

The importance of enlightenment

Published: January 12, 2026, 9:07 pm

I discussed whether I should [publish the articles that I have put out](#) on autism, ADHD, AuDHD and related issues this morning with somebody who most definitely has the last of these conditions, and then went through a risk analysis with them based [on my disclosure](#) that I strongly suspect that I also have both such conditions.

Their immediate reaction was:

You know that your opponents will now use this to say that you don't understand what life is like for normal people because you think that you are not neurotypical, and they will use this to dismiss you?

We discussed this, and they made clear that there were three issues to highlight.

First, they said:

You need to point out that this is nonsense.

The reality of life for a person with any of these conditions is that they have to become an acute observer of what is regarded as "normal behaviour" and learn by observation what it is so that they can comply with it, which is the demand that neurotypical people make of those with ASD, ADHD and AuDHD.

In other words, the non-neurotypical person becomes more aware of what it is to be neurotypical than neurotypicals themselves know, precisely because they have spent so long studying it that you can imitate it to perfection, even though it is something they will never be.

They then put this another way:

The life of the person with ASD, ADHD or AuDHD is, in fact, the equivalent of somebody who is almost perfectly bilingual, but who has been forced to spend their life speaking their second language. That's because of the demands of those for whom that is their first language who, firstly, refuse to recognise there is even a second language and,

secondly, if they do then most definitely refuse to learn it.

I found these insights really helpful. This is what living with these conditions is like, expressed better than I could put it, because the person I consulted has spent far more time dealing with the consequences of their diagnosis, and the need for it, than I have ever dedicated to the subject.

They then made their third suggestion, which was this.

What you really need to do is highlight that these are not diagnoses as such. They are, more properly, discoveries.

After all, these conditions are not a sickness, but are instead descriptions of the difficulties people have fitting into a world that does not wish to accept the way non-neurotypical people are.

The reality is that life with these conditions can be great. There is absolutely no reason why not. In fact, those with them often bring what might be called superpowers with them, which can be liberating and enormously valuable to society.

For example, the reason why so many people with one or both of these conditions are so creative is that they have to develop deep insights because they have to observe the world acutely, and therefore understand its peculiarities, which they can highlight in their work as both participants and observers.

There is also a very good reason why so many comedians have one or more of these conditions, and that is that they can, in particular, see what is so funny about so much behaviour because, once again, they have to observe it so closely.

Again, I found these observations liberating and useful, and they helped inform my decision to publish.

They also pointed me [to this article](#), literally published this week, which says:

A new international study reports that adults with ADHD who are aware of their personal strengths and use them regularly tend to experience higher well-being, better quality of life, and fewer mental health problems.

Scientists from the University of Bath, King's College London, and Radboud University Medical Center in the Netherlands conducted the first large-scale investigation designed to measure psychological strengths in adults with ADHD.

Their point was:

If those suggesting there is overdiagnosis of SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) understood this, they'd ask for more diagnoses: they are the way to solve

many health problems and to increase success at school and productivity in society.

In my own case, I think my understanding, reached some decades ago, that I was an INTJ in Myers-Briggs terms, and more recently that I am a person most likely with AuDHD, has helped me appreciate:

- * Why systems thinking is what I am most suited to.
- * Why I am inclined to work on my own, and not in organisations or groups, most especially of any size.
- * Why I am not inclined to be a politician.
- * Why, much as I enjoy public events, I can only cope with doing them occasionally. I always need space after such events to recover, because that is what a deep introvert always does, even if they have learned to be profoundly socially proficient, as I think I have.

I share these observations in the hope that they might enlighten others as well.

Tickets are now on sale for the **Funding the Future live event in Cambridge** on 28 February. [**Tickets and details are available here.**](#)

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