

Understanding & Appreciating Neurodiversity

celebrate differences

2022




Glossary of Terms

All terms on this page
coined by Harvard
sociologist Judy Singer. All
are non-medical.

Neurotypical: Refers to they types of
brains most people have

Neurodiversity: The understanding
that brain differences are valued and not viewed
as deficits. Applies only to groups of people.

Neurodivergence: Refers to a
group of people whose brains work differently
than most other people.



Additional Terms

Ableism/Ableist: Prejudice by able-body people of those who have disabilities. The belief that not having a disability is superior and that people with disabilities should be “fixed” or “cured”

Masking or Camouflaging: When neurodivergents learn, practice, and perform certain behaviors and suppress others in order to be accepted by neurotypical people.

Neurodiversity Movement: A human rights movement that says that people with brain-based disabilities or differences should be accepted and included in society just like neurotypical people.

Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices: Supporting the needs of neurodivergent learners by modifying the environment, training neurotypical people, and other strategies that avoid trying to fix them or coerce them into masking or camouflaging neurodivergent traits.

All Brains are
Neurodiverse;
People Who Have
“Non-Typical” Brains
are **Neurodivergent**



Types of Neurodiversity That May Require an IEP Include:

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)**
- **Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, etc.)**
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD)**
- **Tic Disorders (Tourette Syndrome)**
- **Intellectual Disabilities (Down Syndrome, Williams Syndrome, etc.)**
- **Seizure Disorders (Epilepsy)**
- **Psychiatric Disabilities (Bi-Polar Disorder, Depression, Schizophrenia, OCD, etc.**

About 15% of all People in the United States Have Neurodivergent Brains*

- 1 in 5 have a Psychiatric Disability
- 1 in 10 Have ADHD
- 1 in 10 are Dyslexic
- 1 in 16 have a Seizure Disorder
- 1 in 44 are Autistic
- 1 in 100 have an Intellectual Disability
- 1 in 162 have Tourette's



*Statistics by the CDC, 2002

Person-First vs. Identify-First

- Some people prefer with disabilities and neurodivergence prefer “**person-first**” language

Examples:

- Person with a disability
- Someone with a visual impairment
- Child with autism
- Man with Down Syndrome



Many adults with intellectual disabilities prefer person-first language

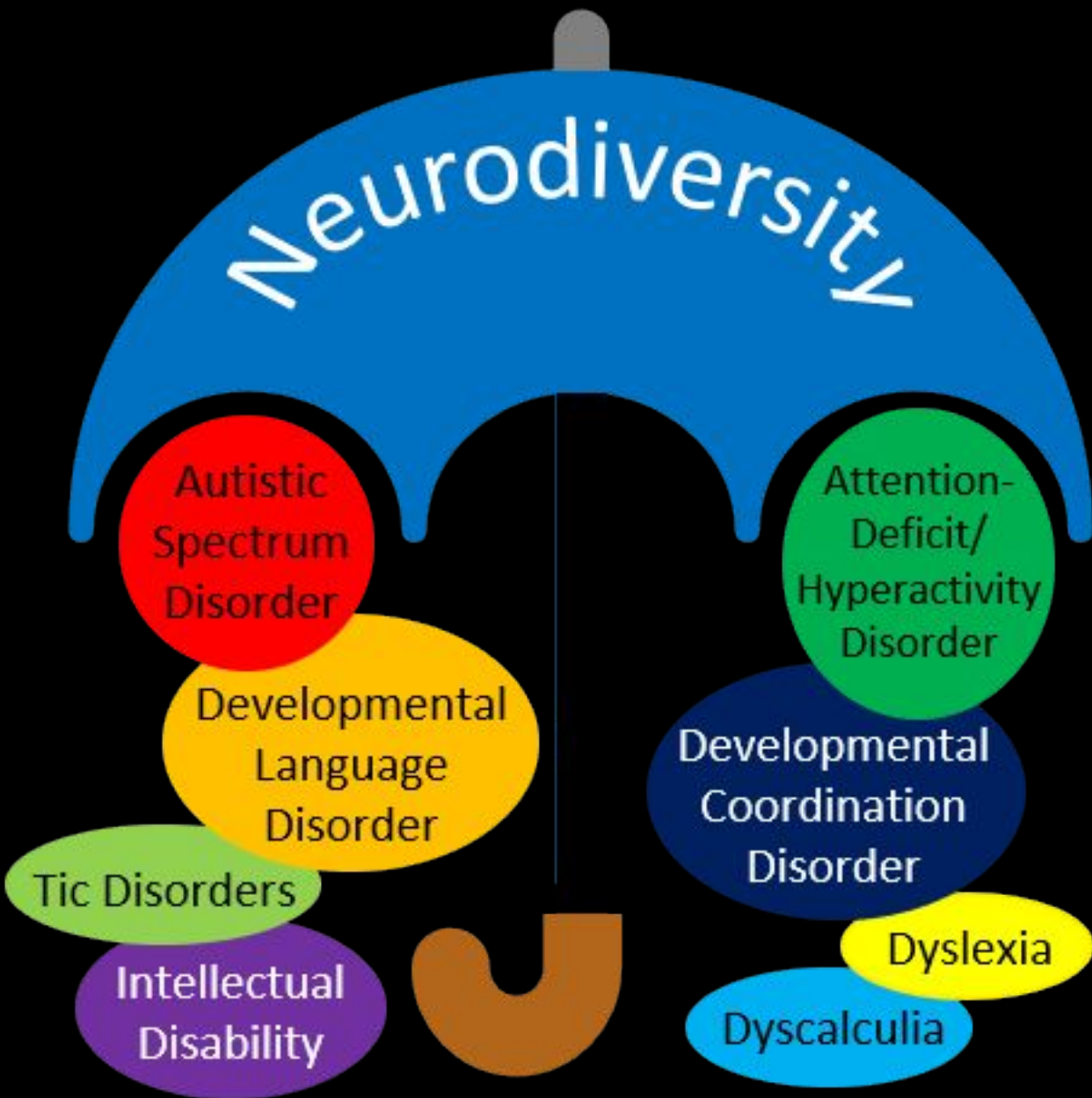
- Some people prefer with disabilities and neurodivergence prefer “**identity-first**” language

Examples:

- Deaf person
- Autistic woman
- Diabetic
- Asthmatic



Many adults on the autism spectrum prefer identify-first language

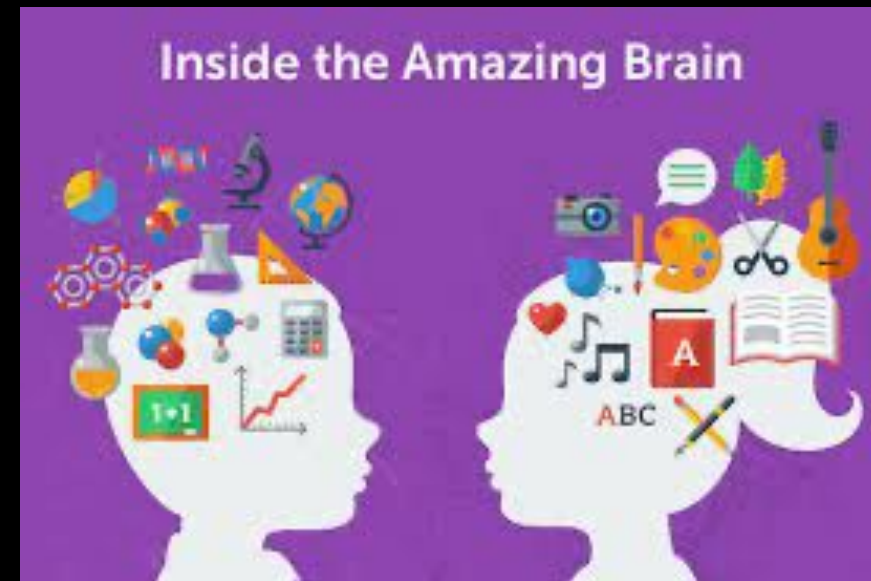


Some neurodivergent people see their conditions not as disabilities but just having a different type of mind that may need accommodations.

Some view these differences as giving them both disabilities, covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and superpowers.

Benefits of Being Neurodivergent Include:

- Curiosity
- Ability to stay focused on preferred interests
- Creative problem-solving skills
- Passionate interests
- Honest and direct communication
- Skills prized by many employers



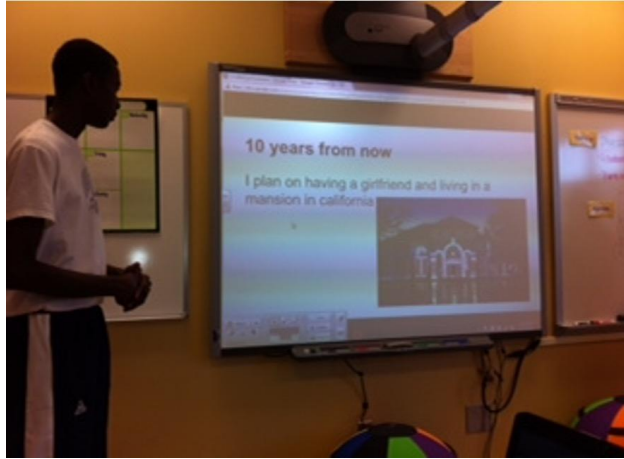
Frame Neurodivergent Characteristics in a Neutral or Positive Way



- ***Passionate*** rather than *Perseverative*
- ***Hyperlexic*** as opposed to *Having poor comprehension*
- ***Prefers consistency*** instead of *rigid*
- ***Loves technology*** rather than *obsessed with computer*
- ***High-support needs*** rather than *low-functioning*
- ***Other examples??***

Students Need to Know About How Their Brains Work

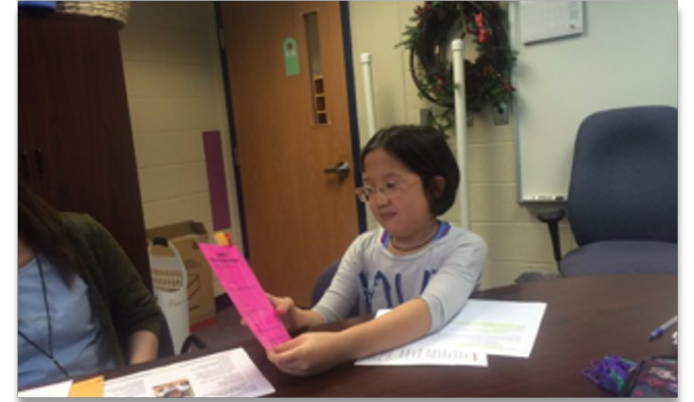
- **Talk with children about their disability**
- **Provide books, films, other resources that show positive examples of neurodiversity**
- **Have them participate in the IEP Process so they have ownership of their goals and accommodations**
- **Provide examples of neurodiverse role models**
- **Connect with peers who are also neurodivergent with similar traits (especially important for girls)**
- **Have them join clubs and organizations that cater to their interests and talents**



Student-Centered IEP



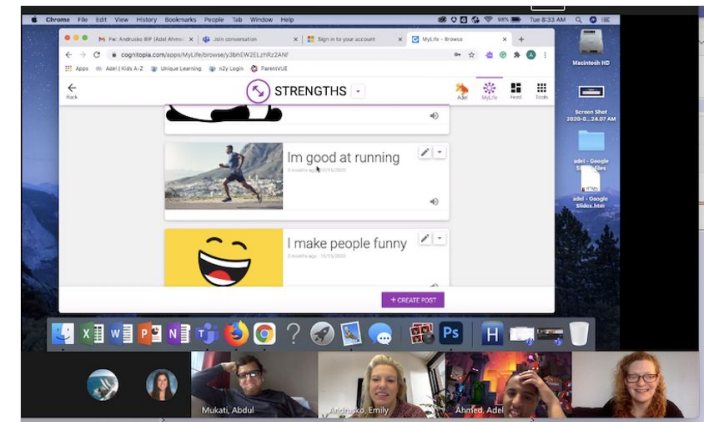
The Order of
Self-Determination



Student-Centered IEP



Student
Teaching
Peers
About Her
Disability



Student-Centered IEP



Temple Grandin
(ASD)



Keanu Reeves
(Dyslexia)



Simone Biles
(ADHD)



Madeline Stuart
(Down's Syndrome)



Adam Levine
(ADHD)



Satoshi Tajiri
(ASD)



Billie Eilish
(Tourette's)



Stephen Wiltshire
(ASD)



Demi Lovato
(Bipolar)



Greta Thunberg
(ASD)

Neurodivergent Role Models



Leo DiCaprio
(OCD)



Octavia Spencer
(Dyslexia)

Neurodiversity Celebrates All Types of Brains



ADHD



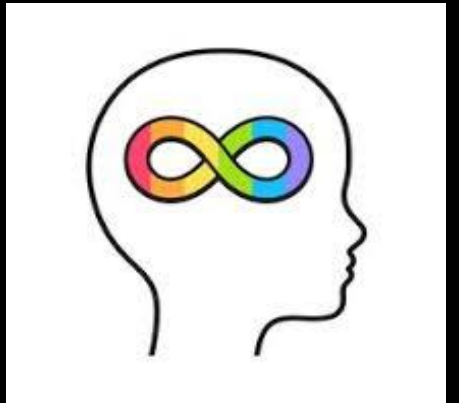
Strengths-Based Approach to Supporting Neurodiverse Students

- Help students learn to identify their interests, talents, and gifts
- Provide neurodivergent models (famous and local adults) for students
- Focus on what types of strategies, accommodations, and interventions are effective and supportive for student success
- Help others (general education teachers, peers, families) appreciate student's unique perspective on the world



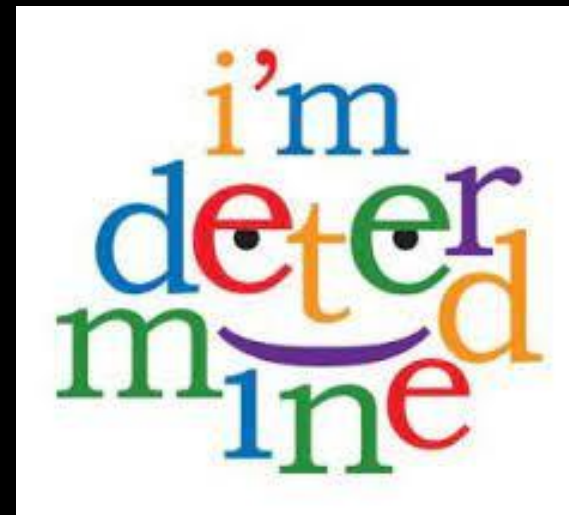
Why Our Children Deserve a Strengths-Based Approach

- Different types of minds are just one way to be human
- We help children grow up to be proud of who they are
- We set a climate for all students that everyone is appreciated and valued
- Being neurodivergent can convey certain advantages and our students need to learn about them; not just their deficits
 - Ability to focus on things you really enjoy
 - Unique passions and interests
 - Solving problems in innovative ways
 - Creativity



Strengths-Based Approach to IEP Goals

- Avoid goals that focus on a student appearing to be neurotypical (masking neurodivergent characteristics)
- Goals that build on a student's talents, interests, and learning style
- Focus on Self-Determination Skills
 - Self-advocacy
 - Self-awareness
 - Problems Solving
 - Choice making
 - Self Regulation



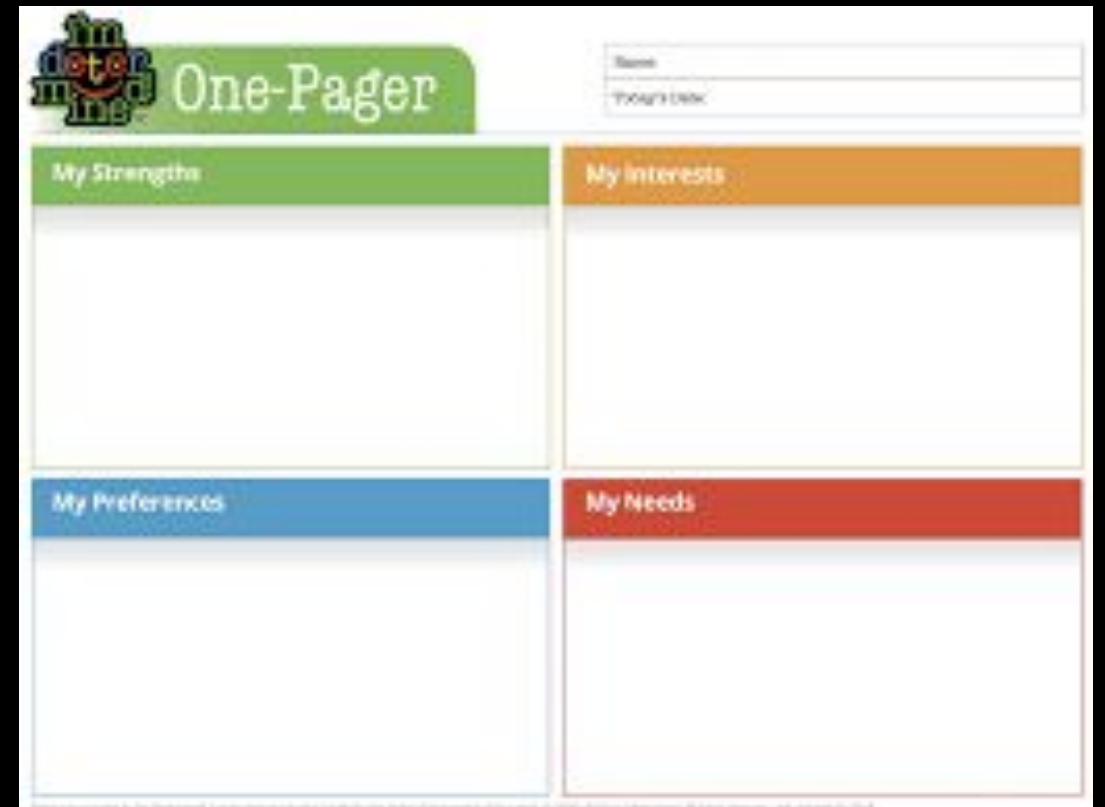
Uses Resources From *I'm Determined*

www.imdetermined.org



The "Good Day Plan" worksheet features a header with the "I'm Determined" logo and the title "Good Day Plan". Below the title are two input fields: "Name:" and "Today's Date:". The main body of the worksheet is a table with four columns, each with a colored header and a specific question:

Good Day	Now	Action	Support
What happens on a Good Day?	Does it happen now?	What needs to happen to make it a Good Day?	Who can help me?



The "One-Pager" worksheet features a header with the "I'm Determined" logo and the title "One-Pager". Below the title are two input fields: "Name:" and "Today's Date:". The main body of the worksheet is a 2x2 grid of boxes, each with a colored header:

My Strengths	My Interests
My Preferences	My Needs

Access and Accommodations

- Normalize fidgets, brain breaks, and visual supports by offering them to all students
- Teach children HOW to use sensory tools
- Students should always have access to their required accommodations (ACC, visual schedules, fidgets, etc.)
- All staff need to know how and when to provide accommodations



Support Sensory –Friendly Classrooms

- Flexible seating options
- Access to sensory tools (headphones, fidgets, etc.)
- Clearly delineated spaces, including movement areas
- Soft lighting
- Reduce distractions





Sensory Supports at Home

- Calm Lighting
- Place to hide
- Support with Organization
- Visual Schedule
- Sensory Tools



Encouraging Sensory-Friendly Environments in the Community

- Smithsonian Access Program
- Performance Spaces (Kennedy Center, Imagination Stage, Ford Theater)
- Movie Theaters
- Museums (Spy Museum, Mount Vernon, National Children's Museum, Artechouse)



Support Communication Needs of Neurodivergent Learners

- Use Visual Supports
- Support consistent use of AAC
- Allow for wait time
- Offer scripts of possible expected answers
- Reduce distractions
- Do not require eye contact



Observe ADHD Awareness Month October 2022



ADHD:
UNDERSTANDING
A SHARED EXPERIENCE

<https://www.adhdawarenessmonth.org/>

Observe Neurodiversity Celebration Week

March 2023



Neurodiversity
Celebration
Week

<https://www.neurodiversityweek.com/>

Observe Autism Acceptance Month April 2023



Web Resources

- **Therapist Neurodivergent Collective:** <https://therapistndc.org/>
- **Autism Self-Advocacy Network:** <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>
- **Autistica Paper of Strengths-Based Approach to Autism:**
<https://www.autistica.org.uk/downloads/files/FINAL-Strengths-Based-Approaches-ActionBriefing.pdf>
- **Authentic Strengths-Based Practice:**
<https://www.autismspectrumnews.org/authentic-strength-based-practice-can-neurotypical-professionals-make-a-paradigm-shift/>
- **How to be a Neurodiversity Ally:**
<https://www.isc2.org/-/media/ISC2/DEI/DEI-Neurodiversity-Ally-Flyer-A4.ashx>
- **Importance of Autism Acceptance:** <https://www.bristolautismsupport.org/autism-acceptance/>
- **Neurodiversity-affirming Practices for Autism:**
<https://www.autismspectrumnews.org/guidelines-for-a-more-neurodiversity-affirming-practice-for-autism/>

Books

- ***The Power of Neurodiversity: Unleashing the Advantages of Your Differently Wired Brain*** by Thomas Armstrong
- ***NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*** by Steve Silberman
- ***Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism*** by Barry Prizant
- ***Divergent Mind: Thriving in a World That Wasn't Designed for You*** by Jenara Nerenberg
- ***The ADHD Advantage: What You Thought Was a Diagnosis May Be Your Greatest Strength*** by Dale Archer



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