

ACCESS RIDER

Tom Stockley (They/Them/He/Him)

Artist, Writer & Facilitator

<https://tsidiot.square.site/>

Tom is neurodivergent, with a formal diagnosis of ADHD (2020) and a suggested diagnosis of ASD in progress. They are also living with lifelong mental health diagnoses of fluctuating depression and anxiety. The intersecting symptoms of these conditions can also affect Tom's memory, processing and anxiety levels - including Auditory Processing Disorder. You can read about some of the symptoms of these conditions below. After viral illness and mental burnout in 2022, Tom also suffers from ongoing fatigue.

ADHD: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/symptoms/>

Autism/ASD: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/signs/adults/>

Auditory Processing Disorder: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/auditory-processing-disorder/>

Depression & Anxiety: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/depression-anxiety.html>

Fatigue: <https://www.nbt.nhs.uk/our-services/a-z-services/bristol-me-service/post-viral-fatigue-a-guide-management>

Burnout: <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/burnout/>

This document aims to raise awareness to any collaborators, partners or commissioners in his professional career, so that any barriers relating to his neurodiversity do not hinder his professional work, his health and relationships with others. It is important to see how the barriers impacting him can be overcome by providing him with specific access requirements. The document has been framed in consideration of the social model of disability as well as some mention of medical diagnoses and prescription.

This access rider will:

- 1) Identify potential barriers that Tom faces
- 2) Identify any support that Tom may require
- 3) How recipients can best use this document to support themselves as well as Tom

Access requirements are highlighted in bold within the text

The main barriers Tom may face include:

- Anxiety (around large groups of people as well as face to face, online or telephone conversations)
- Sensory overstimulation (usually noise based)
- Communicating and processing instructions
- Stress around planning and/or plans changing
- Struggling to maintain focus and/or complete a task
- Fatigue and fluctuating mental health

Anxiety

Anxiety, when related to ADHD and mental health can manifest in a variety of ways. Tom may become very quiet, at odds with their usually extroverted and chatty self. He may also avoid eye contact, use another activity to feel calmer while he is listening/engaging (such as writing notes, looking out the window, walking around) or need a brief break from the conversation or activity.

More often than not, the anxiety Tom is feeling is not your fault! It can arise from overstimulation, stress or struggling to concentrate on multiple things or conversations going on around him.

Please be patient! Feel free to check in if you notice that Tom seems quiet or anxious. If they feel able to do, they will let you know and may need some time (usually 5 - 15 minutes) to move around or sit down away from the group - this may be a physical or digital space.

This does not mean that Tom is disinterested in what is going on, or doesn't want to participate!

Sensory Processing

Due to ADHD and processing struggles, Tom does not process information well if there is lots of noise, music or conversations around him. He also struggles to retain information over audio (a common symptom of APD is not being able to remember song lyrics!)

Please ensure that instructions are given and conversations are held in calm, quiet spaces.

Communication

Tom can face challenges when talking to others in person, on the phone or online.

Usually, emails are the preferred communication - with information and instructions clearly laid out. Tom finds bullet points really helpful.

Tom usually enjoys in person conversations and is a people person! They prefer calmer spaces, and time and space to be able to ask questions, clarify and process information and instructions.

Tom finds phonecalls hard to focus on and process information, particularly if they are unplanned.

Tom appreciates people checking to see if they have received and understood the information - some days and weeks can be busier and more difficult but he will always endeavour to check in with you!

Please feel free to check if Tom has received an email if he has not replied, or to ask if he has understood what is required of him.

If too much information is presented at once, especially verbally, Tom may miss important details and forget things. **Please deliver information either through email in bullet points, or calmly and slowly in conversation - please allow time for Tom to make notes and ask questions, and check in to summarise and confirm that he has processed all the necessary information.**

Planning

Although usually a very organised, diligent person, when Tom feels stressed or has a lot of work to do, they can struggle with timings, dates and sudden changes of plan. 'Time blindness' is one way that his ADHD manifests.

<https://focusmag.uk/time-blindness-adhd-adult-adhd-processing-speed>

This may mean that, in times of stress or business, Tom may appear to get confused over timings and dates. **Please be patient, and work with Tom to slowly and calmly make sure that plans are made without double bookings or unfeasible timings.**

This can also mean, together with his anxiety, that Tom can struggle when trying to find a new place that he hasn't been to before. He may not leave enough time, or struggle with public transport, or get lost. **Please provide clear directions, or provide additional support if possible - e.g., meeting somewhere first that's easier to find.**

When working, they may also struggle to change focus from a task, or to do simple things like take a break or have lunch. **Gentle reminders are always welcome!** This is often a result of hyperfocus, another manifestation of ADHD. If Tom seems to still be engrossed in a previous task, this is not out of rudeness! If possible, allow time for the task to be finished - **if it's important that a new task is started, gently remind Tom and ask if they need any support with transitioning.**

<https://www.additudemag.com/understanding-adhd-hyperfocus/>

If plans change last minute - that's ok, it happens! But this may be stressful to Tom, and cause them to panic, become anxious and struggle to rearrange or focus on what needs to be done. If this happens, **please check in and ask if there's anything you can do to support Tom and make new plans that suit everyone involved.** Sometimes they may need reassurance that people aren't angry or upset. Tom may need a few hours or days to process the change, if possible, before committing to new plans.

Clear and concise plans for projects or working days are always appreciated! Tom works well to timings, dates and deadlines and the earlier and clearer these can be provided the better.

Completing Tasks

Tom's strengths lie in their creativity, high energy and collaborative process when developing or approaching new ideas and situations. Although they are a conscientious worker and well organised, they can struggle to progress or finish a task or project, particularly if it is over a few weeks or months. This is a common symptom of ADHD.

Clear dates, deadlines and check ins can really help with this! Establish a timeline at the start of a project, and then work with Tom to keep checking in and moving onto the next phase of the task together. This will ensure that their energy stays consistent throughout the project! Any support with administrative tasks or other focus-heavy tasks such as copywriting, sending emails or phonecalls can also really help Tom not to feel overwhelmed and complete tasks successfully.

Mental Health

Like many of us, Tom faces lifelong mental health struggles, primarily depression and anxiety. Tom has various tools and medications to manage the symptoms of these, which may include: low energy, tiredness, appearing quiet or withdrawn, feeling unmotivated, struggling to be around people, struggling to focus.

Tom is trained in mental health awareness and always encourages others to talk about their struggles if they feel able to. Please try to do the same for him! Tom will usually let you know if he is struggling on a particular day, but sometimes finds this difficult. **Please work to make spaces where mental health is discussed - check in before meetings and sessions, and allow space for Tom (and others) to say if they are struggling with their mental health.**

Certain topics around relationships, LGBTQ+ identity, trauma and mental health may be difficult for Tom to engage with when they are feeling unwell. **Please try to put content warnings on material and make allowances for this.**

Tom puts a lot of pressure on himself. It's important for him to know that if he is struggling, he can talk about it and have space to rest if needed.

Regular breaks (every hour) are important to help Tom to focus, engage and minimise symptoms of fatigue.

How to use this document:

- Refer back to the information, write notes if needed (don't just read it once!)
- Please share with other team members and relevant collaborators (with permission)
- Keep checking in, especially at the start of a new project or task. People's access needs can change from day to day!
- Use it as an opportunity to learn. Sometimes, Tom may feel able to discuss details around access, neurodivergence and mental health; but please check first before starting and big conversations about this! A lot can be learned from the links provided above
- Keep an open line of communication! Tom is happy to answer questions, clarify and (often) provide further information. They are also always looking to learn and share experiences

Thank you for reading, and for being a part of making our spaces more accessible and empathy-led.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom'. The signature is stylized, with a large 'T' and a cursive 'S'.