



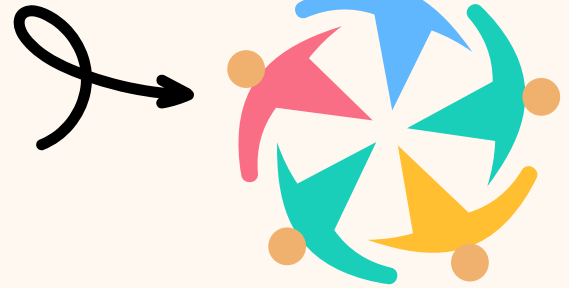
EMPOWERING WORDS

EMBRACING NEURODIVERGENCE POSITIVELY

Words shape the way we see the world—and ourselves. When it comes to neurodiversity, the language we choose can either reinforce stereotypes or help dismantle them, paving the way for greater acceptance and understanding. Empowering words acknowledge the value and strengths of neurodivergent individuals, framing their experiences as part of the natural diversity of human life rather than as deficits or disorders to be fixed.

1 “NEURODIVERGENT”

- **Why it’s empowering:** This term is inclusive and neutral, emphasizing natural diversity in brain functioning without negative connotations.
- **Harmful alternative:** “Mentally ill” or “disordered,” which frame neurodivergence as a flaw or pathology.

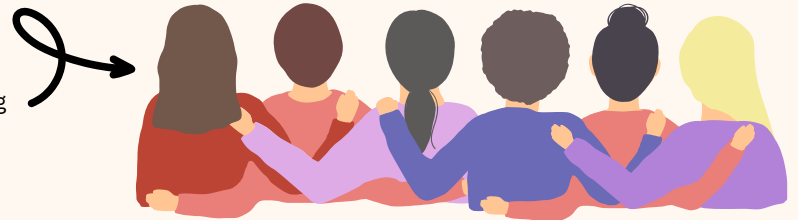


2 “UNIQUE LEARNING STYLE”

- **Why it’s empowering:** It highlights individual strengths and capabilities, acknowledging that traditional methods may not suit everyone.
- **Harmful alternative:** “Learning deficit,” which reduces an individual’s potential to a single limitation.

3 “SUPPORT NEEDS”

- **Why it’s empowering:** It focuses on providing help without judgment, reframing assistance as a universal and human requirement.
- **Harmful alternative:** “Dependent” or “burdensome,” which imply weakness or inadequacy.



4 “DIVERSE ABILITIES”

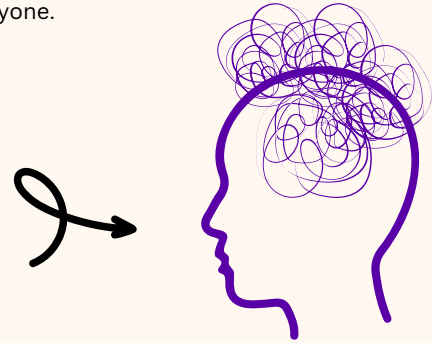
- **Why it’s empowering:** It shifts attention to what individuals can do, encouraging appreciation of their strengths.
- **Harmful alternative:** “Disabled” (when used pejoratively or dismissively), which focuses on perceived deficiencies.

HARMFUL LANGUAGE TO AVOID

By recognizing and avoiding these phrases, we can move closer to fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and empowerment for everyone.

1 “SUFFERING FROM”

- **Why it’s harmful:** This phrase assumes that living with neurodivergence is inherently painful or negative, which isn’t universally true.
- **Empowering alternative:** “Living with” or simply identifying the condition without emotional judgment (e.g., “an autistic person”).

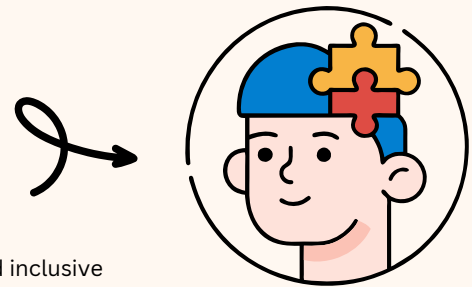


2 “BROKEN” OR “DAMAGED”

- **Why it’s harmful:** These words dehumanize individuals, framing their neurodivergence as a fundamental flaw.
- **Empowering alternative:** “Unique” or “different,” which acknowledge individuality without judgment.

3 OUTDATED TERMS LIKE “ASPERGER’S SYNDROME”

- **Why it’s harmful:** Beyond being outdated, the term has ties to controversial and unethical historical figures. The broader and inclusive term “Autism Spectrum Disorder” is now preferred.



4 “LOW-FUNCTIONING” AND “HIGH-FUNCTIONING”

- **Why it’s harmful:** These labels oversimplify complex experiences, creating hierarchies and ignoring variability in strengths and challenges.
- **Empowering alternative:** Describing specific needs or strengths without categorizing individuals (e.g., “requires communication support” or “thrives in structured environments”).