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**Cybersecurity Career Success for
Neurodivergent Individuals**



Cybersecurity Career Success for Neurodivergent Individuals

Welcome!

Thank you for joining me today. I'm so glad you're here.

- What is neurodiversity?
- Getting started contributing to open source software (OSS)
- Overcoming roadblocks and employing learning strategies
- Goals for Career and Education Success
- Asking for Accommodations
- Things to think on: Improving InfoSec/Cybersecurity
- Q&A



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What is Neurodiversity?

- Neurodiversity is broadly defined in academia/across mental health professions as an umbrella term for the following:
 - [Note: Among many neurodivergent individuals, there has been a recent movement to accept and embrace the validity of self-diagnosis and our own unique lived experiences]
- Autism, ADD/ADHD, Tourette's, dyspraxia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, specific speech conditions, sensory processing conditions, and more.

When discussing neurodiversity: Remember -- An **individual** is neurodivergent, rather than 'neurodiverse.'



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Getting Started In Cybersecurity by Contributing to Open Source

- Contributing to open source is often recommended as a way for neurodivergent individuals to kick-start their career in tech.
 - Contributing to open source software (OSS) is seen as a way for new developers to apply what they've learned to a project, and learn to work with a team if they haven't already
- Contributing to OSS can be daunting, and even inaccessible for many neurodivergent individuals due to excessive use of jargon in OSS communities
- Look for InfoSec/Cybersecurity events with a volunteer program. Others may have an entire event track dedicated to presentations by teenagers and young adults.
- Consider putting together a talk/proposal on an InfoSec/Cybersecurity topic that interests you, or a project you've worked on that shows off your skills in cybersecurity.



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Overcoming Roadblocks

- It. Is. Okay. To. Fail.
- Don't let anyone make you feel like you don't belong in cybersecurity because you're neurodivergent. You belong here, just as you are!
- There will be another opportunity.
- Write down, record an audio note, or talk through what you learned from the experience, and identify what you can improve on for next time.



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Goals for Career and Education Success

- What does success look like to you? Is it financial stability? A long-term career? Respect from your peers?
- Don't compare yourself to others. What success is for someone else might not match what that looks like for you.
- Set clear, measurable goals with your school counselor, college advisor, or education network to make sure you're on track to get where you want to be.
- Make sure that if you're looking at a bootcamp, that you do your research.
- If someone in a leadership position is making you uncomfortable or harassing you, block them and report them. Don't let adults tell you that you **ever** have to do **anything** that makes you feel uncomfortable in order to succeed in this industry.



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Asking for Accommodations

- It's okay to ask for accommodations in a job interview!
 - This can be more time to answer an interview question, or to think through an answer to whiteboard problem.
- At school, accommodations can look like: The ability to use a calculator on a test, recording your teacher's daily lessons with a voice recorder, or asking for un-timed exams.
 - This is unfortunately a difficult thing to achieve, as many schools want you to have an IEP or a diagnosed learning disability. If you think you may be neurodivergent and would like accommodations in your education, speak to your school counselor.



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Things to Think On: Improving InfoSec/Cybersecurity

- What do you feel that we as a community do to improve the InfoSec open source contributor experience, career trajectory, and learning outcomes for those that are neurodivergent?
- How can we best introduce these solutions in a real, meaningful way that enacts change in the community?
- What are 1-2 things that you feel would make a career in InfoSec more accessible to those that are neurodivergent? How will you build upon what you have learned today to implement those in your own communities and with your friends?
- What are some things that you'd like adults to know about what it's like to be a neurodivergent teenager/young adult today?



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Questions and Answers

If anyone has any questions, I'll take some time to answer them now!



Contact Me

You can find me on Twitter at @kiran_oliver

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Thank you so much for joining me today!!

