



Parent resource for understanding neurodiversity in the context of Autism for young children and parents

In the first instance, it's essential to know what neurodiversity means.

- **Neurodiversity:** The idea that everybody has a different brain – and because everybody has a different brain and neurological system, they have different experiences in life. These differences in neurology can change how one person thinks, behaves, processes, functions, copes, and perceives the world around them.
- **Neurodivergent:** A term used to refer to individuals with a brain that diverges from the norm.
- **Neurodiverse:** A group of people with multiple neurotypes (e.g., autistic and neurotypical) is considered to be neurodiverse. Note that one person can't be neurodiverse.

Neurodivergence refers to the natural variation in human brain function and behaviour. It encompasses a range of neurological conditions, including autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and others. The term emphasises that these differences are not deficits or disorders but variations in how people think, learn, and interact with the world.

Here are some critical points about neurodivergence:

1. **Diversity of Minds:** Neurodivergence highlights the idea that there is no "normal" way of thinking. Just as we celebrate diversity in cultures and backgrounds, we should also celebrate diversity in neurological functioning.
2. **Individual Experiences:** Each neurodivergent person has unique strengths, challenges, and perspectives. For example, some may excel in creative thinking or have heightened sensory awareness, while others might face difficulties in social interactions or organisation.
3. **Social Model vs. Medical Model:** The social model of disability views neurodivergence as part of human diversity, focusing on societal barriers and how environments can be adjusted to be more inclusive. The medical model often frames neurodivergence as a disorder that needs treatment.



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4. **Advocacy and Acceptance:** The neurodiversity movement advocates for acceptance, understanding, and support for neurodivergent individuals. It encourages society to create environments that accommodate different ways of thinking and learning.
5. **Importance of Language:** We use language to discuss neurodivergence matters. Respectful, inclusive language fosters understanding and reduces stigma.

Neurodiverse language refers to communication methods that recognise and embrace the diversity of neurological conditions, such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and more. It emphasises understanding and respecting different thought processes, communication styles, and sensory experiences.

For a parent, here are a few key points:

1. **Respect and Inclusion:** Neurodiverse language promotes respect for all types of minds. It encourages an inclusive approach that values different ways of thinking and expressing oneself.
2. **Person-First vs. Identity-First Language:** Some people prefer "person-first" language (e.g., "a child with autism"), while others prefer "identity-first" language (e.g., "an autistic child"). It's essential to ask and use the language that individuals or their families choose.
3. **Focus on Strengths:** It is crucial to highlight strengths and unique perspectives. For example, many neurodiverse individuals excel in creativity, problem-solving, and attention to detail.
4. **Avoiding Stigmatization:** Using respectful, accurate language helps reduce stigma. Terms like "disorder" can imply a deficit; instead, consider phrases that emphasise differences and abilities.
5. **Encouraging Open Dialogue:** Encourage open conversations about feelings, experiences, and preferences related to communication and learning styles. This fosters understanding and support.

Books for Children:

(The majority of these books are available on Amazon, or you can find them in local bookstores, online bookstores and or Kmart/ Big W)

- [A Day with No Words](#) by Tiffany Hammond
- Remarkable Remy by Melanie Heyworth
- [When My Brain is Messy](#) by Tania Wieclaw



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- [Just Right for You](#) by Melanie Heyworth
- [Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is okay!](#) by Clay Morton and Gail Morton
- [Lulu Is A Rhinoceros](#) by Jason Flom, Allison Flom and Sophie Corrigan
- [My Brain is A Race Car](#) by Nell Harris
- [The Brain Forest](#) by Sandhya Menon
- [Some Brains](#) by Nelly Thomas
- [The Rainbow Brain](#) by Sandhya Menon (for the AuDHD brain)
- [Wiggles, Stomps and Squeezes Calm My Jitters Down](#) by Lindsay Rowe Parker
- Sometimes Play by Renee Stewart and Nell Harris
- [My Wandering Dreaming Mind](#) by Merriam Sarcia Saunders and Tammie Lyon
- Bubble Gum Brain.
- Don't Be Afraid to Drop.
- Failure Friday.
- Felix and the Feelings Formulas.
- I'm Stretched.
- My Fantabulous Brain.

Resources/Books for Adults:

(The majority of these books are available on Amazon, or you can find them in local bookstores, online bookstores and or Kmart/ Big W)

Love and Autism by Kay Kerr

[Start Here: A Guide for Parents of Autistic Kids](#) by Autistic Self-Advocacy Network

[Understanding the Autistic Mind](#) by Neuroclastic

[What Every Autistic Girl Wishes Her Parents Knew](#) by Autism Women's Network

[Unmasking Autism](#): Discovering the New Faces of Neurodiversity (Kindle version available also on Amazon)

[The Reason I Jump](#): One Boy's Voice from the Silence of Autism by Naoki Higashida

[Divergent Mind](#): Thriving in a World That Wasn't Designed By You by Jenna Nerenberg

[We're Not Broken](#): Changing the Autism Conversation by Eric Garcia



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[Untypical](#): How the World Isn't Built for Autistic People and What We Should All Do About It by Pete Wharmby

[Back from the Brink](#): Stories of Resilience, Reconciliation, and Reconnection by Tim Chan and Sarah Chan

[Neurotribes](#): The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity by Steve Silberman

[Uniquely Human](#) : A Different Way of Seeing Autism by Dr Barry Prizant

["Learning Outside The Lines"](#): Two Ivy League Students With Learning Disabilities And ADHD Give You The Tools For Academic Success and Educational Revolution" Johnathan Mooney

[Avoiding Anxiety in Autistic Children](#): A Guide for Autistic Wellbeing by Dr. Luke Beardon (ND Author)

[Unconditional Parenting](#): Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason by Alfie Kohn

Growth Mindset resources:

<https://www.mindsetworks.com/free-resources/>

Video series, available on YouTube.

Self-care occupations such as showering, dressing, eating, and preparing food.

Tips for Increasing Participation in Self-Care Occupations:

- **Visual Supports:** Use visual schedules, picture cards, or social stories to help your child understand the steps involved in self-care routines.
- **Choice and Control:** Whenever possible, give your child choices about what to wear, what to eat, and how to complete self-care tasks. This can help increase motivation and reduce anxiety.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your child for participating in self-care activities, even small steps. Use positive language and avoid punishment.
- **Sensory Considerations:** Be mindful of your child's sensory sensitivities. If they dislike the feel of certain textures, provide alternative options.



- **Break Down Tasks:** Break down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. For example, instead of saying, "Get dressed," say, "Find your shirt," and then "Put your arms in the sleeves."
- **Make it Fun:** Incorporate games, songs, or other fun activities into self-care routines. For example, you could turn brushing teeth into a game by timing how long your child can brush.
- **Collaborate with Professionals:** Work closely with your child's occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, and other professionals to develop a comprehensive plan for supporting their self-care skills.

Parent-Based Resources & Tips for Supporting Self-Care in Children with ASD, ADHD, and PDA

Free Live Webinar: School Avoidance & Autism

60-minute session + Q&A For Parents, Carers, and Professionals Supporting Autistic Children 3yrs to Young Adults

<https://www.parentalstresscentre.com/school-avoidance-in-autism/>

- **Understand PDA:**
 - **PDA Society (UK):** Based in the UK, this organisation offers valuable insights into PDA, including its characteristics and how to support children with it.
 - **Key Concept:** Children with PDA often experience significant anxiety around demands, even those they may want to do. This can manifest as resistance, defiance, or emotional outbursts.
 - **Books:** Explore books written by parents of children with PDA, offering firsthand experiences and coping strategies.
- **Adapt Self-Care Routines:**
 - **Visual Supports:** Use visual schedules, picture cards, or social stories to break down self-care tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.
 - **Choice and Control:** Whenever possible, offer choices within the routine. For example, "Do you want to wear a blue or red shirt?"
 - **Sensory Considerations:** Be mindful of your child's sensory sensitivities. Adapt the environment or routine to minimise discomfort. For example, use a weighted blanket when brushing your teeth.



- **Make it Fun:** Incorporate games, songs, or preferred activities into the routine.
- **Build Collaboration:**
 - **Occupational Therapist:** Work closely with your child's OT to develop personalised strategies and adapt activities.
 - **Support Groups:** Connect with other parents of children with similar challenges. Sharing experiences and strategies can be invaluable.

Important Considerations:

- **Avoid Power Struggles:** Direct demands can escalate anxiety in children with PDA. Focus on collaboration and finding mutually agreeable solutions.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward effort and participation, even small steps.
- **Self-Care for Parents:** Remember to prioritise your well-being. Parenting a child with complex needs can be demanding.

Occupational Therapy Resources:

- **The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA):** This organisation offers resources and information on occupational therapy for children with autism, ADHD, and other developmental disabilities. You can find articles, research, and referrals to qualified occupational therapists on their website: <https://www.aota.org/>
- **Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA):** This is the peak professional body for occupational therapists in Australia. Their website may have resources or links to relevant information for parents. *Search their website:* Use keywords like "children with autism," "ADHD," "PDA," "self-care," and "parent resources."
- **The National Autistic Society (UK):** While based in the UK, this organisation provides valuable information and resources on autism, including practical tips for supporting children with autism in daily living skills. You can find their resources on their website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- **General Resources:**
 - **Understood.org:** This website offers a wealth of information and resources for parents and educators of children with learning and attention issues. You can find articles, videos, and tools to support children with ADHD, autism, and other conditions: <https://www.understood.org/>
 - **The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):** This website provides information and resources on mental health conditions,



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including ADHD and autism. You can find information on diagnosis, treatment, and support services <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>



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