



Appropriate Neurodivergent/Autistic language guide.

We believe **Neurodiversity** covers the diversity of all humanity minds like biodiversity encompasses all life on our planet. At present neurodiversity consists of neurodivergent and neurotypical people collectively.

Neurodivergent: A person who is not neurotypical (conditions including, but not restricted to, autism, Aspergers, ADHD, Tourette's, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, PTSD, bi-polar)

Neurodivergence: The state of being neurodivergent.

Neurodiverse: Describes an 'environment' sometime used instead of Neurodivergent to describe a person but this is not factually correct as a single person cannot be neurodiverse or everything at once. A group of people can be neurodiverse: for example A neurodiverse workforce consists of both neurotypical and Neurodivergent people.

Terminology that is best to avoid

Some of this terminology following can be interchanged with neurodivergent (ND) where appropriate, where talking about the wider context. We have used specified language around autistic people for the examples.

We feel there is a difference in the way **Autism & Autistic** are used: There is an 'autism world and culture' that mostly does not involve autistic people and there is an 'autistic world' and culture that does based on lived experience. 'Don't do things for autism do things for autistic people' would be our recommendation.

'Person with autism' This may engender distance and the misconception that we would be better off 'without' autism. We believe It's not separable but part of our innate humanity & identity - please use 'autistic person' or 'neurodivergent person' in general. Although research has found consistently that a majority of autistic people prefer autistic person always ask an individual how they prefer to define.

'Has autism' We believe and it's generally agreed autism is not an 'mental health illness', 'disease' or 'catchable/curable'. Please use 'autistic person' or 'autistic people' in preference when referring generally. Technically we feel autism is a condition not a disorder but many autistic people believe it's an innate way of being which should be respected.

'Autism is a mental illness' - No its widely accepted it isn't but autistic people may suffer mental health issues due to bullying & living in a world that generally doesn't accept our difference on our terms so may be and feel hostile.



'Lives with autism' - Again this imply separateness, actually 'I don't live 'with autism' I live with my wife and cats'. Autistic people may 'live with' Mental health issues because of the way they have been viewed and treated. There is a difference in that I'm fine with being autistic but would like to not have an imposed mental health condition.

'Suffers from autism' 'Struggles with autism' - Autistic people may suffer from people's misunderstandings and bullying and struggle with the consequences.

'Fighting autism' Autism isn't a malevolent force that we have to combat day in day out - Autistic people often have to fight against attitudes, stereotypes and traditional myths daily. Autistic people may also have to fight for their rights to support and services that others may access freely.

'Victim of autism' Autistic people may find this offensive - We are often victims of bullying abuse and crime because of our different way we view and experience the world not being accepted.

'Touched by autism' Please forget this one as we feel it's very inappropriate on several levels - it could be seen as very offensive by autistic people.

'Retarded' Ancient and outdated language as if we need to remind people how offensive this is. I had this applied to me at school in the 60's but please never use.

'We are all a little bit autistic' Not were not, this we feel is complete rubbish and may be seen as offensive/demeaning to actually autistic people as it attempts to steal or derail uniqueness and sometimes used to deny services autistic people need.

'He has mild Autism/Aspergers' Curries can be mil, so can weather. We feel you either are or are not Autistic it seems to just depends how well you cope with camouflaging yourself which may take considerable energy and may have mental health consequences. (The term Asperger may be now controversial to some in the autistic community)

'High functioning - low functioning' For autistic people this feels out of date and may feel offensive. Would you say or refer to a neurotypical person as 'high functioning' or 'low functioning'. It also may deny support to people who need supporting in different ways than may be obvious by these definitions.

Functioning terms do not represent the fact autistic peoples ability may fluctuate over any given day. 'Oh he's high functioning and does not need support' or 'he's managing' but very often were not and need advocacy or other support.



Please don't assume all autistic/Neurodivergent people see themselves as disabled. It's a deeply personal choice how autistic people define and this needs to be respected not imposed. Some may consider themselves disabled by society rather than autism. Please also don't use euphemisms such as 'difability' or 'differently abled' either. If they define as disabled use the word.

If you've met an autistic/neurodivergent person, you've met one autistic/neurodivergent person, were not clones or robots so please don't assume we are all the same. This assuming attitude may be as offensive to us as the phrase 'They all look the same' which may be used inappropriately. 'You don't look autistic' is not appropriate, you can't look autistic. Unfortunately assuming may harm us despite any 'good intention'.

We believe If what you are about to write and say would be seen as offensive or inappropriate to any other other minority group then it also may also be offensive to an autistic/ Neurodivergent person. Think and ask an autistic person.

The autistic narrative: In the same way it would feel inappropriate for a non LGBTQ person to write LGBTQ policy in isolation we feel it's inappropriate to write autism (or neurodivergent) policy if you're not autistic (or neurodivergent). Traditionally autism has been fair game for all to overwrite our narrative but we believe that the autistic narrative needs to be based on lived experience.

"We ask for recognition and respect that autistic people are the primary reference point for information, advice & guidance on 'all things autistic' inc language, need, lived experience and understanding. We desire the power of decision making"

Autistic people should be seen as a the first 'go too' point.

Whilst this does not exclude the voice of parents, organisations or experts from engaging, it's about talking with autistic people and not over autistic people. We believe in coproduction and conversation and desire no myths, stereotyping or harmful opinions, treatments cures or behavioural oppression or treatment beliefs that may spring from the absence of autistic input.

Please remember it should be 'Nothing for us without us' and not 'everything about us without us'