

Neurodevelopmental Differences

The term neurodevelopmental differences encompasses a range of behaviours, challenges and differences. These differences emerge during childhood but may not be obvious until later in life. When these differences are evident at a frequency and intensity that is well beyond what is considered typical, compared to their same aged peers, and these differences impact the persons functioning, such differences may indicate a 'disorder'.

The Neurodiverse affirming movement holds that neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism and ADHD, reflect unmet needs, and the consequence of a neurodivergent person attempting to function in a neuronormative world that is not set up for them. Neurodevelopmental differences refer to but are not limited to the following:

- Intellectual Developmental Disability
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant Disorders
- Conduct Disorder
- Developmental Language Disorder
- Specific Learning Disorder: Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia
- Developmental Coordination Disorder
- Tourette Disorder

Neurodivergence is often used as a 'catch all' phrase to describe a child with neurodevelopmental differences. Supports aligned to helping those with a neurodevelopment difference are as follows:

- Psychoeducation regarding the child's neurotype, including exploration of their strengths and needs.
- Skill building: focussed on the values of the child and the family. This is sensitively navigated via exploring the child's preferences and considering the societal standards of things such as play, friendships and communication. With support, children and families can identify appropriate goals and supports aligned with the child's needs and values. This may also include advocating for adjustments and accommodations for the child.
- Presume competence: acknowledge the child's potential and provide them with opportunities to grow with whatever support they need
- Promote Autonomy: provide opportunities for choice and control and support the child's right to withdraw consent and have a voice in how they engage with supports
- Respect all communication types
- Honour Neurodivergent Culture: accept them for who they are and that they are not trying to changed or to made to appear normal.
- Provide a safe space to be authentic