

Driving School Experience

Paradoxes in Neurodivergent Experience

- Theory vs. Practice Paradox (2e)**
 - Strong theoretical knowledge (driving theory test) but difficulty translating it into practical skills (driving)
- High Sensory Sensitivity vs. Need for Autonomy**
 - Desiring independence (e.g., driving, navigating life) but facing sensory overload in these contexts
- Social Conformity vs. Self-Preservation**
 - Societal pressure to fit into norms (e.g., driving license, typical social behaviors) vs. choosing what supports personal well-being and self-preservation (e.g., quitting driving school)

Neurodivergence Overview

- Autism** — Sensory Processing Disorder
- ADHD
- Alexithymia
- Dyspraxia
- Stealth Dyslexia

Theory Success

- Scored well on the exam
- Rule-based questions suited cognitive style

Cognitive/Physical Challenges & Self-Awareness

- Mismatch of Abilities & Societal Expectations**
 - Realising driving was incompatible with cognitive and physical abilities
 - Decision to quit driving school was an act of self-preservation
- Self-Awareness & Empowerment**
 - Recognising personal neurodivergent traits leading to better self-understanding
 - Empowered choice to avoid driving, reflecting the need for roles and environments that align with personal strengths
- Dual-Exceptionality (2e)**
 - Experience of strengths (cycling, planning) and challenges (driving, multi-tasking) existing simultaneously
 - Insights into twice-exceptional traits (high potential in some areas, struggles in others)

Practical Failure

- Sensory Integration & Modulation**
 - Multi-channel input overwhelm (visual, auditory, vestibular)
 - Engine noise, traffic dynamics, and honks = trigger stack
- Visuospatial Processing & Motion Estimation**
 - Difficulty parsing dynamic visual scenes in real time
 - Unclear vehicle distances/speeds
 - Country roads = lack of visual anchors
 - Reverse parking: direction, orientation, mirroring, distance
- Cognitive Switching & Action Gating**
 - Delay shifting from one task to another (e.g. gear vs turn)
 - Difficulty with coordination and spatial analysis
 - Commands during execution = task collision
- Working Memory & Instruction Stack**
 - Multi-step directions lost under load
 - Phantom recall: didn't recall if something was done
 - Post-event confusion due to memory unreliability
 - Intrusive thoughts such as "if instructor says left", think twice and don't take the "other left".

Aftermath & Decision

- Each lesson caused mental/emotional/physical crash
- Prioritised Safety
- Recognised personal limits = wise withdrawal
- Compared forcing self to drive to dyslexic person proofreading
- Quitting driving school
- Not giving up, but realising poor fit for cognitive style
- Alternative: Choosing a lifestyle (cycling, walking) that aligns with natural strengths
 - Ability to stop and process thoughts
 - Joy and freedom
 - Connection with nature and physical activity
- Positive Outcomes
 - Understanding personal neurology

Anxiety & Catastrophic Thinking

- Anxiety Feedback Loop**
 - Simulating all outcomes while in motion
 - Fear of panicking, catastrophic thinking (e.g., "I might kill someone")
 - Anxiety leading to paralysis in high-pressure situations

Social & Communication Barriers

- Dislikes**
 - Cost and traffic jams
 - Sensory issues with car noises and smells
 - Preference for walking and cycling
 - Social cult around cars
- Alexithymia (Difficulty Recognising/Describing Emotions)**
 - Unable to describe internal state
 - Emotional disconnect with instructor, leading to misunderstandings
 - Struggling to express feelings or internal states in challenging situations
- Social Expectations and Masking**
 - Pressure to conform to societal norms (e.g., "you need to drive someday")
 - Recognising societal expectations of driving as unreasonable for me