



Welcome! I am so glad you are here!

Before we dive in, here's a little guide to get you started. Think of this as your appetizer—a taster of the key concepts and language we'll be exploring (which, by the way, is constantly evolving!)

Now, please understand that I'm not here to tell you precisely what neurodiversity is or isn't.

My goal is to give you a broad overview of how our minds process and communicate in wonderfully different ways—not broken, not better, just different.

Learning about different neurotypes is a lot like learning about other cultures. A fiery Italian grandmother will communicate her needs very differently than, say, a reserved Norwegian businessman. Both are effective communicators, but if you're not familiar with their style, you might find yourself a little overwhelmed, unsure, or wondering if you are on the same track.

The same thing happens in workplaces, friendships, and everyday interactions when we don't recognize different communication styles. Every behaviour has a reason, and understanding these differences can lead to better connection, clarity, and fewer awkward misunderstandings.

So, let's explore the different **Cultures of Communication** together and see how small shifts in understanding can make a huge impact. Sound good?

What Is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is the concept that differences in how our brains work—how we think, learn, communicate, and interact—are natural variations of the human experience. Many understand these differences are not "deficits" or "disorders" but unique ways of experiencing and engaging with the world.

Some examples of neurodivergence:

- Autism spectrum
- ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)
- Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, and Dyspraxia
- Tourette Syndrome
- Developmental Language Disorders
- Intellectual and Cognitive Disabilities
-and the list goes on!

The key principles of neurodiversity:

Strengths-based approach: Focus on abilities and unique perspectives, not just challenges.

Inclusion: Everyone deserves an environment where they feel valued, supported, and understood.

Intersectionality: Consider how neurodivergence interacts with other aspects of identity, like culture, gender, and race.

The Medical Model vs. Neurodiversity Paradigm.

.... (A Much Better Way to Think About Things.)

All right, let's break this down...

The Medical Model



(Traditional deficit-based views on neurodivergence and how I was taught.)

- Sees neurodivergence as a problem that needs to be fixed.
- Focuses on diagnosing, treating, or “normalizing” people.
- Assumes there's one “right” way to think, learn, or behave.
- It puts all the pressure on the individual to adapt to the world around them.

So, as you can imagine, when I got my own diagnosis, I felt *utterly* lost. Suddenly, I was questioning everything I thought I knew. What I had been taught about neurodivergence and how it applied to me didn't make sense. I felt broken.

So, I did what any self-respecting, slightly obsessive neurodivergent deep diver would do—I read *everything*. Articles, research papers, personal stories, Reddit threads at 2 AM (for science, obviously). And that's when it finally clicked: what so many great minds are telling us.

Neurodivergence isn't the problem—our understanding of it was...which leads us to:

The Neurodiversity Paradigm.



(The “Oh, This Actually Makes Sense” Approach.)

- Recognizes that neurodivergence is just a natural part of human diversity
- It focuses on inclusion, acceptance, and making sure environments *work for people*, not the other way around.
- Understands that different brains process, communicate, and experience the world in unique (and often brilliant) ways.
- Shifts the responsibility from “fixing the person” to “fixing the systems” so everyone can thrive.

People aren't broken. When we stop trying to force everyone into the same narrow mould and start designing workplaces, schools, and communities that support different ways of thinking and being, *all minds can benefit*.

And honestly? That makes way more sense.

Neuro-Affirming Language Guide

Using inclusive and affirming language helps build respect and understanding!

But, because life loves to keep us on our toes, remember that it always depends on the person. Here are some examples to get you started (and possibly overthink everything)!

It is best to avoid....	This is better	Why?
"Suffers from autism"	"Is autistic" / "An autistic person"	Many people prefer identity-first language that centers their identity as part of who they are.
"ADHD kid"	"A child with ADHD" or an ADHDer!	Ask their preference, this one is all over the board!
"High-functioning / Low-functioning"	"Support needs" (e.g., high support needs)	Functioning labels can be reductive and dismiss individual needs or strengths.
"Special needs"	"Disabled" / "Has specific needs"	"Special needs" can feel patronizing; many prefer the term "disabled" as it acknowledges systemic barriers.

"Disorder"	"Condition" / "Brain difference"	Shifting language can reduce stigma and highlight natural variation rather than pathology.
"Normal"	"Neurotypical"	Referring to neurotypical brains recognizes diversity without implying others are "abnormal."
"Behavior problem"	"Communicating a need."	This reframes behaviour as an expression of unmet needs rather than a negative label.
"Masking is bad."	"Masking can be exhausting."	While masking can be harmful, and it can quickly lead to burnout. Avoid judging coping mechanisms neurodivergent people may need to use.

How to Ask Questions Respectfully.

1. **Lead with Curiosity** – Instead of assuming you know what's best (because none of us are mind readers!), try asking, "Can you tell me more about what works best for you?"
2. **Be Open to Correction** – If someone corrects your language, take it as a free learning opportunity instead of a personal attack. A simple "Thanks for letting me know!" goes a long way.
3. **Try Using Neutral Language.** Instead of blurting out, "What's wrong with you today?" (Yikes), try a more supportive "How can I support you?" It shifts the focus from judgment to care because kindness always wins! Am I right?

Sparking Questions

As you enter this workshop, take a moment to reflect on how we show up for neurodivergent individuals—whether in the workplace or on the other end of a crisis call.

I wanted to throw a few thoughts your way before we meet—just some things to bounce around in your head and get the wheels turning.

- ◊ How do we make sure neurodivergent folks feel supported, not just accommodated, in new workplaces?
- ◊ What assumptions do we make about someone's abilities based on how they communicate or react under stress?
- ◊ How might neurodivergent individuals express distress differently, and how can we make sure we're actually hearing what they need?
- ◊ What workplace norms or crisis response "best practices" might unintentionally exclude or overwhelm neurodivergent people?
- ◊ How can we adapt our communication—whether in an office or on a crisis line—to meet people where they're at?

This workshop is your chance to dive into these questions (and probably some you hadn't even considered) in a judgment-free space. Bring your curiosity, an open mind, and maybe a coffee—

I look forward to meeting you all!

