

# Autism and Neurodiversity

If you or someone in your family has received a diagnosis, or identifies as on, the autism spectrum, you might be interested in knowing more about the *neurodiversity movement*. The neurodiversity movement can provide a source of support and information about living with autism.



## WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity is the differences in people's brains that affect how we experience the world.

The neurodiversity movement (NDM) argues that forms of 'neurodivergence' such as autism, dyslexia, and ADHD are inherent and valuable parts of the spectrum of human variation. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to develop. There is no 'normal' brain.

## THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Ideas about Neurodiversity parallel **the social model of disability**, which recognises that the negative consequences of having an impairment – i.e, the disabling quality of a condition – are often caused by societal structures rather than the condition itself.

For example, some autistic persons may react badly to lights or sounds that are common in the social world as they may overstimulate their senses.

The social model of disability argues that barriers in society create disability, and require reasonable adjustments for those who need them.

There are parallels between the neurodiversity movement and other social justice movements like the broader disability rights movement and feminism.



# The Neurodiversity Movement



## WHO IS INVOLVED?

People like you:

- Autistic people and others discriminated against for their differences.
- Family members and other 'allies'.
- The movement works to eliminate oppression and stigmatisation and to obtain rights and support for those affected.
- Many of the most vocal activists in the NDM have come from the autism rights movement.

## WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

- Many in the movement see their conditions as an aspect of their identity that brings strengths as well as challenges, not as a disease to cure.
- Many in the movement welcome support and access to services that help with everyday life.
- They argue that children should not be subject to forced attempts to 'normalise' them.
- Consequently those in the NDM promote **acceptance of difference** and **valuing of strengths**.



## RESOURCES

### Blog posts

- *'Autism Resources'* by Kit Mead
- *'Welcome to parenting within the Neurodiversity Paradigm'* by Ally Grace
- *'Here's What Neurodiversity Is – And What It Means for Feminism'* by Cara Leibowitz
- *'Neurodiversity: Some Basic Terms & Definitions'* by Nick Walker

### E-books

- *Being Autistic* by AutAngel
- *Welcome to the Autistic Community!* by the Autism NOW Center and the Autistic Self Advocacy Network

### Online communities

- Parenting Children with Autism with Love and Respect
- The National Autistic Society

### Online resource links

- [www.exeter.ac.uk/exdx/resources/feedback](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/exdx/resources/feedback)
- [blogs.exeter.ac.uk/exploringdiagnosis](https://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/exploringdiagnosis)