

# Parenting on the Spectrum

**Supporting a child with neurodevelopmental differences such as Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia etc**

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[solutiontalk.ie](http://solutiontalk.ie) for parents  
[parentsplus.ie](http://parentsplus.ie) for professionals

# Neurodevelopmental Differences



Austism

Senory  
Processing  
Differences

Tic Disorders

Intellectual  
Disability

Dyspraxia

Synaesthesia

ADHD

Dyscalculia

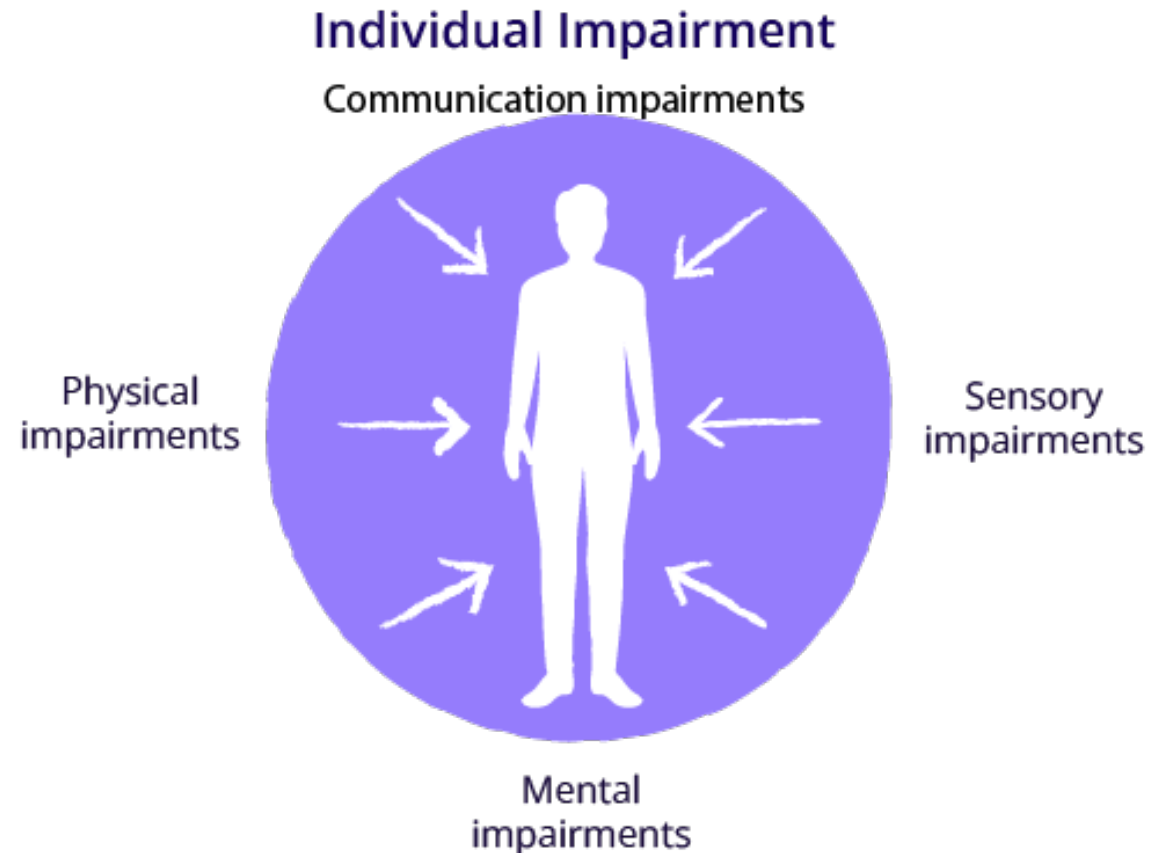
Dyslexia

# Medical model of disability

Neurodevelopmental differences considered as 'disorders'

Individual is seen as impaired or having a disorder

Goal is to cure, fix or help individual manage the impairments



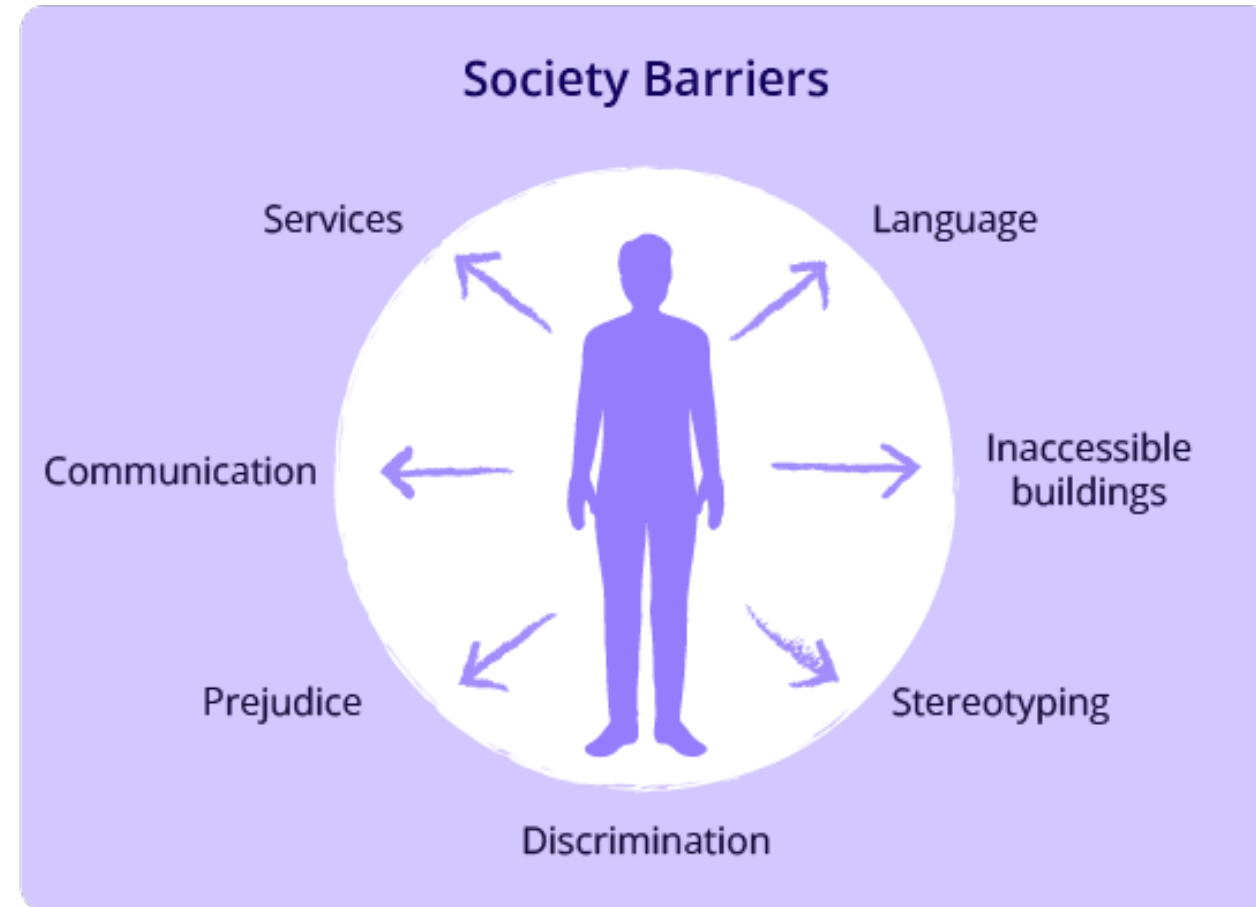
# Social model of disability

Neurodevelopmental differences are brain differences with strengths and weaknesses

Society does not accommodate these differences

Individual is **disabled by barriers** in society

Goal is to remove barriers and/or help individual manage them

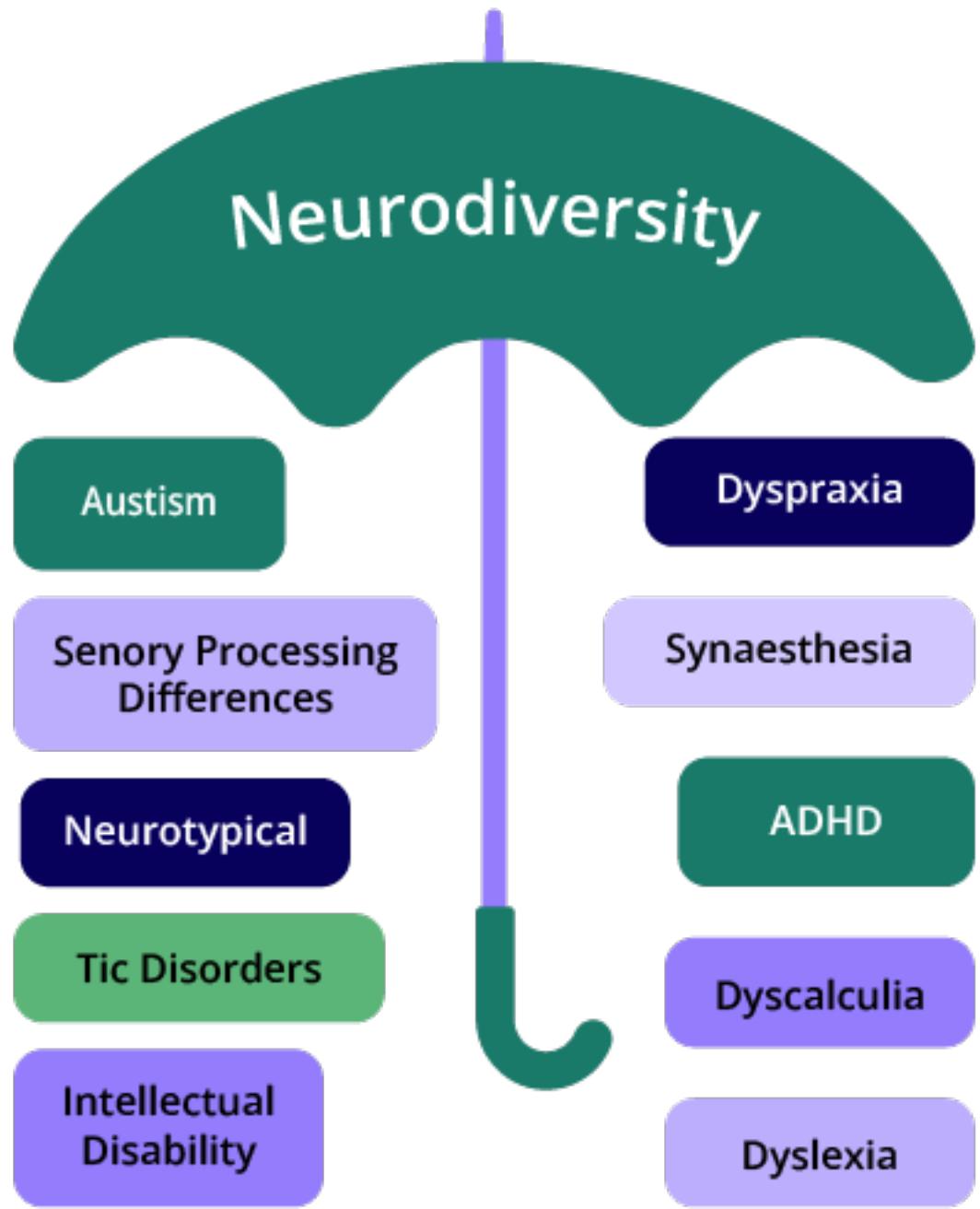


# Gifted children and neurodevelopmental differences

- Gifted children can be neurodivergent in same rates as other children
- Their differences are less likely to be picked up and noticed in school and at home
- Child can learn to mask or hide their differences
- Parents can have higher expectations and put pressure on children
- Can underperform in school and be socially isolated
- Can present as depressed, anxious or having low self esteem

# Becoming a neuroaffirming parent

- Understand and **accept** your child's unique differences
- Focus on your child's **strengths** and embrace their **interests**
- Understand their **needs** and **provide support**
- Adjust the **environment** where possible to match their 'brain type'
- **Advocate** for your child in school to get their needs met
- Encourage **autonomy** where possible and let your child make their own choices
- Learn about your **child's neurotype** by reading, social media etc
- Encourage a **positive identity** around their neurotype



# Neurodiversity

Austism

Dyspraxia

Senory Processing Differences

Synaesthesia

Neurotypical

ADHD

Tic Disorders

Dyscalculia

Intellectual Disability

Dyslexia

# ADHD

(attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)

Deficits ( from DSM-V)	Strengths
Impulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Willing to try new things</li><li>• Creative / outside the box</li></ul>
Hyperactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Energy and Drive</li><li>• Excitement and enthusiasm</li></ul>
Distractibility/ inattention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curiosity/ see things differently</li><li>• <u>Can</u> attend to things that interest them - hyperfocus</li></ul>



# Autism

Deficits ( from DSM-V)	Strengths
Persistent deficits in social communication & social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More honest and direct in communication</li><li>• Loyal relationships, no hidden agendas</li></ul>
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to deep dive and study subject at depth</li><li>• Deep interests in certain subject</li></ul>
Sensory sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rich sensory appreciation of the world</li><li>• Unique perception through senses</li></ul>

# Co-Occurring Conditions

With a diagnosis of autism your child is more likely to have

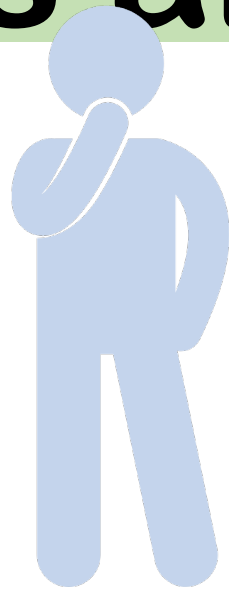
- ADHD
- Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia/ Dyscalculia and other specific learning issues
- Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Alexithymia (challenges identifying and expressing emotions)
- 'Picky' eating, ARFID and Eating disorders
- Anxiety and Selective Mute/ non speaking
- Stress, Burnout, Trauma
- Hypermobility and joint problems
- Fatigue, Fibromyalgia and Auto-immune disorders

# Four Practical Parenting Principles

1. Understand your child's strengths and needs
2. Respond positively to challenges
3. Advocate for your child
4. Cultivate your relationship

## Principle 1

**Understand your child's  
strengths and needs**



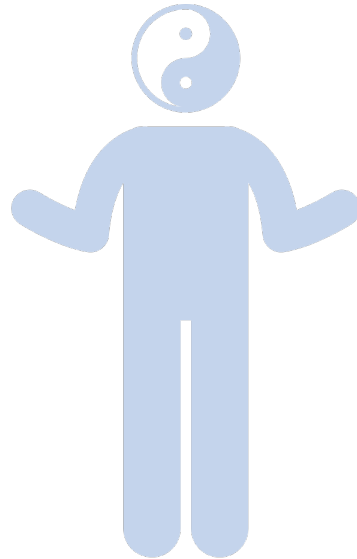
# Build a detailed picture of your child's profile

## Consider

- Executive function (ability to plan and organise)
- Attention and Interests (what grabs their attention?, what is opposite?)
- Communication preference ( PDA, Alexithymia, feeling talk..)
- Routines and repetitive behaviour
- Sensory needs ( what agitates and what relaxes them?)
- Social awareness (friendships)
- Motor and physical skills ( dyspraxia)
- Learning needs ( how do they learn?)
- Physical needs and illness ( hypermobility, chronic pain, fatigue..)
- Other Co-occurring conditions

## Principle 2

**Respond positively to challenges**



# Three Step Problem Solving

## 1) Press the pause button



- Take a **step back** from how you normally react.
- Think **calmly**. What is the best way to respond?

## 2) 'Tune In' to what is happening



- What is going on for **your children**?  
What need is unmet?
- What is going on for **you as a parent**?  
What are your needs?

## 3) Make a plan



- What is the best way to respond?
- What has worked well in the past?



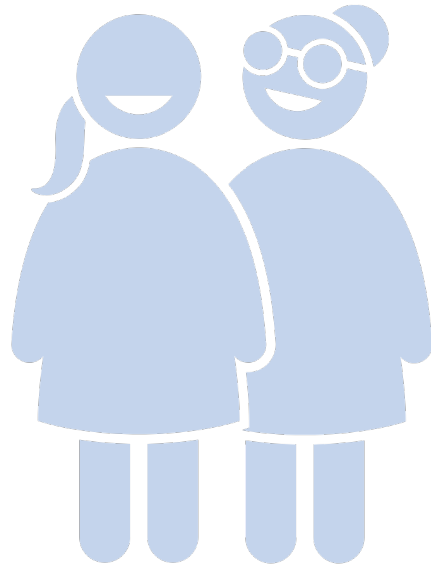
# Making a Plan

- Try to respond calmly, warmly and empathetically
- See behaviour as sign of unmet need.
  - *How can you address this need?*
- See behaviour as triggered in environment
  - *How can you change the environment to help?*
- Empower your child
  - *How can you help your child manage this need?*
  - *How can help you child cope in this environment?*
- Pause and Learn - *don't keep doing the same thing if it is not working!*



## Principle 3

# Advocate for your child



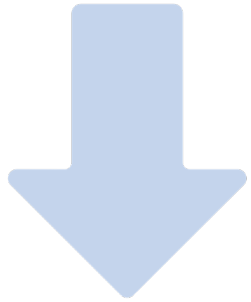
## Principle 4

# Cultivate your relationship



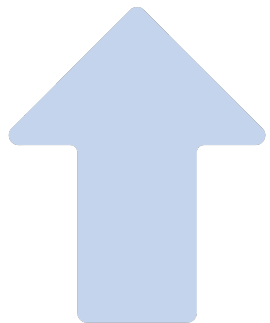
# Cultivate your relationship with your child

## Reduce stress:



- reduce your own stress, focus on self-care
- pause and respond calmly to problems
- create good routines, have a plan

## Increase connection:



- daily play times and fun
- chatting times
- relaxed bedtime and mealtimes

# Daily Moments



What do you **enjoy doing most** with your children?



When do you have the **best chats**?

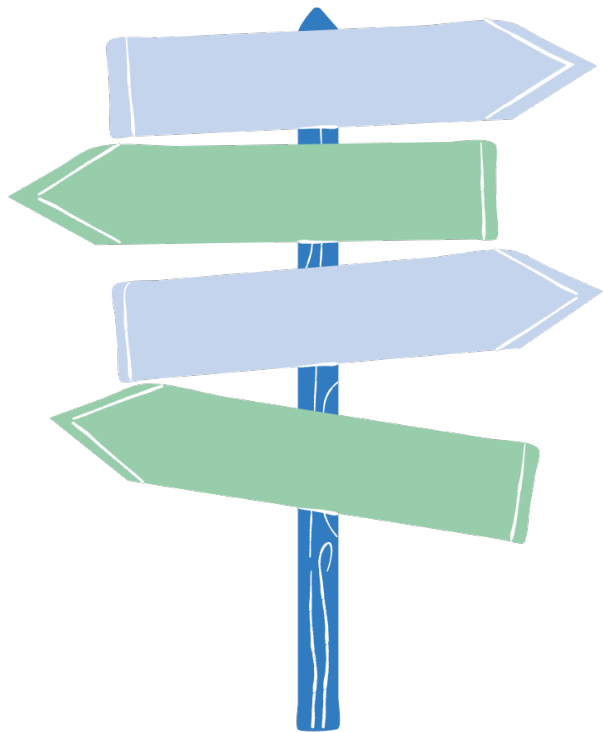
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# Feedback/ Next steps



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