

Neurodiversity Affirming Practice

A process of beings and becomings



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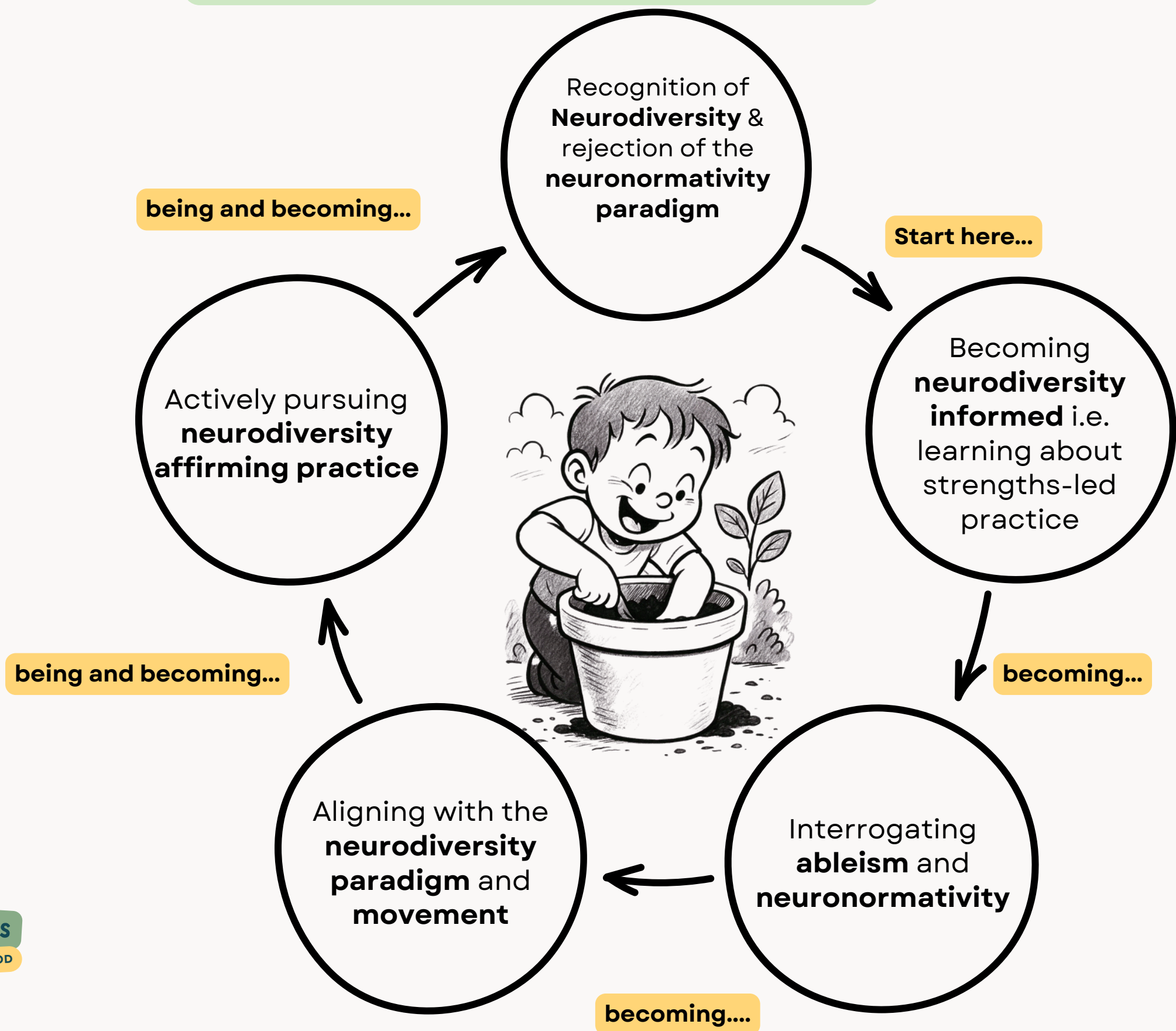
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Neurodiversity	The natural and inevitable diversity of human minds, brains, and ways of processing the world. Just like biodiversity, neurodiversity recognises that difference is essential to the richness and balance of communities. Everyone is valid in the neurodiversity eco-system.
Pathology/Neuronormativity Paradigm	A way of thinking and practicing that frames differences as deficits, disorders, or problems that need to be fixed or normalised. This approach underpins much of traditional SEND practice but is being challenged by neurodiversity and disability affirming approaches.
Neurodiversity Informed	A commitment to recognising and understanding neurodiversity in education, and being open to alternative, progressive approaches, even while working within the confines of oppressive systems such as SEND frameworks or traditional schooling models.
Ableism	Ableism is discrimination, prejudice, or systemic barriers that disadvantage disabled people. It assumes that non-disabled ways of moving, speaking, learning, or being are superior or ‘normal,’ privileging these ways of being. This can mean, for example, an autistic child being stopped from stimming, or a non-disabled child learning that only sitting still and speaking is valued. Ableism results in both direct and indirect forms of othering, exclusion, and discrimination that affect us all.
Neuronormativity (a branch of ableism)	The cultural expectation that there is only one “right” or “normal” way of thinking, behaving, or developing. It positions neurotypical conforming as the default, making other ways of being seem abnormal or deficient.
Neurodiversity Paradigm	A framework that recognises neurological differences as natural and valuable forms of human diversity, rather than problems. It calls for acceptance, inclusion, and systemic change instead of attempts to cure or normalise.
Neurodiversity movement	The social and civil rights movement led by neurodivergent people and allies, advocating for acceptance, equity, and justice. It is connected to wider disability rights and social justice struggles.
Neurodiversity affirming	A practice, pedagogy, or approach that actively values neurodivergent identities, resists deficit framing, and ensures children’s needs are supported in ways that affirm who they are rather than trying to change them to fit in. To be neurodiversity affirming is to resist.
Social Justice Pedagogy	An approach to education that recognises and challenges systemic inequalities (such as racism, ableism, classism, sexism, and more). It connects classroom practice to wider struggles for equity, rights, and justice.
Interconnected social justice movements: The neurodiversity-affirming movement builds on the legacy of earlier struggles such as disability justice, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, climate justice, and decolonisation. These movements are interconnected because systems of oppression overlap, and meaningful change requires solidarity across struggles.	

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Lineage and credit

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