

Beyond Understanding

A suggestions guide for hidden differences at partner dancing environments

related to

Salsa, Bachata, Kizomba, Cuban Salsa, La Rueda and many more

Understanding & information for attendees with hidden differences
Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety

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KMC



With extracts from

▼ Plus Value Awareness



Detailed guide
For Salsa and related organisations leaders & key members



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This document is written by Keith Mckenzie creator of neurodiversity awareness projects, a qualified graphic designer and a participant of salsa dancing & community projects

Introduction

This document gives you an understanding of young people & adults with invisible difficulties in the salsa environment. These guides can also apply to other dancing such as Bachata, Kizomba, Cuban Salsa & many more.

How to use this guide

This guide provides suggestions, ideas and possibilities.

To make it easier you can use a support structure to make sure any solutions are far-reaching and to benefit your team.

The structure examples

Support Level 1: Organising teams

Support Level 2: Teachers & class helpers

Support Level 3: Experienced dancers and participants

Support Level 4: Social event DJs & hosts

It will be impossible for everyone to understand at the same level, so can use the structure to communicate & share relevant information.

You can use the level to share relevant information & guidance.

For example, the members under the level 1 support would have more detailed information meanwhile the members under the Support Level 3 would only receive essential summary but would communicate to others a different support level for any queries information and updates on any progress.

Please note

Even though the information and suggestions are related to dancers for Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Social Anxiety some of the information can also apply to independent people with other neurological difficulties, invisible disabilities and people who experience anxiety. However, it would be advised to approach the information with caution to prevent any negative situations or any circumstances which could be compromising to anyone well-being and stability

About Hidden Differences

The term hidden differences are a collective description of independent & articulate people who lives with neurologically related difficulties and specific phobia which you cannot see. It is linked with a family of conditions at a moderate level, including Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Social anxiety & others. The types of difficulties can affect the mind (including memory), communication, physical appearance, practical tasks, physical appearance, reading, writing & calculation. The difficulties can vary from person to person along with their self-awareness, adjustments, empathy and considerations.

Please note: Because of many feedback & to prevent further stigma this document and the projects and information online are summarised as "Hidden differences" or "Differences".

Their lives and their impact

Despite many individuals have many there do have many strengths they also have a limitation of specific along with coping mechanisms. This can affect their ability to function and in some cases affect their presence in society by facing stigma, and shame. Individuals who have restrictions on physical appearance, socialising & memory can get easily singled out with harassment, bullying & hate. In some cases, they have to suffer without sharing or reporting due to negative attitudes. When this occurs, it can affect their mindset in dancing environments. This can affect their presence in classes when attending classes & events or how long they stay.

**Find out more online by visiting
<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>**

Select the feature "About Hidden Differences" page from the home page

Classes & Social dances

Some individuals can excel more than others. However, individuals who are visual learners and have obstacles in short-term memory may take longer to learn some moves than others. If the dance moves are more complicated it will be harder for them to dance after the end classes with any confidence.

Some will need to make notes on a notepad & the note-taking app on their mobile & tablet devices to remember the specific moves which enable them to stretch their dance to provide a display variety of dancing. However, they can be pressured not to do this to appear too anti-social.

Social nights & conventions

An individual with hidden differences presence can depend highly on a connected surrounding and a supported social circle. With large crowds and a busy environment, it can be a stressful & intimidating environment. This can lead to the right risk for them to be discouraged and be made to dance much less and become highly stressed especially if they are socially ignored or rejected. This can also occur when facing negative & critical judgement when dancing with a partner.

Impact of environment & dancing culture

The partner dancing environment can appear very competitive.

If short-term memory and differences in physical appearance can affect an individual can be judged as disruptive when struggling in classes. One of the examples is with classes in tighter spaces may be harder to learn and can face hostility against their intelligence & can be unfairly humiliated in front of other attendees.

Unsupported & impatient dancing partners can compromise their presence. This includes receiving overloading bossy attitudes from dancing partners and communicating with impatient & intolerant responses. Further problems occur to make it harder for a person with differences to learn authentically when the dancing partner physically intervened when pressurised to complete moves and have their hands pushed to stop dancing when a wrong dance move is made. Also, they can be told off if an accident can occur, even if it's not intentional.

Unfortunately the situation can occur when person with hidden differences can received discrimination including facing ableist office and denigrating insults against their level of intelligence. This can harm their dancing confidence and their presence.

All the examples a person with hidden differences face can ultimately lead them to pull out of classes. This will damage their dancing confidence & not likely to dance with anyone after classes. If a person with differences is seen pulling out of classes too often & displaying anxiety, then they can lose social credibility risking marginalisation and alienation. Their difficulties can be used to be ridiculed & mocked with similar prejudice elsewhere in society which causes a damaging & hurtful scar which makes them feel that their presence as an odd outsider and not take them seriously as a joke for example. Any kind discrimination can lead to the person leaving the dancing environment completely, especially if they was not supported to an adequately level.

It is extremely important to discourage and to not tolerate any kind ableism and other type of discrimination against a person's difficulties what attending classes. This can cause extreme amount of emotional distress. So it is essential for the offending person to be intervened challenged very quickly. In addition the tutor should provide extra support on the dance steps on the attended class which might be harder to follow. If no support or action was made if the matter is reported, it can cause a situation of mistrust and being undervalued for the wrong reasons

The well-being & social effect

The Well-being impact

As mentioned elsewhere how a person with differences can be made to pull out of classes. The impact can lead to mental blocks & Anxiety. The effect can mean they don't participate in social dancing or only limit themselves to people they appreciate & are comfortable with. Unless they have a social circle a person with differences can be seen alone & not able to socially engage with anyone.

As well as smaller environments moving lights & glare vision can cause a damaging effect. Unless a person with differences has some sort of support, engagement & social connectivity any form of stress & anxiety cannot only affect the rest of the evening but also the following day.

The social impact

Due to a lack of understanding & misinterpretation, a person with differences can be wrongly judged as a burden & negative energy. Another kind of judgement will use their differences to attack their character and be perceived as toxic person.

They can be seen as not trying hard enough to become demonised for not being able to keep up with others during classes. When confiding in others they can be wrongly seen as an attention seeker facing unhelpful labels as a creep or a leech. Some can use competitive manipulation to disapprove of their engagement with others, such as "you talk too much" when they are simply socialising. Further, some people with a person with differences socially reject them as disapproval of their presence.

The Social Variations

The examples can lead to some men, especially those with difficulties can be rejected when asking a woman to dance with them. Some people make distracting excuses to reject dancing with a person with differences too. This kind of mistreatment can also occur when attempted to be sociable. This can mean certain men with differences, especially with autism & social anxiety can be easily rejected & ignored, being forced to being easily socially excluded, marginalised and alienated.

Some women with differences can be wrongly socially taken advantage of and can be exploited and manipulated & which can mean social mistrust can occur which affects their dancing confidence & presence.

The lack of understanding can lead to

Some examples of what can happen to a person with differences. As mentioned elsewhere how social & dancing rejection can lead to marginalisation & become socially estranged. If they are seen on their own the majority of the time a person with differences can be wrongly judged as "Anti-social" and an outsider.

Social boundaries can cause a damaging effect on dancing. This can mean they can be forced to be seen much less and be made to reduce their presence to maintain their life stability and to maintain their dignity. Anyone who received this kind of negativity might feel they cannot cope or stress. This can mean the particular person with hidden differences might stop attending completely for several weeks, months or even several years as a way to maintain their well-being and self worth.

How to maintain their presence

Support Level 1: Organising teams

Be aware of a person who may not be on the learning level compared with others.

Getting to know if & discover if they have difficulties which can affect their learning. Also, if they have shared their difficulties with their condition, then give them your support & encouragement. Especially if they are self-aware, attempted to be considerate to others & trustworthy.

Keep monitoring on situations & aspects which bring the best out of their presence & dancing as well as situations which are too compromised. Also to keep regular contact to monitor their progress. Inform the teaching & key attendees & share important information about their difficulties and ways to maintain their presence. If the person with differences is on their own the majority of the time and they are not dancing much encourage other experienced dancers and other attendees to spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them. Also for encouraging others to develop friendships with the person with differences.

For suggestions, their ideas could be helpful for class, social dances & events.

How to maintain their presence

Support Level 2: Teachers & class helpers & DJs

During classes, it is helpful to mention at the beginning to all attendees "Everyone has different learning speeds and might be difficult if someone may struggle to keep the same learning speeds." Also to mention "All followers need to bear in mind the challenges which leaders have to go through when learning". Some Individuals with differences are visual learners (in particular the Autistic spectrum & Dyslexia) and needed to visualise & see everything in detail to understand.

This can mean it will take longer than average to master the moves authentically. This can mean they need a short period of time after classes. It is important to discourage other attendees to be critical and instead let them inform you directly.

It would be good to spend extra time with them after classes to practice the moves with options to let the helper or a key attendee give the extra time of assistance. It should not be taken more than 10-15 minutes to master the moves. If a person has pulled out, approach them after the classes, including if the other attendee's attitudes & impatience forced them out of the classes and to report this to the organising teams. Also, offer if they need minor assistance for an additional 10 minutes.

Support Level 3: Experienced dancers and participants

During the same class, be aware if a person is struggling, especially if they are feeling pressurised. If the person has pulled out, offer assistance away separately, which should last more than 5 minutes. If the person is on their own majority and they are not dancing much encourage other experienced dancers and other attendees to spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them. If they are stressed and anxious invite them for a quiet chat and ask them about any issues which affect them. It might be to do with dancing, social aspects or conflicting issues which impact their daily life because of their difficulties. Just giving them your listening time can have them relaxed. All these measures can make a difference between staying around and dancing for longer or heading home much earlier than others.

How to maintain their presence

Support Level 4: Social event DJ's & hosts

As the recognised faces & dancers other than teachers & other team members have the advantage of watching what is going on. For the event hosts make a suggestion of mentioning just before any party to encourage attendees to approach anyone to dance beyond anyone they normally dance and to be patient as everyone is not on the same level.

A suggestion for DJ's & hosts to have a number of games such as "switch" at each social event to encourage everyone to dance with different people and with more variety of people regardless of abilities or background

The event host can also be a point of initial contact to ask other team members to help or support them dancing & socially (especially if a person with differences has a little social circle or is anxious)

Other points to consider

Safeguarding allowances

Any adjustments towards a person with differences must be based on trust as well as their self-awareness, consideration intentions, responsibility intentions, adjustments and compassion for others.

If someone is unaware that they are behaving inappropriately then they need to be initially informed in a respectful way to prevent bad feelings and still make them feel welcome and appreciated. But if any problems persist, then you can follow any procedure that's appropriate for you.

However, if anyone is exploiting your trust & your team by taking advantage or compromising the safety of your team then you need to follow any procedures to safeguard your team and creditability towards visitors and the venue.

This can be done by using the support structure to make any actions effective. This must be done in a way without any sort of resentment to maintain your team's security & safety.

This might be a reminder, warning and further action to prevent future problems to occur. If a person with hidden differences has a lack of self-awareness then you could refer them to instruction websites such as how.com (with a UK version also available) & wikihow.com.

When circumstances & climate is challenging

If any part of the team members is going through a challenging or compromised circumstances need to inform the person with differences right away. This is important because if they approach the crew members and have reacted more negatively not only affects how they feel but not only can they take it the wrong way when not only they are dancing much less they are likely to leave early. If they offer empathy or undermine it is important not to reject their consideration or to silence them as it harms their presence.

Social & presence issues

The pressures of learning levels & social radar

When a person with differences especially those who are visual learner's may not be quicker to learn compared to others, this can mean they can fall behind all the people they know. This may occur for example if the majority of people who knows a person with differences are at classes at intermediate and advanced level or a person with differences remain to attend classes at improvers level. This might not be a major problem initially, but over a number of years if a person with differences are not at the same level with the same people day they are initially socially with they are highly likely to have a much lower social radar (especially those with autism & social anxiety).

This can lead to be socially ignored at social dances after classes and at parties, events and become very marginalised. Even if try to catch up to the same level of others of they struggle & become stressed being forced to pull out can mean they judged negatively such as mentally too slow or not trying to push themselves through the envelope without realising the harmful implications of anxiety mental health and well-being. Also be seen as backwards if a person with differences has to lower level class from intermediate to improvers.

This is why have additional experiences nominated to help & support if necessary may bridge the gap and can increase the social radar to prevent marginalisation.

However resentment & jealousy can happen if this happen the prejudice must be challenged and corrected very quickly by a team member.

Social & presence issues

Marginalisation & alienation

Individuals with differences, especially those on the autistic spectrum might not be able to manage to socialise at a level of what's expected this can mean they can easily be disrespected, disliked and ignored. If that occurs, then it cannot affect their motivation to dance and can cause stress and anxiety if they are continuously on their own and not able to engage. Men in particular hidden differences are under greater pressure to make an effort to approach others and make friends, especially when the traditions of women are approached by other men. However, this can lead to being shunned, rejected and disliked. When attempting to be sociable and trying to display a sense of humour can lead to hostile responses against them. Because they are at risk of bullying & discrimination and marginalising manipulation which harm their presence.

Be aware of the risks they face against harassment, bullying & hate

Just like at festivals a person with differences is at risk to face prejudice, bullying discrimination and hate. If ignored, not only could affect their personal safety, it could force them to draw their presence or be made to not attend at all. When attendees have drunk some alcohol could behave unsavoury and certain people might single out a person with differences by ridiculing, bullying or causing further harm without other people noticing explicitly in an impact atmosphere. Just like at festivals, it is essential that a person with differences isn't continuously on their own for out the event and be supported when things become challenging.

Marginalising exploitation

It is important to be aware and what can happen if a person with differences does not have a social circle and is seen on their own. Over a period of time, it can lead to certain attendees disliking & disapprove of their presence. Prejudiced or intolerant people can take advantage of a person with differences to deliberately make a person with differences in social life very difficult. For example, if a person with differences is socially engaging with a social friend & acquaintance, the prejudiced or intolerant person would approach the social friend/acquaintance suddenly and abruptly cut into their conversation with a person with differences and when walking them away to either socially engaged with each or to dance together. This means a person with differences would force to stop being socially engaged. It can make them feel separated to a level their sense of belong does not exist. This deliberate strategy is to undermine the person with differences presence to make them feel they should not be around and should of not attended in the first place. This should be informed of any of the salsa teams and if necessary confront the offender who's deliberately making things difficult.

Support & reporting

The Supporting & reporting summary

Support Level 1: Organising teams

Get to know if & discover if they have Differences. If they have shared their difficulties against their condition then give them their sport & encouragement. Especially if they are self-aware, attempted to be considerate to others & trustworthy. Keep in regular communication on their progress.

If the person with differences is on their own the majority of the time and they are not dancing much encourage other experienced dancers and other attendees to spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them. Also for encouraging others to develop friendships with the person with differences.

For suggestions, their ideas could be helpful for class, social dances & events.

Support Level 2: Teachers & class helpers

It is important to discourage other attendees to be critical and instead let them inform you directly. It would be good to spend extra time with the person with differences if struggling after classes to practice the moves it should take no longer than 10-15 mins. If a person has pulled out, approach them after the classes, including if the other attendee's attitudes & impatience forced them out of the classes and to report this to the organising teams. Also, offer if they need minor assistance for an additional 10 minutes.

Support Level 3: Experienced dancers and participants

If they notice a person has pulled out of a class, offer assistance away separately which should last more than 5 minutes. If the person is on their own majority and they are not dancing much encourage other experienced dancers and other attendees to spend a brief time with them socially and to dance with them.

If they are stressed and anxious invite them for a quiet chat and ask them about any issues which affect them. Just giving them your listening time can have them relaxed enabling them to dance more & to stay at the social dance for longer.

Support Level 4: Social event DJs & hosts

A suggestion for DJs present the switch games on the dance floor to encourage everyone to dance with different people dance more variety of people regardless of abilities or background. The event host can also be a point of initial contact the ask other team members to help or support them in dancing & socially (especially if a person with differences has a little social circle or is anxious)

Extracts from sense of belonging & momentum circle

Extracts from Sense of purpose & Momentum Circle

A visual element of the education and training feature "Smarter Senses" who shows what can be possible with the positive effects of sense of belonging.

Remember unless a person with differences are socially engaging with many people then they're not likely to be motivated or feel encourage to dance frequently, leading to anxiety & being made to leave early.

Table 1: Momentum Circle

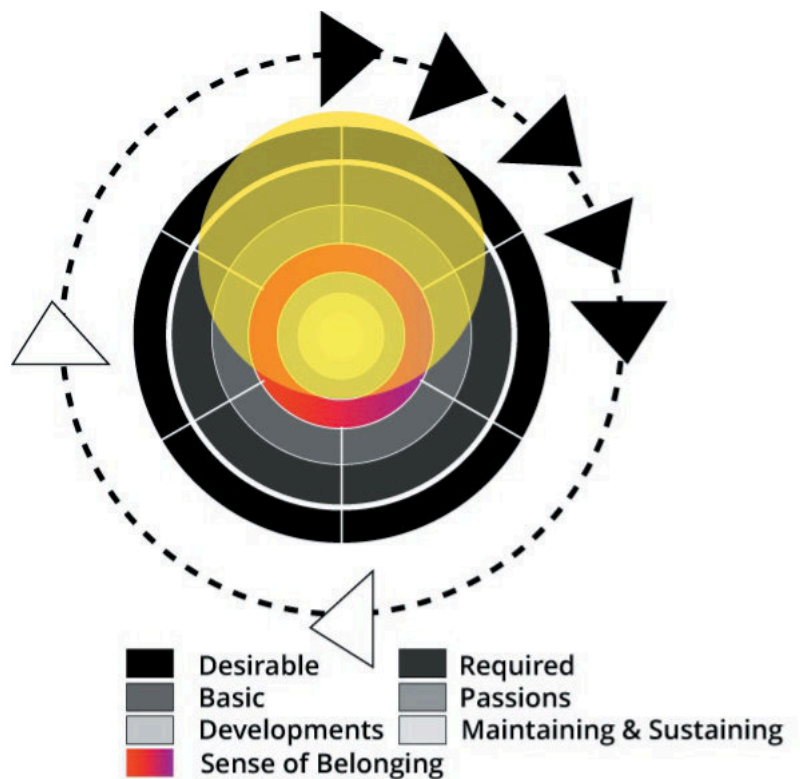
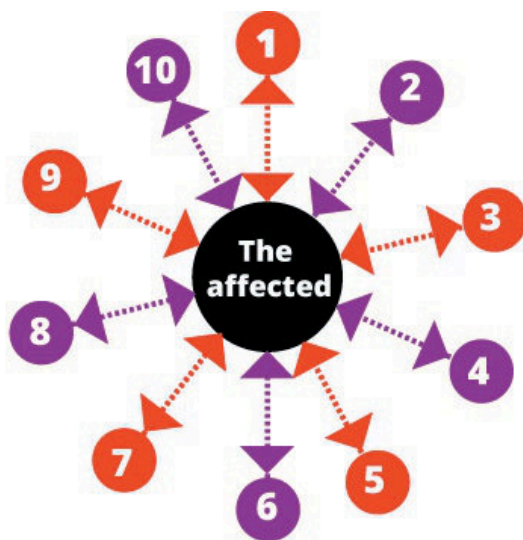


Table 2: Sense of Belonging



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 Good Company | 2 Admire qualities & identity |
| 3 Engaging & show interest | 4 Understanding |
| 5 Value & supportive | 6 On their minds when not around |
| 7 Respected & appreciated | 8 Humour & entertaining |
| 9 Accepting to make allowances | 10 Balanced between idealism & realism |

Additional Factors

Women with social anxiety and autism can be able to mask their difficulties better than men. An autistic & ADHD woman can adapt or blend into social situations better and have fewer boundaries than men.

So unless an autistic or ADHD man can access the social know-how, it is much harder to mask their differences and be able to navigate social occasions without rejection, exclusion and prejudiced attitudes. Also, an autistic woman can largely manage verbal tasks better than men.

A Dyspraxic woman can manage motor coordination more than men. However, they can face many day to day tasks including eyeliner and wearing high heels. There has been conflicting research that there are no variations between dyslexic men and women. However, there is other research that there is some distinctive variation between different sexual orientations.

Because of social pressures on men not to share their feelings, if they ask about something is wrong they can be disbelieved or dismissed as some men share information very short to hide any shame or embarrassment. Women with hidden differences can also be disbelieved as they manage social situations better and mask their difficulties.

Hidden Differences and Multicultural backgrounds Men & women from ethnic backgrounds can be stigmatised much greater stigma of their difficulties is noticed. Due to a stigma, they can be stereotyped very negatively and can be seen as a liability or a burden.

As mentioned elsewhere Autistic & ADHD women blend into a social situation, however, a black autistic or ADHD man can be singled out if their difficulties are noticed. With facing trivialised stigma and shame. As it seems as lowering themselves and it is discouraged to share for understanding as it can be associated with lacking pride and attention-seeking.

When it comes to learning dance steps some people with hidden differences are visual learners. This means more detailed information visually is required in classes. This can affect individuals with Dyslexia, Autism and Dyspraxia. As well as the difficulties many people with hidden differences have specific strengths and attributes.

**Find out more by visiting
plusvalue.dudaone.com**

For understanding details visit the "Understanding Series" Access the feature directly from the home page For details of strengths and attributes visit the "Advantage". Access the project by selecting the "Projects A-Z index" link from the home page

About Plus Value Awareness

The Plus Value Awareness initiative is a family of awareness projects, campaigns and potential services in the future. The aim is to enable a smarter sense of value for independent young people and adults with invisible related difficulties

This is approached within 5 key areas: dignity, integration with inclusion, participation, well represented and responsibility with adjustment.

This means this initiative highlights the human aspects rather than medical or perceptions. In the future to transform Plus Value Awareness as part of the Social Enterprise concept to provide a family of services for businesses, organisations and public services with a family of products to be available for all. In addition to developing a family of social mission activities which will benefit local communities for free and at a discount level.

Find out more on Plus Value Awareness online by visiting <https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

About the author

This document was written by Keith Mckenzie project director of Plus Value Awareness.

Over the past two decades, Keith has developed a variety of awareness projects, campaigns and activities. His projects have been involved with many awareness and support organisations across the UK and have participated in several presentation talks at different events around two decades.

Outside awareness, Keith has been involved in the behind-the-scenes of a unique music project, which includes filming and other behind-the-scenes assistance with developing video documentaries and music events that involve music artists DJs and producers.

Also, Keith is a participant in salsa dancing classes in the community as an assistant along with volunteering and a participant in a salsa dancing conventions Motion city & Latinmotion's NYE Fest based at Birmingham's NEC.

Keith has a background in art & design and has been involved in and many projects related to Graphic design, selected photography and visual art.

In 2022, Keith become a featured community participant and was part of video campaign for Birmingham City Council to showcase the city legacy since hosted the Commonwealth Games

In 2023, Keith participated in an awareness campaign by visiting for supporting the annual events Autism Dance Day (by Anna Kennedy OBE) and International Dance Day (by The Dance Committee of ITI). To coincide supporting both events an awareness information project was launched to encourage inclusivity at dancing related environments for dancers with Neurodiversity, Invisible Disabilities and those who have experienced anxiety

Find out more on developments and achievement by visiting his website Keithmckenzie.weebly.com

Other guides available

This document is a detailed guide and there are also a family of other guides available.

- * Quick Guide pullout
- * Guide for volunteering
- * Guide for conventions & events

Other materials are available

To enable greater understanding a family of additional options can be available

* "Smarter Senses" PowerPoint presentation & training document.
For key members of a salsa organisation or a festival/convention

* A Special family of documents linked to the projects and campaigns
featured on the Plus Value Awareness website

* "Sense of Value Education"
A detailed understanding & information document on the lives of hidden differences

* "Sustainable" guide
The comprehensive relationship & interaction guide for families and friends of hidden differences

Useful Links online

Dancing Direction

The online feature which including dancing related projects and developments

Available via

keithmckenzie.weebly.com

Embrace Dancing

The online Special for supporting Autism Dance Day & International Dance Day

Available via

keithmckenzie.weebly.com

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

Plus Value Awareness



from the awareness website developed by me

Inclusive to Dance

The information and guidance project which enable inclusivity at dancing environments for dancers with Neurodiversity, Invisible Disabilities and people who have experiences Anxiety

Awareness home page

Titled "Plus Value Awareness". the website projects a variety of projects and information based the experiences on changing public perceptions for over 20 years.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com>

Advantage

The information project how certain neurological difficulties can be beneficial to work, education, communities and rest of society.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com/advantage>

Zero Toxic

The information project against prejudice, ablism, discrimination, bullying and hatred.

<https://plusvalue.dudaone.com/zerotoxic>

The contents of this document provide a series of observations and insights. So you are advised to be cautious before adopting any information. Therefore, Keith Mckenzie cannot accept responsibility if any errors which may occur.

Designed & published by Keith McKenzie with extracts from "Plus Value Awareness"

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<https://keithmckenzie.weebly.com>

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