

Defining Neurodiversity



in early childhood

Neurodiversity describes the natural variety in how human minds and bodies function and exist. **There are many ways of being all of which are valid and valuable.** While we may have lots of similarities to each other, we also experience lots of differences.

Neurodiversity reminds us that there is no single “normal” or “correct” way to think or develop. In early childhood children;

- grow and develop uniquely down **diverse developmental pathways**
- **play and move** in lots of different ways based on their interests, motivations and developmental needs
- experience **developmentally meaningful moments** in their own time and space
- communicate in a whole range of ways developing a unique **communication identity**
- experience different sensory, regulation and energy **rhythms**

Neurodiversity is a neutral term and refers to all of humanity. Within neurodiversity, there is also the recognition that along with differences, we will also have human needs that require support through compatible conditions and adaptations. The recognition of differences and needs gives us opportunities to continue to develop and grow our understanding of being human.

Why do we need to understand neurodiversity in early childhood?

In early childhood, neurodiversity helps us understand that differences are expected and valuable. Children may have developmental needs that require sensitive support, without being seen as broken or in need of fixing. Neurodiversity encourages us to adapt environments, expectations and support so that all children can belong and thrive.



Diverse

Pathways

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

www.diversepathways.org

Lineage and references:

- This educational infographic was inspired by the work of Sonny Jane Wise (@livedexperienceeducator).
- Wise, S.J., 2023. We're all neurodiverse: How to build a neurodiversity-affirming future and challenge neuronormativity. Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Chapman, R. (2024) Empire of Normality: Neurodiversity and Capitalism. London: Function Books.