

The Stillness Industrial Complex:

Why Neurotypicals Don't Stim (In Public), and Why They Police Ours

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Abstract

Objective: To investigate the perplexing absence of visible stimming among neurotypicals and the parallel enthusiasm for **suppressing** other people's stimming—especially when our bodies are busy manufacturing happiness without a permit.

Design: Multisite ethnography of offices, classrooms, waiting rooms, and family barbecues (n = too many). Findings suggest neurotypicals **do stim**, but in **camouflage** (leg bouncing under tables, cuticle excavation, marathon “coffee walks”). Visible, joyful stimming is reclassified as “disruptive” because it fails the national test of **Professional Statuesque™**—the peculiar belief that **stillness equals competence** and **vibration equals mutiny**.

Conclusion: Neurotypicals are not always unhappy; they are **strategically rationed**. Joy is quarantined to approved windows (Friday 5–7 pm, strictly weather permitting). Unscheduled happiness—especially if kinetic—trips alarms installed by the Stillness Industrial Complex.

Key Terms (For Reviewers Who Fear Movement)

- **Stimming:** rhythmic or repetitive movement/vocalisation that regulates nervous systems and/or expresses joy.
- **Micro-stim:** socially sanctioned fidget (pen click, sock seam worship, “stretching”) rebranded as **focus**.

- **Stillness Industrial Complex (SIC):** cultural machinery that treats visible regulation as a **behaviour problem** rather than a **nervous system solution**.
 - **Happiness Suppression Reflex (HSR):** reflexive attempt to pause another person's joy in case it spreads and ruins the productivity metrics.
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Methods

1. Observation

- Boardrooms (glass fishbowls for group discomfort)
- Classrooms (chairs designed by the Anti-Ergonomic Society)
- Waiting rooms (temples of sanctioned immobility)

2. Instrumentation

- Covert **Ankleometer™** (measures subterranean leg jiggles)
- **Vibe Barometer** (counts sighs when someone flaps happily near a printer)
- **Clip-Board of Respectable Pretending** (tick box: "Not moving = good human")

3. Analytic Frame

- Compare **Visible Joy** vs **Acceptable Fidget**.
 - Score environments on **Motion Tolerance** and **Punishment Latency**.
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Results

R1: Neurotypicals Absolutely Stim—They Just Rename It

- 87% engaged in **micro-stims**: pen clicking (rebranded as "thinking"), shoe heel drumming ("deep concentration"), compulsive inbox refreshing ("strategic alignment").

- When asked if they stim, they replied, “No, I’m just **focusing**,” while operating a fidget economy that could fund a small space program.

R2: Joy Is the Wrong Kind of Evidence

- Calm, happy stimming (hand-flapping, rocking, humming) triggered **HSR** in observers who swore they were “not bothered,” just “concerned about standards.” Standards of **what**, we asked. “Standards,” they said, meaning **optics**.

R3: The Optics Premium

- The more an environment prized **performative stillness** (open-plan offices, awards nights, school assemblies), the **lower** its Motion Tolerance and the **higher** its Punishment Latency (speed at which someone says, “Could you not?”).

R4: Borrowed Movement

- Many neurotypicals outsource regulation to **wearables** (“stand now”), **sports** (movement allowed, joy taxed), or **children** (“run around for me, I’ll supervise”). Public stimming remains prohibited without a costume (ballet is socially acceptable stimming with tuition).

Discussion

Are Neurotypicals Always Unhappy?

No. They’re **optimising for acceptability**. Stillness is a uniform. Joy, unless decanted into weekend containers, is **non-compliant**. The body wants to move; the spreadsheet wants it to **submit an application**.

Why Suppress Our Happiness?

Because visible, self-directed regulation demonstrates that **calm is possible without permission**. That’s intolerable in systems powered by **approval gates**. Also: someone else’s joy is a mirror—if your culture can’t metabolise it, you break the mirror.

Axel’s Naïve Questions™

- If movement is “distracting,” is the plan to distract us **into stillness** or distract **our nervous systems** into meltdown?

- If ballet is fine and flapping is not, is the missing ingredient **tulle**?
 - If you call your stimming “focus,” can I invoice my focus as **therapy**?
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The Axel Index of Motion Justice (AIM-J)

Score environments on five axes (0–10):

1. **BWI — Baseline Wiggle Index:** how much movement is allowed before eyebrows lift.
2. **MSTT — Micro-Stim Tolerance Threshold:** latency to “Could you stop that?”
3. **JMS — Joy Masking Score:** number of hoops required to disguise happiness as productivity.
4. **SFS — Seating Fragility Score:** likelihood the chair punishes spines to enforce stillness.
5. **NPI — Noticing without Intervening:** proportion of staff who can witness movement and choose **curiosity** over **control**.

Goal: High BWI & NPI; low MSTT & SFS; JMS under 2. (If you need a costume to rock, you’ve already failed.)

Policy (Because Movements Need Movements)

1. **Stim Equity Clause** in every code of conduct: “Regulation that harms no one and protects the nervous system is **endorsed**.”
2. **Motion-Neutral Design:** rocking chairs, standing desks, quiet corners, hall passes for adults.
3. **Language Reform:** replace “disruptive” with “diagnostically informative.” The body is sending **data**; stop flagging it as spam.
4. **HSR Training:** teach managers to recognise the **Happiness Suppression Reflex** and choose **support** over **censure**.

5. **Outcome KPI:** measure **Post-Meeting Regulation** (how many people exit **calmer**). If the number is negative, the problem was not the flapping.
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Field Guide: How to React to Someone Else's Stimming

- **Option A (Recommended):** "Thanks for self-regulating—do you need anything?"
 - **Option B (Common):** Weaponised whisper: "Could you not?"
 - **Option C (Axel):** Produce a fidget. Declare independence.
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Limitations

Sample skewed toward places where chairs squeak like moral panic. Also, the Ankleometer™ detected more movement than reported; honesty levels may be inversely correlated with necktie tightness.

Conclusion

Humans are **kinetic**. Pretending otherwise is a cultural choice dressed as a policy. Neurotypicals aren't joyless; they're **joy-managed**. If our happiness reads as insubordination, the problem is not the hands—it's the **hierarchy**.

Let the bodies move. The nervous system is not a misconduct.

Author Contributions

Axel designed the study (stared out windows), collected data (existed in chairs), analysed results (noticed patterns), and drafted the manuscript (wrote while gently rocking). Reviewers are invited to submit feedback in the form of interpretive dance.