

# Neurodivergent Mental Health

Supporting wellbeing without asking someone to become less themselves

Neurodivergent people can experience the world, relationships, sensory information and communication differently. Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other forms of neurodivergence are not mental illnesses, but living in environments that repeatedly misunderstand or overload a person can have a serious effect on mental health.

***You are not too much. Your needs make sense, and support should meet you where you are.***

## Look beyond behaviour

What appears to be avoidance, rudeness, laziness or overreaction may be overwhelm, executive-function difficulty, sensory pain, uncertainty or a communication mismatch. Asking 'What is making this hard?' is often more useful than asking 'Why will they not do it?' Behaviour carries information, especially when words are difficult to access.

## Masking has a cost

Masking can include copying social behaviour, suppressing movement, forcing eye contact, rehearsing conversations or hiding distress. It may help someone get through a situation, but sustained masking can contribute to exhaustion, anxiety, low self-worth and loss of identity. Create spaces where fewer performances are required and natural communication is accepted.

## Burnout is more than ordinary tiredness

Neurodivergent burnout may involve deep exhaustion, reduced tolerance for sound or touch, loss of skills, greater need for solitude and difficulty completing everyday tasks. Recovery usually needs reduced demands, sensory protection, predictable routines and genuine rest. Pushing harder or adding motivational pressure can extend the recovery period.

## Helpful adjustments

Offer information in writing, make expectations specific, allow processing time, reduce sensory load and provide more than one way to communicate. Break tasks into visible steps and distinguish what is urgent from what can wait. Headphones, movement, familiar objects, quiet rooms and flexible schedules can be legitimate access needs, not special treatment.

## Support the whole person

Mental health support should take neurodivergence into account. Therapy or coaching may need clearer language, slower pacing, fewer abstract questions and space for sensory regulation. The goal is not to train someone to look typical. It is to help them understand themselves, meet their needs and build a life with less unnecessary harm.

## A gentle reflection

What feels most important for me to remember from this resource? What is one small, realistic form of support I could offer myself today?

This resource offers general information and is not a diagnosis or a substitute for personalised medical or mental health care. If you are in immediate danger or unable to keep yourself safe, contact emergency services or an urgent crisis service where you live.