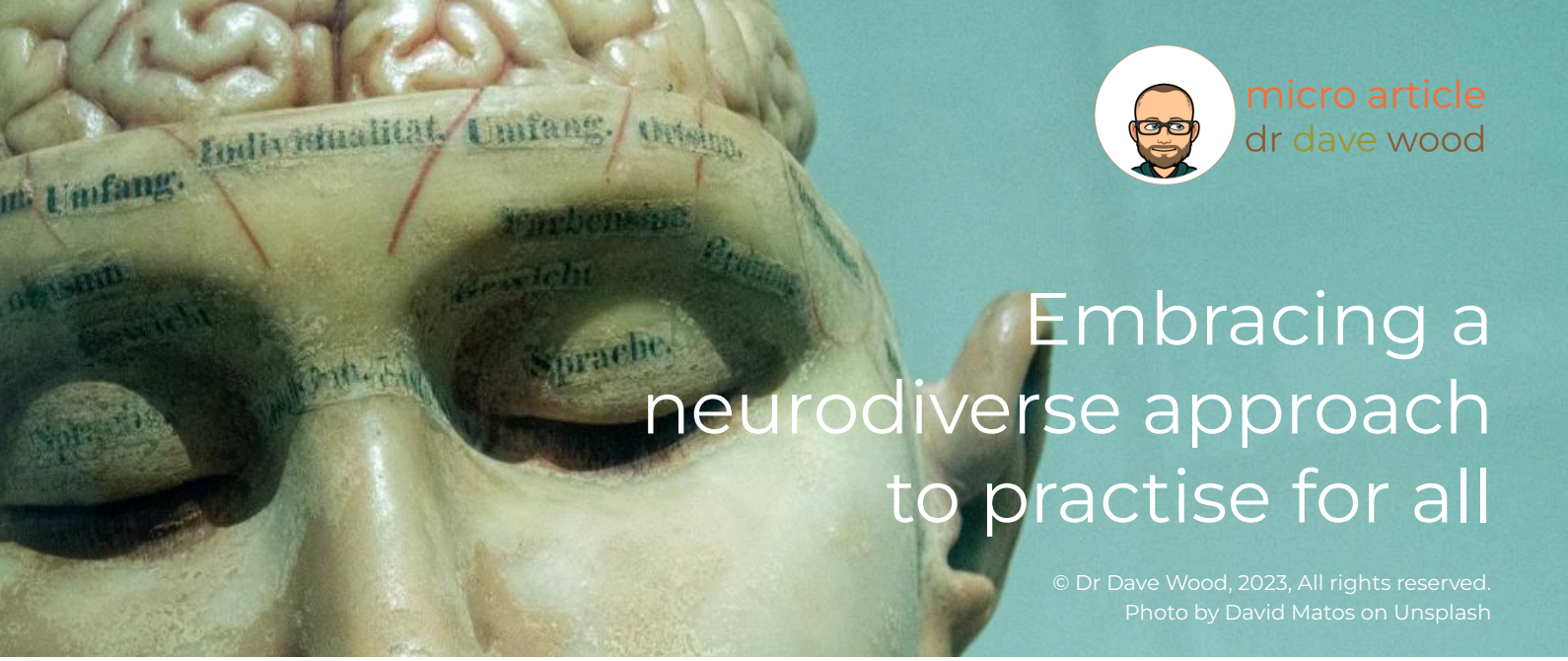

micro article
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Embracing a neurodiverse approach to practise for all

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Embracing the principles of neurodiversity can help us build more effective approaches for all with whom we work.

The idea of the neurodiverse spectrum is borrowed from the science of white light. Just as white light is made up of an infinite mix of colours, the way our brains function is a complex mix of attributes. So, rather than the spectrum being a linear line of high or low functioning, it is better represented by the infinity symbol ♾️.

Is diagnosis important?

As we all possess different neurodiverse attributes, pathologising our differences into disorders might seem unnecessary. However, the majority of people generally share neurotypical attributes in how they process and function in the world. When the character traits of neurodivergence significantly impact on someone's ability to function, diagnosis can help access resources and provide understanding and useful adaptive techniques. So, diagnosis can be useful and positive for some, and negative and labelling for others.

The neurodiverse superpower?

For some people, their neurodiversity may provide them with a unique perspective or focus which can be fulfilling. For many, this is not the case and creates real challenges.

Common challenges neurodiverse people face in comparison to neurotypical include:

- **Communication & social interaction.** The ability to interact with others may be impaired, for example, not getting non-verbal cues, taking things literally.
- **Non-social characteristics.** Some have 'unusual' interests, repeat the same action, struggle to focus or may be over sensitive to certain senses.
- **Perspective taking.** Some people struggle to understand other people's perspectives or emotions.

Making practice personal

We can apply learning from the experiences of neurodiverse people to all we work with:

- **Literacy** - don't be solely reliant on forms and written exercises.
- **Understanding** - don't assume you understand someone or them you.
- **Memory** - consider prompts.
- **Routines** - have clear structures.
- **Flexibility** - hear what people need.
- **Self-determination** - embrace the person's skills and independence.
- **Network** - help identify and build a positive support network.