# Autism and working in IT "There and back again, an Autism tale"

Bart de Bruijn

#### Who am I?

- Bart de Bruijn
- 42 years old
- I work in IT (YaWorks)
- Diagnosed with Autism in '22



## What's the story?

- Some context on Autism
- My story, working in IT
- Strengths
- Q&A

# What gets you an Autism diagnosis?

- Persistent deficits in social communication and interaction across multiple contexts
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities
- Symptoms must be present in early developmental period
- Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in functioning
- All of the above is not better explained by intellectual impairment or developmental delay

#### What isn't Autism?

- Someone who's fond of organizing things
- Someone who's enthousiastic about a hobby
- Someone who doesn't like crowds, or noise
- Someone who doesn't quite "fit in"

- Stop saying "my inner Autistic Person blablabla"
- Autism is more than a collection of symptoms

#### **Cause and prevalence**

- Autism has a neurological basis (information processing)
- Autism is not learned behavior (wired differently)
- Roughly 1% of people has it, as far as we know
- In contrast, about 4-5% of people has ADHD
- People with Autism and ADHD share part of the spectrum
- We know that people with Autism gravitate towards "tech"



## My story

- Never really fit in, triangle in a square world
- Got picked on/bullied a lot in early childhood
- Felt alone and misunderstood
- Academic challenges, despite being considered very intelligent
- Mask to cope
- Masking takes an incredible amount of energy



# Working in IT

- Studied Chemistry and Psychology, finished neither
- Started working at a small IT/MSP company
- Taught myself networking, MPLS, MP-BGP, IGP's
- Switched jobs, kept learning things (Python)
- Ended up as an IT consultant/specialist for the past 8 years

Being a consultant is a perfect fit for me

#### My challenges

- "Reading" people, email
- Cubicle culture ("kantoortuin")
- Being "diplomatic"
- "Educating" people, it makes people feel stupid or offended
- Masking, or fitting in. Overthinking
- "Imposter syndrome"
- Becoming irrationally angry about something small

### My challenges, continued

- Focus on details, not so much big picture
- Side tracked easily (side quests)
- Whom do you tell you have Autism?
- Very good motivation for things I like doing
- Very poor motivation for things I don't like doing
- Autistic shutdown/brain fog, under/overstimulation
- Depression



#### Strengths

- People with Autism struggle with social and occupational settings, but can function and thrive in them
- We're honest, caring, hard working and genuine. We lack social adaptability, not empathy.
- We're usually very analytical, creative and detail focused
- We can thrive, but please meet us halfway
  - We see/experience the world differently
  - Be clear when communicating, don't infer/imply

"It's almost like language. Neurodivergent people can speak Neurotypical, but with an accent"





