

# Neurodivergent Affirming Occupational Therapy



## What is Neurodivergence?

A term to describe **neuro-types** that differ from societal expectations of **brain functioning**. Neurodivergence encompasses autism, ADHD, sensory and cognitive processing differences, intellectual disabilities, mental health conditions and more.

## Neurodivergence vs Neurodiversity

**Neurodivergence** refers to people whose brain processes information in a way that is not typical of most individuals. Whereas, **Neurodiversity** refers to everyone, as each individual person has their own way of processing information.

### Why is Neurodivergent Affirming OT Practice Essential?

- **Validates** people's **lived experience**
- Supports people to feel **safe** and **respected**
- Promotes **improved** therapeutic outcomes
- It is **imperative** that the OT code of ethics and AHPRA code of conduct are actively utilised in practice.

### OT Role in providing Neurodivergent Affirming Care

- Promote and advocate for occupations that provide **joy, purpose** and **meaning**
- Therapy is **not pathology or deficit focused**
- Promote improved **quality of life** by respecting neurodivergent identities and needs
- **Co-create** and affirm **environmental** adjustments

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*Staff at Thrive Rehab recognise the need for ongoing reflective practice and continued professional development in this domain.*

**We will learn from each client on how to best support their individual needs**

# 6 Core Concepts of Affirming OT Practice\*



## Client Centred Care

- Clients are central in **decision making**
- Validating lived experience and each individuals' **unique needs**
- *"Respecting and celebrating neurodivergent ways of thinking and behaving."\**

## Therapy feels like a Safe Space

- Clients are **respected** and heard
- Clients feel comfortable to **be themselves** through the removal of neurotypical expectations
- Therapy will **not** include compliance or control-based practices

## Accommodating Communication Needs

- Offering **different styles** of communication (verbal, written, parallel activities and more)
- Client's **preferred language** is used
- Allowing clients **processing time** when asking questions

## Flexible Therapy

- Flexible session **styles** (in person, telehealth, activity based and more)
- **Choice** of the focus of therapy sessions
- Client has the ability to **stop** or **modify** sessions

## Accommodating Sensory Needs

- **Adapting** therapy to the sensory preferences of the client. **This can include:**
  - Lighting, seating, temperature options
  - Encouraging stimming and use of sensory tools
- It is crucial to *"check in about preferences in the environment"*\*

## Consent and Communication

- Consent gained at every step (**no assumed consent**)
- Specific **outline** of all sessions
- Acknowledgement of client-therapist **power imbalance**
- *"ALWAYS ask for consent [and] explain the purpose of what I am doing."\**

\*Core concepts and quotes gathered from a survey with Thrive Rehab OTs

