



Glossary of ND Terms

Term	What does this mean?
ABI	Acquired Brain Injury.
Acquired Brain Injury	Any injury to the brain. This includes Traumatic Brain Injury but also stroke, encephalitis, brain cancer, hypoxia, poisoning, substance abuse and other brain injuries.
Accommodations	Workplace accommodations are changes made to the workplace to help employees with disabilities perform their jobs. This may be changing the way you work, where you work, specific tools, training or adaptations to support you working.
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder.
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
AS	Asperger's Syndrome.
ASD/C	Autism Spectrum Disorder/Coordination
Asperger's Syndrome	Asperger's Syndrome was not typically associated with low IQ. In 2013, Asperger's Syndrome was removed from DSM-5 categorisation and has been removed from ICD-11.
Attention Deficit Disorder	Attention Deficit Disorder is an old term for ADHD. ADD was introduced in DSM-III in 1980 but was changed to ADHD in the revised version (DSM-III-R) in 1987.



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Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder	A condition characterised by inattention and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity. Symptoms must have been present prior to age 12 years. There are three subtypes of ADHD: predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive-impulsive and combined.
Auditory discrimination	The ability to hear differences and similarities in phonemes or words, e.g. that “cat” and “cot” sound similar but are distinct.
APD	Auditory Processing Disorder
Autism Spectrum Disorder	A condition characterised by difficulties with social communication and interactions and restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests and activities. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood. The term ASD includes conditions formerly described as Autism, Asperger’s Syndrome and PDD-NOS.
BECCTS	Benign epilepsy with centrotemporal spikes (BECTS) is a common type of epilepsy in children that usually resolves by the teenage years. It's also known as benign rolandic epilepsy (BRE).



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Biopsychosocial model	A theory about illness/disability. This theory states that people's experiences of illness/disability depend on the interaction between their health or disability (bio-), their mental health, emotions and feelings (psycho-) and the physical and social environment they live in (social). Therefore, to help someone with an illness or disability, you need to look at all three of these aspects.
BD	Bipolar Disorder
BPD	Borderline Personality Disorder
Camouflaging	This may be seen more often in females with ASD who may 'cover up' or mask challenges they have by modelling their behaviour on others around them.
Chronic Tic Disorder	A condition characterised by motor (movement) or vocal tics that have lasted for more than one year.
Cognitive	Mental processing or thinking.
Comorbidity	When two or more medical conditions that are not related to each other are found in the same person at the same time. This term generally should not be used for Neurodiverse conditions as they are often related to each other in some way.



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Compensating	This is described by adults with ASD as either 'shallow' (e.g. laughing or nodding at others jokes) or 'deeper' compensation. Compensation requires executive function and requires the ability to consider what may happen and to be able to switch between social rules and think about the social niceties. It is much harder to do when distracted or feeling distressed and can lead to mental fatigue.
Co-occurrence	When two or more medical conditions are found in the same person at the same time. This term is the preferred one to use for Neurodiverse conditions as it does not imply that they are unrelated to each other.
CP	Cerebral Palsy – symptoms can sometimes be similar to DCD.
CTD	Chronic Tic Disorder.
DCD	Developmental Coordination Disorder (also known as Dyspraxia).
Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)	A condition characterised by difficulties with big (gross) and small (fine) movement and balance. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood. In the UK, this is often called Dyspraxia.



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Term	What does this mean?
Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)	A condition characterised by difficulties with receptive and/or expressive language. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood.
Diagnosis	A statement or conclusion that describes the reason for a disease, illness or problem.
DLD	This stands for Developmental Language Disorder. A term used instead of speech, language and communication disorders/difficulties.
DSM	This stands for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This book is used by many professionals around the world to diagnose mental health conditions. It is the American Psychiatric Association diagnostic categorisation. The various DSM editions are referred to by number: DSM-I was published in 1952, DSM-II in 1968, DSM-III in 1980 and revised (DSM-III-R) in 1987, DSM-IV in 1994 and revised (DSM-IV-TR) in 2000 and, most recently, DSM-5 in 2013, DSM-5-TR in 2022.
Dyscalculia	A condition characterised by difficulties with mathematics. These difficulties may extend into telling the time and estimating distances. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood.



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Term	What does this mean?
Dysgraphia	Difficulties with handwriting.
Dyslexia	A condition characterised by difficulties with reading, writing and spelling. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood.
Dyspraxia	See Developmental Coordination Disorder. Originally came from the 'brain injury' literature (apraxia).
Education, Health and Care Plan	A term which replaced Statements of SEN in England.
Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome 1V	Ehlers-Danlos syndrome type IV (EDS4), is a rare and severe inherited connective tissue disorder that affects the blood vessels. It's characterized by fragile arteries and internal organs and can lead to serious complications in the digestive system and uterus.
EHCP	This stands for Education, Health and Care Plan.
Empathy	The ability to read and understand other's emotions, needs, and thoughts
Executive function	A set of cognitive skills that make sure things get done. They are used in planning, time-management, problem-solving, emotional regulation and keeping track of what you're doing.



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Term	What does this mean?
Executive function deficit	Difficulties with executive function skills. Someone with an executive function deficit may have a hard time planning or starting tasks and seeing them through.
Expressive language	How a person communicates, using facial expression, gestures, body language and aspects of spoken language including vocabulary, word/sentence meaning, grammar rules, etc.
Expressive Language Disorder	A type of Developmental Language Disorder characterised by difficulties with expressive language. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood. It is listed in ICD-10 as Expressive Language Disorder but is included in DSM-5 under Language Disorder.
Equality Act	This is a UK law (2010). The Equality Act 2010 is a law that protects people from discrimination, harassment, and victimization. It applies to many areas of life, including employment, schools, and public services.
h-EDS	Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (hEDS) is a connective tissue disorder that causes joint hypermobility, pain, and instability. It's the most common type of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS).
HI	Hearing Impairment



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Term	What does this mean?
Hyperactivity	Active movements seen more in children with ADHD. In adult this may be seen as drumming fingers, fiddling with jewellery, doodling, rocking on a chair. May be associated with a 'busy brain' in adults with ADHD and 'internal restlessness'.
ICD	This stands for the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems. It is a medical list that classifies diseases. It is created by the World Health Organisation and is used by doctors around the world. The various ICD editions are referred to by number: ICD-6 was published in 1949, ICD-7 in 1955, ICD-8a in 1968, ICD-9 in 1978 and ICD-10 in 1993. ICD-11 has been written and accepted. Latest version 2024.
ID	This stands for Intellectual Disability.
IDP	This stands for Individual Development Plan.
IQ	This stands for Intelligence Quotient. It is a widely used scale for measuring general intelligence.
Impulsive behaviours	In adults this may be acting without thinking e.g. a tendency to express thoughts and emotions without any sort of censorship; acting without regard to how such behaviour may affect others, spending money or making key decisions without reflecting on the impact on them.



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Term	What does this mean?
Intellectual Disability	A group of conditions characterised by significant difficulties with general intellect and everyday functioning. They are developmental conditions and are present from birth. This term includes conditions such as Down's Syndrome. In the UK, Intellectual Disability is called Learning Disability.
Interoception	Interoception is the ability to sense and understand what's happening inside your body. It's a system that allows you to be aware of your physical and emotional state, and to respond to it.
Kinaesthesia	The awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs (proprioceptors) in the muscles and joints.
LD	This stands for Learning Disability. It is a UK term. In the US it can refer to Dyslexia as well.
LDD	This stands for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties. It is a UK term.
Learning Difficulty	See Specific Learning Difficulty. Learning Difficulty is a UK term.
Learning Disability	See Intellectual Disability. Learning Disability is a UK term.



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Term	What does this mean?
Medical model	A theory about illness/disability. This theory states that people's experiences of illness/disability depend predominantly or only on the symptoms of their physical or mental health/ disability. Therefore, to help someone with an illness or disability, you just need to treat their illness or disability, e.g. with medicine, physical therapy, etc.
Mental Retardation	See Intellectual Disability. This historic term is no longer used as it is considered pejorative.
Mixed Receptive-Expressive Language Disorder	A type of Developmental Language Disorder characterised by difficulties with both receptive and expressive language. It is a developmental condition, so is present from early childhood. It is listed in ICD-10 as Mixed Receptive-Expressive Language Disorder but is included in DSM-5 under Language Disorder.
Misophonia	Select sound sensitivity syndrome, sound-rage. People who are sensitive to certain sounds sometimes cope by blocking them out. Misophonia, literally "hatred of sound", was proposed in 2000 as a condition in which negative emotions, thoughts, and physical reactions are triggered by specific sounds.
Multisensory	Relating to multiple senses, e.g. hearing, sight and touch.



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Term	What does this mean?
ND	This stands for Neurodisability.
NDD	This stands for Neurodevelopmental Disorder.
Neurodevelopmental Disorders	This term refers to a cluster of related conditions that affect the brain (neuro-) during development. It includes ADHD, ASD, DCD, DLD, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, ID and Tic Disorders.
Neuroaffirming	A way of conducting oneself that prioritises valuing and respecting the dignity of all people.
Neurodisability	This term refers to any disability that affects the brain (neuro-). It includes NDDs but also other conditions including brain injury, stroke, encephalitis, brain cancer, neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease and neurometabolic conditions such as Phenylketonuria.
Neurodivergence	This term refers to brains (neuro-) diverge from the norm. This is a social construct and may vary from culture to culture what this means e.g. Pirahã tribe who live in the Amazon rainforest of Brazil; their language only has words for "one," "two," and "many,"



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Term	What does this mean?
Neurodiversity	The term Neurodiversity moves away from considering these conditions negatively, as 'disorders', 'disabilities', 'deficits' or 'difficulties', and instead considers them as a normal part of human variation. It is the different ways we think, act, move, process information and communicate.
Neuroqueer	A term that considers Neurodiversity/Neurodivergence from the perspective of queer theory. It is defined as both an identity and an ethos, involving being Neurodiverse, approaching this as a form of queerness and actively choosing to embrace, embody and express one's own Neurodiversity.
Neurominority	A neurominority is a person with a neurotype that is not considered typical.
Neurotype	A neurotype is a person's brain type, which is a fundamental part of their identity. It describes how a person's brain learns, communicates, and develops.
Neurotypical	A term used to describe people whose brains process information similarly to each other. In school or workplace settings where you must conform to doing things in a certain way to advance this may be an advantage.



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Term	What does this mean?
Neurospicy	A new work reflecting on how people's brains are variable.
Non-stimulants	A family of medicines that are sometimes used to treat the symptoms of ADHD. They work by decreasing impulsive behaviour and/or improving attention span.
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder	A condition characterised by the need to repeatedly perform certain routines (compulsions) or the presence of repeated thoughts (obsessions). These cannot be controlled by the person for very long and are severe enough to negatively affect the person's life.
OCD	Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.
PDD-NOS	Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified. No longer used since 2013.
Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified	See Autism Spectrum Disorder. PDD-NOS is an Autism Spectrum Disorder which is often, but not always, milder than typical Autism but more severe than Asperger's Syndrome. PDD-NOS is sometimes referred to as Atypical Autism. In 2013, PDD-NOS was removed from DSM-5. It remains a diagnosis in ICD-10 but has been removed from ICD-11.



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Term	What does this mean?
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound, e.g. “b”, “t” or “ch”.
Phonology	To do with the systems of sounds that make up a language.
Pragmatics	To do with language in use and the contexts in which it is used. This includes things such as taking turns in conversation and implied meaning.
Proprioception	Perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body.
Psychostimulants	A family of medicines that are often used to treat the symptoms of ADHD. They affect dopamine activity in the brain and can help with focusing thoughts and ignoring distractions.
Reasonable Adjustments	Reasonable adjustments is a legal term and relates to accommodations or changes to working conditions – for example, equipment, duties or hours of work – to enable people to carry out their job should they have medical or physical needs.
Receptive language	How a person understands other people’s communications including how they understand other people’s facial expression, gestures, body language and aspects of spoken language including vocabulary, word/sentence meaning, grammar rules, etc.



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Term	What does this mean?
Self-stimulatory behaviour	Making repetitive movements, sounds or words or observing repetitively moving objects. For example, hand flapping, rocking, head banging or watching spinning objects. Self-stimulatory behaviour is commonly carried out by people with ASD to relieve anxiety and other negative or heightened emotions, happiness, boredom and/or to block out unpredictable or unwanted environmental stimuli. In adults this may be seen as drumming fingers, rocking back and forth on a chair, or repetitive playing or fiddling with objects.
Semantics	To do with meaning in language, including words, phrases, signs and symbols.
Sensory	To do with the senses – touch, taste, smell, hearing and/or sight.
SLI	This stands for Specific Language Impairment.
Social model	A theory about illness/disability. This theory states that people's experiences of illness/disability depend predominantly or only on how they interact with their physical and social environment. Therefore, to treat someone with an illness or disability, you need to change their physical or social environment. E.g. someone who uses a wheelchair would no longer be 'disabled' if the environment they lived in accommodated their needs by having ramps and lifts instead of stairs.



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Term	What does this mean?
Specific Language Impairment	See Developmental Language Disorder. The term SLI was replaced with DLD in 2017.
SpLD	This stands for Specific Learning Difficulty.
Specific Learning Disability	This term includes conditions that affect specific aspects of learning rather than general intelligence or overall functioning. It includes Dyscalculia, Dyslexia and Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia).
Spectrum	It is important to remember that characteristics of neurodevelopmental conditions like those listed in this glossary have varying impacts and levels of severity in individuals diagnosed. It is also important to remember that, while an individual may display characteristics of a specific condition, they may not in fact have sufficient traits of that condition to meet the diagnostic threshold. However, the impact on them will still affect the individual's cognition and behaviour.
Stimming	See Self-stimulatory behaviour. Self-stimulation or stimming refers to behaviours often used by people with autism to provide stimulation, assist with calming down, add concentration or shut out an overwhelming sound. Examples include rocking back and forth, skipping, vocalising or making repetitive noises, flapping hands or spinning round.



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Term	What does this mean?
Synaesthesia	When stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway results in involuntary (automatic) experiences of a second sensory or cognitive pathway. For example, someone might see numbers and automatically strongly feel that each number is associated with a particular colour or someone might hear a particular noise, such as a trumpet, and automatically see a green circle.
Tactile	To do with touch.
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury.
Tic Disorders	A term which includes Chronic Tic Disorder and Tourette's Syndrome.
Tics	The production of sudden, repetitive, non-rhythmic involuntary (automatic) movements, sounds and/or words. These include clapping, blinking, head jerking, repeating/ echoing words or involuntarily saying taboo words or phrases.
Tourette's Syndrome	A condition characterised by motor (movement) & vocal tics that have lasted for more than a year.
Traumatic Brain Injury	Any injury to the brain that is the result of physical trauma, e.g. a blow or fall. TBI is classified as mild, moderate or severe based on length of loss of consciousness and/or Glasgow Coma Score immediately after injury.



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Term	What does this mean?
VI	Visual Impairment
Working memory	The “temporary storage” part of memory that is used, for example, to store numbers when doing sums in your head or for storing ideas when decision-making.
Working memory deficit	Difficulties with skills and tasks that use working memory. Someone with a working memory deficit may have a hard time with decision-making, following instructions with several steps, doing sums in their head and/or copying text.