

THE ZIG/ZAG GUIDE TO NEURODIVERSITY

It's a word that is often misunderstood, often misused and often mistaken for something else. Its meaning depends on whether it's being spoken by academics, capitalists, or activists. And it can be just as often used to silence, oppress, and erase people as it is to include, empower, and accept them. So what actually *is* neurodiversity?

A theory of human diversity



**In a forest there is no
such thing as a
'normal' tree**

The idea of 'neurodiversity' is similar to that of biodiversity - it's a theory that describes our individual minds as being as unique and infinitely variable as the individual trees within a forest.

A forest with a high level of biodiversity is generally more resilient than one with only a single type of tree, and a society with lots of variation in how we experience and make sense of the world is richer and more creative than one in which everyone thinks alike.

A collective social movement



**Refusing to conform can
be an act of radical
resistance**

People who perceive, process, or react to the world in a way that conflicts with the expectations and/or demands of the society in which they live may identify as being neurodivergent.

While every individual is different, many neurodivergent people share attributes and experiences that distinguish them from the dominant social majority. The neurodiversity movement was formed by and for neurodivergent people, as a way to find and claim their collective power.

A challenge to the status quo



**Only by thinking
differently can we
each change the world**

The central idea of neurodiversity - that difference is something to be accepted, not corrected - directly conflicts with the modern Western world's deeply medicalised view of disease and disability.

This can lead to tension when it comes to navigating systems and institutions that view all differences through a deficit-based lens. By self-identifying as neurodivergent, we disrupt the dynamic of power between 'experts' and 'patients' and expand the potential for change.