

There were plenty of hurdles to overcome to reach the point of diagnosis. Having made that progress, it drove me to start sharing my experience and talking about my neurodivergent experience: explaining how it feels, the things that can't be defined or measured so aren't covered in the diagnostic process.

I'm very careful about the wording I use on my LinkedIn profile. I like the word "neurodivergent": it's intentionally broad. Adding this to my profile starts conversations without people making assumptions about me. If I described myself with the label "ADHD", many people will jump to conclusions based on what they know about ADHD, whereas actually they don't know about my ADHD.

For example, I often find it difficult to follow social interactions, and I really struggle with sensory overload. Both of these are more commonly linked to autism. Pre-diagnosis, I assumed I was socially inept – I felt like the outsider. I had no idea I was experiencing sensory overload until I investigated it, yet with hindsight, I remember sitting on a train with headphones on without any music - I was trying desperately to block out sounds. In so many aspects of my life, I was just functioning, burying emotions to keep going. Apparently successful on the outside, yet inside, feeling isolated and confused.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN CONSCIOUSLY AWARE OF YOUR NEURODIVERSITY?

I had no idea before I was formally diagnosed. I remember searching online "reading disability not dyslexia." I struggled to absorb information while reading, I could read the words so I knew it wasn't dyslexia, but I couldn't absorb and combine the meaning. That was the only clue I had. Everything else I noticed pre-diagnosis, you could sum up as a character flaw – missing trains, interrupting people, losing control of my inbox, leaving deadlines until the last minute. Undiagnosed ADHD can trigger a huge amount of shame because it looks as though you're just not trying hard enough.

DO YOU THINK NEURODIVERSITY HAS HAD AN IMPACT ON YOUR CAREER, AND IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

You could say I have an ADHD CV - I changed jobs every year, in fact my current role is the longest role I've ever had. I've always looked for a new challenge, but some hiring managers are sceptical of so much change. Getting a diagnosis means I can understand my brain, which makes it possible to stretch myself in new ways without changing role so frequently.

I've had jobs that have played to my strengths and others that haven't. It's not just the jobs themselves - the culture of the organisation and line management are both massively important. The more I know about myself, the more I can make an informed decision when choosing a job to put myself in the best position to succeed.

There are many ways employers can be neuroinclusive – these things often benefit everyone. For example, easy to navigate website and application form, a clear corporate message and plan, succinct job descriptions, precise application instructions. Neurodivergent candidates will struggle more if those things aren't in place.