

# A Neurodivergent Career: Making Work Fit Us



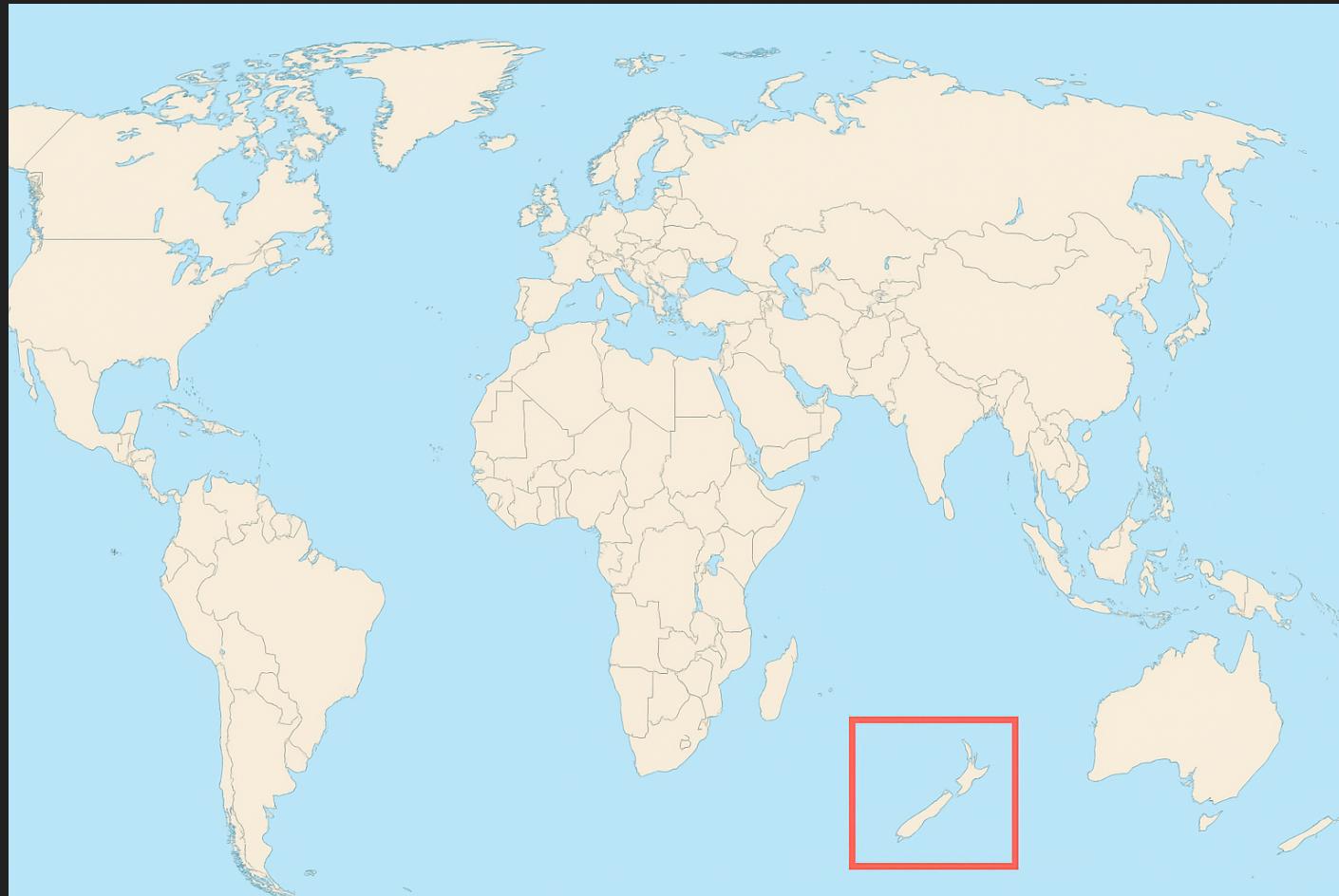
Joelle Tori Maslak  
She/Her/Hers

Kiwi PyCon 2025  
Te Whanganui-a-Tara

Darmok and Jalad  
at Tanagra

No, that's kleptomania.

/j



# 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

# Social Model of Disability

Society accommodates certain abilities and lack of abilities.

Certain profiles are “normal”.



From sample GHFT reproduced in:  
Conson, M., Siciliano, M., Trojano, L., Zoccolotti, P., Zappullo, I., Baiano, C., Caputo, G., Russo, A., & Santangelo, G. (2022). Figure Disembedding: The Gottschaldt's Hidden Figure Test in Children with Typical Development and Autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 52(9), 3790–3799. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-05259-3>

# Social Model of Disability

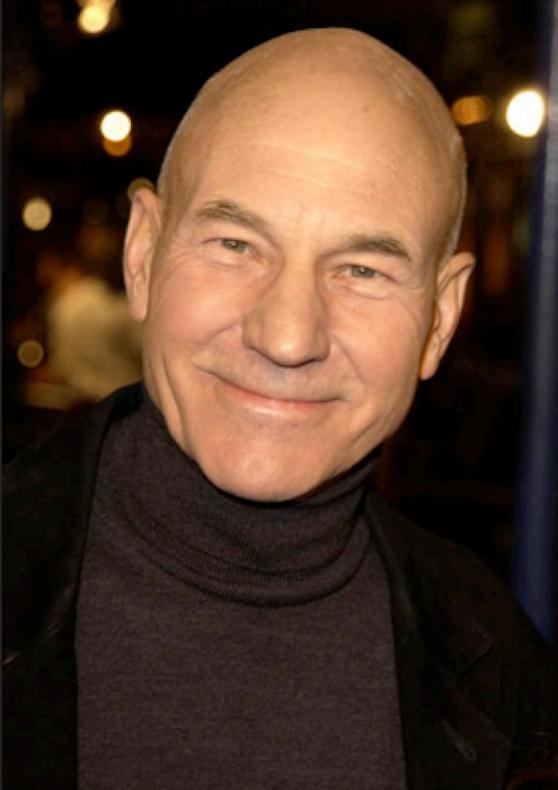
“Right temporoparietal junction underlies avoidance of moral transgression in autism spectrum disorder”

Hu et al. 2021

*The Journal of Neuroscience* 41(8)

pp. 1699-1715

# Social Model of Disability



# Passenger Landing Cards!

► Are you bringing into Australia:

1. Goods that may be prohibited or subject to restrictions, such as medicines, steroids, illegal pornography, firearms, weapons or illicit drugs?
2. More than 2250mL of alcoholic beverages or 25 cigarettes or 25g of tobacco products?
3. Goods obtained overseas or purchased duty and/or tax free in Australia with a combined total price of more than AUD\$900, including gifts?
4. Goods/samples for business/commercial use?

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.

```
[sw08#]show int et11/4
Ethernet11/4 is up, line protocol is up (connected)
  Hardware is Ethernet, address is 444c.a80a.530b (bia 444c.a80a.530b)
  Description: filer1.antelope.net lan6
  Ethernet MTU 9214 bytes, BW 10000000 kbit
  Full-duplex, 10Gb/s, auto negotiation: off, uni-link: n/a
  Up 179 days, 14 hours, 39 minutes, 38 seconds
  Loopback Mode : None
  4 link status changes since last clear
  Last clearing of "show interface" counters 179 days, 14:44:24 ago
  30 seconds input rate 57.8 kbps (0.0% with framing overhead), 20 packets/sec
  30 seconds output rate 55.3 kbps (0.0% with framing overhead), 30 packets/sec
    1761111124 packets input, 2386928239436 bytes
    Received 310810 broadcasts, 568320 multicast
    0 runts, 0 giants
    3660 input errors, 3660 CRC, 0 alignment, 92 symbol, 0 input discards
    0 PAUSE input
    399940389 packets output, 92122272529 bytes
    Sent 6502428 broadcasts, 16491273 multicast
    0 output errors, 0 collisions
    0 late collision, 0 deferred, 0 output discards
    0 PAUSE output
```

```
|sw08#show int et11/4
Ethernet11/4 is up, line protocol is up (connected)
  Hardware is Ethernet, address is 444c.a80a.530b (bia 444c.a80a.530b)
  Description: filer1.antelope.net lan6
  Ethernet MTU 9214 bytes, BW 10000000 kbit
  Full-duplex, 10Gb/s, auto negotiation: off, uni-link: n/a
  Up 179 days, 14 hours, 41 minutes, 50 seconds
  Loopback Mode : None
  4 link status changes since last clear
  Last clearing of "show interface" counters 179 days, 14:46:36 ago
  30 seconds input rate 48.1 kbps (0.0% with framing overhead), 21 packets/sec
  30 seconds output rate 59.3 kbps (0.0% with framing overhead), 31 packets/sec
    1761113029 packets input, 2386928769515 bytes
    Received 310815 broadcasts, 568324 multicast
    0 runts, 0 giants
    3660 input errors, 3660 CRC, 0 alignment, 92 symbol, 0 input discards
    0 PAUSE input
    399943280 packets output, 92122952515 bytes
    Sent 6502453 broadcasts, 16491399 multicast
    0 output errors, 0 collisions
    0 late collision, 0 deferred, 0 output discards
    0 PAUSE output
```

```
I L2      192.168.153.1/32  [115/110] via 192.168.152.51, Vlan102
I L2      192.168.153.5/32  [115/100] via 192.168.152.82, Vlan220
I L2      192.168.153.6/32  [115/100] via 192.168.152.86, Vlan221
C         192.168.153.24/32 is directly connected, Loopback0
B I       192.168.157.0/24  [200/0]  via 192.168.152.51, Vlan102
B I       192.168.158.0/24  [200/0]  via 192.168.152.51, Vlan102
```

```
I L2      2607:fc88:1008:2020::2/128 [115/1100]
          via fe80::20c:29ff:fed7:f8e2, Vlan102
I L2      2607:fc88:1008:2020::/64  [115/1100]
          via fe80::20c:29ff:fed7:f8e2, Vlan102
B I       2607:fc88:1008:20f0::/64  [200/0]
          via fe80::20c:29ff:fed7:f8e2, Vlan102
B I       2607:fc88:1008:20f3::/64  [200/0]
          via fe80::20c:29ff:fed7:f8e2, Vlan102
```

## Other Tech I Use

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

# Reminder Systems

- Meeting notification light under my monitor
- “Today’s view” of tasks
- Super-annoying reminder program that doesn’t give up (“Due” on Apple App Store)

## Other Tech I Use

- “Reader Line” Chrome extension & Reader mode in browsers
- OS-based captioning and combination of CART / auto captions
- Browser extensions to hide annoying page elements

## 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
- Weighted lap pad
- Stim toys
- Informing coworkers about

Prosopagnosia

## Examples - Travel

- Don't travel and work on same day
- Doc on quiet places in airports
- Noise masking hearing aid program
- Giving myself permission to stim in public while traveling
- Asking for pictures/floor plans before I visit new spaces

So, how do you do this?

# Disclosure

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

## Disclosure

If you don't give a label, will others?

Getting Past “I’m not … enough”

“Do you **need** accommodations?”

We might interpret it literally.

# What Do You Want?

- Have a goal!
- Focus on what adjustments you want, not labels (but labels aren't bad!)

## Who do you ask for adjustments?

- HR / Disability Support?
- Manager?
- Coworkers?
- Nobody!

## Job Modification / Crafting

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

A strategy...when others do need to help...

- Consider asking for a trial, particularly for “high status” accommodations
- Focus on productivity

## Community

There are a lot of neurodivergent communities online!

Some companies have official or unofficial neurodiversity groups.

If not...maybe you can make one.

# Conclusion

Ideas



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

# Neurodivergent Pythonistas Discord

Open for this  
week.



# Resources Shared in this Talk

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