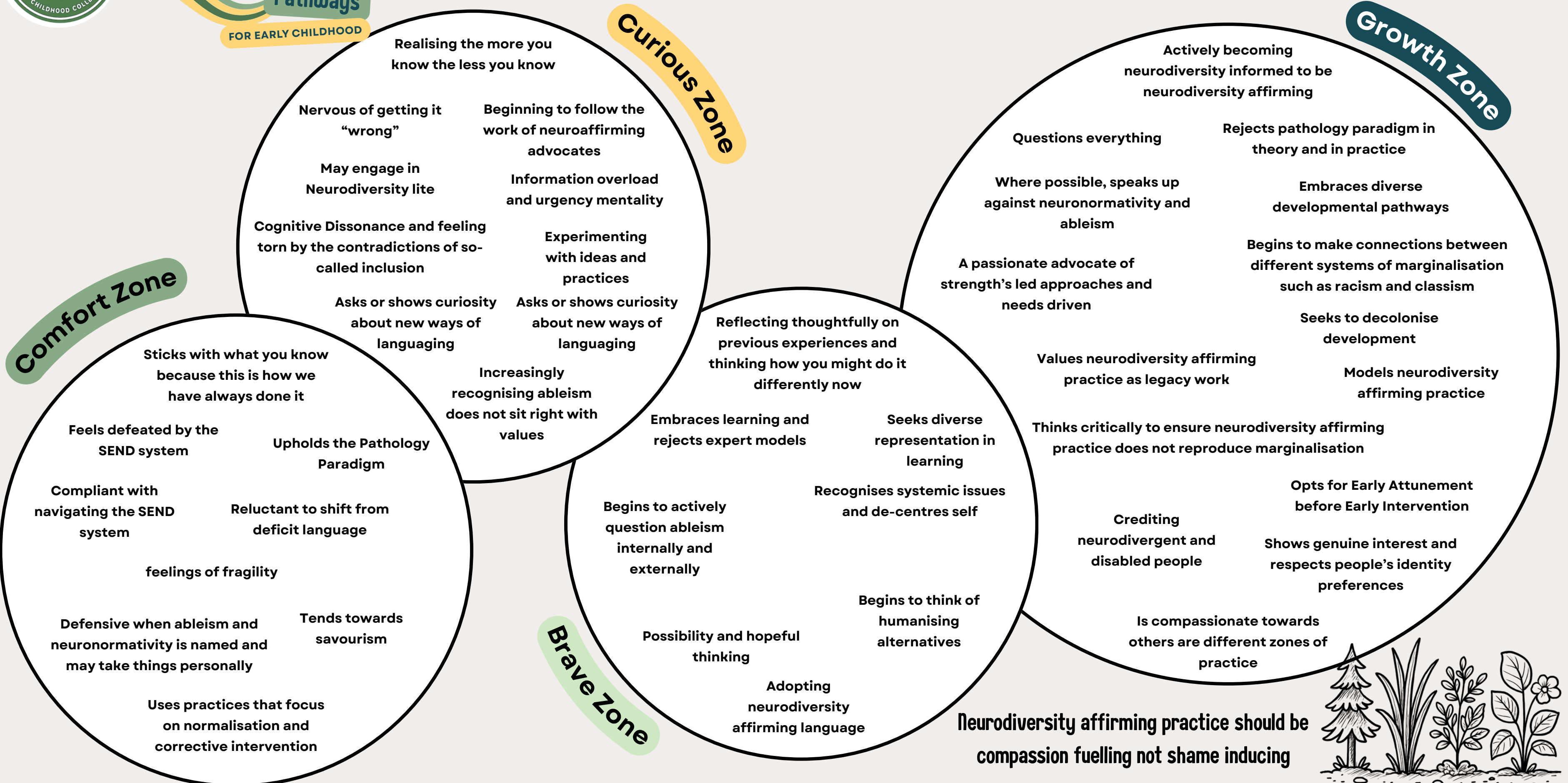




Diverse
Pathways
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Neurodiversity Affirming Zones of Practice





Diverse

Pathways

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Reflecting on your Zones of Practice

Signs you are still in your comfort zone?

Aspects of curiosity in neurodiversity affirming zones of practice?

Actions to move into the brave space?

Recognition of growth?



About Neurodiversity Affirming Zones of Practice

Cathy Nutbrown reminds us that inclusion is a state of becoming rather than a state of being (2016). It is important to recognise that before becoming neurodiversity-affirming, we must become informed about neurodiversity and its implications. The zones of practice help you to map where you currently are and where you might want to be. Please note: this is a rework of Andrew M. Ibrahim's *Becoming an anti-racist: fear, learning, growth framework* (2020). It is critical to acknowledge that ableism is rooted in anti-blackness, eugenics and racism (Lewis, 2022). We cannot address neurodiversity without acknowledging how systems of power and oppression operate to marginalise certain groups of people.

- Murphy, K (2025). *Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices in Early Childhood: An Empowering Guide to Diverse Development and Play*. Routledge.
- Ibrahim, I. M. Learning a lot and striving to be better. Created this visual mental model as a way to help keep myself accountable (Adapted from one I had seen for #COVID a couple months ago.) *Becoming Anti-Racist: Fear, Learning, Growth*. #BlackLivesMatter. 1:17 AM · Jun 7, 2020. Tweet.
- Nutbrown, C., Clough, P., & Atherton, F. (2013). *Inclusion in the early years*. Sage.
- Lewis, T. A. (2022). *Ableism 2020: An updated definition*. Talila A. Lewis.



Slide 1 – Neurodiversity Affirming Zones of Practice

A diagram with four overlapping circles labeled Comfort Zone, Curious Zone, Brave Zone, Growth Zone.

Comfort Zone: Staying with what you know, defensive when ableism is named, compliant with SEND systems, reliant on deficit models, saviourism, fragile feelings, uses normalisation practices.

Curious Zone: Feeling unsettled, nervous of being wrong, experimenting with new practices, cognitive dissonance, urgency and overload, following neuroaffirming advocates, curiosity about language, recognising ableism clashes with values, may engage in neurodiversity lite.

Brave Zone: Reflecting on past practice, embracing learning over expert models, adopting ND-affirming language, hopeful thinking, seeking diverse representation, recognising systemic issues, questioning ableism internally and externally, beginning to humanise alternatives.

Growth Zone: Informed and affirming, rejects pathology paradigm, questions everything, advocates strength-led practice, speaks up against ableism, connects oppressions (racism, classism, sanism), credits ND and disabled voices, models affirming practice, honours legacy learning, compassionate to others in different zones, respects identity preferences.

Tagline at bottom: “Neurodiversity affirming practice should be compassion fuelling not shame inducing.”

Slide 2 – Reflecting on Your Zones of Practice

A reflection prompt slide with the same four zones shown. Text asks:

Signs you are still in your comfort zone?

Aspects of curiosity in neurodiversity affirming zones of practice?

Actions to move into the brave space?

Recognition of growth?

Slide 3 – About Neurodiversity Affirming Zones of Practice

Informational slide. Text explains that inclusion is a state of becoming (Nutbrown, 2016). To become neurodiversity affirming, we must first become informed. The zones provide a way to map current and future practice. Acknowledges influence from Andrew M. Ibrahim’s “Becoming Anti-Racist: Fear, Learning, Growth” framework (2020) and highlights ableism’s roots in anti-Blackness, eugenics, and racism (Lewis, 2022). References Murphy (2025), Nutbrown (2013), Ibrahim (2020), Lewis (2022).