

- Neurodiversity Affirming Therapy-

A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS



WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING THERAPY?

Neurodiversity affirming therapy is an approach that recognizes and respects the natural variations in brain functioning and resulting behaviour among individuals.

It acknowledges that conditions like:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Dyslexia

And others are not flaws or illnesses that need to be 'fixed' but rather represent diverse ways of thinking, learning, and experiencing the world.

WHO COULD BENEFIT?

Just because someone is neurodivergent does not automatically mean they need any kind of therapy. However, individuals may receive help from therapy if:

- They struggle with social interactions.
- They struggle with communication.
- They have difficulty with attention, focus, or organization.
- They have sensory sensitivities or challenges.
- They have differences in learning style or academic performance that cause distress.
- They have emotional or behavioral difficulties that may stem from feeling misunderstood or unsupported.

WHAT DOES NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING THERAPY INVOLVE?

Neurodiversity affirming therapy involves creating a supportive environment where individuals can explore and embrace their unique traits. Therapists work collaboratively with clients using a strengths-based focus to:

- Validate their experiences and perspectives.
- Develop coping strategies tailored to their specific needs.
- Learn to use augmentative and alternative ways of communicating if needed.
- Enhance self-awareness and self-advocacy skills.
- Foster a sense of belonging and empowerment their homes, schools and communities.
- Learn about diversity in social communication styles and perspective taking.

Neurodiversity affirming therapy should never train people to behave in ways that make them look or act neurotypical, as this can lead to masking and poor mental health outcomes.

NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMATION BEGINS AT HOME

Practicing being neurodiversity affirming at home involves:

- Educating oneself about neurodiversity and the specific challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals.
- Creating a supportive and accepting environment where differences are celebrated.
- Encouraging open communication and active listening.
- Collaborating on problem-solving and skill-building activities.
- Providing opportunities for self-expression and autonomy.
- Seeking out community resources and support networks.

For parents looking to understand what their child is experiencing, it's essential to approach the situation with empathy and an open mind, listen to their child's perspective and validate their feelings. It is important not only to advocate for appropriate accommodations and support in educational and social settings but to encourage self-advocacy and resilience while providing unconditional love and acceptance.