

How to talk about neurodiversity

MEDIA GUIDELINES

First up, thank you so much for writing about neurodiversity. It's an increasingly important topic and you writing accurate and helpful content will have a real impact on this often marginalised community.

Some basic guidelines (and these are guidelines, not rules)

- ✓ Use **positive** or **neutral** language around neurodiversity
- ✓ Acknowledge and highlight **intersectionality** - lists of famous neurodivergent people shouldn't be all straight white men
- ✓ Frame conditions as a **difference** not deficit
- ✓ Get **informed consent** when sharing lived experiences
- ✓ Use **identity-first language** where possible ("autistic" not "with autism")
- ✗ Avoid framing neurodiversity as a **deficit** or illness
- ✗ Avoid **patronising language** or "inspirational" approaches
- ✗ Don't **disclose** diagnoses or use photos of neurodivergent people (including those of children) without informed consent
- ✗ Avoid **stereotypes**
- ✗ Don't avoid writing about neurodiversity for fear of getting it **wrong**. Better done than perfect.

Where to get your information

- ✓ Neurodivergent academics (lecturers, researchers)
- ✓ Neurodivergent clinicians (psychologists, diagnosticians)
- ✓ Neurodivergent professionals (trainers, speakers)
- ✗ Not "influencers".

Swipe file

DEFINITIONS

Neurodiversity

Academic definition: Individual differences in brain functioning regarded as normal variations within the human population.

Clinical definition: The variation in neurological functioning, including diagnosable conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia.

Activist/advocate definition: The idea that neurological differences are natural human variations and should be recognised and respected as a form of human diversity.

There is no one definitive list of neurodivergent conditions and there is debate over whether mental illnesses should come under the definition. The following conditions are not mental illnesses but neurodevelopmental conditions.

Autism: A difference in how someone processes and interacts with the world, especially socially and with their senses.

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which comes in type 1 (hyperactive) and type 2 (inattentive).

Dyslexia: Big picture thinking which means challenges with conventional reading, writing, spelling and working memory.

Dyscalculia: "Number dyslexia" - difficult with numbers and maths but good with visuals and 3 dimensions.

Dyspraxia: Developmental co-ordination disorder, with differences in motor co-ordination and planning.