

Ross Garner 0:08

Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Ross Garner,

Ross Dickie 0:15

and I'm Ross Dickie.

Ross Garner 0:16

This week, we're asking how can we better include neurodiverse colleagues? What is neurodiversity? What struggles do neurodiverse people face? And what are the benefits of having a team with neuro diverse people in it? To help us answer these questions? We're joined by Laura Kirby, founder of NEST that's neurodivergent education, support and training.

Laura has a degree in psychology, a postgraduate certificate in special education, and a PGCE, in lifelong learning. How are you doing, Laura?

Laura Kerbey 0:42

Yeah, I'm very well, thank you. Thank you for having me today.

Ross Garner 0:45

You're very welcome. I wonder if you could kick us off by telling us what we mean by the term neuro diversity?

Laura Kerbey 0:52

Yes. So it's probably easy to flip it on its head and talk about what we mean by neurotypical.

So I think, when we talk about a neurotypical person or a neurotypical brain, we're talking about somebody whose brain, I guess, functions in the way that it is expected to which which sounds, I'll elaborate on that a little bit. But a neurodivergent brain is, is one that the way that I look at neurodivergent brain is that it is wired differently.

It is. And the neuro neurodivergent brain could cover somebody who's autistic, somebody who has ADHD, somebody who is dyslexic. And the way that I think

of it is that the brain is huge. We often talk about it being wired differently, and it's not, is not going to take in information process information. In a typical way, I'm doing speech marks and only speech marks because it's an audio pod. But um, yeah, and I think what's, what's really, really important about neurodiversity is that it is very, it is very diverse as well, and, and everybody who's neurodivergent is is different as well, that's really, really important. Yeah,

Ross Garner 2:17

and so I think in the past, we might have considered autism, ADHD, Asperger's, these kinds of conditions is the right term. Yeah, we may refer to them as a disability in the past. Whereas I think now that the much preferred term is differently abled. So it's not there's something wrong with them. They just think differently.

Laura Kerbey 2:40

Yeah, there's a lot of negative words around neurodiverse neurodiversity, such as you know, disability, deficit, disorder. And I think I don't think those terms are very helpful. I think I think they're very negative terms.

And I think we need to again, you know, look at neurodiversity as actually being something that's that can be very, very positive. And as you've just said, Ross, it said, it's a difference, rather than a disability or a disorder, or a deficit. And so going back to your original question, the neurodivergent brain is is is different. But it doesn't, it shouldn't be seen as a negative difference or a bad difference in any way.

Ross Garner 3:28

Do you think am depictions of neurodiversity in popular culture are helpful? Because I was thinking about this podcast in advance. So the obvious one is Rain Man. And then also, I think, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime, the I think it Mark Haddon? Mark Maddon? with his book. Yeah, probably the most famous ones.

Laura Kerbey 3:48

I think, I mean, Rain Man, I think I mean, they they're both helpful in the fact that they raise people's awareness and understanding of neurodiversity. And that's always going to be a good thing. It's always going to be a positive thing. I

think that we do have to be very careful that often neurodivergent people are depicted in a very, very stereotypical way within within the media. I actually went to see the the West End play of the, Curious Incident, and I absolutely loved it. I thought it was really, really well done.

And I think within that, the thing I loved about the stage that I don't know if anyone's seen it, but it's, it's so well done all the sort of sensory difficulties and differences that an autistic person might experience. But yeah, I do. I think that was great. But I do think that there are a lot of you don't a lot of stereotypes that come from that those media representations. I know that actually there was a programme of I think it's still on actually on Sky, the good doctor. And again that had That's quite a mixed response.

You know, some people within the autism community really like it. And other people say they absolutely hate it. And it's it gets very sort of stereotypical. And I, the best programme actually, that I watched a few years ago, which shouldn't if if anybody else watched was the one of the documentaries that Chris Packham did about his autism.

And I really liked that programme, because I think that actually did really challenge a lot of people's views of what being autistic meant. Yeah. And actually, a few people that I spoke to who, who sort of don't work in my community said that it it, they found that really interesting, and it did make them view autism very differently to what they thought it was.

Ross Garner 5:47

Yeah, I think that what you were talking about earlier on as a Brit, the that being differently abled can be different for absolutely everyone. And so to take character from one piece of pop culture and extrapolate from that, that that's what everyone's experiences. And that's the mistake. And so probably that's worth bearing in mind during this conversation.

Laura Kerbey 6:07

Yeah, I definitely agree with that.

Ross Dickie 6:10

Yeah, I think it also, this might just be my impression, but my sort of sense is that it's not something that people talk about, as often as, say, when we talk about sort of diversity and inclusion within organisations, a lot of that, at least historically has been confined to thinking about things like gender and ethnicity.

And I think a lot of people might even be uncomfortable talking about neurodiversity, or not sure how to talk about it. I don't know if that's something that you recognise.

Laura Kerbey 6:38

Yeah, definitely. And I, and again, I think that is, is slowly changing. And I, I've spoken about this recently, in some of the other sort of Facebook Lives, I've done that, I do feel that there is a there is a real movement happening at the moment around neurodiversity, I think that there are a lot of people who are being late diagnosed.

So I, Myself was late diagnosed with ADHD. And there does seem to be more of an acceptance now of of people doing that. And I think you're absolutely right. I think if you talk about diversity in the workplace, people instantly think about, you know, gender or race, they don't necessarily think about neurodiversity. And I think it's really, really important that that does change and it is recognised that that those things are just as important as everything else.

Ross Dickie 7:33

Absolutely. So I mean, the the benefits of diversity in organisations are pretty well established. So what what are some of the benefits of having a neuro diverse team?

Laura Kerbey 7:43

I think there are loads, I think, I think one of the things that's really important to say is that having, you know, having autism or ADHD, or any neurodiverse neurodivergent condition only becomes a disability when you're in an environment that isn't right for your needs.

And so, when people who are neurodivergent are able to work in an environment that really allows them to kind of be themselves and their, their differences are kind of accepted, and celebrated. I think, I think the, you know, the benefits are huge.

So, I'm very lucky that everybody I work with is neurodivergent. And I don't have any colleagues within either of my teams, who are neurotypical, or the Archie part from my PA, who's amazing, and absolutely wonderful. And she, you know, I needed I need a very good organised PA, because because of my ADHD, I'm not very organised. But, you know, I love the fact that my colleagues and I, we are so creative, and we are constantly kind of bouncing ideas off each other.

And, you know, if you've got an employee who has ADHD, or dyslexia, you know, the thinking outside of the box that can go on is, is incredible, you know, there's a lot of entrepreneurs that have ADHD, and, and, you know, I myself as an ADHD, I'm constantly coming up with new ideas, you know, my, my brain doesn't really have a have enough button. And so I'm, you know, when I'm working in an environment where that is really, really sort of appreciated and people can sort of go with those ideas as well. You know, there's there's no limit to what we can do.

The other nice to meet us again, the other day that I will, I will have an idea about something and I will I will run with it and I usually will see it through and then when that idea is in place and sort of happening I've already got the next idea forming. So I think we've, I think, neurodivergent people, when we're given the kind of space and the and the scope, to just sort of run with what we can do, we could really, we can really drive ideas forward, we can really sort of come up with new ideas, there's nothing kind of static, or stagnant about the neurodiverse brain, because it's constantly kind of thinking and evolving and coming up with really, really creative new ideas. I think, you know, one of the real myths about autism is that people who are autistic lack imagination, I think that's absolute rubbish.

Some of my autistic clients, some of my autistic friends are the most creative, imaginative people I've ever worked with. But you won't see that creativity and

imagination, until the environment allows them to be creative and imaginative.

Ross Garner 10:52

Yeah, it's like the social model of disability, I think it's called, which I'm pretty sure that I did, it goes back to the 70s.

Although that doesn't seem to be that widespread. But that's that same notion that m being in a wheelchair is not a disability, the disability would be when you reach a broad thing that only has stairs, and you can't get it until you reach the stairs, you were perfectly able to navigate the world, as long as the environment supported that.

And I guess what you're telling me is, is that it's the same for the for cognitive difference as it is for physical difference. One of the things I wonder, though, is you described yourself as an ADHD or because the first time that we've spoken a couple of times now, it's the first time that I knew that you were neurodivergent.

And so unlike other kinds of diversity initiatives, race and gender are visible diversity. I might not know and as a manager, I might know if my team are neurodivergent or not, is that a good thing is a bad thing should be encouraging people to speak up about this? How do you how do you feel about that?

Laura Kerbey 11:57

I think we absolutely should be encouraging people to speak up and to, I don't think anybody should ever be scared to, you know, say that they're neurodivergent. But I think the reality is, until there is better understanding of neurodiversity within the workplace. I think sometimes that is going to be a concern for people. And intimidating,

Ross Garner 12:24

right? You don't know how people are going to react? Exactly. But you want to share this, that's a core part of who you are.

Laura Kerbey 12:31

Yeah, because you might, you know, if you went into a job interview, and you said, oh, you know, by the way, I'm autistic, or I'm ADHD, and the, unless you feel really confident that the people who are interviewing you have a really good understanding of what that means, then you people could be frightened that they'd be putting themselves at a disadvantage.

Particularly if that person's doing the interviewing experience of autism is watching Rain Man, you know, they might think, Oh, I don't know if that person will fit into to this environment.

Now, myself, personally, I, you know, we actually will say, when we're advertising for people to work with us that, you know, knowledge of underscore understanding of neurodiversity is, is, you know, essential. And so when we have people that that actually apply and say, on neurodivergent, myself, then that, to me, is something that I would be sort of really, you know, excited by because I think, oh, this person's probably got some really incredible skills, that's not to say that I would discriminate against someone who's neurotypical.

But I do think that I do think there's a movement happening, but I think it's quite slow. And I do really, really hope that eventually, people will, will look at neurodiverse neurodivergent, sort of future employees and think I can see what an amazing benefit they would be to my organisation, and that that is also slowly starting to happen.

I know that there are some organisations out there who are actively recruiting neurodivergent people, particularly some of the tech companies, because they they know that within within, you know, the Autistic community, particularly that there are there are very, very sort of skilled people who are who are very skilled with it, and sort of tech things tech issues. I'm the least techie person you'll ever meet. But

Ross Garner 14:35

but you'll sometimes see it on you in job ads is said there'll be lines that say something like, if you're, if you're diverse or require additional support during the interview, then let us know and then accommodations can be made. So

things like sending interview questions in advance. So it's not a shock. These these kinds of things, there are things that employers can do to say, you know, from the beginning of a recruit I'm in process that you're not going to get penalised for talking about who you are basically.

Laura Kerbey 15:08

Yeah, and I hope that is a genuine hope that's genuine as well, you know, I hope that you know, it should it shouldn't be a tick box exercise of like, Oh, we've we've said that we're, we know, we'll make these accommodations, but actually really we won't I think it has to be really sort of, you know, a genuine interest in working with neurodivergent people and, and a genuine willingness to make those reasonable adjustments that neurodivergent people might need in the workplace.

Ross Dickie 15:40

Just to bring this to life a little bit more for our listeners. What are some of the issues that neurodivergent people face in the workplace? So we're talking about sort of accommodations that employers can make? Where might those accommodations be required? And why?

Laura Kerbey 15:58

Yeah, I mean, obviously, it would depend on the individual, I think, you know, for somebody who's autistic, some of the sensory differences that they might experience in the workplace could be really challenging.

So you know, having to go into a very sort of busy office, I know that a lot of offices hot desks these days. So you know, that kind of that difficulty sort of dealing with a sensory overload of lots of people, lots of sort of people's stuff and equipment everywhere, again, with the hot desking.

Autistic people will often find it sort of difficult to cope with lots of change, see, kind of get yourself set up at work, you've got your workstation all sorted out, you leave for the day, you come back the next day, and you've got to work somewhere else that could be quite, quite challenging. And also things like, you know, having to eat in a certain area, like a staff room or a canteen.

If it's kind of noisy or smelly, that could be quite difficult as well. And for me, I think one of the things that I struggle most with my work is when I feel quite overwhelmed with lots and lots of emails, or when emails come in, and they're, they're kind of a huge chunk of text and information. That for me, I just kind of almost can't read it. So the email that you sent Ross with the you know, but the information about today was that for me was really ADHD friendly.

Because you broke it up, you numbered it, it was sort of clearly labelled what we were going to do first you had then you separated out, like what the tech arrangements were and I, that, for me was like a really ADHD friendly email. But they don't

Ross Garner 17:43

say the opposite. I was panicking. I was anticipating.

Laura Kerbey 17:47

No, it was great. It was really, really good. And I think something else that can be very difficult again, you know, particularly for autistic individuals is the social elements of of working and you know, an expectation that you're going to want to socialise with people just because you're employed by the same person. And and then like, you know, getting you preferably

Ross Garner 18:12

not people at work

Laura Kerbey 18:15

exactly. But we do put pressure on people don't worry, they're sort of pressured to attend like Christmas parties or, you know, drinks after work. And, you know, I know a lot of my my autistic friends find that incredibly challenging. But if you're, if you're not going along to those things, and you could be labelled as sort of aloof or unfriendly.

And then another issue that that can sometimes arise that I've I've spoken to clients about, and sometimes my autistic autistic friends is, you know, being labelled as being rude sometimes or difficult. And, you know, I worked with one really lovely guy who was autistic.

And his company actually contacted me and asked me to do some coaching with him. Because they said that his his manner was upsetting the other people in the office. But actually, he was just being incredibly honest and truthful. And he wasn't doing small talk. So if someone sent him a an idea for something, and he thought it was absolutely rubbish, he would tell them that he was absolutely rubbish there was no kind of flowering it

Ross Dickie 19:30

will save some time as well. Absolutely. Dancing around the the sort of formalities of business language that we have to dress things up.

Ross Garner 19:39

Yeah. You can run it pass this guy and get a very quick agencies that everyone else is wasting our time with. Yeah, yeah, that's another benefit, right?

Laura Kerbey 19:48

Yeah, exactly. So but but but his colleagues were sort of becoming upset and he was being accused of being aggressive in meetings as well. And and, and again, And when we unpicked it, he and I on pitch it I, I was able to say to him, I know that you don't mean to be aggressive. But when you're saying to people, you've spoken enough, now, it's my turn sort of thing that your colleagues, if they don't understand that you're autistic will think that you're rude. And then that was obviously having a bit of a knock on effect with, you know, team members and everything.

So it, it was it was difficult, but actually, that organisation were very open to learning about autism. And we're very open to learning that, you know, he will, he doesn't sort of flare things out, he doesn't necessarily have a filter. And he doesn't mean to hurt people's feelings, but he's just being incredibly honest about his thoughts on an on on matters. Yeah,

Ross Dickie 20:48

it sort of makes me think just to go back to, to the example that Ross brought up about how, you know, race and gender are obviously very visible. And the some of the examples you're talking about, like not sending the Christmas party are having having your, your own designation desk when everybody else is hot,

desking, unless you're sort of operating in a culture where people are comfortable talking about these things. And understand your why certain people are making decisions, it can seem like you're just being difficult or aloof or demanding.

And so that strikes me as the big challenge is like, how do you get to a place as an organisation where people are comfortable having these conversations and speaking about them openly, I think both from the organization's perspective, but then also from an employee perspective, where they feel safe enough to, to discuss these things with their colleagues or, and then also, there's an extent to like forcing them to discuss these things, you know, comes back to the, you know, maybe they don't want to have that conversation. And the service, like putting the onus on them to speak about something that maybe they don't want to speak about.

Laura Kerbey 22:00

Yeah, it's interesting, because I'm working, I've been working with another client, who I've been coaching, who, she's quite young, she's in her 20s. And she was diagnosed with ADHD, about a year and a half ago. And she was really, really struggling in her workplace, she was feeling really overwhelmed.

And it was really starting to affect her mental health, she was starting to feel that she was, you know, not doing a good enough job. That, you know, she didn't want to go to work anymore, it was really kind of impacting on her. And, and then her manager left and, and a new HR manager came in, who just had a completely different approach to her.

And, you know, this young lady felt more comfortable speaking to this new HR manager and sort of told her that she was she had ADHD. And the, this HR manager said, Okay, what, what can I do to help, like, what can we do to make things better for you, and, you know, that company company, they approached me, I've been doing some sort of coke regular coaching with this girl. And they've also invested in some training on neuro diversity for the organisation so that her colleagues understand her better as well. And it has made a massive difference. She doesn't feel that she's a burden on them anymore, I think.

But previously, she just felt that everything she did was kind of, you know, she was doing things wrong, and that they were having to sort of rectify those different different mistakes that she was making. And I think just having being able to have an open discussion with someone who, who genuinely wanted to sort of understand more and helped, that, that she has really benefited it, but the company have really benefited from it as well, because that she's so much more you know, she's enjoying her job more. So obviously have productivity has really improved as well. So it's, it's been, you know, definitely a, a two way street in terms of understanding.

But I can imagine if you've got a manager that you think would be less than sympathetic, it would be scary to talk to somebody about it. I have worked supported other neurodivergent adults who we've had to sort of become a little bit more kind of a bit heavier about it and remind organisations of, you know, the legal responsibility that employees have to make reasonable adjustments.

But really, you don't want to have to go down that route. You would like to think that organisations would be making reasonable adjustments without having to sort of start getting a bit heavy.

Ross Garner 24:53

With the things that you're talking about in the example of your client are not typical. They're not really expensive things. These are relatively simple. force no organisation can do to normalise the notion that people interact differently and have different needs within the workplace.

And one of the things I was thinking about when you're talking about being able to control your environment and looking for the not wanting change is that the the rapid and sudden shift to working from home during the pandemic, for some people must have been a welcome relief, we've been tough to interact in big crowds anymore or eaten the the smelly canteen.

And now we're seeing with some organisations looking pretty arbitrary, like you have to be in the office two days a week or three days a week must be

incredibly anxiety producing, because what they're doing is they're forcing a pretty blunt policy on everyone, based on the notion of this norm, that people are going to want to be together and collaborate, and actually be individual differences in where people want to work and how they want to work. And even when they want to work, which in a lot of jobs makes no difference whatsoever.

Laura Kerbey 25:56

Yeah, I totally agree with you. And it was very interesting, actually, when we went into that first lockdown. Because I work with the majority of my clients, or I'm school age children, and you know, from quite young up to teenagers. And it was a very mixed response. So some of them, like you say, were just absolutely delighted that they didn't have to go into school, and that she really embraced the kind of homeschool learning.

And others absolutely hated it. And we're very kind of adamant note, I do my schoolwork at school, and I do my homework at home. So I can imagine that there were probably lots of neurodivergent adults that that I would imagine it's a sort of a similar similar split. And I do think that I think lockdown has changed the way that we work permanently.

But I completely agree with you that I think, you know, there are some, some people whose productivity and inability to sort of work really, really well would massively be improved if they could work from home, you know, more often, I think we've also got to remember that for someone who's who's neurodivergent, you know, if they work if they have to travel to work on public transport, that in itself can be really, really stressful as well.

So just getting into the building for Hopper state in the morning, that that in itself could use up a sort of a huge amount of sort of social energy or with the Autistic community often referred to this to spoons, this there's this thing called Spoon Theory, which is really interesting that you started

Ross Garner 27:31

podcast, I think, yeah. I think we've spoken about the spoon theory on this podcast before, but

Laura Kerbey 27:37

Oh, brilliant, brilliant, yeah,

Ross Garner 27:38

give an explanation. Because I think it's really useful for,

Laura Kerbey 27:41

it's really useful. So it basically, it's a bit like, I kind of think of spoons as units of energy. So you won't you wake up in the morning and you have a certain number of spoons, it could be 25. And then throughout the day, you you, you know, you use up your spoons. So it could be that if you if you find travelling or public transport very, very difficult.

You know, by the time you've even gotten to the office, you might have used up five of your 25 spoons. And then you've got a really difficult meeting with a new client that you've never met before. And you know, you've got to make sort of social chitchat with them. And that could use up another three of your spoons. So you might get to 10 o'clock, and you've already used our eight of your 24 spoons. And so I think, yeah, and there are ways to replenish your spoons as well.

So you can replenish your spoons by having guilt in a quiet time or engaging in your special interests, or, you know, everyone's different could be going for a walk, it could be going for a run, it could be having, listening to music at any of those things. And I think that again, that's a really brilliant thing that she fit for, for an autistic port for neurodivergent person to be able to say so one of my colleagues who's autistic, and we were doing some training a little while ago. And it's quite a heavy training day, and it was a hot day. And it got to three o'clock, and he just said to me, Laura, I'm nearly out of spoons. I

said, that's fine. I said we'll wrap it up soon. And he knew that that's all he had to say to me, for me to know that we needed to stop really, really soon. And so I think wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a work environment where someone could say to their, to their boss or a colleague, I'm almost out of spoons, and that person knew exactly what that meant. But then also was was able to make it you know, a reasonable adjustment to make sure that person know was okay.

Ross Garner 29:38

Yeah. And the final question, I think, if anyone listened to this is neurodiverse. What might be helpful for them in terms of thinking about their own career path and where they might want to go and develop?

Laura Kerbey 29:52

Yeah, it's really interesting. Actually, I did a Facebook live about six weeks ago now. I think there's about 12 of us on This life, and we were all neurodivergent. So we were all, I think all of everyone, there was ADHD. And then I think there were 10 autistic people. So myself and another guy were the only ones that were just ADHD.

And interestingly, all of us are self employed. And they're all doing really, really well within our, within our careers as well. So what I would say to anybody who's neurodivergent is, where possible, try and work in a field that is connected to something that you love, or something that you're really, really interested in. You know, I tried jobs when I was younger, that, you know, it was purely a job, it was to get money they might have, I think the first job I accepted off to university accepted was because it came with a company car. Absolutely. Sales and marketing,

I absolutely hated it. And actually, my interested or has always been people, you know, I did my degree in psychology. And I'd always wanted to work with children as well, I just kind of went off that path for for, you know, various reasons when I was in my, when I was in my early 20s. Now that I genuinely do something that I really, really, really loves, it is really, really hard work.

But it's something that I'm really passionate about. And I think if you can do something that you are passionate about, then it doesn't feel like so much of a job. That makes sense. And I think also, you know, try and speak to the people who who work within that field as well. So that you get like a really good understanding. I say work with something, work with something that's a passion or an interest. But I think you also have to be realistic about that. I work with quite a lot of teenagers that are convinced that they're going to be YouTubers.

And the reality is, is that they're not all going to be YouTubers, but there might be jobs around YouTubing, you know, learning about video editing, or sound production or something that you know it, there's a link to it. So yeah, I think I think if you can do something around your passion, I think that would be amazing. And researched as much as you can, so that you understand that, you know what you're really getting yourself into, rather than what you think you're getting yourself into as well.

And then, you know, do do try and talk about the positives of your your condition as well, you know, don't like Miss at the very beginning of this podcast, don't focus on the on the DS that the deficits the disabilities focus on all the things that are, you know, that you're really good at, focus on the things that your your neurodiversity makes you brilliant at and try and sort of focusing on those, but also sell those as well, when you're sort of trying to sell yourself so that you know when you're looking for work or trying to get jobs?

Ross Garner 33:11

Yeah, brilliant. Thanks for sharing all of that. We're going to wrap up now, Ross, what will you be taking from this conversation?

Ross Dickie 33:18

I think for me, I will be trying to be more mindful of neurodiversity at work generally, I think, as we've been talking about is not visible, but I think some of my colleagues could be neurodivergent I've just not had that conversation with them and possibly don't feel comfortable having that conversation with me.

So I think often I'll sort of there's some people avoid working with because they're they seem to be you know, scatterbrained is a word that I've used, but I think it just that they work differently to me, doesn't always lead to the best results. And if I just surround myself with people who think the same way as I do, so let's say, um, can we take away?

Laura Kerbey 33:54

Can I just add to that as well, Ross? I think self identification is really, really

valid. And I think so I think if if you might have a colleague who self identifies as neurodivergent.

And that is, that should never be seen as well. They think they're autistic, but they're probably not, you know, we would never if someone actually brilliant example here that an autistic person said in a presentation of so once they said, You don't have to be diagnosed gay, if you if you if you know you're gay, you're gay and people accept or should accept that you're that you're gay.

You shouldn't really have to feel that you have to get a medical diagnosis diagnosis. Exactly. Yeah. So I think if this is also really, really important, if you're listening to this and you, you strongly feel that you're neurodivergent that is absolutely valid and it's just as valid as somebody who's got a diagnosis and actually colleagues and managers Is should treat that person exactly the same as somebody who does have a formal diagnosis as well.

Ross Garner 35:10

For me reflected in this conversation, it kind of feels like a lot of the advice that you were giving for people who are neurodivergent would apply equally well to people who be neurotypical which, which makes me think that the neurotypical people are maybe just better equipped to put up with a job that they hate and have no passion for other than an environment that they find oppressive and distracting.

That doesn't mean that we should just accept that as the norm, like making accommodations for people who are neurodivergent may have benefits, in fact, for everyone, maybe having more purpose to work and having more flexibility and choice and where you are and what you do. And when you work and these kinds of things. That was just something that struck me.

Laura Kerbey 35:54

Yeah, I completely agree. And when when I was teaching, because my background is teaching I, you know, I might have a class of 16 students, because I worked at my, my first teaching roles were in colleges.

So the classes are about 16. And I might only have one or two autistic students in my class, but I knew that the the kind of reasonable adjustments that I was making for those two students actually benefited all the students in my in my lesson, nobody would have been at any disadvantage.

So I think you're absolutely right there, that a lot of the stuff that neurodivergent people need actually neurotypical people would really benefit from as well.

Ross Garner 36:35

Yep. And what one idea a lot of would you like listeners to remember from this conversation? If they remember nothing else?

Laura Kerbey 36:42

I think the main thing is to treat everybody as an individual. I think, like I mentioned at the beginning, there are a lot of stereotypical views of what neurodiversity is.

And, you know, I am very different to other people that I know who have had it, who have ADHD. And, you know, my autistic clients, and autistic friends are all very different.

So I think the most important thing is just to treat everybody as an individual. Don't sort of lump people together just because they share the same diagnosis. Yeah, great.

Ross Garner 37:25

Thanks very much, really appreciate that conversation. We're going to move on now to a regular feature. One thing I've learned this week, and share somebody picked up over the past seven days. And Ross, do you want to go first?

Ross Dickie 37:37

Absolutely. So I was talking to my niece this week, she's six years old, and regularly schooled me on all things, but particularly around science. So she was telling me that she recently learned in school that our lungs are not the same size as one another. This is possibly something that I should have known

because I studied biology until higher, which is like the end of high school in in Scotland, but I possibly just wasn't paying attention that day.

But it turns out that the the right lung is shorter because as to make room for the liver, which is right underneath it. And then the left lung is a bit narrower, because it has to make room for the heart. I think I've always thought of, you know, these sorts of anatomy models you see in classrooms where the lungs are presented as a poor memory, at least, perfectly symmetrical.

But it turns out that that is not the case. So I'm always fascinated by how much kids know, and expect to be repeatedly schooled over the coming years. So speak to this bright young lady.

Ross Garner 38:45

Yeah, didn't know that either. And a lot of what have you learned this week?

Laura Kerbey 38:50

Well, it actually I had something else to talk about. But I've learned something about an hour before I came on to this. So I was doing, I work as part of a multidisciplinary team doing autism assessments.

And I was talking to this mom about her child. And she said something about him having different stomachs for different foods. And I was a bit flummoxed by that. And she said, Do you not know what I mean? So I said no. So she said, Yes. She said on the same, she said, I can eat my dinner and I feel full of potatoes, but I'll still have room for something else. And I thought that was really fascinating.

And then I started Googling it. And there is something called sensory specific. So I think I can't say the word satiety, which is when basically you This is why we can always find room for dessert, you know when you feel really really full. And then I did this last Saturday, we went out for dinner and I was absolutely stuff that she bought the dessert menu.

I was like, Oh, okay then and yeah, there is a reason it's because you're you Your brain becomes kind of aware of what the what the what the? What can be so your brain becomes aware of the sort of different chemicals that are being released. And because does that really specific chemicals you can like, it's almost like you've got separate stomach for pudding, which I just thought was really, really interesting. And not something I never realised before.

Ross Dickie 40:19

That is super interesting. I always joke about having a separate stock for fitting, but it turns out that is partially true. Yeah. Very interesting Roscoe view. And this week,

Ross Garner 40:32

so I was watching a feature length documentary from the BBC that I thought I'd recommend your nice might enjoy this. Ross is sort of science he kind of thing. It was called dinosaurs the final day with David Attenborough. Now, it is widely believed that the dinosaurs were wiped out by an asteroid that hit the Earth 66 million years ago.

But there's a problem, which is that no dinosaur fossil has ever been found from within 1000 years of that happening in the documentary, what we really see that in the documentary, I didn't really speak to researchers at this site, were trying to verify this claim. There's all sorts of like, sort of CGI recreations of what happened kind of Jurassic Park style, which are fine, but a little bit boring as well, except for a rather gruesome and peeling of a turtle. But it was smart.

Laura Kerbey 41:25

But it was really unnecessary.

Ross Garner 41:30

But what was amazing it was they found these tiny little rocks inside the gills of fossilised fish, and other little rocks at records furls or something like that might be pronouncing that wrong, that they formed when the asteroid hit the Earth. And we know that because these tiny little rocks contain extra terrestrial material.

So these would fly up into the sky when those impacts and rain down, in this case, 2000 miles away, where the fish would choke on them, and die. And so we know that that these fish died when this event happened. Because there's some surprisingly high density of dinosaur fossils in this area.

You can see these dinosaurs died at the same time as well. So it's really great. It's available on the BBC iPlayer. And it was called dinosaurs the final day with David Attenborough. Did you enjoy a lot? Have you seen it?

Laura Kerbey 42:16

Yeah, I thought was really interesting. Yeah, I just started to get a bit paranoid. What's something like that happens again? Is that Is that likely, but yeah, I thought it was really well done. But yeah, the turtle bit was a bit wet my husband. Oh, boy, did they have to show that?

Ross Garner 42:33

Yeah, it was it wasn't it was very sad. And I had forgotten that they found and appealed turtle fossils. So then when they have the recreation of the last day, it really feels like out of nowhere. Yeah. And Laura Julian mentioned anything before we wrap up anyway, you can find out more about you and the work that you do.

Laura Kerbey 42:51

Yes, so my organisation is actually now known as nest. So we were past we were positive autism support and training. And in the new year, we had a bit of a rebrand. And we actually realised that because we were positive autism support and training that didn't actually encompass everything that we do. And we don't just work with autistic individuals and their families and organisations that work with autistic people.

We work with neurodivergent. So we've we've sort of changed that. So we have a very active Facebook page, which is easily found if you just pop in nest and then neurodivergent education support and training. We do lots of regular Facebook Lives where we sort of chat to other neurodivergent people.

We tackle some quite different topics on there. And we do other events. We've got a couple of events this week that are coming up we are we've recently started collaborating with Melanie Sykes who herself received a diagnosis of autism and then later ADHD quite recently. So yeah, there's lots of really good stuff going on on on the Facebook page. And we also have a website as well, which is [www dot n hyphen e s t.org](http://www.nhyphen.es.t.org).

Ross Garner 44:13

Great. And that's it. You've been listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me, Ross Garner and Ross Dickie, a guest this week. It was Laura Kirbey. Until next time, bye for now.