

# Let's Talk About Neurodiversity

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Let's talk about neurodiversity. Neuro- has to do with our brains, and diversity means things are not all the same, so neurodiversity is the concept that all brains work differently, often in ways that don't mix well with the way our society expects people to function. Most often, we hear the term neurodiversity in conversation around autism or attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD). The autistic community recognizes that a whole lot of autistic people, especially girls or adults, may never be formally diagnosed by a doctor, but still experience the challenges of living in a world that doesn't understand them.

To learn more about neurodiversity, I highly recommend this newsletter from the United Methodist Disability Ministries Committee: [VOICE of the UMC Disability Connection \(constantcontact.com\)](https://constantcontact.com)

I'll leave the explaining to them, because the autistic author of this newsletter put a lot of effort into sharing her own experience and how it connects with the broader experience of autistic and generally neurodivergent folks in our society. Here are a few ways we can make sure our church and community are welcoming for our neurodivergent neighbors:

1. **Normalize and encourage quiet fidgets.** Whether we're worshiping or studying or even sharing a potluck dinner, often neurodivergent children and adults alike can benefit from the tactile experience of fidget toys. Some of these toys have clickers and other noisy elements, but others are perfectly quiet. So to welcome neurodivergent folks, we can simply understand that fidgeting (maybe playing with one of these toys or coloring or crocheting or even just shaking hands or tapping feet) actually might mean people are paying better attention than they would if they tried to stay still.
2. **Go with the flow.** We're pretty good about this with young children already, but if teenagers or adults make unexpected noises during worship or feel the need to get up and walk around, that might challenge our expectations a bit more. Let's practice assuming the best about our neighbors, trusting that they know how they can best worship, and I hope we can find ways to share the experience of worshiping God together with all our hearts, souls, and diverse minds.

And finally, if someone trusts you to know they are neurodivergent, then just ask them how you can best help them feel at home with our community. Understanding neurodivergence means understanding that one size never fits all. As the body of Christ, we are committed to life in community with all kinds of people whose brains work in beautifully varied ways, who experience Jesus and the world differently from us.