



*amaze*

# **Jacquiline Den Houting**

*An introduction to the Neurodiversity Movement*

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An Introduction to the  
Neurodiversity  
Movement

Jacky den Houting



# Overview

What is the  
neurodiversity  
movement?

The autism  
discourse

Myths and  
misconceptions  
about the  
neurodiversity  
movement

What is the  
neurodiversity  
movement?

## Terms

# Neurotypical

Having a style of brain functioning that falls **within** *society's standards* for **“normal”** functioning

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# Neurodivergent

Having a brain that functions in ways that are **different** (i.e., 'diverge') from *society's standards* for **“normal”** functioning

What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity

Fact

Diversity exists in human neurobiology – different brains work in different ways

Neurodiversity Paradigm

Belief

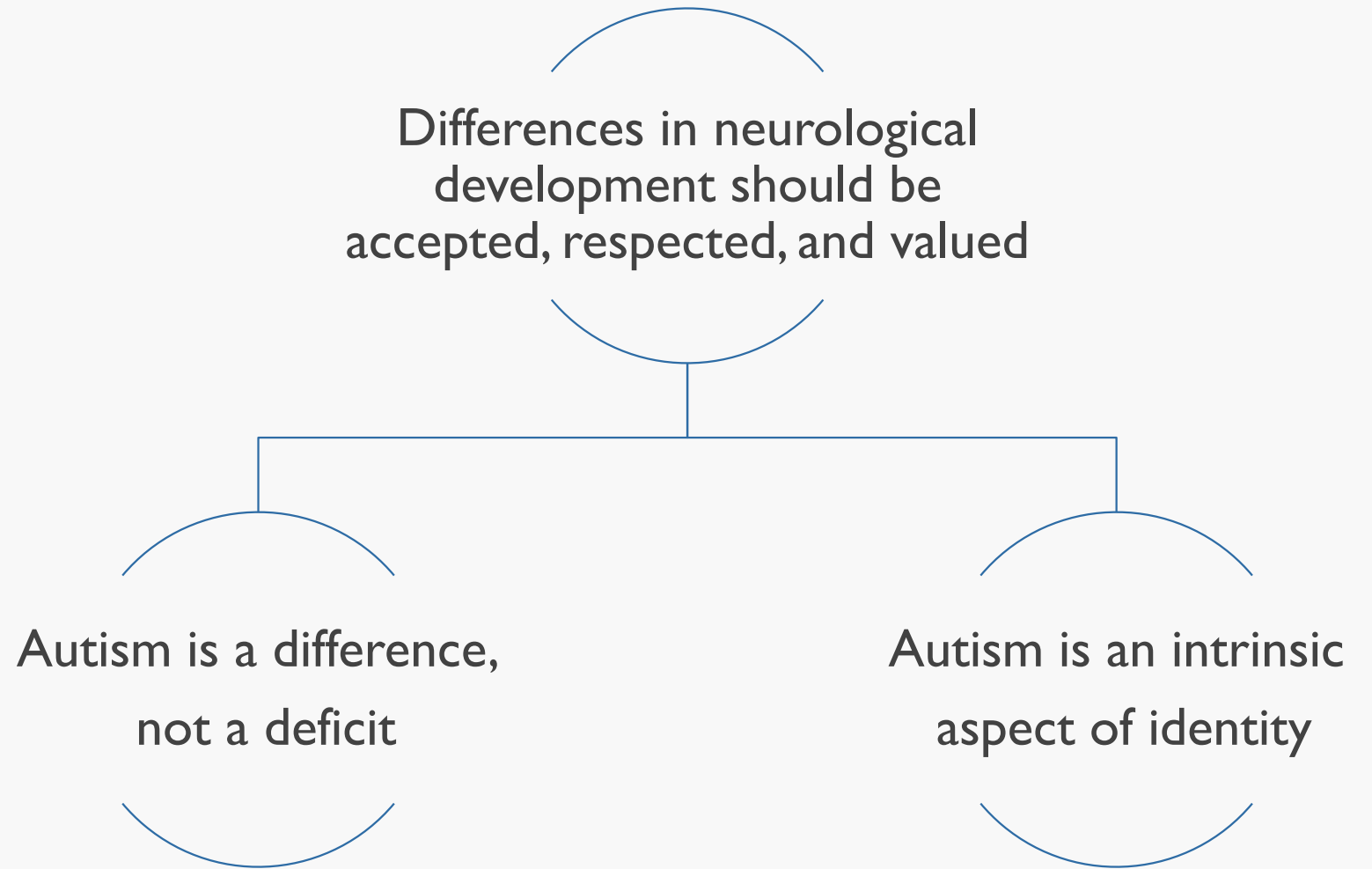
Neurodiversity is valuable; there is no “right” form of neurology

Neurodiversity Movement

Action

Social justice movement calling for respect, equity, and inclusion for the neurodivergent

## Core beliefs of the Autism Rights movement



Jim Sinclair

*Don't Mourn for Us* (1993)

“ Autism isn't something a person *has*, or a shell that a person is trapped inside. There's no normal child hidden behind the autism. Autism is a way of being. It is *pervasive*; it colours every experience, every sensation, perception, thought, emotion, and encounter, every aspect of existence. It is not possible to separate the autism from the person – and if it were possible, the person you'd have left would not be the same person you started with.

”



# The autism discourse

The autism  
discourse

epidemic dysfunction  
restricted  
locked abnormal trapped alien  
incapable disorder  
severe fight challenging  
hate lack  
kidnapped suffer  
isolated disease shell battle tragedy  
impaired wall  
puzzle stolen risk  
low-functioning

Language - “identity first” or “person first”?



Autistic person



Person with autism

# Kenny et al. (2016)

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Language - *identity*  
*first* or  
*person first*?

**61%** of autistic adults preferred the term *autistic*, but

only **28%** of autistic adults preferred the phrase *person with autism*.

In contrast, only **38%** of professionals preferred the term *autistic*, while

**49%** of professionals preferred the phrase *person with autism*.

Myths and  
misconceptions about  
the neurodiversity  
movement

Myth

1

“

Neurodiversity  
advocates **don't**  
think autism is a  
**disability**

”

## Models of disability

### Medical model

Defines impairment as the physical, mental, or emotional characteristics of a condition (e.g., losses or abnormalities in function or structure)

Defines disability as a lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the “normal” manner

Places disability within the individual

### Social model

Defines impairment as the physical, mental, or emotional characteristics of a condition (e.g., losses or abnormalities in function or structure)

Defines disability as the limitations, restrictions, and disadvantages experienced by people who have impairments

Places disability within society

Myth

2

“

The neurodiversity  
movement is  
**only** for  
**high-functioning**  
autistics”



## Functioning labels

*High-functioning* and *low-functioning* are  
not diagnostic categories

Functioning changes over time and  
across skill areas

*High-functioning* means difficulties are  
ignored; *low-functioning* means abilities  
are ignored

Myth

3

“

Neurodiversity  
advocates think autistic  
people **shouldn't**  
get **treatment**

”

## Support and interventions

### No

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- × Aversive therapies such as use of electric shock
- × Compliance therapies, including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)
  - × Normalisation therapies, including social skills training
  - × “Cure” therapies, including chelation and Miracle Mineral Solution (bleach)

### Yes

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- ✓ Communication and assistive technology
- ✓ Accommodations to support inclusion and success in education and employment
- ✓ Treatment for co-morbid physical and mental health conditions
- ✓ Any therapy that is beneficial **for the autistic person**

# Resources



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## Neurodiversity, the Autism rights movement, and the social model

- Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand (ASAN AUNZ) <http://www.asan-au.org/>
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) <http://autisticadvocacy.org/>
- *Neurocosmopolitanism* by Nick Walker <http://neurocosmopolitanism.com/>

## Raising and educating Autistic children

- Autistic Family Collective <http://autisticfamilycollective.org.au/>
- Respectfully Connected <http://respectfullyconnected.com/>
- Parenting Autistic Children with Love and Acceptance <https://www.facebook.com/ParentingAutisticChildrenWithLoveAcceptance>
- *Michelle Sutton Writes* by Michelle Sutton <http://michellesuttonwrites.com/>

## Autistic people (and allies) on Autism

- *Musings of an Aspie* by Cynthia Kim <http://musingsofanaspie.com/>
- Thinking Person's Guide to Autism <http://www.thinkingautismguide.com/>
- *Non-speaking Autistic Speaking* by Amy Sequenzia <http://nonspeakingautisticspeaking.blogspot.com.au/>

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