**Disability History Month: Our Stories.**

**Video transcript: Anna.**

Hi everyone. My name is Anna Neale and I am a lecturer in Music Business and Production, and I'm also co-director for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for the School of Arts. I also have ADHD. I found out last year after seeking private diagnosis later in life to find out why I had experienced various difficulties throughout my life. Some of those difficulties have ranged from time blindness, so I would look at a clock and still not register what it reads as.

I will think that I've got ages with 15 minutes and actually it ends up being an hour and 15 minutes. I have short-term memory issues as well. I forget things all the time. I'm really organised in my work. I'm very disorganised, probably everywhere else. I suffer from sensory issues as well. So noises on trains, working in shared offices so it can feel quite lonely and it can feel quite isolating.

I have something called hyperfocus as well, which means that when I'm here, which is like my second home, I'll go into absolute fixation on what I'm doing. It makes me brilliant at my job. I mean, I can write a song and finish it in 3 hours and get it to total professional level. But it does mean I will forget to eat.

I'll forget to drink. I’ll forget to go to the toilet. I will forget to do anything, really. And then the next day I tend to feel quite exhausted. So there is no kind of middle ground with ADHD. It's either now or not now, and it can make working life really challenging and it can make friendships really challenging as well. I can find it very hard to assess how I feel and to be able to express that.

Quite often there'll be problems with language as well. So finding the words I'll trip over, words I have to say to my students in lectures that I will forget their names. I will forget how to pronounce words sometimes. And it can be quite debilitating for someone who has worked professionally within a very high-pressured environment, such as the music industry, to sort of turn around and say, look, you know, the basic everyday executive function things can be quite difficult to manage.

My students are really good, but I'm always very honest about who I am, what impact it has on me, what talking in the background of the room does in terms of distracting me because distraction could be quite a significant problem as well. I'm proud of the fact that I have ADHD. I think if I didn't, I wouldn't have achieved everything that I have and I've achieved a lot.

But I am aware of the challenges that come with finding out later on in life and having a diagnosis at the age I am now means that I have had to spend a considerable amount of time going back through my life. Mornings are extremely difficult for people with ADHD and that's due to a lack of adrenalin and dopamine in the brain.

So we suffer from a lack of two chemicals within the brain and in the mornings I cannot get myself going. I will forget all sorts of things, including taking the shampoo out my hair and as you can see, I'm quite coherent but not in the morning. So I have reasonable adjustments that mean that I start later and I also manage my condition by trying to maintain wellbeing.

So yoga, meditation, I have medication as well that helps me to communicate and manage. But there are some days when it's tough and it can be very difficult to judge when one of those days is going to happen. So you do have colleagues that suspect they have ADHD or have a diagnosis of ADHD, just be mindful that the emotional side is quite debilitating and that we can have days where we just can't function.

It's like, it's like walking through a fog or walking through a soup. There's a lot more awareness now, I think, than there ever used to be. But seeking diagnosis is difficult. But the NHS has real problems with helping neurodiversity and diagnosing neurodiversity. It is causing untold suffering and pain for a high percentage of the population. Estimated 20% - it’s probably higher who are unable to seek diagnosis or treatment, who are being treated for depression and anxiety.

But medication for depression and anxiety makes ADHD worse. So I've always struggled with parenthood and I have noticed in my mid-to-late thirties that things were getting much worse. And I felt that things were much more difficult for me, like I could never do the whole parenting classes and deal with the schools and manage the kids and manage my own work.

And I just felt constantly overwhelmed, constantly flooded, like I was an absolute failure. Like I was worthless, you know. I had various bouts of depression, anxiety, and the anxiety is really bad. The ADHD anxiety will just bang, come on and it will be three in the morning and it's like, okay, what do I do with this? You get to a point where you go okay I should be a grown-up now.

Why can I not function like a grown-up? So it was, and it was quite an upsetting process having to sit there. But the psychiatrist, when I had the assessment, it was like being seen for the first time. Finally somebody saw me because I spend a lot of my time masking and I've had to spend a lot of my time now learning to unmask and sort of pick back on what I've mimicked, what I've learnt, and pick back who I am.