Mika

21 years old, non-binary, single
Software developer

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Evaluating and planning time and own resources

> *"I may not be good at managing time, but I'm great at making the most of every minute"*

Short description of Mika:

Mika is an open, creative person, likes socialising and is very committed. Mika is direct, honest and unconventional, appears unstructured and disorganised, high sensitivity to stimuli as a stress symptom, time management biggest challenge, analytical thinking.

About me

- ADHD (11 years) and ASD (19 years), GdB of 30 (with equalisation)
- open to new things, needs variety to avoid boredom
- Humorous and authentic
- Impulsive and enthusiastic
- direct and honest communication is often misunderstood
- Hyperfocus with high work efficiency and states of exhaustion
- Sensitive to stress and jumpy

Devolution

- **School:** good performance, good compensation, **graduation:** Baccalaureate
- **Studies:** Informatics; challenges in organisation and time management overwhelming
- **Dropout** after 2 years due to depression
- **Education:** Informatics at the vocational training centre; better framework conditions
- **For 3 months, permanent position in software development (full-time)**

Working environment

- Small office, few passages, space with a view of the door
- little to no customer contact
- no obligation to make phone calls
- option to work from home
- flexible working hours according to performance
- independent working with own structures and working methods
- understanding, appreciative and sensitised colleagues

Challenges in the job

Time and task management:
- Manage work time effectively
- Set and keep priorities

Concentration and stress management:
- Motivation for uninteresting tasks, avoid distraction
- frequent absences due to overwork
- high sensitivity to stimuli and concentration problems due to stress

Communication and social interaction:
- Expressing criticism in a socially appropriate way
- Recognising people
- Participation in meetings/groups

Help me

- **Autostimulation/stimming** to calm down or promote concentration
- **Transparency:** clear, unambiguous, comprehensible communication and rules
- **Reminder** to recognise and categorise people
- **Distraction-free environment** and prioritisation of tasks
- **Visual markers** in the field of vision as a reminder for current tasks
- **Honest feedback** e.g. about work performance, misunderstandings. e.g. about work performance, misunderstandings, perceived inappropriate behaviour

Tools & aids

- Calendar, timer
- **Outlook calendar:** Visualise appointments and tasks, reminder
- **Smartphone:** Reminder, calendar, countdown, watch lists
- **Voice assistant** and **Smartwatch** for mobile, instant use
- **Headphones with music:** rare use in the office, too much shielding

Mika

21 years old, non-binary, single
Software developer

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Evaluating and planning time and own resources

Hello. I am Mika!

Hello, I'm Mika, 21 years young, single, live in a shared flat with a good friend and was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 11, which didn't surprise anyone around me. I was then diagnosed with autism at the age of 19, whereupon I was given a GdB of 30.

I am an open, creative person, like social contact, have a wide range of interests and am highly committed and have a good sense of humour. However, I also have phases in which I am less productive, which frustrates me a lot. I am honest and direct, which some people take as arrogance or personal criticism. At school, I stood out because I was disorganised and easily distracted and often caused offence. Boredom is unbearable for me, which is why I find it difficult to stick to fixed structures and routines - I need variety in order to realise my (full) potential. I have great difficulty recognising people, remembering conversations with them or assigning them a name - this has often put me in awkward situations, which I face authentically with humour and openness. My forgetfulness and clumsiness often make me look clumsy, I often overlook and look for things that I just had in my hand and forget what I was about to do. I find it difficult to keep my focus and concentration in balance. I can often either concentrate too little on one thing or so much that I forget everything else around me - including basic needs such as eating, sleeping and going to the toilet. I'm easily distracted by all the stimuli, especially when I'm doing uninteresting tasks. On the other hand, I have exceptional analytical thinking skills and can quickly grasp relationships and transfer them to other areas - this makes me ideal for working in IT, where I also benefit from my verbal fluency and eloquence. I rarely had any technical problems, it's more a case of not being able to assess my own resources, realising stress too late and often pushing myself beyond my limits.

I was able to compensate sufficiently for the associated challenges at school up to my A-levels. During my studies, I had more difficulty concentrating, organising myself and staying focused in written exams.

In exams, I often got stuck on one task and had problems switching to the next task if I couldn't solve the previous one satisfactorily. Under stress, I develop strong inner tensions and react much more sensitively to stimuli, so that sometimes even the breathing of the person sitting next to me becomes almost unbearable. I then sometimes react impulsively and can no longer control myself appropriately, so that I sometimes come across as very brash and others feel attacked.

When I was studying computer science, I overworked myself so much that I developed depression and dropped out. The IT training programme at a vocational training centre offered me better conditions.

I've been working in software development for three months now. The flexible flexitime arrangements and trust-based working hours allow me to adapt my working hours to my uneven performance. Here I work in a fixed team that meets from time to time while the tasks are worked on independently. As a "newcomer", I am still forgiven for being unpunctual. Tasks or plans are often discussed in the corridor and distributed by shouting, which leaves me little room for questions and I have to memorise them until I can note them down in a tool in the office - I have forgotten this several times. I prefer to complete tasks that require a high level of concentration from home, in a quieter environment. I work very efficiently there, but I tend to overwork myself in hyperfocus until I'm completely exhausted without taking a break. Afterwards, I am very exhausted and need long recovery periods. This results in a fluctuating performance level and frequent sick days or periods of low performance.

Team communication occasionally leads to misunderstandings and meetings can cause me a lot of stress, especially when spontaneous reactions are required. I never know exactly when it's appropriate to speak up and when someone is just taking a short break, so I often interrupt people or don't let them finish. For the first 6 months of my employment, I have a personal mentor who supports me, after that I have to deal with most things on my own.

Mika

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Software developer

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Evaluating and planning time and own resources

Effects of autism in the workplace

Strengths and potentials

Eloquence and directness: clear, honest communication without hidden messages
Humour: confronting unpleasant social situations with humour
Pragmatism: decisions and arguments are based on facts
Prediction: analytical approach promotes impact assessment; very good programming performance

Communication and social interaction

Visual imagination: good representation of visual relationships and overviews
Hiding the environment: strong concentration and high performance in hyperfocus, even in unfavourable conditions
Pattern recognition: quick detection and recognition of errors, e.g. spelling, errors in source code

Stimuli: perception and processing

High motivation for interesting tasks that are perceived as important
Quick overview especially possible with visual aids, focus on the big picture, less on details
Individual/unconventional way of working brings new solutions and ideas

Task and time management

Deficits and risks

Insecurity in meetings/groups: context-dependent unwritten social rules not intuitive (interrupting, impatience when making excuses, addressing superiors inappropriately)
Directness: misinterpretations, direct (unsolicited) criticism often perceived as arrogant, personal attack; observance of social positions
Spontaneous reaction: spontaneous reaction under pressure (e.g. in meetings) challenging

Face blindness: Recognising and classifying familiar people, particularly difficult in unexpected situations
Increased sensitivity to stimuli during stress: Distraction and tension caused by noises increases with stress levels
Easily distracted by uninteresting tasks due to any stimuli
Time blindness: Distorted perception of time

Impulsive commitment: too many projects and tasks at once, many open projects
Procrastination: procrastinating or taking on uninteresting tasks again and again until the pressure is too great (causes stress)
Unrealistic estimation of time for tasks
Maintaining focus (concentration) or switching in hyperfocus difficult - overwork, lack of breaks

Patrice

53 years old, male, married
Tax clerk

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Conversation and work organisation

"If order is half the battle, then I prefer the other half"

Short description of Patrice:

Patrice impresses with his open manner and dry sense of humour. He can also quickly familiarise himself with complex matters. His special speaking style makes him a distinctive character in every conversation.

About me

- ADHD and ASD (46 years), GdB of 50
- started working 32 years ago
- open and humorous towards people I know
- chaotic when dealing with forms, notes and other (work) materials
- quickly overwhelmed in the presence of many people
- Misunderstandings of Misinterpretation of facial expressions and gestures or own pronunciation (monotony, volume)

Devolution

- **School:** good performance, good compensation, **graduation:** Baccalaureate
- **Training:** Tax clerk
- **Career:** Frequent job changes due to organisational and communication challenges before diagnosis
- **Professional time-out due to depression 7 years ago**
- **For 5 years permanently employed in a small family business (part-time)**

Working environment

- Small office with few employees
- Support with organisation through suitable tools
- sensitised staff
- little to no customer contact

Challenges in the job

Time and task management:
- Taking breaks
- Keeping order
- Completing tasks

Concentration and stress management:
- High sensitivity to stimuli and concentration problems in situations with many people

Communication and social interaction:
- Maintain eye contact with interlocutor:in
- Recognising emotions
- Unstressed pronunciation
- Regulation of own conversation volume
- Recognising people

Help me

- **Open communication** regarding tasks
- **Tasks and feedback**
- **Recognition aids for recognising people**
- **Closing off and withdrawing from overburdened environments**
- **Structures regarding** the sequence of tasks as well as for work processes. the sequence of tasks and for work equipment
- **Familiar environments** with familiar people

Tools & aids

- **Headphones** for masking ambient noise
- **Labelling** of cabinets and shelves for work equipment
- **Labour notes** with temporary notes
- **Outlook calendar** to note deadlines

Patrice

53 years old, male, married
Tax clerk

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Conversation and work organisation

Hello. I am Patrice!

Hello everyone, my name is Patrice I'm 53 years old and I'm happy to tell you my story today. I am a qualified tax clerk and currently employed. I am married, have an adult child and live alone. Why do I live alone? I have many strengths and weaknesses and appreciate my partner, just as she appreciates me. Nevertheless, we have realised that separate flats, where we can retreat after stressful days, suit us better.

In my nature, I am someone who likes to be chaotic, but at the same time open and humorous. I have a deep curiosity for the world, love to experiment and am active in many artistic fields. As a musician in a band, I can live out my creative side and share my passion for music. I also like to be open with people I know and always try to approach others with compassion and goodwill.

However, I also have a number of diagnoses that affect my life in many ways. At the age of 46, I was diagnosed with ADHD and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These diagnoses have helped me to better understand some of my idiosyncrasies and challenges and also to get a better handle on difficulties, for example in my everyday working life, and I have now been permanently employed for 5 years.

In my job, some of these autism symptoms are particularly evident. I have an unstressed, unemotional pronunciation and I find it difficult to maintain eye contact during a conversation. This can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and has always been the reason why I've been a bit of a pain in the arse and not got on well with colleagues. I also find it difficult to remember agreements and I tend to interrupt tasks frequently and switch back and forth between different tasks.

But in the midst of these difficulties, I have developed a particular strength - the ability to meticulously and accurately enter invoices and receipts into the software, which is greatly appreciated by my colleagues. Although I give the impression of having a chaotic working style, I am extremely accurate and conscientious in my work, as long as I can find all the receipts. In addition, I am now well integrated into the company. The company itself is not large and very informal, which suits me. I have also been given the opportunity to sit in a small office with just one colleague. Our boss also allows me to work with headphones to minimise acoustic distractions.

Another challenge is large crowds and loud noises due to my sensory integration disorder. I therefore avoid using public transport as the overstimulation is exhausting. Reading faces in crowds also causes me difficulties and requires a lot of concentration. Here, too, the family environment in my company suits me very well, even if this makes professional development difficult. This is mainly because communication is easier for me when I'm in familiar surroundings, whereas it's more challenging in unfamiliar situations. However, eye contact remains an issue that I have to keep practising; and I believe that interpreting facial expressions and gestures will continue to cost me a lot of energy in the future, no matter how much I practise.

Patrice

53 years old, male, married
Tax clerk

Diagnoses:
ADHD, autism, depression

Biggest challenge:
Conversation and work organisation

Effects of autism in the workplace

Strengths and potentials

Deficits and risks

Communication and social interaction

Humour: dry humour that particularly stands out due to its own pronunciation
Openness: also communicates challenges openly to familiar people

Misunderstandings: Both your own pronunciation (monotony/loudness) and the difficulty in interpreting facial expressions and gestures lead to misunderstandings
Social interaction: Maintain eye contact in conversation

Stimuli: perception and processing

Intuitive data analysis: Get along very well with the accounting software and detect errors

Facial blindness: Difficulty recognising and classifying familiar people
Increased sensitivity to stimuli: Avoidance of many people, distraction by auditory and visual stimuli

Task and time management

Willingness to perform: even for short-term tasks
Accuracy: completes important tasks conscientiously

Procrastination: frequent switching between irrelevant tasks
Organisation: takes too few breaks and thus overtaxes themselves
Organisation: has great difficulty keeping documents tidy
Time planning: forgets to keep the calendar tidy, especially for tasks that are not so relevant

Charlie

41 years old, female
Divorced, single parent, studying transport

Diagnosis:
Suspected autism, ADHD

Biggest challenge:
Creating and implementing structures, hyperfocus

> *"Even if chaos has its pitfalls, it is the birthplace of my best ideas"*

Kurzbeschreibung von Charlie:

Charlie is a dedicated but chaotic single mum with a passion for heritage railways who shows great flexibility and spontaneity in her work and personal life, but at the same time has challenges in time management, structuring her tasks and communication.

About me

- ADHD diagnosis (aged 13) and suspected diagnosis of ASD (aged 38), no GdB
- one child (aged 14), separated for 5 years and single parent
- Special interest in historical railways
- Somewhat chaotic and very spontaneous
- Not very talkative but cordial, sometimes too direct
- often get lost in details and then no longer see the big picture

Devolution

- **School:** Regular school with mixed results, **Graduation:** Baccalaureate
- **Studies:** Started studying physics and dropped out after many problems
- **Job:** changing minor jobs over 5 years
- **Child rearing:** Household and child rearing
- **Studies:** Resumed physics studies, then switched to traffic engineering due to internship

Working environment

- Favourite place to work is at home or in the library, where it's quiet
- Desk with pinboard as a (chaotic) hub
- Prefer personal communication, instead of chat and Zoom - avoids misunderstandings
- Time extension as compensation for disadvantages in exams (due to ADHD diagnosis)
- Avoidance of group work

Challenges in the job

Time and task management:
- Don't get lost in the details
- Write down appointments and tasks and keep your calendar up to date
- Keep appointments in very focussed phases

Concentration and stress management:
- Concentration in stressful situations
- No sense of exhaustion in hyperfocus

Communication and social interaction:
- often too direct, honest communication
- difficulty understanding irony
- Inattention
- Avoidance of small talk

Help me

- **Preparation for discussions**, especially for difficult and emotional topics
- **Transparency:**clear, unambiguous, comprehensible communication and rules
- **Reminders:** when I am reminded of appointments
- **Being able to design my own working environment** (chaos with a system)
- **Visual markers** in the field of vision as a reminder for current tasks
- **Honest feedback** e.g. about work performance and misunderstandings. e.g. about work performance, misunderstandings, perceived inappropriate behaviour

Tools & aids

- open to technical aids, tech-savvy
- forgets to open, use the aids, e.g. calendar, timer
- Testing different tools
- ANC headphones
- Calendar App
- Reminder App
- To-do lists (paper and app)

Charlie

41 years old, female
Divorced, single parent, studying transport

Diagnosis:
Suspected autism, ADHD

Biggest challenge:
Creating and implementing structures, hyperfocus

Hello. I am Charlie!

I'm Charlie, 41 years old, divorced and a single mum of a teenager. I was diagnosed with ADHD as a child, and a few years ago I was diagnosed with a suspected autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This journey of discovery has helped me develop strategies to cope with daily challenges. One of my greatest passions is historic railways, an interest that continues to inspire me.
Although I would describe myself as open and sociable, I often find navigating social situations challenging. Directness is one of my communication strengths, although it occasionally leads to misunderstandings. Irony and sarcasm usually escape me, which some interpret as naivety.

My educational path was a rollercoaster of emotions. After dropping out of a physics degree and working in various jobs, from electrical retail to cinema box office, I dedicated myself to bringing up children. The separation from my partner was a turning point that led me to seek therapeutic support and ultimately to ASD diagnostics.
A renewed attempt to study physics ended quickly when I realised that group work was a huge hurdle for me. My switch to transport engineering was a decision that combined my technical curiosity and my fascination for railways. Studying fulfils me, although balancing motherhood and studying is a daily challenge.

In addition to my studies, I earn my living by driving trams, a job that offers me unique insights into city life. My favourite places to study are my desk at home, surrounded by creative chaos, and the silence of the library when the hustle and bustle at home takes over.
For me, being deeply immersed in tasks means forgetting everything around me - time, exhaustion, even direct speech. This hyper-focus is both a curse and a blessing, as it drives me to be highly precise, but also leads to overwork and exhaustion.

My biggest challenge is and remains time management. Despite numerous attempts to bring order into my life with digital and analogue tools, my time management is often inadequate. Fortunately, I have a supportive circle of friends who help me to master everyday life and are an enrichment for my daughter and me.

Charlie

41 years old, female
Divorced, single parent, studying transport

Diagnosis:
Suspected autism, ADHD

Biggest challenge:
Creating and implementing structures, hyperfocus

Effects of autism in the workplace

Strengths and potentials

Deficits and risks

Communication and social interaction

Openness: open to new ideas and experiences, which can lead to enriching conversations and open up new perspectives in social interactions
Honesty: direct communication ensures clarity and avoids misunderstandings
Positive charisma: positive attitude and warm-hearted nature are likeable

Directness: often blurts things out, takes people by surprise and is sometimes perceived as rude as a result
Difficulty recognising irony and sarcasm: sometimes appears naive, overlooks subtle nuances in communication, which often leads to misunderstandings
Avoidance of small talk: makes it difficult to build social relationships

Stimuli: perception and processing

Hyperfocus: Can concentrate very well on a task and is then not so easily distracted

Exhaustion: hardly aware of own exhaustion in hyperfocus phases and exceeding own limits
Reduced perception of stimuli: especially in phases of high concentration; does not hear mobile phone ringing, does not react to being spoken to

Task and time management

Ability to hyperfocus: good results thanks to high accuracy and efficient processing
Creativity: unconventional approach to tasks leads to innovative solutions
Open-mindedness to technology: can quickly familiarise themselves with a wide range of tools

Difficulties with prioritisation and planning: gets lost in details, misses deadlines or does not complete projects
Inconsistent use of organisational aids: forgets to use aids (calendar, to-do list, ...) consistently
overestimating own capacities: unrealistic time estimation leads to stress and excessive demands

Toni

32 years old, male, in a relationship
Manager for logistics and forwarding services

Diagnosis:
Autism

Biggest challenge:
Overload due to sensory overload

"I love my family, even if it gets wild sometimes. What would I do without them? My work also fulfils me, but often pushes me to my limits. That's when I need to get out of the situation - preferably with trainers in the fresh air and switch off.

Short description of Toni:

Toni, 32, who has been autistic since childhood, needs clear structures and a calm environment in his logistics job to avoid sensory overload and maintain concentration. At the same time, he is open, social, balanced and relaxed.

About me

- ASS since childhood (4 years); GdB 30
- and father of two children
- adapted behaviour, prefers the familiar to the new
- socially open-minded, sociable and active
- optimistic and cheerful character
- confident, co-operative, compliant
- careful, orderly, reliable and planning
- emotionally relaxed, content, confident
- active in sports (jogging as a balance)

Devolution

- **School-leaving certificate:** Baccalaureate
- **Training:** In-company vocational training to become a logistics and forwarding services clerk
- incl. internships during training
- **For 2 years permanent position in logistics group (full-time)**

Working environment

- Office with several colleagues and a fixed workstation, also with high tables
- Possibility of retreat or quiet room
- Relaxation room
- fixed working hours and break times
- Mainly individual tasks, consultation with colleagues
- ANC headphones permitted at the workplace

Challenges in the job

Time and task management:
- Challenges due to deadline changes and task dependencies
- Task switching (multitasking)
- Task prioritisation

Concentration and stress management:
- Overloading of Conversations and noises
- Overloading with other stimuli (visual, olfactory)
- High workload as a stress factor

Communication and social interaction:
- direct communication preferred
- spontaneous communication on the job difficult

Help me

- **familiar environment** for social interaction
- sufficient preparation time for conversations
- leave overwhelming situations and move to a **quiet environment** or distract yourself with **outdoor sports**
- reduce collaboration with colleagues:inside to avoid **dependencies** that would make flexibility necessary
- **Support from collegues** in planning and prioritising work assignments
- to get into the **"flow"-state** in order to better block out distractions

Tools & aids

- ANC headphones
- sunglasses
- dark mode using a computer or smartphone

Toni

32 years old, male, in a relationship
Manager for logistics and forwarding services

Diagnosis:
Autism

Biggest challenge:
Overload due to sensory overload

Hello. I am Toni!

My name is Toni, I'm 32 years old and I've been working in a logistics company for two years. As someone who has lived with autism since childhood, I find my job challenging, especially because of the sensory overload that often prevails in an open-plan office. Nevertheless, I appreciate the routine and clear structures that my working day offers me. My day starts early to avoid the crowds of people who use public transport later on. The silence in the early morning is a blessing for me.

I put on my ANC headphones when I start work. They help me to block out the constant office noise and concentrate better. Preparing for my day takes a little more time than for my colleagues. I check my to-do list and priorities twice, as changes in plans and unpredictability can easily throw me off track.

I prefer direct communication with my colleagues, which prevents potential misunderstandings. However, spontaneous conversations or unannounced meetings are a big challenge for me. Today, for example, I was unexpectedly called into a meeting. The short preparation time and the need to react immediately put me under stress. Fortunately, the meeting was short and I was able to return to my quiet workplace afterwards.

My workload is often heavy, and the feeling of overload from too many conversations and ambient noise makes it difficult for me to concentrate. When I realise I'm getting close to overload, I often decide to take a break. A short run during my lunch break helps me to ground myself and relieve stress.

At the end of the working day, I take time to plan for the next day. This routine gives me a sense of security and predictability. After work, I look forward to coming home to my children and my partner. There I find the support and understanding I need to cope with the challenges of my everyday life.

Toni

32 years old, male, in a relationship
Manager for logistics and forwarding services

Diagnosis:
Autism

Biggest challenge:
Overload due to sensory overload

Effects of autism in the workplace

Strengths and potentials

Deficits and risks

Communication and social interaction

Attentiveness: can listen well and remembers explicit information precisely
Directness: prefers direct communication, which minimises misunderstandings
Sustainable: absorbs information fully, good for details in everyday working life

Open-mindedness: Difficulties with small talk, often walks straight in the door
Misunderstandings: Problems with facial expressions and gestures, doesn't recognise niceness or falseness
Meetings: Online conferences less suitable for important conversations, prefers face-to-face communication

Stimulus perception and stimulus processing

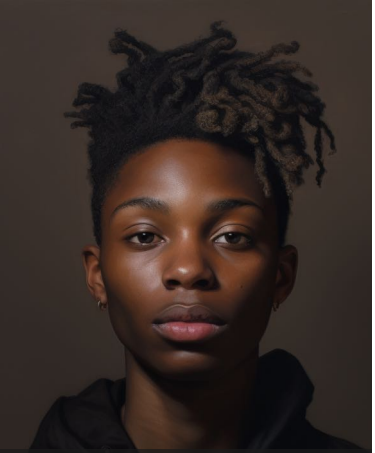
Focus: ANC headphones enable focus by blocking out unpleasant noises
Concentration: can block out even auditory stimuli during periods of high concentration
Open for aids: uses sunglasses and dark mode to minimise visual stimuli

Overload: due to multiple, overlapping stimuli such as music and conversations
Stimulus sensitivity: large crowds and public transport cause stress and avoidance
Distraction: olfactory stimuli such as perfume are highly distracting and disrupt concentration

Task and time management

Self-organisation: stays on top of tasks, asks people and tries to avoid dependencies
Detailed work: highly accurate at work, but often gets lost in details
Time planning: plans and prioritises work assignments effectively with the support of colleagues

Structure: has difficulty coping with changes to deadlines, needs precise planning and reliability
Focus: has problems with multitasking; is quickly distracted by new tasks
Planning: prioritisation is difficult, which affects time and task management



Lou

24 years, female
Currently looking for work, lives with parents

Diagnosis:
Autism since childhood, dyspraxia, depression, anxiety disorders

Biggest challenge:
Communication and social interaction

> *"You might not be able to tell by looking at me, but when everything around me goes quiet, that is the moment when my head cinema really starts to chatter"*

Short description of Lou:

Lou is a reserved and cautious person who is very reliable and good at planning. Despite her insecurity and tendency to communicate primarily non-verbally, she is characterised by her understanding, benevolence and compassion. Lou is creative, with a penchant for art and design, particularly 3D modelling. Her challenges lie in communication, processing sensory stimuli and social interaction.

About me

- ASD diagnosis since childhood, currently with a fading moderate depression
- no physical impairments, but sensory integration disorders and dyspraxia
- very structured, plans carefully and is deliberate in her actions
- tends to worry about her health and has difficulty reacting appropriately under stress

Devolution

- Successfully completed standard schooling with **secondary school leaving certificate**
- **Vocational preparation year** followed by **vocational training** in vocational rehabilitation
- Specialisation in **media design** with a focus on 3D modelling
- Experience with frequent job changes and short-term employment after training

Working environment

- prefers **quiet working environments**, such as their own home or the library
- difficulties with group meetings and initiating conversations
- Uses various **planning tools** for better organisation and scheduling

Challenges in the job

- **Communication:** Difficulty initiating conversations and direct communication that is sometimes offputting
- **Sensory stimuli:** Problems with ambient noise and large crowds
- **Structure:** Gets lost in details, has trouble multitasking and has difficulty coping with schedule changes

Help me

- **Personal support** from the environment, such as help getting up or travelling to the workplace
- **individualised work organisation** with breaks and **reduced working hours**
- Use of **ANC headphones** and **Dark Mode** on the computer for less distraction

Tools & aids

- **Open to technical aids**
- actively uses **planning tools**
- **prefers written communication**, e.g. email
- **ANC headphones** to block out stimuli
- relies on regular, calming activities to reduce stress

Lou

24 years, female
Currently looking for work, lives with parents

Diagnosis:
Autism since childhood, dyspraxia, depression, anxiety disorders

Biggest challenge:
Communication and social interaction

Hello. I am Lou!

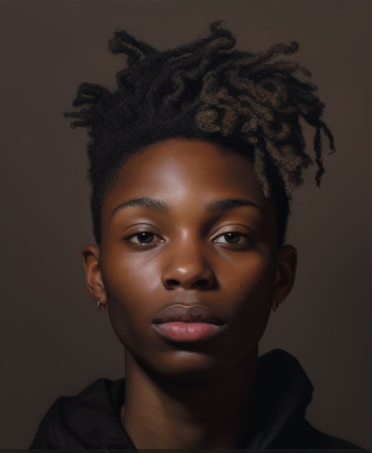
I am Lou, 24 years old, currently live with my parents and am looking for a new career path. I was diagnosed with autism as a child, which has shaped my life in many ways. This diagnosis has taught me to see and experience the world differently. I find my greatest refuge and joy in art, especially painting and design, where I can express my thoughts and feelings.

Despite my reserved and insecure nature, I am very organised and planful, which helps me to structure my days. However, communication can be a challenge for me. I often find it difficult to initiate conversations and prefer non-verbal ways of interacting. Group meetings and direct eye contact are particularly stressful for me, which sometimes leads to misunderstandings.

My educational path was characterised by constant learning and adapting. After finishing secondary school and a vocational preparation year, I completed an apprenticeship in vocational rehabilitation, specialising in media design with a focus on 3D modelling. However, finding a suitable job is proving difficult because even the job interview is a big hurdle for me.

The biggest challenges for me are processing sensory stimuli and time management. Loud noises, large crowds and sudden changes can be overwhelming and throw me off track. Despite using various aids such as ANC headphones and planning tools, I sometimes find it hard to stay on top of things and prioritise correctly.

Luckily, I have the support of my family and friends to help me cope with everyday life and find my place in society. Their patience and understanding are infinitely valuable to me and enable me to make my way despite the challenges.



Lou

24 years, female
Currently looking for work, lives with parents

Diagnosis:
Autism since childhood, dyspraxia, depression, anxiety disorders

Biggest challenge:
Communication and social interaction

Effects of autism in the workplace

Strengths and potentials

Deficits and risks

Communication and social interaction

Empathy: strong ability to show compassion and understanding
Written expression: preference for text-based communication can express themselves clearly and thoughtfully

Initiating conversations: Difficulty starting conversations can lead to isolation and misunderstandings
Group interactions: Discomfort in group situations, limited participation in social and professional activities
Nonverbal signals: Problems reading and sending nonverbal signals can lead to communication barriers

Stimuli: perception and processing

High sensitivity: keen perception of details in the environment
Adaptability: Ability to adapt through individual work design and tools such as ANC headphones
Focused creativity: Lou can maximise her creativity and concentration in quiet environments

Overexposure to environmental stimuli: difficulties in dealing with loud noises and large crowds
lack of concentration in multi-stimulus situations: inability to filter multiple sensory stimuli impairs the ability to work and learn
stimulus-related overload: high sensitivity sometimes leads to overload and thus to increased sick leave

Task and time management

Structuring: Tendency towards careful planning and organisation leads to an efficient way of working
Detail orientation: Focus on details enables high quality and accuracy
Reliability: Responsibility and reliability make Lou a trustworthy person in professional and personal contexts

Multitasking: Difficulties with simultaneous tasks can lead to delays and overload
Flexibility in changing plans: Problems adapting to spontaneous changes can increase stress and reduce adaptability
Prioritisation: Recognising implicit priorities and roles is challenging, which affects the effectiveness of task completion