

# What Is Neurodivergence?

A plain-English introduction to what neurodivergence means, what it doesn't, and why it matters at work.

## TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- Neurodivergence means having a brain that works differently to what society treats as “typical.”
- It's a natural variation in how people think, focus, communicate and process the world, not a flaw to fix.
- Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, OCD, Tourette's and more all sit under this umbrella term.
- Being neurodivergent affects how you work best; it says nothing about your intelligence or worth.

## A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

## Why This Matters

Around 1 in 7 people are thought to be neurodivergent in some way. You almost certainly work alongside, or are, someone who is.

Understanding what neurodivergence actually means helps remove stigma, reduce miscommunication, and make workplaces work better for everyone.

## What This Might Look Like

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- Someone who does brilliant deep-focus work but finds small talk in meetings draining.
- A colleague who needs instructions written down, not just spoken once.
- Someone who thrives with a strict routine, or someone who thrives with total flexibility.
- A person who notices details others miss, or connects ideas in unexpected ways.
- Someone who finds bright lights, noise, or busy open-plan offices genuinely exhausting.

## Key Things To Know

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### **It's a spectrum of differences, not a single checklist.**

- No two neurodivergent people experience things the same way.
- “You don't seem ND” isn't a compliment; it just means you can't see someone's internal experience.

### **It's not new, and it's not a trend.**

- Neurodivergent people have always existed; awareness and language have simply improved.
- Increased diagnosis rates reflect better understanding, not more people “becoming” ND.

### **A diagnosis isn't required for the experience to be real.**

- Many people self-identify long before, or instead of, getting a formal diagnosis.
- Waiting lists, cost and access barriers mean diagnosis isn't realistic for everyone.

### **Neurodivergence brings strengths as well as challenges.**

- Pattern recognition, creativity, hyperfocus, honesty and original thinking are common strengths.
- Challenges usually show up most in environments not designed with ND people in mind.

## Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

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You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

"I think differently to some people, and that's something I've learned to work with, not against."

"I'm neurodivergent: it just means my brain processes things a bit differently. Happy to explain more if useful."

## Quick Tips

- Neurodivergent is an umbrella term, not one condition.
- "Neurotypical" simply means not neurodivergent; it isn't an insult either way.
- You don't need permission to describe yourself as neurodivergent.
- Struggles usually come from mismatched environments, not from being "less capable."
- Neurodivergence can be visible, invisible, constant, or situational.
- There's no "correct" way to be neurodivergent.

## Want to Know More?

- See our companion guide: "Types of Neurodivergence: A Quick Guide" for a breakdown of common types.
- Speak with your GP or a workplace occupational health service if you're considering formal assessment.
- Ask your employer or manager about any neurodiversity or wellbeing policies already in place.

### Before You Go

However you relate to neurodivergence (diagnosed, self-identified, or still figuring it out), your experience is valid.

You're not alone, and there's nothing wrong with you for thinking differently.