....can't vs won't



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Executive Functions



"The executive functions are a set of processes that all have to do with *managing oneself* and one's *resources* in order to *achieve a goal*."

Cooper-Kahn & Dietzel, 2008



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3 STEPS to address coaching challenges:




Mindset + Knowledge = Neurodiversity Lens



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Common barriers in the coaching partnership



The barriers are *not* about the client.

A "challenging client" is one who challenges the *coach's* mindset and skills.


The challenges:

- Limited understanding of competencies
- Unconscious biases - individual and cultural
- Lack of accurate information and awareness
- Misinterpretation of neurodivergent traits

Consequences:

- Ineffective, if not detrimental services from well-intentioned coaches
- Lack of access to coaching

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4 Types of Strengths




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Strengths ignite INTEREST



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Interest fuels
IGNITION

Use Curiosity
to explore new
walking trails

Use Flexibility
to try a new
sport: Pickleball!

Use Perspective
to think about
"exercise" as
"play"

Use Draviny
to try a new
workout
challenge

Use Visual
Processing
with a new
yoga video

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Strengths Toolbox

- Strengths-Integrated Approach (not optional)
- Practical tool for identifying and leveraging strengths
- Increases client self-awareness, confidence, and self-efficacy
- Client-driven strategies
- Work *with* brain wiring

Strengths Toolbox

Character Strengths
What are?

Executive Function Strengths
How do they drive?

Processing Modality Strengths
How do they enhance and challenge?

Performance Strengths
What do we see?

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Strengths Toolbox

Character Strengths
What are?

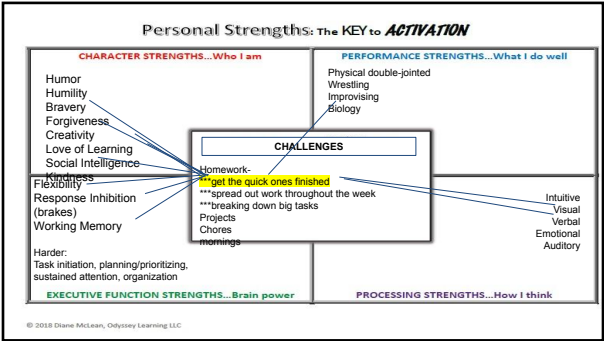
Executive Function Strengths
How do they drive?

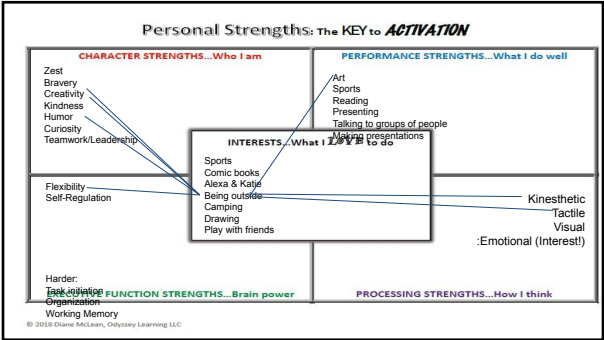
Processing Modality Strengths
How do they enhance and challenge?

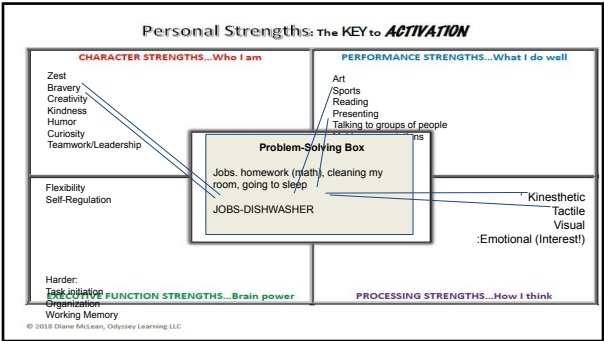
Performance Strengths
What do we see?

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- ICF Competencies
- PAAC Essentials



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- Set aside preconceptions about neurodivergence; shift perspective of challenging clients using neurodiversity lens.
- Listen for neurodivergent traits. Focus on ONE until it is integrated into your lens.
- Acknowledge clients' strengths and successes.
- All people do well when they can. (*Ross Greene*) When they can't, create scaffolds.
- Don't be afraid to make accommodations to meet your client where they are.
- Keep expanding your knowledge through research-based sources expanding your mindset, uncovering and eliminating biases.
- Advocate, speak out against discriminating practices, be a part of a cultural shift.



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Contact and Resources



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For more in-depth information
about the Strengths Toolbox



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