# Words for *our worlds.*

A field guide to words the neurodivergent community uses. Borrow the ones that help; leave the rest. You decide which words fit you.

*Your words, your choice.*

## A

### Accommodation — Support
A change to how something is done so it works for your brain, like written instructions or a quieter desk. It's access, not a favor.

### Alexithymia — Experience
Difficulty noticing or naming your own emotions. Many ND people say feelings show up in the body before the words do.

### AuDHD — Identity
A community word for being both autistic and ADHD, which can mean craving routine and novelty at once.

### Autistic burnout — Experience
Deep exhaustion, often with skills harder to reach, that many autistic people describe after long masking or overload. Rest and fewer demands help.

## B

### Body doubling — Tool
Doing a task with someone else present, in person or on a call. For many ADHD brains, company makes starting easier.

## D

### Demand avoidance (PDA) — Experience
A strong, often anxious resistance to demands, even ones you want to meet. A debated profile; many prefer "persistent drive for autonomy."

### Double empathy problem — Concept
Damian Milton's idea that misunderstandings between autistic and non-autistic people run both ways, rather than being one side's deficit.

## E

### Executive function — Concept
The brain's management team: planning, starting, switching, remembering steps, tracking time. Differences here are common in ND people and aren't about effort.

## H

### Hyperfocus — Experience
Deep, absorbed attention on something engaging, where time and hunger can disappear. It can be both a gift and a drain.

## I

### Identity-first language — Language
Saying "autistic person" rather than "person with autism." Many autistic adults prefer it. Always follow each person's own choice.

### Inertia — Experience
Difficulty starting, stopping, or switching, like a heavy object that keeps doing what it's doing. It isn't laziness.

### Info-dumping — Connection
Sharing lots of detail about something you love. For many ND people it's a way to connect and show care.

### Interoception — Body
Sensing what's happening inside your body: hunger, thirst, needing the bathroom, heartbeat, emotions. It can be louder, quieter, or harder to read.

**Good to know**

Some of these terms, like **AuDHD**, **autistic burnout** and **inertia**, come from lived experience rather than diagnostic manuals. You may not see them on a clinical report, but they are widely used in the community.

Continued on back: M to U →

# WORDS FOR OUR WORLDS, *continued.*

M – U

## M

### MASKING EXPERIENCE
Hiding ND traits to fit in or stay safe. It can protect you, and it often costs a lot of energy.

### MELTDOWN EXPERIENCE
An involuntary, outward response to overwhelm. Not a tantrum or a choice; safety, space, and less input help.

### MONOTROPISM CONCEPT
A theory from Dinah Murray and colleagues: autistic attention tends to gather deeply into a few things at once, rather than spreading wide.

## N

### NEURODIVERGENT IDENTITY
Having a brain that works differently from what society treats as typical.

### NEURODIVERSITY CONCEPT
The natural variety of all human brains. It describes a group; one person is neurodivergent.

### NEUROTYPICAL IDENTITY
Having a brain that works the way society usually expects and builds for.

## P

### PARALLEL PLAY CONNECTION
Being together while each doing your own thing. A low-pressure, real way to connect, at any age.

## R

### REJECTION SENSITIVITY EXPERIENCE
Intense pain in response to real or perceived rejection or criticism. Often discussed with ADHD; not a diagnosis.

### ROUTINE TOOL
A predictable pattern for a day or task. It can lower the load of constant deciding.

## S

### SENSORY OVERLOAD EXPERIENCE
When sights, sounds, smells, or crowds add up to more than your nervous system can process.

### SENSORY SEEKING / AVOIDING BODY
Going toward some input (pressure, movement) and away from other input. Most people do both.

### SHUTDOWN EXPERIENCE
An inward response to overwhelm: going quiet, still, or hard to reach. Low demands and time help.

### SPECIAL INTEREST JOY
A deep, passionate interest that brings joy, calm, and expertise. Often central to who you are.

### SPOONS (SPOON THEORY) TOOL
Christine Miserandino's picture of daily energy as a handful of spoons: each task costs some, and they run out.

### STIMMING BODY
Repeated movements or sounds, like rocking or humming, that help you regulate, focus, or express feeling.

## T

### TIME BLINDNESS EXPERIENCE
Difficulty sensing how much time has passed or how long things take. Common with ADHD; timers and visible clocks can help.

## U

### UNMASKING EXPERIENCE
Gradually, safely letting more of your natural self show. Personal, and paced by you, never an obligation.