

CPD masterclass: mediating with neurodiversity

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In partnership with

scottish
mediation



AS Anderson
Strathern

Defining and embracing neurodiversity in mediation

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**What do we mean by
Neurodiversity?**

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in human brains:

...how people's information processing, behaviours and traits can differ because of neurodevelopmental differences

Some neurodiversities....

- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Dyslexia (*difficulties with word recognition & decoding*)
- Dyspraxia (*challenges with movement & co-ordination*)

**What is it like for the
neurodivergent
individual?**

A photograph of two women in a meeting, overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. One woman is in the foreground, looking towards the camera, while the other is in the background, seen from the back. The text is centered over the image.

....essentially, differences between the person's strengths and weaknesses are often magnified...

An autistic person

...may find socialising confusing or tiring, or become overwhelmed in loud or busy places

AND they may have intense interests, prefer & enjoy order and routine, and know how to keep calm and happy through regulatory behaviours

Someone with ADHD...

...may struggle to focus, may be hyperactive or impulsive (acting without thinking), and be restless and fidgety

AND be really creative, have high energy and resilience, be spontaneous and intuitive, and have contagious enthusiasm.

A closer look: Autism

About autism

Often referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder, with three common features that people may have difficulties with:

- Interacting with others in social situations
- Communicating with others
- Experiencing the world through the senses

1 in 100

people on the autism spectrum in the UK

Autism Society, 2025

700,000

autistic adults and children in the UK

Autism Society, 2025

Some positives of autism

Many autistic people say that positive characteristics of the condition include:

- Being loyal
- Being honest
- Being focussed

Embracing ASD as Mediators

Someone with ASD may need:

- More time to process information
- Clear, consistent language, rather than abstract phrases
- Less reliance on things like
 - facial expressions
 - jokes and sarcasm
 - metaphors and similes
- An understanding that they may not always hold eye contact, engage in banter, etc.

A closer look: ADHD

About ADHD

People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of:

- inattention, and/or
- hyperactivity–impulsivity

that gets in the way of day-to-day functioning

1 in 25 adults

1 in 20 Children

(approximately) with ADHD in the UK

ADHD UK, 2025

2.6 million

adults and children with ADHD in the UK

ADHD UK, 2025

Some positives of ADHD

Many people with ADHD say that some of the positive characteristics of the condition include:

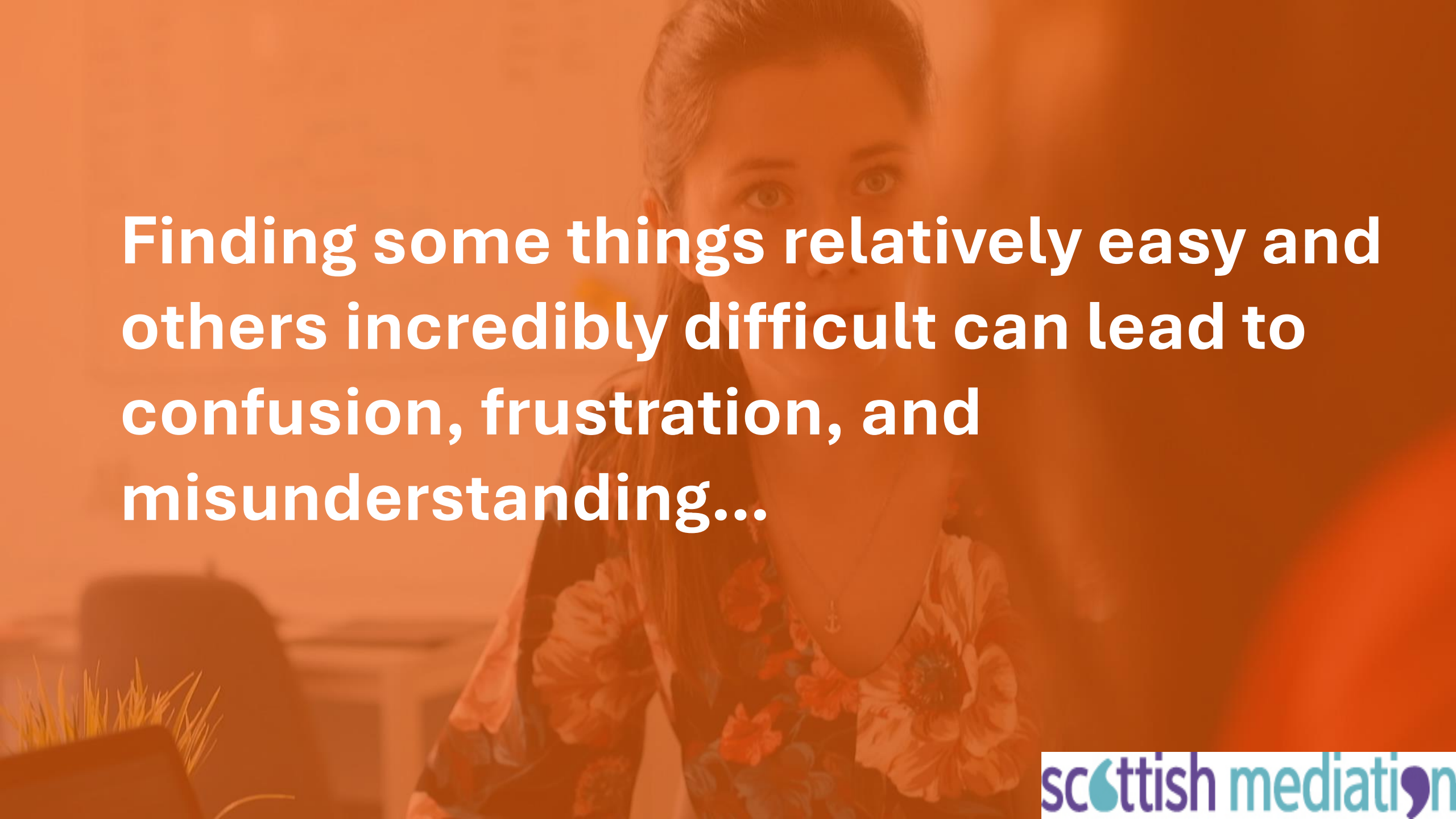
- heightened creativity
- intense focus (hyperfocus) when needed
- a strong sense of adventure & spontaneity
- resilience: an ability to bounce back

Embracing ADHD as Mediators

Someone with ADHD may need:

- A setting with few distractions
- Extra patience and support from the mediator(s)
- Clear and concise language
- Focussing on one point at a time & sometimes using visual cues
- An understanding that they may sometimes speak without thinking and/or talk across other people

**How might conflict
arise around
neurodiversity?**



Finding some things relatively easy and others incredibly difficult can lead to confusion, frustration, and misunderstanding...

And, at work for example, can lead to issues...

Employers and authority figures may think that the individual isn't trying or lacks 'capability' in relation to particular tasks

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Behaviour can be misinterpreted as having poor motivation, a lack of focus, or a bad attitude

And can lead to issues...

Employers and authority figures may think that the individual isn't trying or lacks 'capability' in relation to particular tasks

Behaviour can be misinterpreted as having poor motivation or a bad attitude

Neurotypical assumptions about the person's behaviour can ultimately lead to discrimination

**Why are these insights
Important to mediators?**

To embrace neurodiversity, mediators must...

Consider that mediation might be based on neurotypical assumptions about 'normal', and that our goal is to ensure that mediation is inclusive, and equitable for all

mediators must...

Consider that mediation might be based on neurotypical assumptions about 'normal', and that our goal is to ensure that mediation is inclusive, and equitable for all

Listen to what neurodiverse individuals might need so that they can participate fully in mediation

mediators must...

Use mediation as a safe, non-shaming, and private opportunity for conversations about what people need from each other so that they can resolve their dispute

mediators must...

Use mediation as a safe, non-shaming, and private opportunity for conversations about what people need from each other to make their relationships better

Recognise that it is the mediation environment, and not the individual, that needs to be 'fixed'

Over to Laura.....