

Neurodiversity Terminology and Acronyms

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Ableism: The discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require “fixing” and defines people by their disability.

Alexithymia: The inability to recognize or describe one’s emotions.

Allistic: Refers to people who are not autistic. A non-judgement term unlike “normal”.

Aphantasia: The inability to form mental images of objects that are not present.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): is intended to improve social skills by using interventions that are based on principles of learning theory. ABA therapy helps children on the autism spectrum by: Increasing their social abilities like completing tasks, communicating, and learning new skills. Some advocates in the Autism Community have spoken out against ABA, stating it can be traumatic, encourage masking, and an attempt to “fix” the autistic person.

Atypical or Neuroatypical: A person with a brain structure that is different from what the medical community views as normal or neurotypical.

AuDHD is a new term used by folks who identify as Autistic and ADHD.

Autistic or Autistic Individual: In the autistic community, the identity first language is preferred because autism is an inherent part of an individual’s identity, not something they have (“a person with autism or ASD”) or somewhere they are located (“on the spectrum”). However, some autistic people identify as “On the Spectrum”, “Someone with autism or ASD” (Autism Spectrum Disorder), “Highly Sensitive Person” (HSP), “Someone with Asperger’s” or “An Aspie” or “neurodivergent”.

Dyscalculia: Sometimes called math dyslexia, difficulty in performing arithmetical calculations due to brain differences or damage. It can be associated with ADHD. 40% of ADHDers have a learning disorder.

Dysgraphia: A neurological disorder characterized by writing disabilities causing a person’s writing to be distorted or incorrect.

Dyslexia: Difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed.

Dyspraxia: Difficulty in performing coordinated movements, often associated with a neurodevelopmental condition in children (developmental coordination disorder).

Gustatory: The sense of taste, texture, bitter, sweet, salt and sour.

Highly Sensitive Person (HSP): A neurodivergent person who is believed to have increased or deeper central nervous system sensitivity to physical, emotional or social stimuli.

Hyperlexia: Advanced and unexpected reading skills and abilities in children way beyond their chronological age.

Interoception: Sensing internal bodily cues and regulation.

Neurodivergence: (early 21st century from neuro + divergence) - is defined as divergence in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical or normal (frequently used concerning autistic spectrum disorders)

- (<https://www.lexico.com/definition/neurodivergence>). Several "recognized" types of Neurodivergence include autism, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia, dyscalculia, epilepsy, hyperlexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and Tourette syndrome (TS). Left-handedness, gender identity disorder, homosexuality, bisexuality, and asexuality are sometimes also included (<https://psychology.wikia.org/wiki/Neurodivergent>). Other sources have included bi-polar disorder, acquired brain injuries, dysgraphia, Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Co-ordination Disorder, and this list is constantly being expanded.

Neurotypical: Not displaying or characterize by autistic or other neurological atypical patterns of thought or behavior.

Proprioception: The sense of external body limits, includes sensing where your body ends and your body's position and placement of body parts.

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) or Sensitivity (SPS): A condition that affects how the brain processes sensory stimuli. There is a significant overlap between SPD and various neurodiversities. There are 3 subtypes of SPD.

- Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD) which includes Sensory over-responsivity (SOR), -Sensory under-responsivity (SUR), and Sensory seeking/craving (SS).
- Sensory-Based Motor Disorder (SBMD) which includes Dyspraxia and Postural disorders.
- Sensory Discrimination Disorder (SDD) which includes Visual, Auditory, Tactile, - Vestibular, Proprioception, Taste, and Smell.

Vestibular: The sense of movement including trajectory, alignment, and balance.