



# NEURODIVERSITY

## I N L A W

### Interview: Danielle Rowland Lindahl

**'JUST BECAUSE SOMETHING DOES NOT WORK FOR YOU, IT DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE FAILED'**

Danielle Rowland Lindahl is an attorney admitted to the New York bar in 2011 and Washington D.C. in 2012, who works on corporate accountability. It was not until Danielle came across an article highlighting how ADHD presents in women that Danielle was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 33. Danielle says "the article described me almost perfectly". Danielle shares her experience of being a neurodivergent lawyer with Susana Ferrin Perez.

Danielle began at a big law firm in New York, in Corporate and Securities. She would later join a small plaintiff firm that represented shareholders seeking to hold corporate officers and directors accountable for misconduct. After a few years, Danielle changed scenery by joining a non-profit that worked with corporations to support their efforts to prevent bribery and corruption. It was during this time at the non-profit that she learned that "despite the efforts of many in a corporation to do the right thing, it ultimately rested with the corporate officers and directors to ensure that corporations followed the law". Danielle joined a former colleague, who opened his own law firm, and nowadays works on corporate accountability.

Danielle was not diagnosed with ADHD until her early thirties. For Danielle, the delay in her diagnosis is owed to two reasons. The first reason lies in the lack of information on neurodivergent conditions and how they manifest in women. "ADHD is seen as something that impacts young boys. Girls are seen as daydreamers, shy, or making careless mistakes when in reality they have ADHD". The second reason is related to being a 'twice exceptional individual'. Danielle puts it plainly "my psychiatrist first rejected the idea that I had ADHD because I had gone to a top-ranked college, graduated law school and had a successful career. I sometimes wonder what my life would have been like had I been diagnosed earlier".

There is no better way to succeed than getting to know oneself and Danielle uses her diagnosis and understanding of herself as a powerful tool to succeed. She describes "my brain loves to research and do deep dives into interesting topics, so I am able to spend time researching areas of corporate misconduct that interest me". This has helped her gain a deep understanding of different areas of the law. For instance, when she has a case, she takes advantage of her brain's desire for novelty channelling it to "learn more about the specific misconduct at issue, and how it complies with the law or does not". When dealing with the more 'uninteresting' parts of her job, Danielle has another effective technique. "I rely on rewards, small things like spending a few minutes on Twitter or playing a game on my phone, to motivate myself to accomplish those tasks". She further adds that she takes medication that helps her focus and stay motivated to work.

Danielle has disclosed her diagnosis to both her colleagues and employer. Her colleagues have been supportive of her diagnosis and she often found that sharing her diagnosis enabled others to open up about their own. With regard to her employer, she explains that despite not having had to fill out forms that asked about disabilities since she was diagnosed, she is indeed open about her ADHD with her employer. However, she asserts that "employers do not understand neurodiversity,



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and approach neurodivergent people based on their past experiences or even how they are portrayed in the media". When pondering whether neurodivergent individuals are prejudiced when applying for a legal job, Danielle is clear "I believe all disabled people are discriminated against, neurodivergent people are not unique in that respect. I consider my ADHD a disability, and I am proud of it".

In her free time, Danielle enjoys reading, arts and crafts projects, and watching what's new on Netflix. She hopes that once her children are older, she will be able to travel again. If Danielle could give her younger self some advice it would be: "You are not lazy, or careless. It may take time to discover what habits and routines work for you, but it is worth taking the time. And be creative– try lots of things when figuring out how to work. Just because something does not work for you, it does not mean you have failed".

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