

# The Language of Neurodiversity: A Practical Guide

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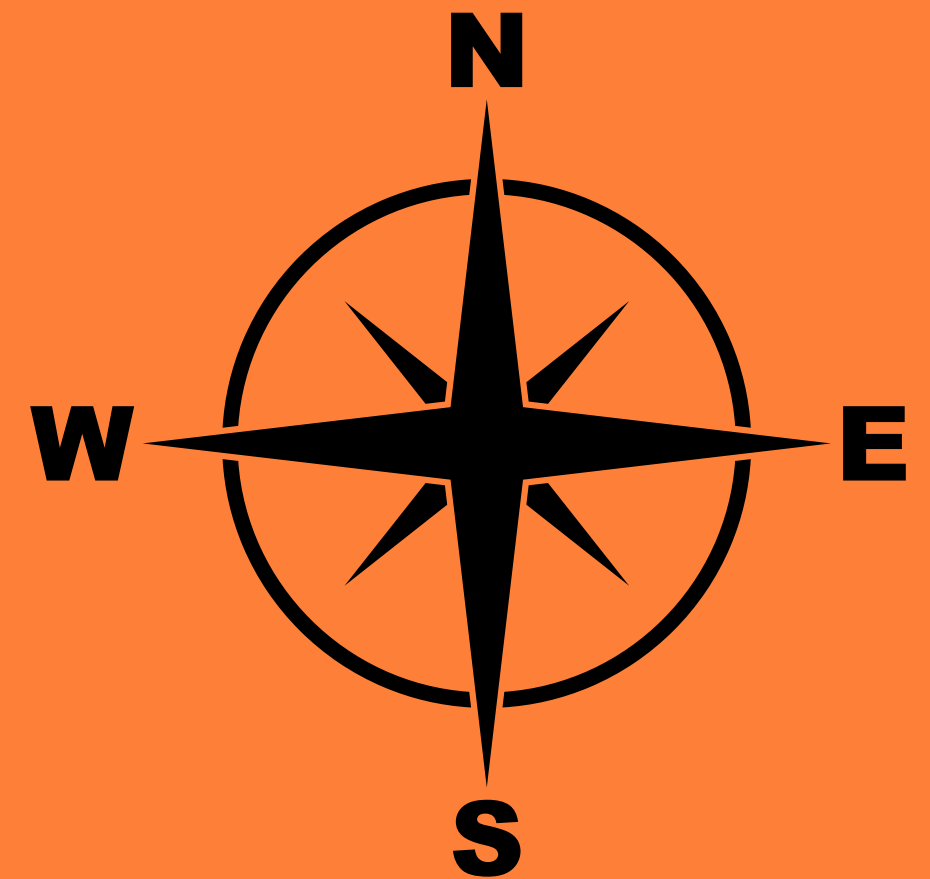


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At Bee Brilliant  
People, we believe in  
the power of  
inclusive language  
to foster  
understanding and  
respect. Embracing  
neurodiversity  
starts with how we  
communicate.



This guide will help you navigate and use neuroinclusive language more effectively to create a supportive and inclusive work environment.



Using neuroinclusive language contributes to a psychologically safe workplace, fostering collaboration, reducing employee stress, and improving overall team performance.



# Key Terms and Concepts (Not Exhaustive)



# Allistic:

A term used to describe individuals who are not autistic. It encompasses people who are neurotypical as well as those who are neurodivergent but not autistic.



## **(Neurodivergent) Burnout):**

Extreme exhaustion from prolonged stress, often due to masking, sensory overload, and unmet support needs. Recovery requires reducing cognitive, sensory, and social demands, not just rest.



# Emotional Dysregulation:

Difficulty managing emotions, leading to intense reactions.





# Executive Functioning:

Mental skills like working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control.



# Hyperfocus:

Intense  
concentration on  
a specific task,  
often seen in  
neurodivergent  
individuals.



# Masking:

Concealing  
neurodivergent  
traits to fit  
societal norms.  
Can often lead to  
Burnout.



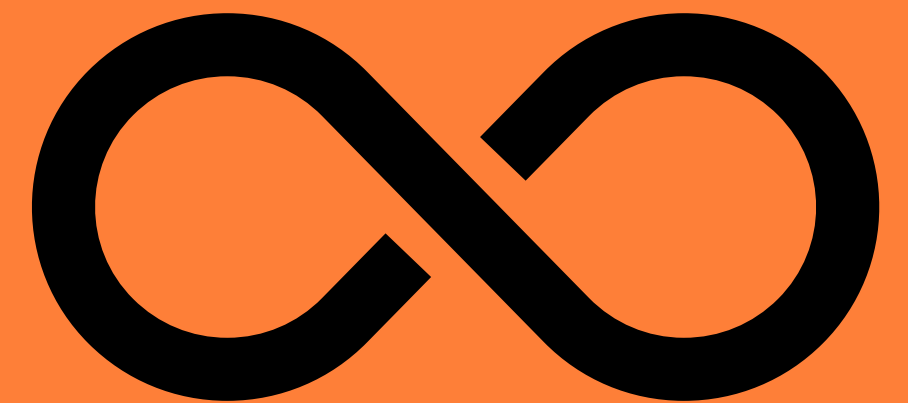
# Meltdown:

An Intense response  
to overwhelming  
situations.



# Neurodivergent:

Individuals whose brains function differently from the dominant societal norm, including autism, ADHD, bipolar, dyslexia, dyscalculia, tourette's, and many other cognitive differences.



# Neurotypical:

Individuals with typical neurological development and functioning, often contrasted with neurodivergent individuals.



# Neurodiversity:

The recognition that neurological differences should be simply respected as variations of human diversity.



# Overstimulation:

Being overwhelmed by sensory stimuli and input causing distress for the individual.





# Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD):

Extreme sensitivity to  
perceived rejection or  
criticism.



# Sensory Processing:

How the nervous  
system interprets  
sensory messages.



**Shutdown:**

Becoming minimally  
responsive due to  
overwhelming stress.



# Stimming:

Repetitive behaviours that help individuals manage and regulate sensory input and emotions.



# Inclusive Language – Best Practices



Ask Don't  
Assume: If  
unsure, ask  
directly  
which terms  
to use.



# Avoid Ableist Language:

Terms like "crazy" or "insane" are harmful and stigmatising. We're not all a little bit autistic.



# Be Patient and Understanding:

Accommodate  
different  
communication  
styles and needs.





# Educate Yourself and Others:

Continuously  
learn and share  
knowledge about  
neurodiversity  
with your team  
and peers.



# Respect Individual Preferences:

Some people prefer identity-first language (e.g., 'autistic person'), while others prefer person-first (e.g., 'person with autism'). Always ask individuals how they prefer to be identified and respect their choice.



# Use Descriptive Terms:

Clearly describe  
behaviours and  
experiences.



## Example of Harmful Language:

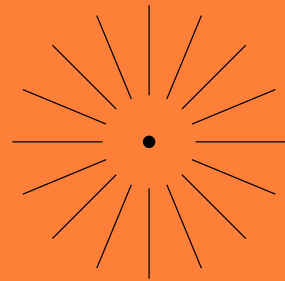
Avoid saying, "We're all on the spectrum," as this phrase minimises the unique experiences and challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals and can invalidate their specific needs and the accommodations they require.



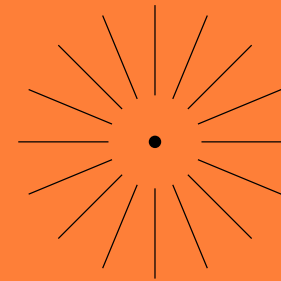
# Right and Wrong Way to Use Terms in the Workplace



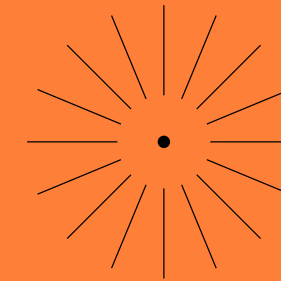
# Right:



“Beth experiences hyperfocus, which helps her complete tasks efficiently”.

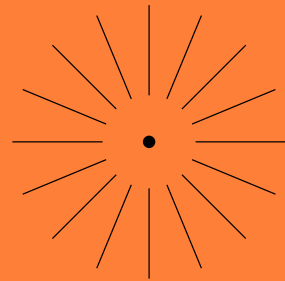


“Mike is an autistic person who excels in analytical thinking”.

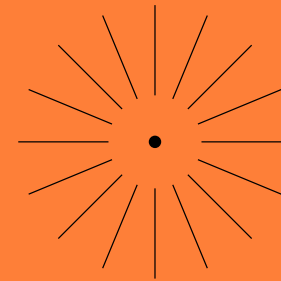


“Let’s create a quiet workspace to support sensory regulation”.

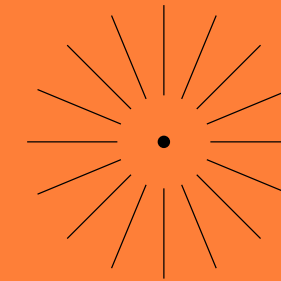
# Wrong:



“Lucy is obsessive about her work” → Implies pathology.  
Instead, say “Lucy has strong attention to detail.”

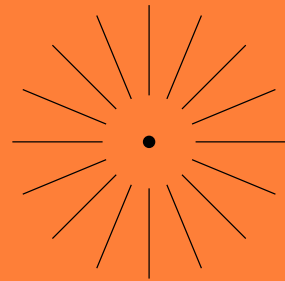


“Sam is autistic and weird” → Dehumanising.  
Instead, say “Sam is autistic and brings unique insights”.

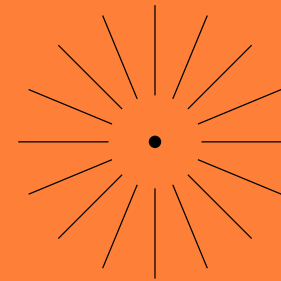


“Why can’t they just handle the noise?” → Ignores sensory processing challenges.

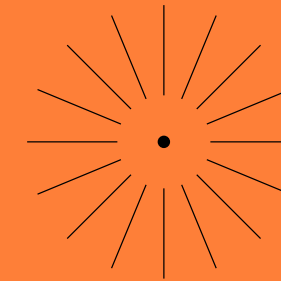
# Key Takeaways



Ask Don't Assume: If unsure, ask directly which terms to use.



Educate Yourself and Others: Continuously learn and share knowledge about neurodiversity.



Be Patient and Understanding: Accommodate different communication styles and needs.





# Acknowledgements

This guide is informed by:

- All we have learned and continue to learn from our many neurodivergent coaching clients over the years.
- Our own lived experience
- Lots of research and practical work in this space including training delivery, coaching, consultancy and conversations with neurodivergent people.

Acknowledgments:

- The neurodivergent community - who we serve
- National Autistic Society
- Neurodiversity Hub
- ADHD UK
- Amy Peters
- Theo Smith and Dr Amanda Kirby

This resource is a guide. Please continue to educate yourself, speak to neurodivergent people and don't be afraid to ask questions.



# Conclusion

- Using neuroinclusive language isn't just about words—it's about shaping a culture of respect, inclusion, and understanding.
- By implementing these principles, organisations can foster an environment where all employees thrive.

For further information and expert neurodiversity training and support, visit

**[www.beebrilliantpeople.com](http://www.beebrilliantpeople.com)**

We offer professional consultancy, workshops, and training to help businesses just like yours implement practical neuroinclusive strategies.



# Next Steps

- Review your existing workplace policies to ensure they reflect neuroinclusive language.
- Share this guide internally with managers, HR teams, and leaders.
- Start the conversation in your workplace, invite your neurodivergent people to share what it's like to work for your business.
- Visit our website and learn all about us and our offer.
- Book a free discovery call to explore how we can support you embed neuroinclusion in your workplace.



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