NeuroSpice & life

THE QUIRKBOOK
- SEASON ONE -

Let's rewrite some labels.



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NeuroSpice & life

welcome

Hey friend,

We made this little book of reflection and rebellion with a whole lot of love (and probably too much coffee). Each page is a place to pause, scribble, and unstick the unfair labels that have followed you around — the ones that whisper lazy, weird, difficult, sensitive, stupid...

In Season 1 of The NeuroSpice & Life Podcast, we're calling out some of the biggest offenders — and shaking the dust off them. Because none of those words tell the real story of you. They're just outdated labels on a wildly complex, deeply human, and beautifully neurodiverse pantry of traits.

So grab your pen, your curiosity, and maybe a snack (because snacks make everything better). Use these pages to reflect on the stories behind each label, where they've stuck, and how you might swap them for something that actually fits.

Here's to peeling back old labels and letting your real flavour shine. ✨

— Hanna & Freya

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episodes 1 and 2

labels

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notes on *Labels*

I can choose my labels

reflecting on *Labels*

- **Labels are a normal part of the human experience:**
  - We have all been labelled and labelled others.
  - We use labels to make sense of what we don't understand so we can feel safer.
  - Categories provide comfort - it helps us find people 'like us' - a survival instinct.
- **Not all labels are bad:**
  - Some labels are helpful, some are harmful - some we give ourselves, some are assigned to us.
  - Assigned labels often stem from corrections and criticism.
  - Neurodivergent kids get significantly more criticisms than their neurotypical peers.
- **We are often not conscious of the labels we carry:**
  - These labels can form part of our identity over time they can become our 'why', reason or excuse.
  - When this happens they can limit us, shrink us and hold us back. They can make us feel less than.
- **We can choose what we do with the labels we have:**
  - But we don't have to keep them - we can choose to hold them up, look at them and check them for fact.
  - We can ask "If not this - what is true", we can explore them safely with curiosity and care.
  - We can rename them, we can reclaim them or return them to sender - the choice is ours.
  - Because we don't have to accept other people's explanations of our experience.
- **As we unmask - we can choose our labels. Ones that affirm and strengthen us - because we have had enough criticism.**

notes on *Labels*

We all carry labels

reframing *Labels*

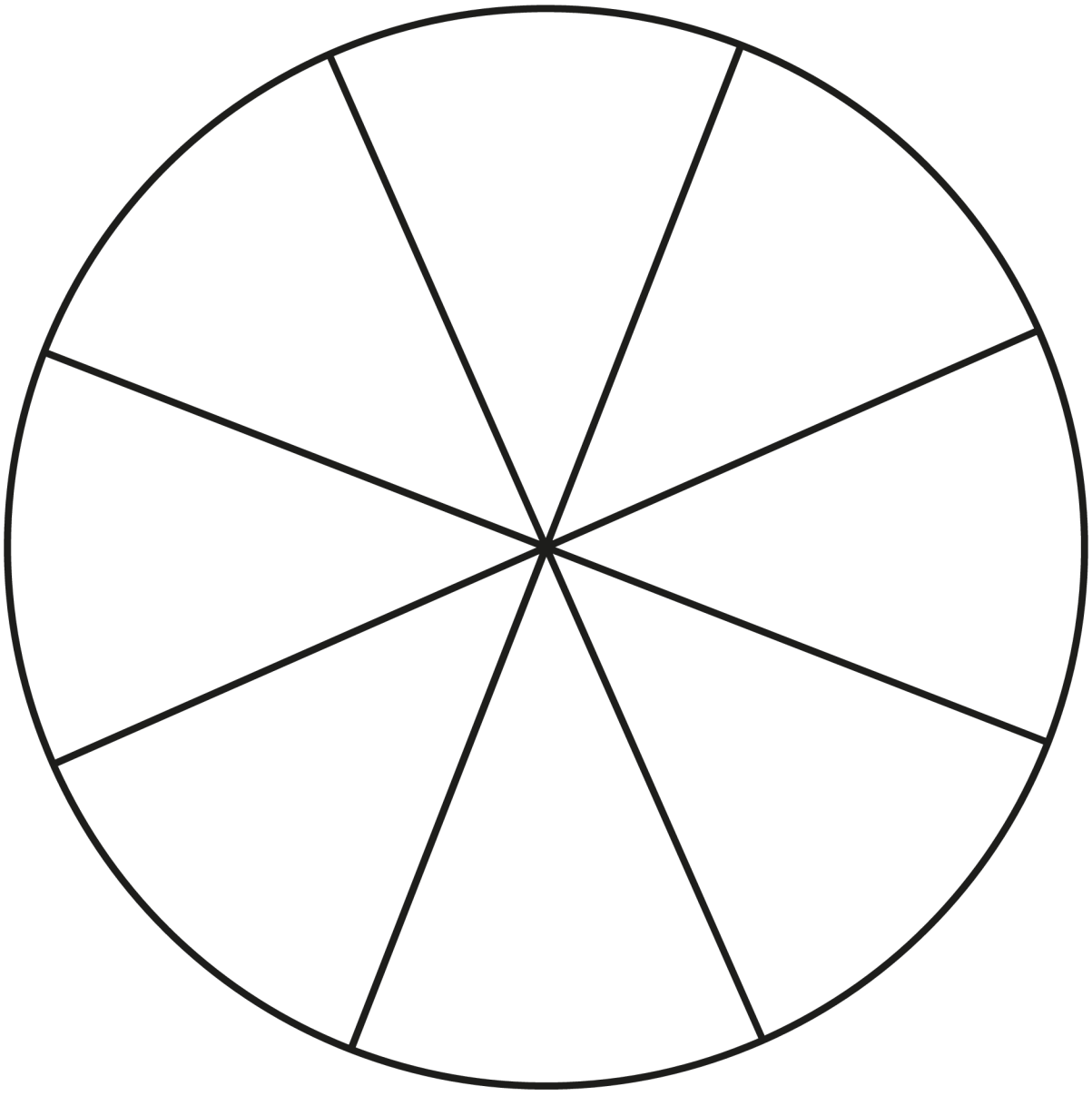
- **We do not have to keep the labels others assign to us:**
  - Rooted in perception, perception is not fact
  - Other people only see your actions in small contexts
  - We know ourselves better than anyone else
  - Two opposing things can be true at the same time like weird and wonderful, lazy and efficient
- **Change is constant:**
  - What was once true, is not true now
  - What we do now will be challenged in future generations
  - It is OK to let go of old ideas if they do not serve you
  - We do not know everything - we were never meant to - it is ok not to know
  - When we ask - what else might be true it opens up a new world of thinking
- **Self-compassion can be hard:**
  - It is not about being soft - it is about acceptance that things are not different
  - It comes from curiosity and starts with words like I wonder and what if
  - When we are compassionate to ourselves we let our bodies know we are safe
  - Aim for 5 affirming statements for each criticism
- **The first step to unmasking is self-awareness:**
  - When we are aware of the labels we are carrying we can choose whether we want to keep or shed them
  - It is only when we start truly understanding these labels and rewriting them do we really unmask
- **When we can see all parts of us - we can better embrace who we truly are.**

The labels I carry

We are often unaware of the labels we carry - awareness is the first step towards a conscious choice

1. Identify the roles you play and list them in the segments
2. Identify the labels you wear in that role and put them there too
3. Reflect on which ones might be unfair or unjust
4. Highlight the ones you want to leave behind

My roles and labels wheel



Affirming Words

We all need to be reminded of our strengths and skills. It helps us see who we really are:

1. Think of an activity of your relationship - it can be in the bedroom:

2. Now think of one criticism for your partner during that activity:

3. Now think of 5 positives, strengths or affirmations:

4. Your mission today is to tell them this feedback in a space and time that feels safe for you both. You can choose to focus just on the positives if you like and see the difference it makes.

Exploring *Labels*

1. **Draw what 'labels' mean to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'labels':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. What does this tell you about your feelings on labels?

Exploring *Acceptance*

1. **Draw what 'acceptance' mean to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'acceptance':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for *Labels*

A label is
someone telling me -
they don't understand

How you choose to label
me -
is none of my business

I choose to ask why -
rather than label
what I don't understand

Say it until it sticks

episodes 3 and 4

Lazy

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notes on Lazy

Sometimes I need to rest

reflecting on lazy

- **A lack of movement and laziness are not the same thing:**
  - Often stillness on the outside with lots of things happening beneath the surface.
  - If we were being lazy, we would be having fun.

- **“Laziness” is often a sign that something else is happening:**
  - Overwhelm = high standards + executive dysfunction
  - Procrastination comes from a fear and avoidance
  - Burnout = masking + demands exceeding supply
  - Shame comes from missing goals and narrative of being broken/ worthless/ useless/ less than reinforced

- **It is momentum not motivation that stops us from starting:**
  - Our brains deliver dopamine differently meaning we don’t get the boost to start until after we have finished.
  - We want to do the thing - we know we need to, but we are unable to start.
  - We are not weak or morally flawed - our brains work differently and it makes momentum harder.

- **We stop or slow because there is nothing left in the tank:**
  - It can be exhausting living in a world that was not designed to support your brain and your needs.
  - When we honour our limits and boundaries and say no we conserve our energy so we can say yes to what matters.
  - When we take time to recharge our batteries, to cocoon and care for ourselves, it is not laziness.

- **When we take a moment to look underneath we can be more compassionate, accepting and support ourselves.**

notes on Lazy

If I was being lazy - I would be having fun...

reframing lazy

- **“Laziness” is self-protection:**
  - Often comes from energy conservation
  - Cognitive load, social, emotional and physical demands can all drain us - disconnect between ‘norms’ and ‘needs’
  - When demands on our capacity exceed supply we need to find ways to reduce the demands to something manageable
  - If we operate outside of capacity for too long, we get burned out - “laziness” is protection
  - Rest does not have to be earned
- **“Laziness” is efficiency:**
  - The lazy part of our brain is also the part that is responsible for creative problem solving
  - History is filled with stories of neurodivergent people’s problem solving and efficiency capabilities
- **Stuck is an executive function challenge:**
  - If we were being lazy, we would be having fun
  - When we notice lazy chance to stop and notice the hard and find a way to find the hard - and make it softer
- **“Laziness” labels comes from a mismatch between expectation and capacity:**
  - The cost of meeting that expectation often exceeds supply
  - We can make the demand smaller or adjust the expectation
  - Often our standards are too high and there is an opportunity to practice ‘enoughness’
  - If it is not my expectation - why am I trying hard to meet it?
  - It is not our job to meet the expectation of others
- **Laziness comes from the same place as creative - but it also comes from overwhelm and the need to pause.**

Momentum Makers

Six strategies to break the cycle of stuck and work with your brain to build momentum



body double

Have someone be there while you do the yuck



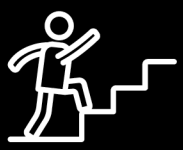
make it urgent

pretend it's urgent - due in 5 mins.
set a timer.
do what you can



find the fun

add music, movement, rewards, make a game. make it fun to do.



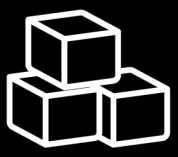
task stacking

sort tasks from easy to hard.
start with easy - tick it off - then onto the next



sort it out

use someone help you sort priorities from now to never



break it down

ask someone to help break a task down into smaller steps

We need others to help us problem solve and solution - we are external processors.
No humans around - no worries,
you can do it online or use AI

State of the Union

It is not the tool - but the behaviours around the tool that make a difference

1. **Agree a day and time in the week that works**
2. **Find a planner that works for you - if stuck just start with a piece of paper for each day**

Meeting agenda

- Day by day for the week ahead, work out - who has what on, who will be doing certain chores and responsibilities, key deadlines, want to dos and appointments
- Take a step back and look at the week - can you do this all, how much energy do you both have?
- Identify things you can cancel, any short cuts and lower expectations to save energy
- Add in one thing that will fill your cup.

Exploring Lazy

1. **Draw what 'lazy' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'lazy':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on lazy?

Exploring Efficient

1. **Draw what 'efficient' mean to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'efficient':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would _____

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for Lazy

I do not need permission to rest

Momentum can be made - one nudge at a time

I am worth more than my achievements

Say it until it sticks


episodes 5 and 6
WEIRD
NeuroSpice
& life

notes on WEIRD

Your weird is my Tuesday

reflecting on WEIRD

- **Social rejection stems from a deep rooted survival instinct:**
  - In evolution - isolation equals death.
  - It has been used as a punishment for millennia.
  - When we experience rejection our pain synapses fire.
  - ‘Weird feels uncomfortable because of this instinct.

- **‘Weird’ means inhuman and other worldly:**
  - Our styles, needs and preferences are different - not worse.
  - They are easily misunderstood and misinterpreted.
  - It can sometimes feel like we are speaking a different. language.
  - We might relate differently and have deep knowledge that we openly share.

- **When we feel ‘weird’ we mimic and mask:**
  - We internalise stress and put other peoples comfort first.
  - We try to hide the parts of us that feel uncomfortable.
  - We copy or imitate others and lose sight of who we are.

- **Diversity is beautiful and needed:**
  - In all other contexts in nature, difference is seen as vital with different parts of a system all having a role to play.
  - We do not expect a flower and a tree to do the same thing - we do not want them to, we need both. Neither is weird.
  - Neurodivergent people are capable of thinking differently and this is the home of innovation and creativity.
  - It is when things are uncomfortable that change blooms.

- **When you find someone that is your kind of weird - magic happens - something supernatural.**

notes on WEIRD

Weird is Wonderful

reframing WEIRD

- **We never fully understand anyone else's experience:**
  - Our brains determine how we experience and interpret the world around us.
  - We can't look inside someone else's brain or feel and experience what they do.
- **Our behaviours stem from our needs:**
  - Our sensory needs will not be the same as anyone else.
  - Our communication and social needs are unique.
  - Our interests and passions are our own.
  - Our 'normal' comes from what we need.
  - Our 'weird' is us, putting our comfort and our needs first.
- **We innately develop strategies to make life easier:**
  - A weird 'habit' or 'shortcut' might be a management strategy or an accommodation.
  - Someone's 'weird' probably has a good reason.
  - Your 'weird' is likely someone else's Tuesday.
- **Weird shows the edges of someone's bubble:**
  - We can invite people into our weird - experiment and expand our bubbles together.
  - We can't know everything and we don't know what we like until we experience it.
- **Weird can be wonderful:**
  - Often our oddities are what makes us special.
  - When we reframe our weird as wonderful - unique and beautiful, it becomes something we want to show off.
  - When we let the weird out - we are authentic to ourselves.
- **When we unmask and embrace our weird - we can start to find our own weird village - the people that truly get us.**

let your weird out

1. Make a list of all your ‘weird’ thoughts:

2. Identify a ‘safe’ person to speak to (a mirror or voice memo is OK)

3. Ask for consent to ‘weird’ dump on them
    - Time box it (start with 1 minute)
    - All they need to see at the end is ‘thank you for sharing’
    - Check in after are they OK, do they have questions?

4. Reflect - how did it feel for you?

find your weird

1. Note the different ways you feel ‘weird’

2. Research common needs of your neurotype

3. Link your ‘weird’ back to these needs

4. Research people of note and celebrities who are your kind of weird and who have the same neurotype and needs as you

Exploring WEIRD

1. **Draw what ‘weird’ means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about ‘weird’:

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on ‘weird’?

Exploring WONDERFUL

1. **Draw what ‘wonderful’ means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about ‘wonderful’:

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would _____

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for WEIRD

Difference is needed -
Difference is beautiful

My weirdness is wonderful -
it makes me, me

People who truly know me
- truly love me

Say it until it sticks


episodes 7 and 8
sensitive
NeuroSpice
& life

notes on *sensitive*

My needs are valid

reflecting on *sensitive*

- **The world for us can feel like 'too much':**
  - Too much noise, light, decisions, textures, data...
  - Our brains allow us to observe, interpret and feel more.
  - Sometimes we need to turn the volume on life down.
  - These are 'needs' to be met - not wants. We need to feel safe in our bodies to thrive.
- **Sometimes we have big feelings:**
  - Alexithymia can make it difficult to name feelings and interpret others intentions.
  - Interception differences can make it harder to notice our own feelings until they are already big.
  - Sometimes it looks like we go from 0-100 in a flash.
- **We experience more rejection than neurotypicals:**
  - Can lead to Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria (RSD) which makes us believe it is our fault - all the time.
  - RSD can make us appear needy and easily upset.
- **We can experience physical and emotional pain:**
  - Sensory differences can feel physically painful - and can be all consuming mentally and physically.
  - Rejection can stimulate the same parts of the brain that activate with physical pain.
- **When we are labelled 'sensitive' we learn to suppress:**
  - We still feel things intensely but we don't let it show.
  - We learn how to hide it and mask.
  - This internalises stress responses and causes physical and emotional harm.
- **When we advocate for our needs - everything feels lighter.**

notes on *sensitive*

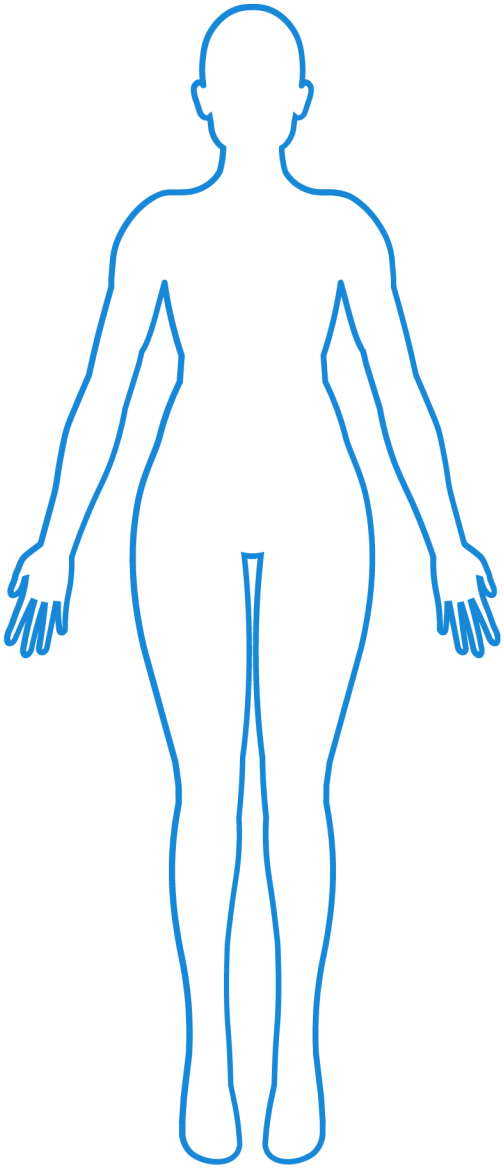
It is Ok to tend to my needs

reframing *sensitive*

- **Learning our feelings can be hard - but worthwhile:**
  - If we label feelings as ‘bad’ we try to ignore, avoid and suppress them - which only makes them bigger.
  - When we start to accept them, they flow easier.
  - When we can name them - they lose a lot of their power, they become less scary and move on faster.
- **It starts with small steps:**
  - Learning zones of regulation and just being able to name the zone (red, yellow, green and blue) is a start.
  - We can then layer on names of emotions - be curious and get to know how and when they tend to show up (and which friends they bring with them).
  - We can throw feelings out and see what sticks am I angry, annoyed, frustrated, resentful, jealous... your body will tell you when you find the right one.
- **We are less sensitive when we meet our bodies needs:**
  - Regular check-ins for water, food, movement, temperature and toilet can help keep our nervous system in check.
  - We can observe from the extremities (like a dry mouth) and work our way back in.
- **We can advocate for our needs and experience:**
  - Educating others on what the world feels like for us, how emotions can be hidden or about how RSD shows up.
  - We can ask for help and accommodations - this does not make us wek.
  - People want to help by nature - we can provide a bridge into our world.
- **Whilst the world can feel intense - we have a richness to our experience that a lot of other people will never understand.**

Body Scan

When someone asks ‘Are you OK’ rather than say no - take some deep breaths and ask yourself:



Do I need **darkness** or **light**?

Do I need **quiet** or **noise**?

Do I need to a different **smell**?

Is my **mouth dry**?

Is my **tummy** grumbly?

Am I **hot** or **cold**?

Is my **clothing** comfortable?

Do I need to use the **toilet**?

Do I need to **move/ swing/ spin**?

Do I need to sit **still** or **lie down**?

Do I need **deep pressure**?

Take a moment to tend to all the things which are a ‘yes’.

See What Sticks

When we are feeling off - it can be hard to work out why. Let's make it a bit easier.

1. Think about the situation in your mind and note what you feel in your body. Where are you feeling discomfort. It is OK if this is hard.

2. Now identify the zone of regulation you are in. By asking is the feeling pleasant or unpleasant. Is it high energy or low energy:

Red **Unpleasant and High Energy**	**Yellow** **Pleasant and High Energy**
Blue **Unpleasant and Low Energy**	**Green** **Pleasant and Low Energy**

3. Now throw feelings at it and see what sticks... e.g. in red (anger, disappointment, frustration, fear, worry, rage). Let each emotion sit. You will notice a change in your body when you find the right one.

4. Now look at the situation to understand where the feeling is coming from. For example...

- Is it what was done?
- Is it what was said?
- Is it who it was with?

Again you will notice in your body when you find out what is difficult.

5. Notice the change in feeling when you understand what and why. Does this insight lead to some action you would like to take?

Exploring *sensitive*

1. **Draw what 'sensitive' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'sensitive':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on 'sensitive'?

Exploring *strong*

1. **Draw what 'strong' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'strong':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would _____

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for *sensitive*

Emotions are not good or bad - they just are

When I honour my needs - I honour myself

I am sensitive and strong

Say it until it sticks

episodes 9 and 10

blunt



notes on blunt

Intent is not the same as Content

reflecting on blunt

- **Neurodivergent people often favour direct communication:**
  - We are often literal thinkers and take things at face value.
  - We trust what people say - we don't look at how they say it.
  - We value direct and clear communication in others.
  - Many of us find processing communication more difficult - so fewer words is a kindness.
  - Neurotypicals find 100% honesty untrustworthy.
  - We often find lying hard to do and difficult to keep track of.
- **This style is not a defect, it is just different:**
  - Milton's double empathy problem shows neurotypical and neurodivergent styles are equally effective.
  - When we communicate cross-neurotype it can feel uncomfortable - like we are speaking a different language.
- **At a young age we are taught that directness is 'wrong':**
  - Gender and cultural norms favour, quiet, polite, soft, gentle and indirect communication.
  - We start to over-engineer polite in our heads - creating mental gymnastics and making communication even harder.
  - We can often turn to people pleasing - submitting to other people's preferences as 'yes' is easier than 'no'.
- **Communication is a two way street:**
  - We bring a lot to interactions - history, beliefs, memories and habits - this noise interferes with what send and receive.
  - As senders we can choose to deliver the message differently.
  - As receivers we can choose to assume good intent from the other person - especially if we know them.
- **Blunt means 'uncompromisingly forthright' but in reality we are compromising all the time to make ourselves gentler.**

notes on blunt

Directness is valuable

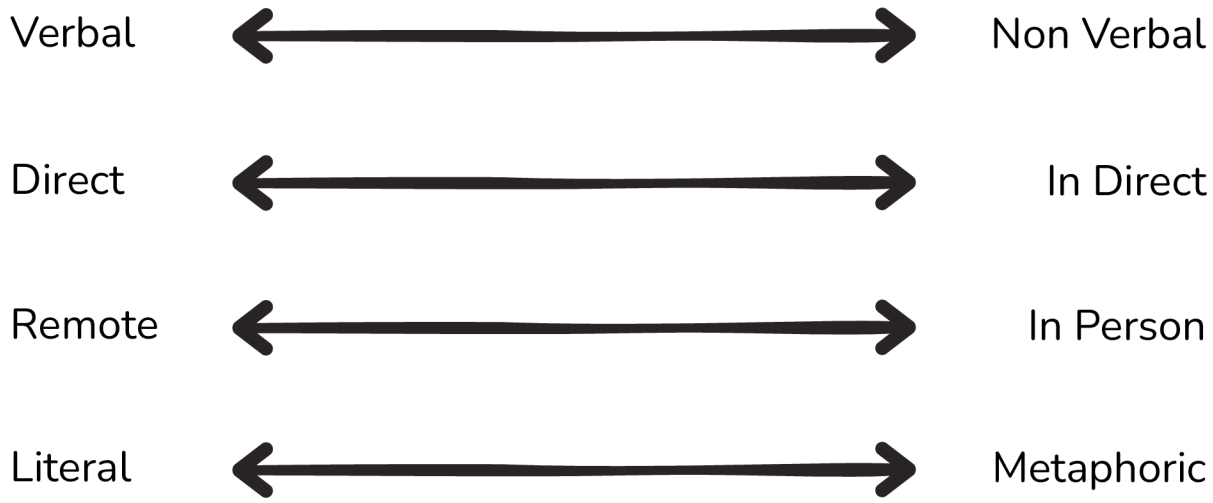
reframing blunt

- **Bluntness or directness can be a real strength:**
  - Direct communication is needed.
  - When we state our needs - directness is powerful.
  - If everyone stated their wants and needs clearly - life would be a lot easier.
  - However, honesty is always expected to come with tact - one without the other is seen as undesirable.
- **Communication does not have to be all one way:**
  - There is space for bluntness, and value to it.
  - We can advocate for our preferences and offer a bridge for people to accept us and meet us part way.
  - We can invite people to focus on the intent and the message, not the style that it is delivered with.
  - We can invite people to be more blunt.
  - People can choose to take offence - or not.
- **People pleasing ends up pleasing nobody:**
  - You are not yourself and internalise stress and discomfort.
  - Other people are denied the opportunity to get to know you and to say ‘yes’ to supporting your needs.
  - Nobody wants to be in a relationship that is one directional.
- **Sometimes we need to relearn directness:**
  - Starting small with safe people and situations.
  - Thinking about the desired outcome of the communication and working back.
  - A good place to start is with ‘no’ - pausing before we say ‘yes’ and then not elaborating on the no.
- **When we are blunt we are giving you a pre-shelled nut. We are giving you the bit you need and not making you work for it.**

My Style Is...

There is no right or wrong communication style - Difficulty comes when we communicate across styles and we don't know it...

- Take a moment to think about your communication preferences. Do you prefer?:



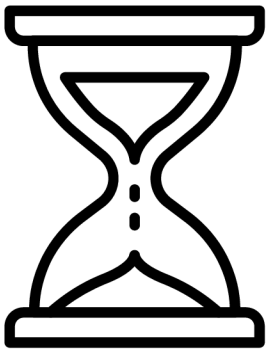
- Think about why these are preferences for you.

- Then practice writing a bridge that is in your words.
  For example:
  My preference is for direct, non verbal communication. Words for me can sometimes be hard to process so fewer words is easier for my brain. If you want to me to elaborate it is OK to ask. Also if you can use fewer words when communicating with me, that will make it easier for me to communicate with you,

Sometimes you might get a no - but we need to give people the change to say yes.

3 minute game

Sometimes it can be hard to ask for what we want - let's practice making it easier.



1. Find some quiet time to massage your partner. If touching is not your thing, you can choose another caring activity.

2. Then do that activity for 60-90 seconds, set a timer if time is tricky.

3. At the end of this time - pause and ask "how can I make this better for you?

4. Listen to their feedback - it is not a criticism, just them stating their preferences. If they are struggling to share feedback, these statements can be used as a bit of a framework:

    - I like X, could you add/ remove or focus on Y
    - I really like it when you X
    - Could you focus more on X area

5. Now repeat the activity. Taking their feedback into account.

6. Then check in again to see how that was for them.

7. If you like you can keep going or swap roles, this is about getting comfortable in stating your needs and wants to improve communication and enjoyment.

Exploring blunt

1. **Draw what 'blunt' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'blunt':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on 'blunt'?

Exploring soft

1. **Draw what 'soft' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'soft':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would _____

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for blunt

My directness is not a deficit

My communication style is valid and valued

I am blunt and kind

Say it until it sticks


episodes 11 and 12
stupid
NeuroSpice
& life

notes on stupid

Intelligence takes different shapes

reflecting on stupid

- **Our education system is not a measure of smart:**
  - It is narrow in scope of what it measures and is based on neurotypical development norms.
  - Schooling rewards average performance in broad domains - careers and the world outside.
  - After school we build lives based on specialisation.
  - In many cases the environment is disabling for neurodivergent brains - making it hard to learn and be our best.
- **Intelligence is not one size fits all:**
  - There are many different types of intelligence including problem solving, creativity and innovation.
  - Neurodivergent people are often monotropic thinkers meaning we think in deep tunnels - not in tasks.
  - Neurodivergent people tend to have “star” or “spiky” profiles for intelligence meaning we have bigger gaps between what is easy and what is hard.
- **We often try to mask the ‘stupid’:**
  - Our ‘stupid’ is criticised from a young age - things we forget, can’t remember, misplace or misremember.
  - Our brains can struggle with words, shapes, coordination, numbers and spatial skills.
  - These things are seen as evidence of stupidity or a lack of common sense.
  - We learn to feel shame for these things and to hide them.
  - We exhaust ourselves using the tips of our stars to compensate for and hide the hard things.
- **We can only truly unmask, when we embrace our valleys as much as the shiny tips of our stars.**

notes on stupid

Systems don't measure smart

reframing stupid

- **We can't compare:**
  - "Comparison is the thief of joy" - Roosevelt
  - We are unique - with different strengths and vulnerabilities.
  - Systems like school and work, drive comparisons based on performance against a 'norm'.
  - Someone will always be better than you and someone will always be worse than you.
- **We often struggle with rigid structures:**
  - When we have to think in terms of tasks not tunnels - it is hard to get in and out of flow.
  - When we have to learn in a set way, in a set time, it is hard.
  - There are different learning styles for different brains (Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic and Reading/Writing) - most systems are designed for 1-2 styles and miss most learners.
  - It can be difficult to follow a process when we can see and know a different way
- **Many of the greatest innovators were seen as 'stupid':**
  - When they could follow passions and interests.
  - Learn in a style suited to their brains.
  - When difficulties were supported.
  - In an environment that supports continuous thought.
- **We expect too much of ourselves:**
  - It is not possible to know everything.
  - It is not possible to be good at everything.
  - Greatness is not sustainable - it comes in moments.
  - Brilliance can only come in the right environment.
- **We can be both smart and stupid - brilliant and benign. It is OK to not be perfect.**

Strengths Finding

Our strengths often translate across all domains of our life - let's take a moment to notice them.

1. Take a moment to think of your top 5 in each category.

Strengths	Skills	Passions

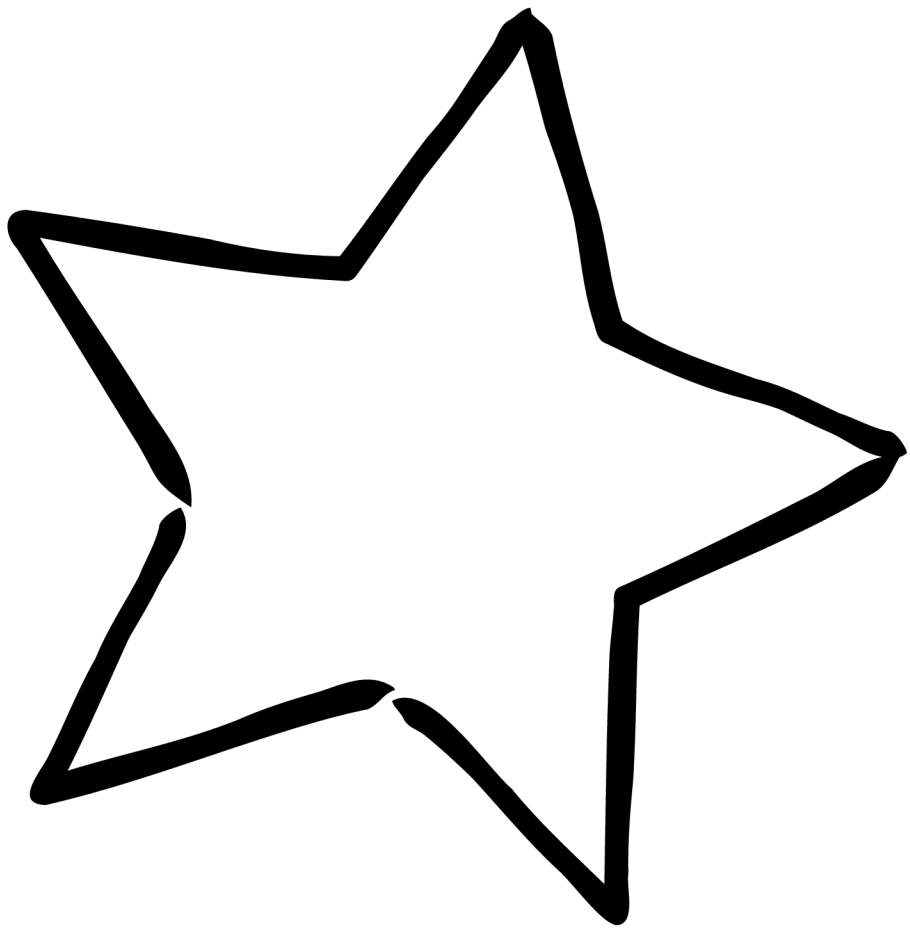
2. Now reflect on how they show up in your relationships

3. Pop them on a post it note, screen saver or voice memo - and pop them somewhere you will access them easily - so you can remind yourself of your brilliance each day.

My Starry Profile

We all have things that feel easy and hard. When we understand our own blueprint for brilliant - we can grow our strengths and accommodate our difficulties.

1. Reflect on your strengths, the things that come easy - list these as the points of the stars.
2. Now think of the things that are harder for you and list these in the valleys of the stars.



3. Now reflect, how does this show up for you each day?
    - What is one thing you can do to show your strengths?
    - What is one accommodation that would help you?

Exploring stupid

1. **Draw what ‘stupid’ means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about ‘stupid’:

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on ‘stupid’?

Exploring smart

1. **Draw what ‘smart’ means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about ‘smart’:

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would _____

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

Affirmations for stupid

I have my own blue print of brilliance

Intelligence is not - one size fits all

I can do hard things

Say it until it sticks

episodes 13 and 14

self-centred

NeuroSpice & life

notes on *self-centred*

There is no one way to care

reflecting on self-centred

- **Remembering and caring are not the same thing:**
  - Prosopagnosia (face blindness) and Anomic Aphasia (word-finding difficulty) can make remembering people hard.
  - Executive functioning differences and time blindness can make remembering dates and details can be hard.
  - We can make commitments with the best intention but remembering to follow through can be harder.
  - We can care deeply for people and not remember their birthday or what they look like.
  - Time can be extra tricky, especially when we are in hyperfocus - where nothing else can exist.
- **We can experience and express emotions differently:**
  - Alexithymia makes it difficult to name feelings.
  - Empathy can look different - by relating things back to ourselves and sharing like experiences. It is not selfishness.
  - Sharing experiences allows us to process emotions in real time - reducing emotional load.
  - We can be impulsive at times and it can be difficult to see the consequences of actions.
- **We have our own ways of showing love and affection:**
  - Neurodivergent love languages and neurotypical love languages are not the same thing.
  - It is OK to tell others how we prefer to show love and ask them how they like to receive love.
  - We won't always get it right - but it starts a conversation.
  - Frustration comes when we are expressing love but it is not seen or understood.
- **When we are seen and heard in our love and communication we are able to feel truly accepted.**

notes on *self-centred*

Forgetting it forgiveable

reframing self-centred

- **Our expressions of love and empathy should be valued:**
  - They can often be misunderstood and seen as self-centred.
  - In reality we have different cultural norms and expressions.
  - But they are no way less valid.
- **Often we are the ones to bend:**
  - We are trained on neurotypical norms and taught our preferences are wrong.
  - When conflict arises - we are encouraged to change, to bend.
  - We can be made to feel selfish when we state our needs.
- **We can be kinder to ourselves:**
  - We are going to forget and make mistakes - we can try to do it less, or be kinder to ourselves.
  - Often we can't do it less as we are not doing it on purpose - our choice is to be more accepting of ourselves.
  - When we acknowledge mistakes, rather than judge ourselves they feel less heavy.
- **Accommodations are not special favours:**
  - Neurotypical preferences are seen as altruistic norms, while neurodivergent preferences are seen as difficulties.
  - Accommodations are a basic accessibility needs.
  - We can think creatively about accommodations like time, dates and reminders.
  - We can ask others to help soundboard out solutions - chances are someone in the village has had the same difficulty.
- **When we are open to expressions of love looking different, we realise that we have been loving and been loved all along.**

How I Show Love

When we are aware of our preferences we can invite others to show up in a different way.

1. Think about how you like to receive and show love:

Neurodivergent Love Locutions

Penguin Pebbling giving based on sentiment and passion	**Spoon Swapping** trading tasks to conserve energy	**Info Dumping** sharing facts and knowledge
Parallel Play doing things alongside not with or body doubling	**Deep Pressure** physical pressure given to someone's preference	

Neurotypical Love Languages

Gift Giving Giving gifts of material value and status	**Acts of Service** doing things for someone else	**Words of Affirmation** compliment giving
Quality Time Spending time together	**Physical Touch** Touching and being touched	

2. Now think about why you enjoy these things and how they feel good to you.

3. Now find a safe person to tell (start with a mirror or voice memo if you like). Share your preferences and invite them to share theirs.

4. Discuss similarities and how you can bridge differences.

Mistakes with Grace

We all make mistakes - they are how we learn. We can't be everything to the other person in a relationship - but we can try to be better at what matters to them.

1. Think about what matters most to your partner:

2. On a scale of 1-10 rate how well you show up this way:

3. Think of one thing you could do to improve this score:

4. How can you help yourself to make this change:

Is there someone you can share this with - Feeling safe and supported in your learning?

Exploring self-centred

1. **Draw what 'self-centred' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'self-centred':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. ~~What does this tell you about~~ your feelings on 'self-centred'?

Exploring *generous*

1. **Draw what 'generous' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'generous':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

affirmations for
self-centred

My ways of communicating are valid and important

There is no right way to show love and affection

I deserve to be loved in a way that feels right for me

Say it until it sticks

episodes 15 and 16

DIFFICULT

NeuroSpice & life

notes on DIFFICULT

Anger is our body saying stop

reflect on DIFFICULT

- **When we are labelled difficult we either flex or hold:**
  - We dig our heels in and hold our ground - we hold tight and eventually get put in the too hard basket.
  - We try to shirk the label and become people pleasers - we avoid the label but put a mask in it's place. The more we suppress our needs, the bigger emotions build up.
- **Difficult gets judged:**
  - It is seen as a problem to be fixed and a behaviour to be punished. It is undesirable - especially in women and girls.
  - As we get older expectations and demand gets higher, support gets less as does tolerance for 'difficult' behaviour.
  - We can get trapped in struggle.
  - The definition is rooted in being/causing a "problem."
- **Where there is resistance - there is a reason:**
  - Dr Ross Greene from Lives in the Balance states "kids will do well if they can - not if they want to".
  - When we are difficult it is our way of showing we are struggling - there is an expectation we can't meet or a problem we can't solve.
  - Somehow these needs are seen as unreasonable as they are linked to hidden needs and disability.
- **The diagnosis process reinforces this narrative:**
  - No matter how affirming, the medical model of diagnosis and disability looks at 'deficits' to be 'fixed'.
  - Diagnostic criteria is filled with synonyms for difficult.
- **Imagine if we spent time working out where the hard and difficult is for us and fixing the problems we are struggling with? How different would our experience be?**

notes on DIFFICULT

Difficult and difficulty are different

reframe DIFFICULT

- **Difficult disappears when our needs are met:**
  - When we feel safe there is no need to be difficult - we are not in danger, we don't need to express distress.
  - Difficult is a sign that we need to 'stop' or 'slow'. We need to do something not now or not like that.

- **The social model of disability shows we are not the problem:**
  - Environments, processes and situations can be disabling or enabling depending on how they are designed.
  - Hidden ableism is everywhere - if you are finding difficult, you have probably found an unfair playing field.

- **But we need to feel safe to be seen:**
  - In relationships, workplaces and roles we play - we often have to hide or mask or hide the hard bits.
  - We monitor, modify and censor our behaviour but persist in living with the problem.
  - This leads to blow ups and burnout.
  - When we feel safe to be seen we can raise concerns and work constructively to solve the problem.
  - Chances are, it is a problem for others too.

- **In an ideal world we would ask everyone what the need:**
  - Because the more accommodations that are offered - the easier this world is for everyone.
  - When we can focus more on outcomes, rather than rigid processes to get us there - we all have greater ability for our strengths to shine.

- **Difficult is a symptom - not an explanation. When we look at the difficult we can see it is distress in disguise.**

Relationship Needs

When our needs are met - we are not difficult. Managing our needs is not a passive activity. Take 5 minutes to check in on your relationship and how it is meeting your needs.

1. **Think about your relationship in these 4 quadrants and answer the below questions:**

Am I safe? physically, culturally and emotionally?	**Am I valued?** shown I am valued in a meaningful way to me?
Am I heard? are my needs and views taken into account?	**Am I inspired?** are we working on a shared vision and values?

2. If you answered no to any sections, think about why you answered 'no'. Jot down some of your unmet needs.

3. Reflect if you think these needs can be met and how and if safe, have a conversation with the other person about these needs. If uncertain, a therapist or counsellor might be able to support.

5 whys

When we notice something is hard - let's take a moment to swim upstream and find the root cause - so we can meet it there and address it.

1. **Think of something that you are struggling with - write it down and be specific. I find it difficult to X when Y is happening.**

2. Now ask yourself 'why' is this hard?

3. Now ask 'why' again. Note it and keep asking 'why' until you can not go any further. That is the place to work out a solution.

The further up stream we swim -
the more effective the solutions are.

Exploring DIFFICULT

1. **Draw what 'difficult' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'difficult':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. What does this tell you about your feelings on 'difficult'?

Exploring WORTHY

1. **Draw what 'worthy' means to you:**

2. Now answer the below statements about 'worthy':

- If it was a colour it would be _____
- If it was a shape it would be _____
- If it was a texture it would be _____
- If it were a sound, it would be _____
- If it had a smell it would be _____
- If it was a symbol it would be _____
- If I were an animal it would be _____
- If it had a human name it would be _____
- If I saw it walking in the street, I would

3. How can you see these 2 opposing forces working together?

affirmations for DIFFICULT

I can express difficulty and not be difficult

I do not have to meet other people's expectations

I am worthy of love, care and support

Say it until it sticks



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