

A Neurodivergent Career: Making Work Fit Us



Joelle Tori Maslak
She/Her/Hers

North Bay Python
2025

A Neurodivergent Career: Making Work Fit Us



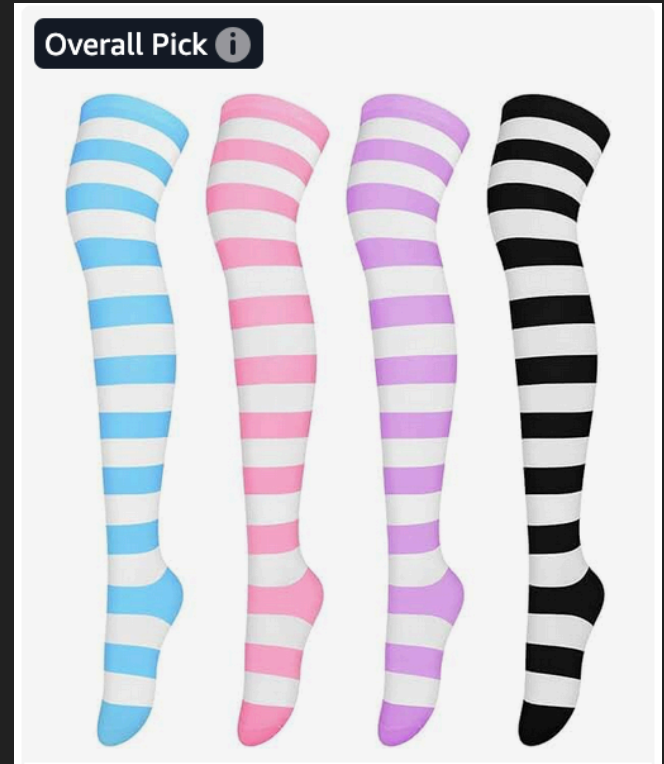
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/j

All Autistic+Trans Women
Are Software Engineers

Don't Believe Me?
Search Amazon for
“programmer
socks”



All Autistic+ Trans Women
Are Software Engineers

A large, thick red 'X' is drawn over the text, indicating that the statement is false or incorrect.

I am a Network Engineer

What is Neurodiversity?

There are an infinite number of
ways human brains work.

What is Neurodivergence?

A brain that works in ways that are
not considered typical


Okay, Enough 101!

Now some Neurodivergence 201.

Capitalism

- Neurodivergence 🤝 Capitalism

Capitalism

- ~~Neurodivergence~~  ~~Capitalism~~
- We may have a strong sense of justice
- Trend towards the neurotypical full-stack developer isn't helpful to us

Trying Harder

It's not laziness.

Solving for laziness won't help.

How Tech can Help

- We don't need tech saviors.

Hackathons won't fix ableism.

They can make ableism worse.

- What are **your** needs?

Tale of Two Autistic Tech Workers

Joelle:

I prefer written
communication.
Always.

Don:

I prefer spoken
communication.
Always.

```
Vlan221 is up, line protocol is up (connected)
Hardware is Vlan, address is 444c.a80a.52eb (bia 444c.a80a.52eb)
Description: "sw08<sw03"
Internet address is 192.168.152.85/30
Broadcast address is 255.255.255.255
IPv6 link-local address is fe80::464c:a8ff:fe0a:52eb/64
IPv6 global unicast address(es):
2607:fc88:1008:20fe::5, subnet is 2607:fc88:1008:20fe::4/126
IP MTU 1500 bytes (default)
Up 102 days, 2 hours, 29 minutes
```

```
24312435123 packets input, 36223634424903 bytes
Received 176774 broadcasts, 303466 multicast
0 runts, 0 giants
5 input errors, 5 CRC, 0 alignment, 0 symbol, 0 input discards
0 PAUSE input
1417928653 packets output, 307903258861 bytes
Sent 4701169 broadcasts, 9858721 multicast
0 output errors, 0 collisions
```


Other Tech I Use

- Separate work/home phone
- Turning off nearly all notifications & badges
- Disabling animations (I.E. in Slack)
- Grayscale on my phone

Other Tech I Use

- “Reader Line” Chrome extension & Reader mode in browsers
- OS-based captioning and combination of CART / auto captions
- Chrome extensions to hide annoying page elements
- Super-annoying reminder program that doesn’t give up (“Due” on Apple App Store)

Non-Tech I Use

- Work from home
- Therapy / Coaching! (with ND therapist)
- Discussion of upcoming meetings w/ my boss
- Saying “no” to social events
- Advocating for help / asking for accommodations

More Non-Tech I Use

- Colored overlays for reading printouts
- I don't travel & meet on same day
- Weighted lap pad
- Stim toys
- Informing coworkers about Prosopagnosia

Communication / Feedback

- I need positive feedback or I think I'm doing bad
- I communicate best in writing for serious stuff
- Asynchronous text communication is my native language!

Job Modification

- Are there things you do well, and things others on your team do well?
- Sometimes you can have a win-win by trading tasks.

Getting Past “I’m not ... enough”

“Do you **need** accommodations?”

We might interpret it literally.

How do you adjust your job?

- Do it unofficially?
- Ask a manager?
- Can I do a trial of an accommodation?
- HR / Disability Support?

How do you adjust your job?

HR has no idea how to help us.

They can't know just from a diagnosis!

We need to tell them what we need.

Ideas



<https://github.com/jmaslak/neurodivergence/blob/main/work.md>

Disclosure

1. What do **you** want from the disclosure?
2. Have you thought of consequences?
Bad **and** good?
3. Who should you disclose to?

Community

There are a lot of neurodivergent communities online!

Some companies have official or unofficial neurodiversity groups.

If not...maybe you can make one.

Neurodivergent
Pythonistas
Discord

Open for this
week.



Resources Shared in this Talk

<https://github.com/jmaslak/neurodivergence>

Ideas



<https://github.com/jmaslak/neurodivergence/blob/main/work.md>