

Talking About Possible Neurodivergence in Therapy:

Respectful and Sensitive Interventions

This guide offers example interventions for counsellors and psychotherapists who wish to explore the possibility of neurodivergence with a client gently and ethically. These suggestions prioritise curiosity, consent and collaboration – and they avoid making assumptions or using pathologising language.

1. Gentle Observations

To reflect something you're noticing in the client's experience:

- *'I've noticed that certain situations seem especially draining or overwhelming for you – is that something you've noticed too?'*
 - *'You've mentioned feeling different from others for a long time. Would it feel OK to explore what that's been like for you?'*
 - *'You often describe needing time alone to recover from social things – I wonder if that's something you've always experienced?'*
-

2. Inviting Exploration

To open a door for further discussion, without pressure:

- *'Some of the things you've shared remind me of what others have described when they've been exploring neurodivergence. I wonder if that's something you've ever thought about?'*
 - *'Would it feel OK to think together about different ways people experience the world – including sensory stuff, communication and focus – and how that might relate to you?'*
 - *'It's not a diagnosis, but I sometimes come across patterns in people's stories that reflect neurodivergent ways of being. I'm wondering if you might find it helpful or interesting to explore that possibility?'*
-

3. When the Client Has Wondered or Named It Themselves

To deepen the conversation with sensitivity:

- *'You mentioned wondering if you might be autistic. How did that thought come up for you?'*
 - *'What would it mean for you to have a name for some of these experiences?'*
 - *'If we explore this together, what are your hopes – or your hesitations – about that?'*
-

4. When the Client Is Distressed but Undiagnosed

To validate and explore traits without pathologising:

- *'You've shared that loud environments can be overwhelming and that you often need time alone to recover. That's a really valid experience – and one a lot of people share. I wonder if we could gently think about why that might be?'*
 - *'What if there's nothing "wrong" with how you are – what if it's just that the world hasn't been designed with people like you in mind?'*
-

5. Framing Neurodivergence as Difference, Not Deficit

To support identity-building and empowerment:

- *'Some people find that identifying as neurodivergent – autistic or otherwise – helps them make sense of their experiences in a new, empowering way.'*
 - *'Neurodivergence isn't about something being broken – it's just a different way of processing things and relating to the world.'*
-

These phrases are not a script but a starting point. Always be led by your client's language, needs and pace. Neurodivergence may be a key to deeper understanding, or it may not feel relevant.