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**ASCETS**

**SHEFFIELD**

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| **An Introduction to Neuro-Affirmative Language** |
| **Introduction** |
| **What is neuro-affirmative language?**  Neuro-affirmative language acknowledges a person’s strengths, interests, and differences in a positive way. It reflects a strengths-based approach to difference. The use of different terminology varies over time as society changes.  **Key terms**   * **Neurodiverse/neurodiversity** describes the natural variation of human brains within the population. * **Neurodivergent/neurodivergence**: people whose brains have developed significantly differently from the typical brain (for example, autistic, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia). * **Essentially, we are all neurodiverse, some are neurodivergent.** * **Autistic person /Allistic person (non-autistic person)**   **Why is it important to use neuro affirmative language?**  It promotes understanding, celebrates difference, and empowers the neurodivergent community. Moves away from deficit, overly, medicalised language   * **Social rather than medical model**   The social model removes the focus of need to be within the CYP and encourages instead to change wider factors such as the environment, relationships and the curriculum.     * **Promote a strengths-based approach**   The choice of language we use can reinforce a CYPs positive qualities, capabilities, and identities. Neuro-affirmative language counteracts the tendency to focus on CYP needs and challenges (a deficit view) and to label them with a negative reputation.   * **Respecting the individual**   It is important to recognise that we are all unique. A person’s neurotype (and other factors such as their gender, occupation, or age) contributes to their individual identity. Using identity-first rather than person-first language recognises the whole, unique person: for example, we may use the term ‘autistic’ rather than ‘a person with autism’, but this is dependent upon the CYPs preferences.   * **Person centred approach**   Presents the CYP in a way in which they and their family would like them to be seen. The use of negative language can lead to CYP attempting to hide or camouflage their identity, [masking](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/autistic-masking), and can result in anxiety.   * **Promotes self-esteem and wellbeing**   Foster motivation and resilience and promote more effective personal development and progress.  **Use neuro-affirmative language when communicating with, about and around CYP.** |
| **Examples** |
| How do you feel about each of the young people below?  What impression would a new member of staff have of that young person?  How would a parent feel reading or hearing this about their child?  How would each of the young people feel about themselves? |
| **Examples of how language can be referred or ‘flipped’ to be neuro-affirmative** |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | ***Commonly used*** | ***Affirming*** | | **Difficulties with …..**  **‘Struggles to…’** | Differences in … Requires support with/from to…  Areas of challenge are…. | | **Overwhelmed**  **Meltdowns** | Triggers to high anxiety are …. resulting in …. | | **Restricted interest/hobbies** | Focused / intense / specialist /passionate interests in …..  Areas of expertise in …. | | **Dramatic**  **Easily upset** | Expressive/ passionate/ animated facial expressions to communicate emotions  Sensitive when……  Hyper-empathetic when…… | | **Disorganised**  **Messy** | Requires support with planning and organising (what/when?), | | **Attention seeking** | Seeks connection…. Seeks a familiar response …  Communicates need …. | | **Following their own agenda** | Autonomous Focused interests  Quickly forget or lose interest in things they are no longer focusing on. | | **Defiant** | Anxiety driven demand avoidance.  Distressed  Dysregulated when…. Anxious when…  Holds strong beliefs. Determined.  Advocates for a different perspective.  May be overwhelmed by environmental demands of …… | |
| **Resources and Links** |
| Beth Wilson: [Identity First Language – Beth Wilson – Artist (doodlebeth.com)](https://doodlebeth.com/identity-first-language/)  Neuroclastic:[Person-First Language: What It Is, and When Not To Use It](https://neuroclastic.com/person-first/)  Neurodiversity information hub: [What is neurodiversity? - MindMate](https://www.mindmate.org.uk/nd/what-is-nd/)  Reframing Autism: [Celebrating & nurturing Autistic identity](https://reframingautism.org.au/)  [Language of Autism Project: Short film (with subtitles) - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F03Dwp5YWw8)  Neuro-affirmative [Language](https://www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk/media/cqkliim4/the-neuroaffirmative-language-guide-002.pdf) Guide |
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