Managing our own neurodivergence & disabilities

Many of us discovered our own neurodivergence, disabilities, and/or health challenges much later in life than our sisters and brothers.

a. We may struggle with feelings of guilt, if we are used to being "the easy one".
b. Our needs may have gone unnoticed because they seemed less obvious than our brothers' and sisters' or because neurodivergence is our familial norm.
c. Our parents and siblings might struggle with the news of our new diagnosis or identity - especially if it causes them to re-evaluate their own experiences and/or our respective roles in the family.

Our brothers and sisters **may struggle with worry about us** or with the ways that our needs prompt **changes to their routine or environment**.

a. We have to remind ourselves that it's okay for our sisters and brothers to experience some discomfort. **Our needs are allowed to take priority.**

Our own experiences can give us valuable insights into our brothers and sisters – but **our support needs may also sometimes clash** with theirs (and that is okay!)

a. This empathy can make it even harder to give ourselves permission to prioritise our own needs.

We find ways to set boundaries that work for us and our relationships.

a. These might be gentle redirections to accommodate a PDA profile, or firm boundaries around time/space/method of contact (which can be easier to enforce than boundaries around a topic or activity).
b. Sometimes we set **internal boundaries**, like allowing ourselves the emotional distance to listen without trying to solve the problem. We might also recognise repetitive info-dumping as a verbal stim than may not require our full attention (or a whole lot of response from us).

Many of us find it helps to prioritise *quality* over *quantity* of time spent with our brothers and sisters. This is both more satisfying and draws less on our energy.

a. Doing an activity removes some of the pressure to invent conversation. We might talk about the activity or just enjoy the experience of "parallel play".
b. Visiting "home" can feel particularly stressful if it requires us to balance interactions with our sisters/brothers and our parents simultaneously.

It can feel difficult to draw a line between "innate" neurodivergence and neural pathways or habits that we associate with being a sibling.

a. Many of us have learned hypervigilance in response to or as a way of anticipating our brothers' or sisters' meltdowns and shutdowns. This alertness might intersect with our experiences of ADHD (shifting attention) or anxiety.
b. Especially if we suspect our parents may also be neurodivergent, it can be difficult to tell which tendencies are inherited and which come from growing up in a neurodiverse/neurodivergent environment.