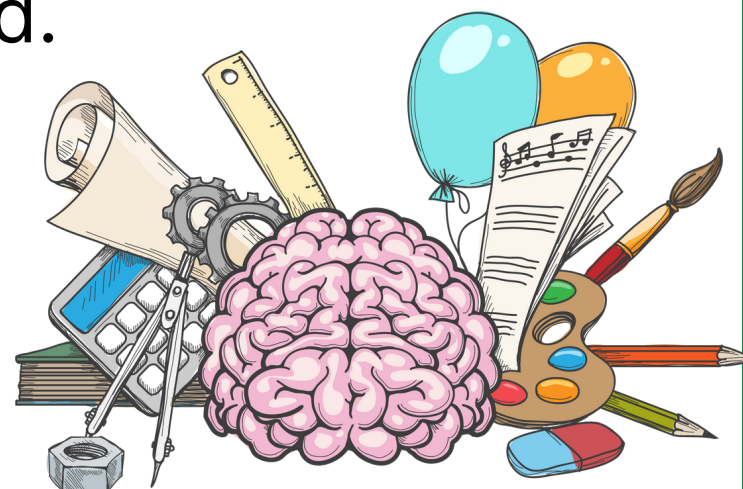


# What is Neurodiversity?

Refers to the recognition and acceptance of the wide range of neurological differences in individuals; including **Neurotypical** and **Neurodivergent** brains



Neurological differences are natural variations of the human brain and should be respected and accommodated, rather than being pathologized or stigmatized.



We should advocate for external support and accommodations to ensure that all individuals thrive in society; as opposed to changing the individual



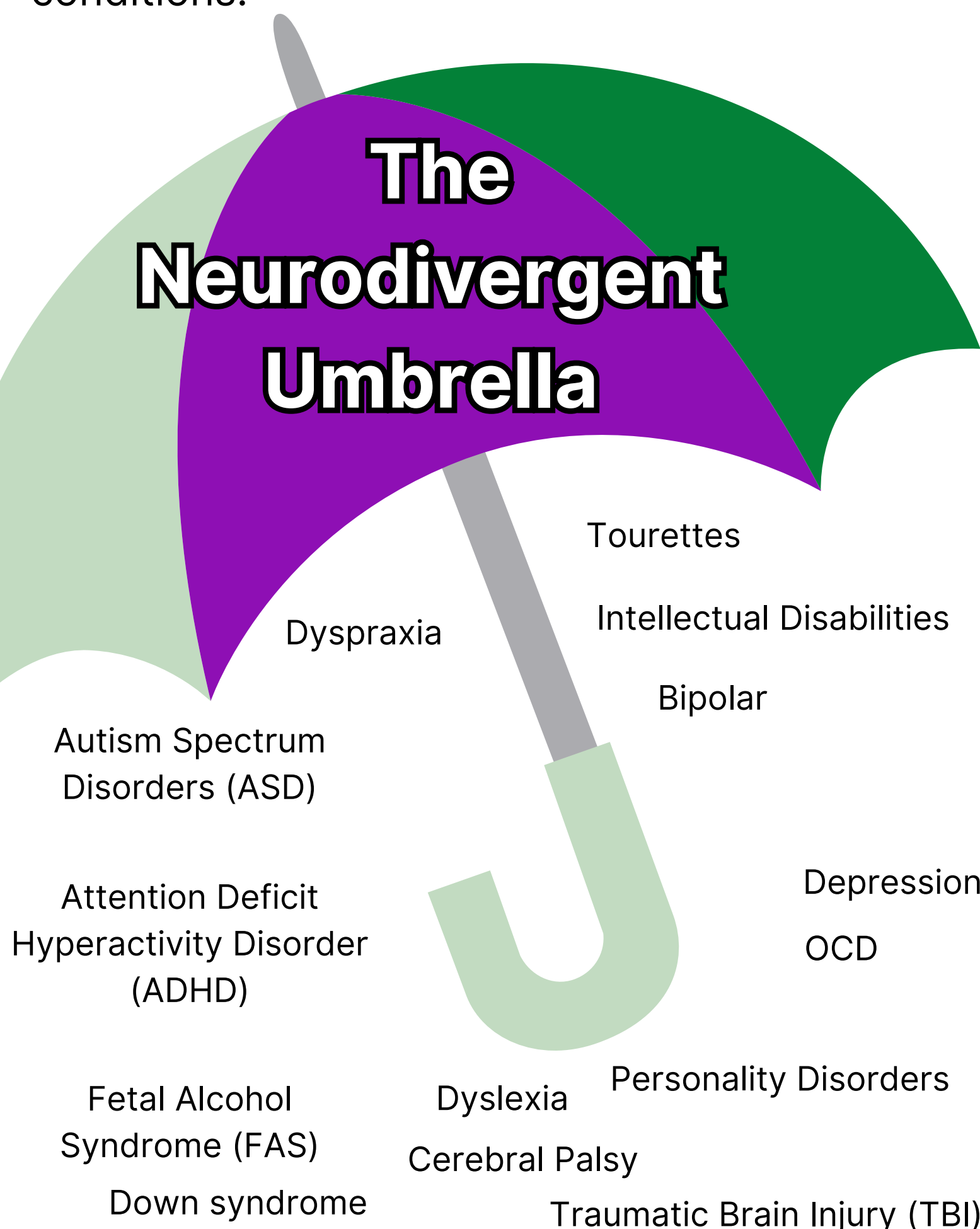
## Neurodivergent (ND) and Neurotypical (NT)

ND and NT are terms often used to describe different ways in which individuals experience and process the world based on their neurological traits and conditions.

Individuals who are ND have neurological development and functioning that **differs** from what is considered typical or average.

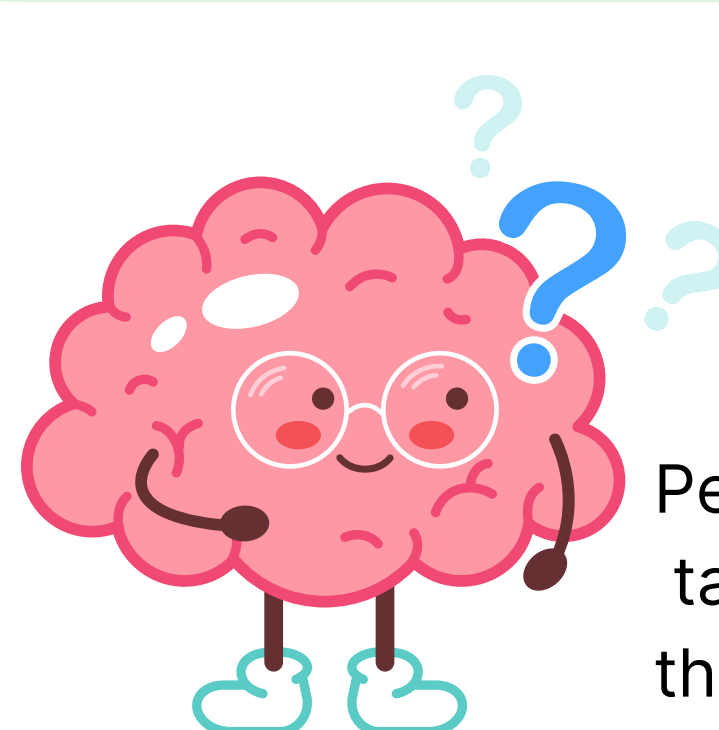
Those who are NT have neurological development and functioning that are considered **typical** or within the range of what is considered normal or average.

### The Neurodivergent Umbrella



This terminology is used to describe a group of conditions that are associated, as a result of variations in mental functions. The **Neurodivergent Umbrella** includes;

- Neurodevelopmental conditions
- Mental health conditions
- Brain injuries



**Did You Know?**

People with ADHD who are taking **appropriate medication** therapy have **lower rates** of substance use vs. those who are not receiving treatment

# Recognizing the intersection of neurodiversity and substance use (SU), consider these aspects:

## Vulnerabilities and Challenges

- Those who are ND may experience heightened vulnerabilities which could potentially influence their interactions with substances. These vulnerabilities include difficulties in social interactions, communication, and sensory sensitivities.
- They may experience co-occurring mental health conditions, like anxiety or depression, which could contribute to SU as a way to cope with distress.

## Coping Mechanisms

- Those who are ND may develop unique coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges they face. This could involve SU as a way to manage stress, anxiety, or sensory overload.
- We should recognize the need for healthier coping strategies and provide support to help individuals develop adaptive ways of managing their emotions and challenges.

## Individual Experiences

- The relationship between neurodiversity and SU is highly individualized.
- Some people who are ND may have no interest or susceptibility to SU, while others may be more vulnerable due to factors related to their condition, environment, or personal history.

## Education and Support

- Education about the potential risks and consequences of SU should be provided in ways that are accessible and understandable for those who are ND.
- Support networks, including family, friends, educators, and healthcare professionals, play a crucial role in guiding those with ND toward healthy decisions regarding SU.

## General Classroom Tips

- Be aware of the stimuli that could interfere with the learning experience for those who are ND. Make necessary adjustments to **create an environment** where all students can learn.
- Incorporate a **variety of materials and activities** that facilitate the best possible learning experience for all types of learners.
- Use **non-stigmatizing language** when discussing SU and ND associated conditions. Refer to our [stigma infographic](#) for more information.

For more information visit us at:

[www.decyde.ca](http://www.decyde.ca)

The relationship between neurodiversity and SU is complex and multifaceted. It's essential to approach this intersection with sensitivity, recognizing the unique challenges and strengths of neurodiverse individuals, and providing tailored support, education, and resources to help them make informed and healthy choices.

### References:

1. Miller C. What Is Neurodiversity? Child Mind Institute. (Last updated 2023 April 21). <https://childmind.org/article/what-is-neurodiversity/>
2. Harvard Health Publishing. (2021, November 23). What is neurodiversity? Harvard Health Blog. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/what-is-neurodiversity-202111232645>
3. Sizoo, B., van den Brink, W., Koeter, M., Gorissen van Eenige, M., van Wijngaarden-Cremers, P., & van der Gaag, R. J. (2010). Treatment seeking adults with autism or ADHD and comorbid substance use disorder: Prevalence, risk factors and functional disability. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 107(1), 44-50.