Finding myself after 30: Diagnosis and a new career – Anon's Story

For most of my life, I felt as though I was constantly running on the wrong track. I worked hard, excelled in certain areas, and yet always carried a nagging sense that I was missing something fundamental about how the world worked - or how I worked within it.

At 30, I received an autism diagnosis. Not long after, ADHD followed. It was a seismic shift. Suddenly, so many years of confusion, self-criticism, and exhaustion made sense. What I had labelled as "failings" were, in reality, my brain working differently from the so-called norm. Instead of being broken, I was simply wired another way.

Getting those diagnoses was both a relief and a challenge. Relief, because I finally had words and explanations that fit. Challenge, because the world rarely pauses to accommodate difference. For me, it meant looking again at the path I was on and asking whether it truly suited who I was.

The answer was no.

I had been working in an area that didn't play to my strengths and left me drained. Once I understood my neurodivergence, I gave myself permission to change. I leaned into what energised me: structure, analysis, problem-solving, and the pursuit of fairness. That's how I found myself embarking on a new journey into law.

Studying law as an adult learner with both autism and ADHD has its unique challenges. Organisation doesn't always come naturally, and long reading lists can feel overwhelming. But the flip side is a mind that can make connections quickly, dive deeply into detail, and stay passionately engaged when the subject sparks interest. Where others might see contradiction, I see balance: autism gives me focus and persistence, ADHD gives me creativity and drive. Together, they push me forward.

The process hasn't been smooth. There are days when I still feel the weight of imposter syndrome, and nights when my brain refuses to switch off. But I also carry a newfound sense of pride. For the first time, I am not trying to mould myself into what I think I "should" be. Instead, I am building a career that fits the way I work and the way I see the world.

One of the most affirming experiences so far has been the application process for my future firm. At an Aspiring Solicitors event about disability and neurodivergence, I met someone from the firm who spoke with genuine openness about inclusion. Encouraged, I decided to be honest in my application about my diagnoses. Not only was I supported, but I was successful in securing a training contract. It proved to me that being authentic and open about who I am can lead to the right opportunities, not close them off.

Receiving my diagnoses in adulthood didn't change who I am, but it changed how I understand myself. And in that understanding, I found the courage to make choices that align with my authentic self.

Law might seem an unlikely destination for someone who spent years lost in doubt, but for me, it feels exactly right. My neurodivergence doesn't hold me back; it is the reason I can offer a perspective that is different, valuable, and deeply needed.

I may have started this journey later than some, but I've arrived exactly when I was meant to.