

Understanding Neurodiversity



Neurodiversity is a term that recognizes and celebrates that there is natural variation in how human brains and minds work, with no single ‘correct’ way. It refers to the idea that neurological differences like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, sensory processing disorders, OCD, and other conditions are simply variations of the human experience, rather than disorders to be “fixed.”

Embracing and Understanding Differences

Understanding neurodiversity begins with recognizing that the brain works in unique ways for different people. Conditions like ADHD, autism, and dyslexia are part of the neurodivergent spectrum. Rather than viewing these conditions as disorders, the neurodiversity movement emphasizes that differences in how we think, learn, and process information should be respected and accommodated. For example, individuals with ADHD may have a heightened ability to focus on tasks that engage them, while those with dyslexia might find creative ways to problem-solve, despite challenges with reading.

How Are Neurodivergence and Mental Health Related?

Neurodivergent individuals may face additional mental health challenges due to societal misunderstandings. Anxiety, depression, and social difficulties are often more pronounced among those who are neurodivergent, especially if they feel pressure to conform to societal norms or mask their true selves. Understanding that mental health

struggles are valid and offering supportive environments at work or school can greatly reduce these challenges.

What is Neurodivergent Masking?

Neurodivergent masking is the act of concealing or suppressing one’s true behaviors, thoughts, or feelings to fit in with social expectations. This can be especially exhausting and harmful over time, leading to burnout, depression, and anxiety. Masking often occurs in social or professional environments where individuals feel their neurodivergent traits are unwanted or misunderstood. By fostering understanding and openness, organizations and schools can create environments where masking is less necessary, allowing individuals to feel authentic.

Community Resources to Support Neurodivergence

There are many resources available for neurodivergent individuals to receive support and build community. Many national and local organizations, such as the Autism Society and CHADD (Children and Adults with ADHD), offer educational resources, support groups, and advocacy.

Your Assistance program is also here to help with information and referrals that address all areas of health, including mental health, financial wellness, family care, and lifestyle support. Services are free, confidential, and available to you and your family members. You can access them 24/7/ by phone or online. To learn more, contact [Member Support](#).