



# Glossary of Terms

This document includes terms related to neurodiversity and autism that may be used throughout the AuSM Celebrates Interdependence resources.

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## **504 and IEP**

Both a 504 plan and an IEP are plans for students to receive support and accommodations for their disability in school. An IEP gives a plan for specialized instruction that includes special education in grades K-12. The 504 provides a plan for accommodations (changes and supports) to the student's current learning environment and can continue through college.

## **Ableism**

Discrimination and/or prejudice against people with disabilities.

## **Allistic**

Someone who is not autistic

## **Apraxia**

The complete loss of gross and/or fine motor skills. Apraxia is similar to dyspraxia, however apraxia means the complete loss of a motor skill whereas dyspraxia is a partial loss.

## **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)**

All the ways someone might communicate that are not spoken words. It can include very basic communication like pointing or gestures, all the way through high-tech devices that generate speech.

## **Dyscalculia**

A math-related learning disability. This can include difficulty with concepts like larger vs. smaller, and extend from basic math to more complex and abstract problems.

## **Dysgraphia**

A learning disability that presents as difficulty with writing. It includes difficulty with spelling, legibility, word spacing and sizing, and expression.

## **Dyslexia**

A learning disability in reading. It can include difficulty matching letters to sounds, spelling words correctly, and reading fluently.

## **Dyspraxia**

A disability that affects a person's motor skills. Someone with dyspraxia may struggle with movement, coordination, judgment, processing, memory, and some other cognitive skills.

## **Echolalia**

A pattern of speech in which an individual repeats words or phrases they have heard that are not directly related to their current context. Echolalia can be meaningful communication, although it is not always.

## **Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention (EIDBI)**

A benefit offered by the state of Minnesota to pay for services of individuals under 21 years old with ASD.

## **Elopement**

This is when an individual wanders, runs, or leaves a designated area without permission or without telling anyone. This can include leaving home, school, or work.

## **Executive Function**

The skills that allow us to set a goal and organize our resources in order to reach that goal. It includes organization and planning, working memory, self-control, and mental flexibility.

## **Expressive Language**

Expressive language (in contrast to receptive language) is the ability to use language to communicate to another person, whether through verbal or signed speech or written word.

## **Hyperlexia**

When a child begins reading early and beyond what would be expected for their age.

## **Hypersensitive**

Highly sensitive. Generally used in relation to a sense: you might be hypersensitive to sounds.

## **Hyposensitive**

Under sensitive, for example if you are hyposensitive to pain you don't feel it much.

## **Identity First Language**

Referring to a person as an "autistic person". Some people prefer this type of language because they feel that autism is a part of their identity.

## **Interoception**

One of the senses, interoception includes the ability to perceive internal cues like hunger, fullness, sleepiness, a racing heart, or clenched muscles.

## **Meltdown**

A meltdown is when an autistic individual can no longer process what is happening to them and have an intense response: it might be running, self-harm, intense stimming, hurting others, vocalizations, or something else. Meltdowns may look like tantrums but they are different: an autistic individual is no longer in control when they are melting down, and they are not trying to get anything from their behavior.



## **Neurodivergent**

A term for someone whose brain functions outside of what is generally considered "typical". Neurodivergent people struggle to function in society as it is currently set up. You would use this term to describe one individual who is autistic, ADHD, has a learning disability, etc.

## **Neurodiverse**

Neurodiverse refers to a group of people with different neurotypes. Two autistic individuals are not neurodiverse, however an autistic individual and a neurotypical individual are neurodiverse.

## **Neurodiversity**

The fact that human brains come in a variety of types which function and process differently. This is considered part of the natural variation in human life.

## **The Neurodiversity Movement**

While "neurodiversity" as a term is simply a fact, the Neurodiversity Movement takes that fact and goes further. It is a social justice movement that promotes civil rights, equality, and full societal inclusion for neurodivergent individuals. It argues that different neurotypes are not problems that should be cured, but natural differences that should be accommodated.

## **Neuromajority**

Those people whose brains can function and process in a way deemed normal or acceptable by society.

## **Neurominority**

A group with the same neurodivergence, for example autistics or people with ADHD.

## **Neuronormativity**

The behaviors and minds that are seen as normal and socially acceptable. Neuronormativity is often reinforced with social rules, social consequences, and therapies.

## **Neurotypical or NT**

A person who is not neurodivergent. This person's brain can function relatively well in society as it currently exists.

## **Non-Speaking or Non-Verbal**

Both non-speaking and non-verbal refer to individuals who have very little or no speech. Many of these individuals use augmentative and assistive communication devices.

## **Person First Language**

In contrast to identity first language, person first language refers to someone as a "person with autism". Some people advocate for this language because it puts the focus on the person instead of the disability.





## **Proprioception**

One of the senses, proprioception is the awareness of the body in space, pressure, and movement.

## **Receptive Language**

In contrast to expressive language, receptive language is an individual's ability to understand language, whether spoken, written, or signed.

An individual may have different expressive and receptive language abilities.

## **Scripting**

Repeating the same words over and over. This may be repeating words or phrases that someone heard in media, or it might be their own words. At times, scripting can be a method for calming. Other times, someone might use scripting as functional communication.

## **Shutdown**

A shutdown is very similar to a meltdown, however in a shutdown an individual will withdraw rather than exploding. A person in shutdown may be unable to speak or move. They are likely to freeze up due to the overwhelming experience they are having.

## **Special Interests**

A common characteristic of autism is having very deep, focused interests. These are generally referred to as "special interests". Many autistics find their special interests to be deeply fulfilling and calming, and can focus on them for hours at a time. A special interest can be anything, and stands out in its intensity.

## **Splinter Skills**

Splinter skills are a pattern of development in autism. Where a neurotypical tends to develop skills that they can generalize fairly evenly across an area, autistics may have very high skills in one specific area that don't generalize to another area. Sometimes we call these differences splinter skills. For example, a person may be able to complete high level calculus in his or her head, but he or she can't balance a budget.

## **Stimming**

Stimming, or self stimulating behavior, is repetitive movement or noises. Autistic individuals might stim to let out anxiety, show emotions, meet their sensory needs, or simply for fun.

## **Theory of Mind**

Theory of mind is an ability that humans develop as they age. It is the ability to understand that other people have different beliefs, desires, intents, emotions, and knowledge from our own and to anticipate what those might be.

## **Vestibular**

One of the senses, the vestibular sense provides balance and awareness of motion.