

# Understanding the X Men : The Neurodiverse Talent, in the world with Diva Diaz

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:00:02]:

Hello everybody. This is Superstar Communicator with Susan Heaton Wright and Nick Simon, who is on his way. I understand. Today we are going to talk at something slightly different within the communication world and that is related to fantastic people who have neurodiversity and we have Diva Dias is it Diaz or Dias?

Diva Dias [00:00:35]:

Diaz, yeah.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:00:37]:

Who's a global speaker and facilitator of Access Consciousness classes and seminars that consist of pragmatic set of tools and perspectives that allow you to change what isn't working for you. So, having held several positions in economic, media and business intelligence opened her view of global business and piqued her curiosity. I love curiosity. It's such a strong emotion about the brilliant mind behind some of the most innovative solutions in the marketplace today. They might be disruptive, they might be thinking outside the box, or they might just have a completely different perspective on the world. Her interest in X Men began when she came across Access Consciousness and realized that so much of what she thought was wrong with her was actually a capacity, it was a strength, it was a superpower. So welcome Diva.

Diva Dias [00:01:45]:

Thank you so much. Very happy to be here.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:01:48]:

Now tell me about your journey because clearly you've worked in business for a number of years. What was that moment when you had that AHA moment and realized that you had a superpower?

Diva Dias [00:02:04]:

I think I have to say I was working on a project in Saudi Arabia and I was with a colleague of mine and we were recalling the day's events and our recollection of the day was entirely different from each other. So his recollection was all about the things that were said, the topics that were discussed, which I did not remember at all. But my recollection of the day

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was very visual and I was telling him about the rooms and the buildings that we walked in, what people were wearing, and very detailed, perhaps details that would seem irrelevant to him, but they allowed me to remember the conversations in a different way. And that was the moment where I realized I might think in a different way than other people.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:02:54]:

I think that's a really important point. And certainly if you are going into a lot real detail in meetings or there's a load of data, people pick up on different things or they switch off, don't they? And then they have to fill those gaps with other information. So maybe gosh say this quietly, maybe you were picking up on different things and having a gap and filling it with that information.

Diva Dias [00:03:30]:

Well, I mean the fascinating thing that I then discovered is that people with autism tend to sink in pictures. And so for me the way to remember the information was as a picture, almost like a film in my mind. And that's how I would describe it. So even though at the end we were describing the same information, we were pulling information in very different ways from our memories, from our minds and just from how we perceived everything that went on in the day.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:04:02]:

Now, people often say with learning that there are different ways that people learn. There are some people that want the manual and read through everything. Other people, like me, want to have a go. It's the equivalent of Lego. Or there are people that need to be told verbally or have a series of pictures.

Diva Dias [00:04:25]:

Yes, absolutely.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:04:28]:

Would you say that for autistic people they all go down the visual images route or diagrams?

Diva Dias [00:04:41]:

I'd say for the vast majority of the people that I've worked with, that tends to be the way of course, it's different and individual to each person, so the way that they will see things in their mind will be very different. But I know, at least for me in school, if I were told to read a book and I could see everybody in class reading the book from left to right, I wouldn't be able to. But if I were to skim the book and almost take a photograph of it with my mind, then at any point that the teacher asked a question about that section of the book, I would be able to pull out the image, almost like a Google search for images and just read it from

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what I was seeing in my mind. And so it doesn't necessarily always have to look that way for people with autism, but that is how it was for me.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:05:31]:

Our world now is much more visual, isn't it? People often say that we live in a very visual world and videos and images, pictures, they capture the mind, don't they? Do you think it makes it much easier for you and for other people who are autistic?

Diva Dias [00:05:51]:

Yes, I can say 100%, yeah. I think it really allows for a different way of thinking to be incorporated into, like you were saying, learning, but also the way that you communicate, because you can also then pass on information in different ways. I remember for a very long time at the beginning of my career, where information was mostly written, it wasn't so visual, which did make everything a lot harder work. And I would wonder why I would be exhausted by the end of each day and feeling like I was on the brink of a breakdown and it was because I was having to try and bend my brain into functioning in this way that wasn't natural to me. Whereas now it's so much more common and accepted to say, can we draw this out? Can we have a look at what this would actually look like?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:06:44]:

So you are autistic. Do you have any other diagnoses?

Diva Dias [00:06:52]:

No, that's the only one that I have officially kind of researched and went to actually find out more about there may be others, but for now you.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:07:04]:

Can cope with that one. Do you think it's more challenging for women to be diagnosed with autism than men.

Diva Dias [00:07:14]:

I think a lot of women have an incredible capacity to be chameleons, which is also known as masking. Perhaps more so than men, perhaps not. But I think what tends to happen is because of that incredible skill, we then don't even bother looking at asking ourselves a question of, okay, what's actually going on here? For me, is it normal to feel this way? Like, when I would feel exhausted at the end of each day just from trying so hard to function the way that other people did? Was that actually something else going on? So I think that I'm just so happy that this is even a conversation that we can have in this time, day and age as well.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:08:03]:

And in case anybody is listening, what is neurodiversity? Can you explain? I should have asked you this right at the beginning.

Diva Dias [00:08:15]:

Really? Yeah, of course, really. It covers such a broad spectrum of things, but it's when somebody basically has either been diagnosed officially or not with a completely different way of receiving information, delivering information and thinking, essentially. So in the work that I do, we affectionately call these people X Men, like the X Men films.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:08:45]:

Brilliant.

Diva Dias [00:08:46]:

Yeah. Because they all have superpowers. They're all different to each other, but they also tend to think that they're wrong, that there's something wrong with them. Society doesn't always accept them until they realize that actually they're quite incredible.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:08:59]:

They have a superpower.

Diva Dias [00:09:00]:

Yeah.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:09:01]:

Now, welcome. Nick. Do you have any questions?

Nick Simon [00:09:07]:

Yes, I was just reading this article about how it's possible, especially from my point of view. I have Dyslexia, and there's a point that's been made and studied by scientists that poses the possibility that people with Dyslexia could essentially be more creative, when I suppose it's a lack of ability to focus on words or that kind of thing. Due to that, there's sort of a more explorative element to their mind. Is that a kind of point that you explore?

Diva Dias [00:09:49]:

Absolutely, 100%. I mean, this is one of the things that I would say is one of the superpowers. Because for a lot of people with autism or just neurodiverse people, because the way that everybody else communicates doesn't necessarily make sense immediately they have to be curious about what is going on constantly. So they tend to have to be asking

themselves, what is that person saying? What do they need of me? What am I supposed to deliver here? What's going on? And that, to me, puts us all ten steps ahead. Why? Because where most people will take information for granted and say to themselves, well, I know what this task requires of me, I'll just get on and do it. You've got the autistic person or the Dyslexic person who's suddenly asking 100 questions just to understand what they're doing and not realizing that they have now opened up their creativity hugely. They've now stepped out of the box and they're receiving a lot of ideas and information and different perhaps paths and ways to get to the same result that everybody has taken for granted that they can only get to in one way.

Nick Simon [00:10:59]:

That's so interesting, isn't it? Because during our education, we are trying to pass exams. We're trying to say the right thing, answer in the right way, which makes it more challenging for neurodiverse people. However, that when you go to work, particularly if you've got your own business or you're in a department, in fact, employers want to have people that think outside the box.

Diva Dias [00:11:32]:

Absolutely. Yeah. To me, it's really an invaluable skill. And the work environments that I've been in that have been the most interesting and dynamic have been the ones where there is one person in the room asking a question and it doesn't need to be a question to interrogate people or just create trouble for the sake of it. But really, out of curiosity of what else haven't we considered here? Or is there a reason that we're doing it this way and not in another way? What else could we look at? Those conversations have always expanded every project and everything that's being talked about in the moment, whether it's been in a board meeting or even in president's offices that I've worked in before. Because the person who's able to ask a question is always taking things forward.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:12:24]:

So I'm sure that there are going to be many people that are listening to this and they're going to think, how can I access the superpower from the X Men that might be working in my team or in my company? Do you have any tips for that?

Diva Dias [00:12:46]:

I do. Absolutely. I would say ask them questions. Because one of the things like you mentioned, Susan, is that when we're in these environments with others, we try so hard to fit in and not do the wrong thing and to even, I guess, hide the way that we think so that people don't kind of discover that we don't understand what's going on. So very rarely are we taught to have the freedom of thought actually, truly beyond just remembering what you're supposed to say or knowing the right answer. So if you can be the boss or the manager or the project leader or even the colleague who's asking, hey, how would you do this? How are you seeing this? What would be a different way that we could approach this that you might be able to come up with without expecting a right answer in that very

moment. But the more you do that, you're actually creating this culture where that person, the neurodiverse person, now has that question in their mind, and it's something that they begin to ask themselves and know that they have the freedom to. I know that in business, when I've done that, the things that my staff have been able to come up with have been incredible. Because they were suddenly given permission to. And I think that's a big part of it, that people that are neurodiverse very often are trying to stay quiet or fit in like we've spoken about. And so when you actually give them permission to speak out, it can really create great results.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:14:16]:

Do you think that that's going to help the culture for a team, whether they have diverse neurodiversity or not, that everybody feels that their opinion and questions are valued?

Diva Dias [00:14:34]:

I think so, 100%, yeah. I think it's a great way to empower people to know that they do have a level of self awareness and ideas and creativity that perhaps they just haven't tapped into because they haven't been required to. Whereas for the neurodiverse person they need to every day in order to get through the day, they need to tap into that resource.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:14:59]:

Do you have any questions, Nick?

Nick Simon [00:15:02]:

Yeah, I just thought about I'm writing a book and there's a lot of the software I'm using is Google Docs, but many softwares now either Word or Google Gmail, they have an extra kind of layered grammar system where it helps you write sentences and that kind of thing, and also gives a review of what kind of emotional undertone the email or something is saying. Do you think that kind of technology will help, just in general, the kind of approaches you can write about in the future?

Diva Dias [00:15:57]:

I think it could do. I think a lot of times also we tend to give a lot of power and importance to things outside of us thinking that if a machine can do it for us, then surely the machine will do it better than we can. And I think even though neurodiverse people don't perhaps have the same emotional responses or reactions as others do, it doesn't mean that they're not actually having those emotions, they're just not displaying them in the same way. And so I've read books by several people who are on the spectrum and if you've heard of Temple Grandin, you'll know that she's a huge advocate for autism. And when you read the words in her books, it's not that they're void of emotion or they don't bring things up for you, they absolutely do it's just in a different way. So I think also allowing that to be okay and not having to always communicate the way that everybody else has done up until now can be a huge gift. Because what if there's just a whole new range of communication that we haven't

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even begun to tap into because we're using things like AI to try and mask everybody to behave in the same way or write in the same way that everybody beforehand has?

Nick Simon [00:17:11]:

That's so interesting that you've mentioned AI because there are so many biases in that and that will be learnt behavior and presumably that will be learnt behavior that might not be neurodiverse. So it's masking again a superpower.

Diva Dias [00:17:32]:

Yes, absolutely.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:17:36]:

Very interesting. Now, we've spoken about employers and leaders thinking about how they can tap into neurodiverse superpowers, but what about the other way around? What tips could you give to someone who is neurodiverse, who might be struggling in a normal what I call a normal environment? You understand, a corporate environment where there are all sorts of things going on, but there is some accepted levels of behavior. What would you suggest they do so that they can still access their superpowers?

Diva Dias [00:18:18]:

Great question. I would say one of the main things that has really helped me is to stop judging myself, which is, I think, a huge thing that a lot of neurodiverse people do on a daily basis, even when they don't cognitively know that they're doing it, the undertone is generally unwrong.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:18:41]:

Yeah.

Diva Dias [00:18:42]:

With that judgment, what happens is it really just stifles all your creativity and you may have huge opportunities directly in front of you. You may have incredible ideas, but with that underlying tone running your life, it's very difficult to pull those ideas out or even present them in a way that makes sense to other people. So it's very easy also to say, stop judging yourself. But, okay, how do you do it? So a great tool that I use, and I give a lot in the classes and seminars and it's a tool from Access consciousness is just to say to yourself, Interesting point of view. What if this is just an interesting point of view. It doesn't need to be a fact just because I think that I'm wrong or just because I think these people don't like me. Okay, what if it's just interesting. And what that does is it starts to take away the heaviness and the stuckness, if you like, of self doubt, which I see in a lot of people who are neurodiverse because of course they haven't really had that nurture to be able to explore how they function in society. So even by changing that perspective, what it does is it suddenly starts to

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bring out this quiet confidence that a lot of neurodiverse people do have, because they do have a lot of ideas, and they do see a lot of detail in things, and they do recognize how things could be done 20 times better in 100 different ways. They usually see that very quickly. Now, being able to get that across confidently or even feeling that that idea is valid enough for them to communicate it is the next thing. So getting out of judgment, I would say, is probably a huge step.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:20:24]:

My website designer has some neurodiversity challenges and very early on she said to me, because I love leaving voicemail messages on WhatsApp? That's a preferred point of mine. And she said, do you know I cannot process those? Can you type them up? And that was hugely useful for me. Can you think of other ways that neurodiverse individuals could communicate what their preferences are to make life easier for everyone.

Diva Dias [00:21:02]:

Yeah, absolutely. One thing that I find works very well as well in the workplace and also in relationships in any kind of communication is asking, how do you see this looking? Why? Because without knowing it, the person who is not a visual thinker, let's say the Neurotypical person will start to then think of what that situation will look like. And the way that they then inadvertently describe it is going to differ and it's going to be different and it's going to be a different energy and a different body language to as they're communicating it, even if it's in a text, I will often ask people, so how do you see this looking? And suddenly they start to give more detail or more information that will allow me to form the images in my mind that I need to understand what the situation is.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:21:49]:

Do you have any questions? Nick?

Nick Simon [00:21:53]:

Yeah. What's the gift in Neurodiversity that few people acknowledge?

Diva Dias [00:22:03]:

I think as a world and as a society, we're always evolving, or at least I like to believe that that's what I'm trying to, but we are. And the planet evolves and different species evolve to adapt to their surroundings and be able to thrive rather than just survive. And I strongly believe that us as people also have that capacity. And to me, Neurodiverse people have the capacity to be part of that evolution by actually always being on the leading edge, on the creative edge, by their ability to see the world in such an unfiltered way. So rather than being limited by just seeing things from a limited perspective that they may have learned about or that they're culturally restricted to, or because they were taught to think a certain way, they don't have those filters in place which allows them to actually see the bigger perspective and in a lot of detail. So they can often make for great strategic managers too.



Susan Heaton-Wright [00:23:02]:

That sounds so powerful. It's a shame we don't have many people like that in leadership roles in our country at the moment.

Diva Dias [00:23:11]:

That is very true. Susan?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:23:14]:

Yes. Now, I did ask what your three top tips to share with the audience are.

Diva Dias [00:23:23]:

Yes. I would say the main thing is be willing to change your perspective. Be willing to know that just because you have a certain point of view about what being Neurodiverse means or looks like, it doesn't mean that that's the be all and end all. Be willing to be curious and ask what's going on with this person? How are they receiving this information? How are they seeing this situation? Because they will be perceiving the world in a very different way to you. Just like when I discovered that not everybody thinks the way that I do. So that immediately allows you to have a different connection with people where you're including them in the mix too. You're not only seeing everything from your perspective and then the other one is, of course, asking questions, which is so powerful and potent as well, because it's so simple. We often dismiss the power of being in question. But really, if you're able to even ask yourself, what am I aware of here? It takes you very quickly out of overwhelm, out of feeling that you're being judged, out of feeling stuck, like you don't understand something. And it puts you into the creativity of, okay, so let's find some solutions here, let's find some different possibilities, and then again, get out of judgment with yourself. If you can begin, even for 1 minute a day, to judge yourself a little bit less than you did yesterday, the change that that can create is really, really dynamic. Because being different doesn't mean that you're wrong, you're just different. And just because somebody doesn't understand you, it also doesn't mean that you're wrong. It just means that they think in a different way than you do. So I think getting out of the stigma that what we don't understand is wrong or bad is a huge step towards neurodiverse people being empowered enough to start to actually create lives that work for them and be able to contribute to society in a completely different way.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:25:24]:

I know a couple of people who've been diagnosed as adults, I would say middle aged women, and it has been a huge relief for them that they know why they behave in a particular way. Do you have a message for people that are asking themselves, why do I always feel as though I'm a square peg in a round hole? What do you think they should do?

Diva Dias [00:25:55]:

I would suggest that they definitely check it out. I would suggest that they check out. There's so many great resources out there. A book that I particularly love is called *Would You Teach a Fish to Climb a Tree?* It's by Anne Maxwell and Gary Douglas and Dr. Dane here. And it's incredible and it really puts things into perspective where even if you haven't received an official diagnosis and it doesn't mean that you need to go down that route either. Might not even be necessary for you, but it can shed some light onto the fact that you don't need to try and force yourself into a square hole. If you're a round peg, there is a different way of functioning.

Nick Simon [00:26:35]:

That's a really good answer. Before we go, Nick, do you have any other questions? Because I know you've been scribbling away.

Nick Simon [00:26:44]:

Yeah, I was just thinking about so the approach you mentioned of asking questions. Do you think that kind of approach could be used in a school environment? Because I was sort of missing that whenever I was in school, I have a trouble thinking inside the box. I had the curiosity, but not so much the drive to write within the bands of the questions. So do you think that kind of approach would work more cleanly in school?

Diva Dias [00:27:22]:

That is such a brilliant question. Yes, 100%. And I would say that the questions don't necessarily always need to be questions that you ask out loud to other people. They can be questions that you ask yourself internally. So I had a very similar situation in school. I found school incredibly challenging because I could not get my head around what the box was, why we were in the box, and what order to put things in in the box. And so I had to start asking myself, what does the teacher require here? What am I supposed to deliver here? What are the answers here? And even just asking that would switch my mind from going off into a billion ideas and actually start to put it in a different direction. So when you start to ask, okay, so what does this person actually require? What is required for this project? And you start asking the questions to lead you in that direction, it's not that you're going to put yourself in the box, but you suddenly allow yourself to see things from their perspective, and then you can deliver things, information, essays, work, answers in a completely different way, too.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:28:30]:

Any more questions, Nick? Do you want to just go for it? Because I think you've got a few questions.

Nick Simon [00:28:37]:

I'm not so sure that was a great answer. I think I was just sort of demotivated in school. Not just that. There was also teachers saying I should learn this long in my long term memory that I'll probably never use in my life. I guess following on from that, there was a religious studies kind of format of questions and English where it would use that kind of format of asking you a question and discussing. So would that kind of be more appropriate in an overall context of school questions?

Diva Dias [00:29:23]:

Yeah, absolutely. And again, if you look at it as this kind of internal work that you do with yourself in every area of your life, I mean, I used to have terrible difficulty in English. I just could not understand what we had to discuss about one tiny paragraph that would take, like, two or three lessons. I would be very literal in my approaches. And so I had to ask myself internally, okay, so what is it that other people are seeing here that I'm not what is it that we're supposed to be looking at that I'm not quite seeing? How can I look at this in a different way, and what am I seeing actually? What am I aware of that perhaps nobody else has picked up on, that I can also approach? And as you start to ask yourself many, many questions, it's not just one or two. Like you can't ask yourself the wrong question. But as you start to get curious in your own mind about what else it is that you can do in those situations and how else you can, I guess, receive the information, you'll be really surprised at how quickly your mind kind of switches. And you can start to see things in a different way. And again, this isn't not to fix anybody and not to create this as another way of masking, but to create this, as I'd like to say, like an expanded awareness, if you like. So rather than just seeing things the way that we see things, the way that Neurotypical people see things the way they see things, neurodiverse people, what if they actually do have the skill and the ability to see things in all the ways? So now I understand a lot more how other people see and think the same that I understand the way that I see and think, whereas for other people, it's hard to put themselves in someone else's shoes. So really, just allowing your mind and the creativity that you already have to extend into that as well.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:31:21]:

Have you got another question, Nick?

Nick Simon [00:31:23]:

No.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:31:26]:

I am absolutely certain, Diva, that your work would help many, many people, not exclusively people who have Neurodiversity, but also managers and leaders. How can people get in touch with you?

Diva Dias [00:31:45]:

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Thank you. They can go to accessconsciousness. Comdiva DIAZMy or just directly on my website, [www.Divadias.com](http://www.Divadias.com) . Those are the two places where you can see all of my upcoming things and a lot of free gifts and resources to get people started on their journey of having more awareness about the incredible gifts that Neurodiversity has to offer.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:32:07]:

Brilliant. And we will make sure that this is in the notes for the podcast in case people would like to contact. Diva, thank you so much for coming on. It's been a fascinating discussion and it has been highlighting how powerful Neurodiverse people are and how they really can contribute to the world in such a positive way.

Diva Dias [00:32:37]:

Thank you so much, Susan, Nick, very grateful to have been here and to have this conversation with you both.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:32:43]:

Thank you. Until next time, this is superstar. Communicator. Thank you very much for listening. Don't forget to subscribe on the podcast platform that you listen on, and we look forward to hearing from you with feedback from this. Until next time. Bye bye.

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