



Neurodiversity



Author: Swathi Vellal Raghunandan

Founder, Director Ishanya India

Foundation, Centre for

Neurodiversity, Bangalore, India

When we talk about ‘Normal’, we are simply talking about the most significant part of the bell curve- the percentage into which the most considerable number fits. Have you wondered what happens when you are towards either end of the turn and are considered outliers?

The Human world is created for the majority but navigating this system can be daunting if you are not like the majority in some or all aspects. We have created a society that says the most important things are those our brains are good at. Because we so strongly believe in that, we spend most of our time doing them, but these could be areas that many people who are neurodiverse may have a hard time doing and are therefore labelled.

Neurodiversity is a term simply used to describe neurological differences in the brain. It is an umbrella term that defines

life-long conditions and those that can develop throughout life. It includes acquired illness or brain injury:

- i. **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**
- Difficulties with social interaction and changes in routine can be complex apart from associated difficulties related to sensory sensitivity, repetitive movements, and restricted interests.
- ii. **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**-where there are difficulties with sustaining attention & impulse control.
- iii. **Dyscalculia** - difficulties in learning basic arithmetic, processing numbers, and making calculations.
- iv. **Dyslexia** – language processing difficulties that cause reading, writing, and spelling difficulties. Dyspraxia affects physical coordination, so people with dyspraxia may be very clumsy, disorganized, and may have trouble with structure.
- v. **Intellectual Disability** - difficulties with a person’s ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life.

All these conditions are known to be interrelated, and all stem from neurological differences.

The term ‘Neurodiversity’ is not anything new. The term was first used in the 90s by ‘Judy Singer’, a sociologist on the autism spectrum who believed that people with autism are not disabled, but their brains work differently from others.

Many therapies focus on ‘normalizing’ a neurodiverse individual and treating them by focusing on their deficits. In the neurodiversity movement, it is often emphasized that accepting the neurological differences does not mean that we are pretending people with autism do not have impairments; it just calls for accepting the differences & valuing the strengths. The model calls for creating opportunities that neurological value differences, options that allow these individuals to experience the success they can capitalize on to persist through other challenges.

Reference:

1. What is Neurodiversity (2020) The education hub [Accessed on: 24/03/2022] doi: <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/what-is-neurodiversity/>

Further reading:

1. <https://med.stanford.edu/neurodiversity.html>
2. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity>