

ABSORBook
Neurodivergence

A gentle guide to understanding
Neurodivergence (Autism, ADHD, HSP)

Dear Reader,

perhaps you're holding this ABSORBook because you are neurodivergent yourself. Or because your child has recently been diagnosed with autism or ADHD. Or perhaps you're simply curious about what neurodivergence really means.

Whatever brought you here, I'd like to tell you something important first: It's okay to feel exactly the way you do right now. The questions. The fear. The overwhelm. Perhaps even the anger. Every one of these feelings is valid. Many parents experience a wide range of emotions after receiving a diagnosis. Some feel relief. Others feel uncertain, sad, or even guilty. And sometimes, they feel all of these things at once.

But I'd like to leave you with something else, too. Little by little, your questions will begin to find answers. Uncertainty can become understanding. Fear can grow into trust. Despair can give way to hope. And one day – perhaps sooner than you expect, perhaps much later – those feelings may even become joy and pride.

Because neurodivergence is not only about challenges. It is also a gift. It is a different way of experiencing the world – and, because of that, a unique way of enriching it. Perhaps this little ABSORBook is the first step on that journey.

Neurodivergence – what does it mean?

Neurodivergence means that a person's brain processes information differently from that of most people. It is a different way of experiencing the world, thinking, feeling, and responding to everyday situations and sensory input.

Neurodivergence includes, for example, autism, ADHD, dyslexia, giftedness, and high sensitivity. Neurodivergence is not a flaw, an illness, or a personality trait.

And every neurodivergent person is unique. There is no such thing as a “typical” neurodivergent person.

Neurodivergence does not need to be cured. It needs to be understood. Because understanding can give people something they often need most:

Relief. Acceptance.

And the freedom to finally be themselves

What is Autism?

Autism means that the brain perceives and processes information differently.

People on the autism spectrum often see, hear, feel, and experience the world more intensely – or simply differently – than other people. Some sounds may seem extremely loud. Certain textures or touch can feel uncomfortable. Even small changes to everyday routines can be exhausting.

Many autistic people find comfort in clear structure and predictable routines. They often develop deep interests in particular subjects and can become exceptionally knowledgeable about them.

No two autistic people are the same. Some need significant support in everyday life, while others live independently, have families, and successful careers. This is why it is called the autism spectrum – because every autistic person is unique. Autism is not an illness. It is not a flaw. And it is not something that needs to be cured.

The way we experience and respond to the world is shaped by many different factors – including how our brains process information.

The more we understand how an autistic person experiences the world, the better we can support them in finding their own way.

What is ADHD?

ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) means that the brain processes information and sensory input differently.

People with ADHD often experience the world very intensely. Thoughts, sounds, emotions, and impressions can arrive all at once and at great speed. This can make it difficult to separate what is important from what is not. Some people with ADHD are constantly on the move and full of energy. Others appear calm, daydream often, or become deeply absorbed in their thoughts.

This is why ADHD looks different in every person. Many people with ADHD are creative, curious, spontaneous, and full of ideas. At the same time, staying organised, concentrating, or following routines can be especially challenging.

ADHD does not mean someone is lazy, badly behaved, or unmotivated.

How well a person with ADHD manages everyday life depends on much more than the way their brain processes information. Understanding, the right support, personal experiences, and a supportive environment all play an important role.

With understanding, helpful strategies, and the right support, people with ADHD can build on their strengths and find their own path.

What is High Sensitivity? (HSP)

High sensitivity means that a person's nervous system responds more strongly to sensory input. Sounds, smells, emotions, and the moods of other people are often experienced very intensely. Things that barely register for others can be overwhelming or exhausting for someone who is highly sensitive.

Many highly sensitive people quickly notice how others are feeling. They reflect deeply, observe carefully, and often pick up on even the smallest changes. At the same time, they usually need more quiet time to process everything they have taken in.

High sensitivity is not an illness. It is not a weakness. It is a unique way of experiencing the world.

How intensely someone experiences their surroundings, however, is influenced by more than their nervous system alone. Personality, life experiences, and the environment also play an important role. In an environment that offers understanding and enough space to rest and recover, high sensitivity can become a remarkable strength – bringing empathy, creativity, attentiveness, and a deep awareness of people and situations.

Good to know – Masking

Many neurodivergent people learn from an early age that others see their natural behaviour as “different,” “strange,” or “wrong.”

That can be deeply hurtful and may leave lasting self-doubt.

To avoid standing out, prevent criticism, or simply to fit in, some people begin to hide who they really are. They begin to mask. They carefully observe the people around them and try to copy behaviours that seem to be accepted or expected. For example, they may:

- maintain eye contact even though it feels uncomfortable
- sit still even when their body needs to move

This conscious – or sometimes unconscious – adaptation is called masking.

From the outside, the person may appear to be coping well. On the inside, however, it can be exhausting and require an enormous amount of energy.

Masking is often an attempt to navigate a world that does not yet fully understand the way they experience and perceive it.

**Sometimes we only see the mask –
not the strength it takes to wear it every single day**

Good to know – Overload

Our brains are constantly taking in information from the world around us: Sounds, light, movement, smells, conversations, and countless other impressions.

In neurotypical people, the brain automatically filters out much of the information that is not important. For many neurodivergent people, however, this filter works differently. Their nervous system often takes in more information at the same time – and with greater intensity.

When too much sensory input reaches the nervous system all at once, it can lead to overload. Some people become restless or angry. Others become quiet and withdraw.

This is not intentional, and it is not “bad behaviour.” Sometimes the brain simply needs time to process everything it has taken in. How strongly someone responds to sensory input depends on more than their nervous system alone.

The situation they are in, their emotional and physical state, and their past experiences all play an important role.

**Sometimes the world isn't too loud –
the nervous system is simply carrying too much**



Good to know – Meltdown

A meltdown can happen when the nervous system has already become overwhelmed by too much sensory input (overload). The body is trying to protect itself. Some neurodivergent people become restless and try to escape the situation. Others become quiet and withdraw.

If the sensory input continues and there is no opportunity to recover, a meltdown may occur.

At that point, the nervous system has become so overwhelmed that it temporarily loses control.

A meltdown may include, for example:

- shouting or screaming
- kicking, hitting, or lashing out
- self-injurious behaviour, such as hitting one's head against a wall

After a meltdown, many people feel completely exhausted.

Their body has used an enormous amount of energy trying to cope with the overload. Every meltdown is different.

The situation, previous experiences, and the opportunity to recover before reaching overload can all influence how a meltdown unfolds.

From the outside, a meltdown may look like an intense temper tantrum – but it is an involuntary loss of control caused by an overwhelmed nervous system.

**Sometimes we only see the outburst –
not the complete loss of control behind it**

Good to know – Routines

Many neurodivergent people feel safer when things are predictable. That is why routines can play such an important role in everyday life. Routines are familiar patterns that happen in the same – or a very similar – way each day For example:

- taking the same route to school
- eating or going to bed at regular times
- following the same morning or evening routine
- spending time in familiar places and situations
- eating familiar foods or drinking familiar beverages
- wearing familiar clothes

Routines help the nervous system feel oriented and secure. When life is predictable, the brain has fewer new situations and sensory inputs to process. This reduces stress and creates a sense of safety. For many neurodivergent people, routines provide stability and help prevent overwhelm.

For this reason, unexpected changes or unfamiliar situations can be especially challenging. To others, this may sometimes look as if a neurodivergent person is being stubborn or unwilling to accept change. But they aren't.

**Sometimes we only see the routine –
not the need for safety behind it**

Why is my child always daydreaming?

My mum gently brushes my hair away from my face.

“Wake up, Camille...”

I hear her...

...but I’m still dreaming about my chocolate cake. Soft. Moist.

Mum calls again.

...with big chunks of chocolate...

“Camille, wake up!”...

A little later, I’m standing in front of my wardrobe.

Blue with blue? Or green with green?

Then I spot my pink jumpsuit. My new socks match it perfectly...

In the bathroom, I slowly brush my hair.

Again. And again. It feels so nice...

On the way to school, I skip along. A song pops into my head.

I sing it out loud...

Back in the classroom, my teacher is talking. Numbers. Fractions.

I’m thinking about my cake again...

Maybe with pink sprinkles...

“Camille?”

I look up. Everyone is looking at me. The teacher is angry.



Good to know – Attention & the inner world

Many neurodivergent people have a rich and vivid inner world. Thoughts, images, memories, and imagination can feel so vivid that the outside world gently fades into the background. As a result, they may appear distracted or “not paying attention.”

But they aren’t.

Their attention is simply directed inward. For example, they may:

- become deeply absorbed in their thoughts or daydreams
- spend a long time exploring ideas or mental images
- respond more slowly when someone speaks to them
- seem absent or far away

To others, this may sometimes look as if they are not listening or are not interested. But they aren’t. Their attention is simply focused somewhere else.

A rich inner world can be a place of creativity, reflection, processing, and, above all, restoration. At the same time, some neurodivergent people may find it difficult to switch quickly between their inner world and the world around them.

**Sometimes we only see the absence –
not the world they are immersed in**

Why is change so difficult for my child?

My stomach is fluttering. In a moment, I'll walk through the golden portal. Into the next world.

"Taso...?" It's Mum.

"Taso, you need to get up."

No. Not now. I keep my eyes closed.

I try to find my way back to the portal. But I can't find it.

Then everything turns bright. The curtains are opened.

The light hits my eyes. It's too bright.

"No! No! No!!"

My stomach starts to churn. I pull the blanket over my head.

Everything inside me resists. I don't want to get up.

Mum is here. Her hand rests on my back. Cold. Far too cold.

Goosebumps race across my skin. The churning in my stomach grows stronger.

I try to find the portal again. But now it's really gone.

"Taso... you really do have to get up now."

"Noooooooo... I don't want to!"

Good to know – Transitions and change

Many neurodivergent people find everyday transitions especially difficult. For example:

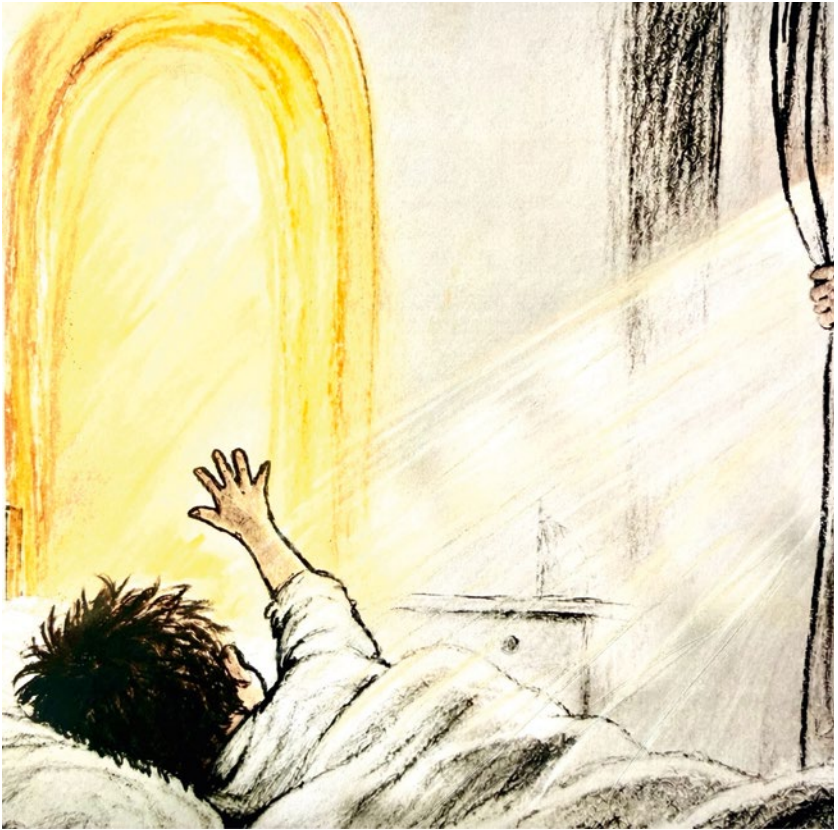
- from sleeping to waking up—or the other way around
- from an imaginary world back to the real world
- from rest to activity
- from home to school or work

To others, it may sometimes look as if they simply don't want to cooperate or are deliberately taking their time. But they aren't.

For many neurodivergent people, a transition is not just a small change. It is a sudden shift for the entire nervous system.

Especially in the morning, the brain may still be immersed in dreams, images, or thoughts. When that state is interrupted too suddenly, it can trigger stress. Light, voices, or even gentle touch may suddenly feel overwhelming. The body responds with resistance, anger, or withdrawal. This is not defiance. It is an overwhelmed nervous system.

How difficult a transition feels depends on more than sensory processing alone. Previous experiences, the environment, and a person's current state all play an important role.



Many neurodivergent people need more time, gentle transitions, and familiar routines to move safely from one situation to the next.

**Sometimes we only see the resistance –
not the worlds they are moving between**

Why does my child seem so clumsy?

I hate school...

But today is Wednesday. And on Wednesdays we have P.E.

I like P.E. For a little while, I get to escape the exhausting classroom. On the way to the gym, it's loud and chaotic.

Everyone is talking at once.

I can feel my body becoming restless.

My arms start flapping with excitement.

But first, I have to change my shoes.

Oh no... These shoelaces.

My fingers tremble as I try to tie them.

The noise around me makes them shake even more.

One shoe just won't cooperate.

My teacher is already asking why I'm taking so long.

Oh well. I'll just tuck the loose shoelace into my shoe.

We rush into the gym.

I'm excited because my teacher said we're going to play my favourite game at the end of the lesson.

But first, we must warm up. We stand in a circle and have to move our arms and legs in a certain sequence.

My arms and legs just won't do what I want them to do.



My face grows hot. I can feel it turning red.

The other children are laughing because I can't copy what the teacher is doing.

I feel so ashamed.

Why can't my body ever do things the way everyone else's does...?

Good to know – Sports & gross motor skills

Many neurodivergent people experience their bodies differently. This is especially true when it comes to gross motor skills – movements such as running, jumping, or catching a ball.

For many neurodivergent people, planning and carrying out movements can be more difficult. The nervous system plays an important role in this. The mind may know exactly what to do – but the body cannot always do it. For example:

- movements may seem uncoordinated
- a ball may be missed or not caught properly
- it can be difficult to copy movement sequences
- movements may require more time and practice

Especially in sports, this can quickly become overwhelming because of the noise, constant movement, and the pressure to keep it up. To others, it may sometimes look as if the person simply isn't trying hard enough. But they do. Many neurodivergent people are processing movement, sensory input, and expectations all at the same time. That takes an enormous amount of energy and concentration.

Sometimes we only see the mistake – not how deeply that moment can hurt someone who was trying so hard

Why does my child react this way?

I love my LEGO city. It spreads across my whole room.
I work on it every single day. Every detail has to be just right.
Black bricks or grey ones? Thirty or thirty-three bricks high?
I think about it for a long time. Sometimes for hours. My LEGO city means everything to me. Nobody is allowed to touch it.

School is exhausting. Too loud. Too much. So, I think about my LEGO. It calms me. Later, I'll finish the roof of the new building. I already know exactly how it's going to look. When I open the door to my room after school, I see it immediately. The baseplate. Moved. The tower. Knocked over. I stop. My stomach tightens. Then the anger comes. Hot. Fast. Too much.

I scream.

Mum comes into my room. She's talking. But I can't hear her. She tries to hug me. I push her away. The anger inside me is enormous. Like an animal that won't stop biting me.

I keep screaming.

Because of the anger. Because of the pain.
And because of the chaos inside me.

Good to know – Special interests

Many neurodivergent people develop especially strong interests in certain subjects. These are often called special interests. A special interest might be, for example:

- trains, vehicles, different animal species, or dinosaurs
- computers, gaming, or technology
- numbers, maps, or facts about a particular topic
- specific books or films

When someone is engaged with their special interest, they can often focus on it for long periods of time. Along the way, they may learn an incredible amount of detail about their chosen subject. Special interests can bring joy, calm, and a sense of safety. They can help reduce stress, restore energy, and create inner calm.

To others, it may sometimes look as if the person is too focused on just one topic. But they aren't. How important a special interest is, varies from person to person.

For many neurodivergent people, it is an important source of energy, knowledge, enthusiasm - and sometimes even comfort.

**Sometimes we only see the focus –
not the joy, strength and calm it brings**



Good to know – Anger

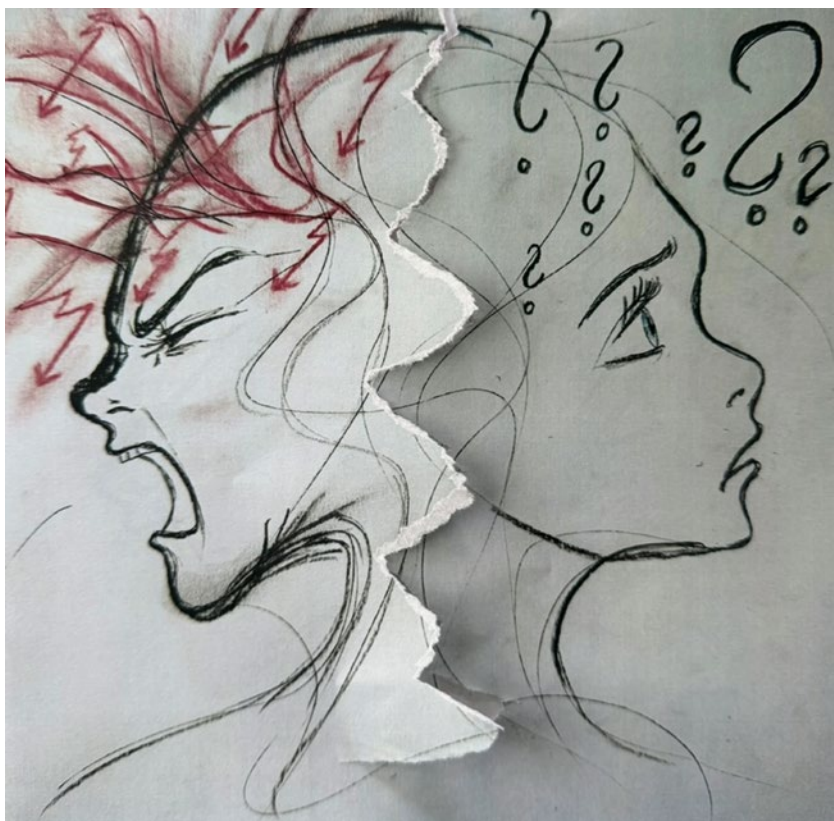
Sometimes the body is simply full. Too full. Everything has become too much. And then, all of a sudden, the anger comes. Loud. Intense. A scream. An outburst.

From the outside, it can look frightening. Or completely out of proportion.

On the inside, it often began long before. Too much sensory input. Too much tension. Not feeling understood. Something keeps building. More. And more. Until the body simply can't hold it anymore. Then it comes out. Fast. Direct. Unplanned.

The anger is not an attack. It is a way out. An attempt to release the pressure. Anger is also trying to tell us something. A boundary. A "too much." A need. Beneath it, there is often exhaustion. Overwhelm. Helplessness. Or the feeling of never quite being enough.

**Sometimes we only see the anger –
not what has been building up beneath it**



Good to know – Misunderstandings

Many neurodivergent people are often misunderstood in everyday life.

Some behaviours may seem unusual, rude, or confusing to others. For example, someone may:

- make little eye contact
- suddenly leave a conversation
- speak very directly or not respond to questions
- want to be alone

To others, this may sometimes seem disrespectful or as if the person is not interested. But they aren't.

Many neurodivergent people are simply trying to cope with sensory input, social expectations, or exhaustion.

In those moments, they may need more stillness, more time, or more space.

**Sometimes behaviour means something very different
from what we assume**

A message for parents

If your child is neurodivergent, it is not only your child who needs time. You do too. Perhaps you're wondering if you've done something wrong. Perhaps you're searching for answers or feeling afraid of what the future may bring. Or perhaps you're simply tired. Exhausted. Uncertain. Many parents know these thoughts and feelings.

But there is one thing I would like you to remember: You do not have to be perfect. Your child does not need perfect parents. They need people who are willing to listen, to truly see them, and to accept them for who they are. Neurodivergence is not an illness that needs to be cured. It is a different way of experiencing the world.

That is why the goal is not to change your child. It is to understand them. Because being understood is one of the greatest gifts many neurodivergent people can receive. It brings relief.

A loving look can often do more than a thousand well-meant words or actions.

**What your child needs most is not to become someone else –
it is the freedom to be themselves**

Discovering strengths

In everyday life, it is often the challenges that stand out first. Too loud. Too quiet. Too slow. Too fast. Too sensitive.

But behind many of these challenges lie unique strengths and talents. Some neurodivergent people are exceptionally creative.

They notice patterns and connections that others may overlook.

They are honest, observant, loyal, imaginative, or have remarkable knowledge in the subjects they love.

Not every strength is visible straight away.

Some need time. Trust. And someone who is willing to discover them.

That is why it is worth looking again. Not only asking: “What is difficult for my child?” But also: “What makes my child unique?”

**Strengths and talents flourish
when they are seen**

Good to know – Co-regulation

Some people do not calm themselves on their own - they calm more easily in the presence of another person. This is called co-regulation.

When someone offers calm, understanding, and a sense of safety, the other person's nervous system can gradually begin to settle too.

Many neurodivergent people benefit greatly from co-regulation.

A gentle voice, patience, or simply being close to someone they trust can help an overwhelmed nervous system find its balance again.

This does not mean someone is dependent on others.

It simply reminds us how deeply human beings can support and regulate one another.

For many neurodivergent people, co-regulation is an important step back toward inner balance.

**Sometimes it isn't words or actions that bring calm –
but the quiet presence of someone we trust**

Neurodivergence in everyday Life – You are not alone

Perhaps you have recognised yourself – or someone close to you – in some of the pages of this book. Perhaps it has given you some answers. Or perhaps it has raised new questions.

Understanding neurodivergence takes time. It is a journey – and you do not have to walk it alone. Every neurodivergent person is different and has different needs. What helps one person may be overwhelming for another. That is why it is worth taking the time to notice: What creates a sense of safety? What feels overwhelming? What gives energy? What takes it away?

Often, it is the small changes that make a big difference: A short break. A quiet place. Clear expectations. A little more time. Or simply the feeling of being understood. There are many people who share similar experiences. People who know what uncertainty feels like. How exhausting misunderstandings can be. And how comforting it can be when someone suddenly says: “I understand you.” Have the courage to ask questions. To accept support. And to find your own way. Over time, uncertainty can grow into understanding. And overwhelm into confidence. And perhaps, one day, into the certainty:

**There is nothing wrong with my child – or with me
We are allowed to be who we are**

Finding Support

If you would like support, there are many different people and places that can accompany you along the way.

This might include counselling services, peer support groups, therapists or medical professionals, specialised organisations, or people with their own lived experience of neurodivergence.

What matters is not where you find support. What matters is that it feels right for you – and that you feel seen and understood there.

I also support neurodivergent people and families as part of my work. If you would like to learn more about me, my work, or my other projects, you can find me at:

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They need the freedom to be themselves**

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