

Neurodiversity

by Nick Walker

Neurodiversity is the diversity of human brains and minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species

The **Neurodiversity Paradigm** is an emergent paradigm in which neurodiversity is understood to be a form of human diversity that is subject to the same social dynamics as other forms of diversity (including dynamics of power and oppression)

Principles

- Neurodiversity is an essential form of human diversity. The idea that there is one "normal" or "healthy" type of brain or mind or one "right" style of neurocognitive functioning, is no more valid than the idea that there is one "normal" or "right" gender, race or culture.
- The classification of neurodivergence (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia, bipolarity) as medical/psychiatric pathology has no valid scientific basis, and instead reflects cultural prejudice and oppresses those labeled as such.
- The social dynamics around neurodiversity are similar to the dynamics that manifest around other forms of human diversity. These dynamics include unequal distribution of social power; conversely, when embraced, diversity can act as a source of creative potential.

In Practice

Psychotherapists who integrate the neurodiversity paradigm into their work do so by refusing to label **neurodivergence** as intrinsically pathological.

Instead of attempting to "cure" autistic or bipolar clients, for instance, these therapists seek to help autistic or bipolar people thrive as autistic or bipolar people, finding ways of living that are more in harmony with their natural neurological dispositions, and helping them to heal from internalized oppression.

Development

The **Neurodiversity Movement** has its origins in the **Autistic Rights Movement** that sprung up in the 1990's

The term **neurodiversity** was coined in 1998 by an autistic Australian sociologist named Judy Singer, and was quickly picked up and expanded upon within the autistic activist community.

The focus of work within the **neurodiversity** paradigm has broadened beyond autism to encompass other forms of **neurodivergence**, while at the same time the paradigm has increasingly gained footholds in various realms of scholarship, literature and praxis.