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becomes the norm and changes the world

"I am different, not less."

- Temple Grandin



Editorial 22 March 2025

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- · Caring for people
- · Creating faith pathways
- · Building healthy communities
- · Working for justice

The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay ourrespect to Elders, past, present, and future. We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children.





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Thinking differently about inclusion

In this edition of Salvos Magazine, we explore neurodivergence – what it is, what it isn't, and how important it is for all of us to change the expectations and norms in our society, so all are included and respected. Without fully including and respecting the value of neurodivergent people, the world will remain a poorer and more fractured place.

As part of this story, we feature glimpses of lived experience from neurodivergent people who share what they wish people could know about neurodivergence and its impact on their lives. A parent of neurodivergent children also writes about some of her experiences and encourages parents of all children in raising their kids.

On 22 March, Australia joins the world in marking Earth Hour – a commitment to the health and healing of the planet. Fay Foster writes about the day, including suggestions of how each of us can participate and do our part.

For these stories and more, go to **salvosonline.org.au**

Simone Worthing **Editor**

THINKING DIFFERENTLY

Understanding the value of neurodivergence

by Anthony Castle

We can all think differently. Everyone can have their own ideas and reactions, their own opinions about things like food or sports. While this may cause disagreement, these differences are important and express the diversity of our identities. Some of us can think differently for other reasons though, due to genetics or events. Rather than just a difference in opinion or background, some of us may have brains that are wired in less common ways. The term we use to describe these differences among people is neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity refers to the diversity of human brains and minds. Just as everyone's bodies are different, there can be infinite variation in our minds too. While everyone is part of humanity's neurodiversity, the term neurodivergent refers to those whose brains function in ways that diverge significantly from common expectations or societal norms.

Range of differences

We can hear the term neurodivergence and maybe think of things like autism and attention deficit disorder (ADHD). Some may only hear those terms applied to children or school students, but neurodivergence includes a range of experiences shared by people of any age, and any background. Neurodivergence can encompass any difference in someone's neurocognitive function and mental health, such as general anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, epilepsy, dyslexia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

and other mood disorders, conditions, and intellectual disabilities.

Someone can be born with a neurodivergent mind, like with autism or ADHD. Alternatively, it can be from circumstance, age, or event, like with PTSD, dementia, or acquired intellectual disability. About 15-20 per cent of the world's population shows signs of neurodivergence, with these differences much more common than many may realise.

Low priority

Even though almost two in 10 people in the world may be neurodivergent, the world isn't exactly designed for those who think differently to others. Schools, workplaces, faith communities and community groups are often designed for the most common and dominant ways of thinking. People who aren't neurodivergent, whose minds work within the common expectations, are described as neurotypical, and much of the world is built with neurotypical people as the priority.

In fact, neurodivergence is rarely the priority when things are being designed. For some neurotypical people, the different traits and expressions of neurodivergence can make them uncomfortable. A difference in thinking, feeling and acting can also be seen as a weakness or antisocial behaviour. This ignorance in how minds and brains can function results in neurodivergent people being excluded from the world

Feature 22 March 2025



as it is designed. Neurodivergent people have lower school participation and educational attainment, greater levels of unemployment and underemployment, and poorer physical health.

Inclusion benefits everyone

This ignorance results in a society that not only excludes neurodivergent people, but ultimately disadvantages everyone. While some neurodivergent people may refer to their difference as a disadvantage or a disability, they may also describe it as a strength or a gift. For some, they may feel both things simultaneously. Regardless, many do not refer to their neurodivergence as a condition or a diagnosis, but as an important part of their identity and part of how they connect with the world.

The ways that neurodivergent minds connect with the world has created so much of society's technology and art, literature and music. Neurodivergent people are a part of humanity's joy, spirituality and vulnerability. Rather than a weakness, these differences have value for everyone.

There is a different world possible, one with more knowledge and expression, more humour and kindness. As long as our world is built for neurotypical people alone, unless we change the expectations and norms in our society, the value of neurodivergent people won't be fully shared. We can all think differently, but unless we start to grow wiser about inclusion, our world will remain a poorer place.

WHAT I WISH PEOPLE COULD KNOW ...

Neurodivergent voices share their experiences

"As a parent, what I needed was encouragement, not unwanted 'helpful advice' that showed they knew nothing about parenting neurodivergent children." (anxiety)

"My neurodivergence is acquired due to PTSD, rather than something that's always been present. I'm sick of people telling me I have ADHD, for example, because there are lots of crossovers between ADHD and the way my PTSD has changed my brain and caused it to function. But I wasn't like that as a child or young adult; it's because of trauma and when people assume to know more about it than I do is

"I want to be able to easily communicate with my GP; 'I'm tired and it could be related to my ADHD, or ASD, or it could be low iron', and have that make sense, allowing us to move on towards a plan instead of feeling like I have to explain neurodivergence all the time." (autism, ADHD)

"My entire life has been spent trying to make sense of things, of what people are saying, what they want, why they treat you the way they do. It felt like everyone else was given a rulebook for life I never saw. So much of my life has been spent anxious, afraid, and unsure of what to do." (autism)

"Epilepsy shapes my entire life. I was diagnosed at the age of three, but the seizures didn't start until adulthood. It means I can't drive. I can be afraid of crossing the street in case of a seizure in the middle of the road. Going anywhere alone is hard." (epilepsy)

"Sometimes my ADHD is super helpful. I'm sure it's got a lot to do with why I've been successful in my work, but there are a whole bunch of things connected to my neurodivergence that aren't fun, or easy, or a 'superpower' and that very much get in the way of me doing things that I want to do." (ADHD)



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"I fall in love with weird things, silly things, important things, all of it. I can see things other people can't, understand patterns, explain complexity. I also get lost in things easily, become afraid. Sometimes I feel like the smartest person in the room, but also an idiot because I can't do simple tasks others do naturally." (autism)

"Neurodivergence, whether you are born that way or experience it later in life, does not lessen the way the image of God is revealed in who you are." (autism, complex PTSD)

"As an autistic person, it was helpful for me to see a brain scan of an autistic and non-autistic person. You can see the differences in the way the brain develops. It's all visible. The general population needs to see things like that. We need to understand the why of it." (autism)

"It's really frustrating to not feel understood and not even being able to express that frustration in a 'normal' way, which leads to being even more misunderstood. It's like living in a bubble that other people forced you into because that's easier than having to learn." (autism) "I have dyscalculia, which is a difficulty understanding numbers. Dyscalculia affects my maths skills, which also affects my ability to get a job." (dyscalculia)

"I have borderline personality disorder. When a BPD person is splitting, they may distort how they see things. One moment they feel good and the next they feel low. One moment they feel loved and the next they feel unwanted or abandoned. It's like, you start to recognise when your personality isn't really yours anymore and it takes antipsychotics to control the severe mood issues." (borderline



Earth Hour 2025: Playing our part to protect our planet

In the first Earth Hour, celebrated in Sydney on 31 March 2007, more than 2.2 million people turned off their lights for one hour. The aim was to show our governments that people were concerned about climate change.

The next year, 50 million people in 35 countries took part! And in 2024, people in more than 180 countries and territories showed their support for the movement (earthhour.org).

While our lights go out for just one hour each year, Earth Hour has generated multiple changes to environmental laws, resulting in the protection of seas, creation of forests, the freezing of oil projects, cessation of deforestations and banning of plastic bags.

From 2023 onwards, Earth Hour organisers have called on supporters across the globe to not only switch off their lights, but to give an 'Hour for Earth', spending 60 minutes doing something – anything – positive for our planet.

Ideas to consider:

- Check around your home for ways to reduce waste, reuse items and recycle.
- Plant a veggie patch at home, or some fruit trees or native trees.
- Go for a beach- or bushwalk and pick up any rubbish you see along the way.
- Volunteer for a local Bushcare, Earthcare or item repair group.
- Set up a compost system for your home.
- Join a citizen science project like Birdata (with Birdlife Australia), the Christmas Beetle Count Project (the University of Sydney) or FrogID (Australian Museum).
- Convert the settings on your devices to 'energy saving'. Using 'dark mode' or 'eco mode' is a simple switch that can free up energy you didn't even realise you were consuming.



 Take your used smartphones, headphones, cables, chargers, speakers, printers and print cartridges, pens and markers, CDs and DVDs to Officeworks for free secure recycling. Batteries can be taken to Bunnings or Aldi.

This year's Earth Hour will take place at 8.30pm on Saturday 22 March (AEST). Let's show our support and help to save our planet.

Fay Foster

News 22 March 2025

Salvos world leader calls for an end to suffering in Ukraine



On the third anniversary of the start of the Ukraine war (24 February 2022), international leader of The Salvation Army, General Lyndon Buckingham, reached out to survivors with words of solace and comfort and called for a new level of moral consciousness and civic responsibility from both sides to end hostilities.

"Unfortunately, we do not know the extent of the impact of the war on the Russia side," said General Buckingham. "Details are scarce. But on the Ukraine side, The Salvation Army is working among people who have experienced great devastation as a result of the war.

"Many thousands have died, nearly four million – including one million children – are displaced within the country, and six million have fled their country as refugees. Our prayers for comfort and healing are with all who live in fear and who grieve the loss of loved ones.

"Today, for the sake of their own people, I call upon the leaders of both countries to bring about a swift and just end to hostilities. I also call upon world leaders to do all within their power to come alongside both countries in a spirit of bipartisanship and peacemaking."

The prolonged conflict in Ukraine has resulted in serious mental health needs, ranging from depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and panic attacks to insomnia, nightmares and problems forming attachments with others.

The Salvation Army within Ukraine and neighbouring countries is creating safe spaces for children and adults where their mental, physical, social and spiritual development can be nurtured and supported.

For more information, please visit:

salvationarmy.org/ihq/ ukraine-three-years-ofwar

Staying kind in an angry world

by James Burns

66 Being kind is neither weak nor a new concept.

The first time I spotted them I did a double take. How long had they been there? Why hadn't I noticed them before? How did they end up there?

'They' were daffodils.
Well, miniature ones and certainly not 'a golden cloud' – more like a clump of daffs on the grass verge of our housing estate.
And then, as these things go, once I'd seen them, I started to notice them popping up elsewhere on the estate.

My curiosity was aroused as to how they got there. Who had planted them? It seems that a group of people who wanted to brighten our town got together to plant the bulbs in the autumn, ready for spring. They wanted to bring colour to the grass verges and some joy as well.

Bright moments

As far as I'm concerned, they definitely succeeded. Just seeing them brightens my day. Who would have thought that such a simple, selfless act could bring so much joy to others?

However, the selfless actions of the volunteer gardeners resonate with advice urging us to 'be kind', which is particularly relevant today in a world filled with so much anger and negativity. Much of this is expressed anonymously on social media, where it can seriously harm the recipient's mental health.

Nothing new here

Being kind is neither weak nor a new concept. While on earth, Jesus encouraged his listeners to "Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Mark chapter 12, verse 31). It was so significant that Jesus referred to it as the second greatest commandment. And it remains good advice even today.

It isn't always easy, but how can you be kind today and every day? It will grow on you. It will become the norm. Faith Talk 22 March 2025



PARENTING IS HARD

Sometimes we feel as though we have got it all wrong

by Karen

Being a parent is hard. Sometimes we feel like we can do this, and other times that we have got it all wrong. Children are all different – they grow, act and respond in different ways. Even siblings behave differently from each other. And there are always observers who are ready to give advice on someone else's parenting.

When you parent a neurodivergent child who does not follow the expected pattern, unwanted 'helpful advice' can be overwhelmingly forthcoming.

In parenting my neurodivergent children, I often found that what was considered 'normal' did not apply to them, and people around them had a lot to say about my parenting. This often left me feeling like I was failing as a parent.

I felt as though any behaviour from my children that was slightly different to the expectations of those around me was seen as my failure. I watched and listened to my children, learning how they would react to situations, and soon was able to anticipate their behaviour. I was able to figure out how to handle some situations that were difficult for them and encourage them in their strengths. There were other times that I was still lost as to how to help and did not get it right.

I believe that we are here for each other, not against each other. Everything comes from an understanding that you are a gift in my life – whoever you are, whatever our differences.

- John Denver

Encouragement

Not long ago, I discovered that some of the things I figured out are recommended by specialists for neurodivergent parents. This was very encouraging, that maybe I was not so bad a parent after all.

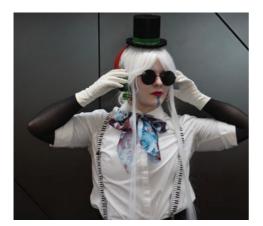
My advice to all parents is to watch and listen to your children; no one can know your child better than you! Respect them and understand that their behaviour is for a reason, a reason that they may not be able to articulate.

My children have grown into capable, talented and loving adults. They still struggle with life sometimes, but my life is blessed for having them in it. Parenting is hard, but children are a gift from God, each one different and each one special.

1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4,5,7 (New Living Translation) says, "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

Love each child as God loves you and you can't go wrong. Keep up the good work parents!

My Story 22 March 2025









↑ Parenting neurodiverse children brings unique joys and challenges. Encouragement and respect, rather than judgment and advice, help all parents in their roles as they guide and nurture their diverse little humans.

Taste of Life Salvos Magazine



Waffles



Ingredients

1 cup plain flour; 1 tsp baking powder; pinch of salt, 4 ½ tsp sugar, 1 cup milk, 1 egg, 1 ½ tbsp butter, melted; maple syrup and berries; toppings of your choice

Method

Pre-heat waffle iron or sandwich press.

Mix flour, baking powder, salt and sugar in a large bowl.

In a smaller bowl mix the milk and egg, then add this to the dry ingredients. Mix until combined.

Stir in the melted butter.

Cook waffles until crisp and brown on the outside.

Serve with maple syrup and berries or toppings of your choice.



Believe in Good: Tips

"A walk in nature walks the soul back home."

- Mary Davis

Take a walk and see how many flowers you can find.



Quiz



- 1. Who is responsible for the scenery in a theatre production?
- 2. Who takes over a role when an actor is unable to perform?
- 3. What is the area between the stage and audience where the orchestra plays?
- 4. Which word describes acting out a story without words or props?
- 5. Which word describes acting out a scene with little or no preparation?



On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?

Take Five 22 March 2025

? Did you know?



The oldest living land animal on earth is a 192-year-old tortoise named Jonathan.

The tiny pocket in jeans was designed to store pocket watches.

Competitive art used to be an Olympic sport.



Answers

Tum-Tum: is hiding behind the people on page 5.

Quiz: 1. The set designer S. The understudy 3. The pit 4. Pantomime 5. Improvisation

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Alave a laugh

How do trees access the internet?

They log on.

Why did the pine tree get in trouble?

Because it was being knotty.

Do you want a brief explanation of an acorn?

In a nutshell, it's an oak tree.

What type of tree fits in your hand?

A palm tree.

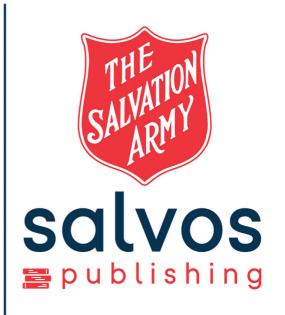


Bible byte

"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!"

Psalm 121, verse 2 New Living Translation

READ all about it!



salvosonline.org.au/salvos-publishing

