

# WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

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Neurodiversity is simply the reality that human brains are wired differently. Some term it as someone being on a spectrum. However, it reflects the natural range of how people think, process information, and interact with the world. As we've all come to know, there isn't one "right" way to learn, communicate, or make sense of things—just a diversity of ways, all of which are part of what makes us human.

When we say someone is neurodivergent, we mean their cognitive processes differ from what is commonly expected or typical. On the other hand, a neurotypical person's brain aligns more closely with the dominant norms of society, essentially, the way society tends to be structured and what it tends to expect.

We use neurodiverse when referring to a group where neurodivergent individuals are present. For example, a team might be described as neurodiverse if it includes people with different ways of thinking and processing information.



## IS NEURODIVERSITY THE SAME AS DISABILITY?

This is a question that often comes up—and it's an important one. To answer it well, we need to recognize that neurodiversity and disability aren't interchangeable terms.

Neurodiversity describes the natural variations in human cognition, while disability—in a legal or functional sense—refers to impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities.

This means:

- Not all neurodivergent people identify as disabled.
- Not all people with disabilities are neurodivergent.
- Some individuals are both.

Within the neurodivergent community, views vary widely. Some individuals strongly identify as disabled because of the barriers they face. Others reject the label of disability, viewing their differences as part of who they are without wanting or needing to be pathologized. Both perspectives are valid—and it's crucial to respect each person's choice about how they identify. At the end of the day, the most respectful and effective approach is simple: honor the terms people choose for themselves.

## COMMON TYPES OF NEURODIVERGENCE

While everyone's brain is unique, the term "neurodiversity" often comes up when discussing certain neurological and developmental differences, including but not limited to:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism
- Bipolar Disorder
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Epilepsy
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Tourette Syndrome
- Trauma-related cognitive differences
- Sensory Integration Disorder



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