

Tēnā tātou katoa

Hello, I am a proud advocate and champion of neurodiversity, not only through my personal journey but also in my role as a board member of Learning Differences Aotearoa and as an Assistant Commander within Fire and Emergency New Zealand. My name is Scott Lindsay and this is my journey understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity, beginning with my own life, and extending to my family, particularly my son, who also embodies the unique strengths and challenges that come with neurodiversity.

My journey with neurodiversity has been enlightening, guiding me through both challenges and triumphs. It has taught me resilience, adaptability, and the importance of seeing the world through multiple lenses. As a parent of a neurodiverse child, I have navigated the educational system, healthcare, and societal attitudes, striving to create an environment where my son can thrive, not in spite of his neurodiversity but because of it. This personal experience has fuelled my commitment to advocating for individuals with learning differences and promoting a more inclusive and understanding society.

In my role as a volunteer board member of Learning Differences Aotearoa, I leverage my personal insights and professional skills to champion the cause of neurodiversity. My focus is on dismantling barriers to education, employment, and social acceptance for those with learning differences. I am committed to fostering an environment that recognises the unique talents and potentials of neurodiverse individuals, advocating for policies and practices that support their growth and inclusion in all aspects of life.

My vision is of a world where neurodiversity is celebrated as a vital aspect of our collective human experience. I believe in the power of education, awareness, and advocacy in transforming societal views on neurodiversity. By promoting a deeper understanding of neurodiversity, we can unlock the potential of countless individuals, enabling them to contribute their unique perspectives and talents to our communities and society at large.

In both my personal and professional life, I am dedicated to the cause of neurodiversity, working tirelessly to ensure that every individual, regardless of how their brain functions, has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling and rewarding life.

As we embrace the benefits of neurodiversity within Fire and Emergency New Zealand and our whanau, I stand before you not only as an advocate but also as a testament to the unique strengths that are born from our neurological differences. My personal journey with verbal

dyspraxia, metathesis, and dyslexia has not only shaped my perspective but has significantly enhanced my skills as an assistant commander.

These conditions, which have presented challenges in communication and learning, have also endowed me with a unique set of leadership qualities. They have taught me the importance of patience, empathy, and adaptive communication strategies. In striving to overcome my own hurdles, I've developed a keen insight into the power of diverse perspectives and the value of clear, concise, and direct communication.

My experiences have empowered me to lead with compassion and understanding. I've learned that fostering a supportive environment where every member feels valued and heard is crucial to building a cohesive and effective team. This understanding has led me to champion inclusivity and diversity, recognising that each of us brings a unique set of skills, talents, and perspectives that, when harnessed, can lead to ground-breaking innovation and enhanced team performance.

These insights have been invaluable. They have allowed me to create strategies that leverage the strengths of each team member, promote creative problem-solving, and implement inclusive practices that accommodate the diverse needs of our personnel. This approach has not only improved team morale but has also increased our efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the complex and dynamic challenges that we face in emergency services.

By embracing my neurodiversity this has encouraged a culture of openness and resilience among my peers and subordinates. It has shown that vulnerability is not a weakness but a catalyst for growth and understanding. By sharing my experiences, I've inspired others to acknowledge their own challenges and strengths, fostering a workspace where innovation thrives on the diverse ways we think and interact with the world.

My journey through neurodiversity has been a profound source of strength in my leadership role. It has taught me that the true essence of leadership lies not in uniformity but in the ability to recognise, embrace, and harness the diverse potentials of our team members. As we continue to build an inclusive and dynamic service, let us all remember that it is our differences that make us stronger, more compassionate, and ultimately, more effective in fulfilling our mission to serve and protect.

I encourage brigades to go forth and have these conversations at brigade levels assisting to create an environment where every individual has the opportunity to shine. Together, let's look to a future where diversity is our strongest asset.

If you want to talk with me about my journey or neurodiversity whether yourself or your whanau, I'm proudly a member of the Employee Lead Neurodiversity committee and you can find my details and other committee members within our portal.

Kia Kaha - be strong, be brave, be steadfast in our journey towards an inclusive and diverse future.

Kia Ora