



What is neurodivergence?

Neurodiversity refers to the natural diversity of human brains meaning that everyone has a unique way of thinking, feeling and functioning.

Neurodivergence means that some people think, feel and function in ways that are considered less common, as opposed to people who are **neurotypical**.

Neurodivergent is a non-medical, self-identifying term that may be used by people with a range of diagnoses including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Tourette Syndrome and Specific Learning Disorders (SLD).

Neurodivergent brains are **different, not better or worse**.

Differences can relate to...

Planning and time management	Flexibility and adaptability in certain situations	Maintaining focus and shifting attention	Processing, responding to and tolerating certain stimuli (sometimes referred to as sensory differences)
Regulating emotions and reactions	Navigating everyday environments and tasks	Communicating and socialising	

Words matter and language evolves.

Many neurodivergent people have expressed a preference for identity-first language (i.e. neurodivergent person rather than person with neurodivergence).

It is important to ask
about and to respect
neurodivergent people's
language preferences.

This content was developed for use by community mental health practitioners. It is based on an AIFS publication and webinar, and further consultation with community mental health practitioners who support neurodivergent children. For more information and to learn about supporting neurodivergent children, visit our website: aifs.gov.au/research_programs/child-family-community-australia/supporting-neurodivergent-children-young-people or follow the QR code.





Misconceptions about neurodivergence

Misconception

Reality

People are diagnosed as neurodivergent.

All neurodivergent people have ASD or ADHD.

Neurodivergent people are all bad at...

Neurodivergent people are all good at...

Neurodivergent people have a problem that should be fixed.

Neurodivergent people can and should change to fit in.

Neurodivergent is a non-medical, self-identifying term. Neurodivergent people can have a range of clinical diagnoses, including ASD, ADHD, Tourette Syndrome and SLDs (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia). Some people identify as neurodivergent without a clinical diagnosis.

Just as there is diversity amongst people who are neurotypical, each neurodivergent person has unique strengths, challenges and areas that could be considered 'typical'.

Neurodivergence is a result of the natural variation in the human brain. Just like neurotypical people, neurodivergent people cannot change their brain functionality. Working alongside neurodivergent people means accepting, supporting and accommodating neurological differences.

Embracing neurodiversity means valuing, accepting and supporting everyone's differences, whether they be related to neurology, ability, race, religion, culture, age, gender, sexuality or social status.

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This is who they are in the world, just like this is who you and I are!

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Mental health practitioner speaking about neurodivergent children.