## ABOUT CAMILLE

*Camille is passionate about nonviolent, respectful, and compassionate communication. She is a proud Registered Social Worker & Neurodiversity Advocate.*



Camille and her husband have two bright and beautiful children, ages 6 & 8. Living in a neurodiverse family herself, she advocates for the recognition, accommodation, and celebration of human neurodiversity, and embraces the mutual process of learning in the parent-child relationship.

Camille has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice , an Honours Bachelor of Social Work degree, and is currently working on a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology. Currently working as a private R.S.W., her passion is to support parents and families in developing collaborative, nonviolent, compassionate, and healthy relationships.

## Questions for Reflection...

*Does the dominant brain wiring in our society have a name?*

*What kind of brain do you have?*

*What is "normal?"*

*Is there one right, ideal, or healthy way to be human?*

*What are some reasons or benefits of using diagnostic labels in our society?*

*What about 'functioning' labels?*

*What is neurodiversity?*

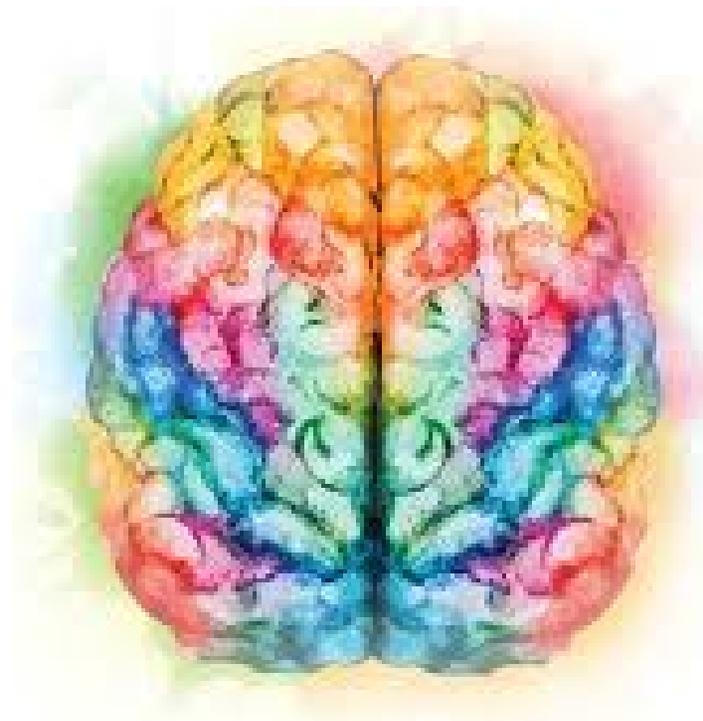*What is the language of diversity?*

*How can I become an ally / advocate of autistic and neurodiverse populations?*

*Is there a way to recognize and accommodate differences without maintaining a deficit-focus and an idealization of the dominant brain type, or a concept of "normal"?*

*In what ways am I privileged, and how can I use my status and position to support and learn from under-represented, under-valued, and oppressed populations?*



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*Seeing Autistic and Neurodivergent Individuals Through a Lens of Human Diversity Rather than Pathology*



## EXPLORING
## NEURODIVERSITY

With Camille F. Long, R.S.W.

# DIFFERENT, NOT LESS

**Neurodiversity** is the naturally-occurring infinite variation in neuro-cognitive functioning and wiring of human brains.

**Neurodivergent (ND)** refers to a brain that functions in ways that diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of "normal."

**Neurotypical (NT)** refers to a brain that functions in ways that fall within the dominant societal standards of "normal."; the most common and dominant brain type

**Neurominority** is a group of neurodivergent people who share a type of neurodivergence, are inseparable from their innate characteristics, and who are often faced with prejudice, misunderstanding, discrimination and oppression by the neurotypical majority who insist on classifying their differences pathologically

**Pathology** is the study of the essential nature of diseases and the structural and functional changes produced by them

## Benefits of Having a Label

- They can provide access to helpful services and accommodations to facilitate true inclusion and full access
- They can provide a sense of community, which can protect against isolation and loneliness
- They can lend to self understanding, self awareness, and self acceptance

Labels don't have to have a negative undertone to them. The only reasons this undertone exists is because of the pathology through which these differences are still viewed. There is nothing inherently wrong with recognizing that there is a difference. The problem lies in our interpretation of what that difference tells us about that population in comparison to what we value as "normal", "right" or "ideal".

## Difference as Diversity

Differences in neurology should be recognized and respected as a social category of naturally-occurring human diversity, similar to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, or disability. These groups do not require a pathological diagnosis to access accommodations and services to meet their needs.

We recognize that when neurodivergent kids struggle, it's likely that their surroundings need to be adjusted to accommodate their inborn differences, rather than simply viewing them as having the problems that need fixing. It is a fact that many neurodivergent people are disabled by nature of having to function in a society that is not structured with their needs in mind.

There are many ways that people communicate and when we can recognize and accommodate these differences, anxieties and frustrations are lowered, and self confidence, self determination and feelings of competence and autonomy are fostered, allowing that person to develop to their fullest potential.

## Difference as Pathology

We see divisions in race, age, and ability, and unfortunately what ends up happening is that we inadvertently attribute a person's worth to what they contribute or how well they fit into the greater society.

When looking through a lens of pathology there are two basic assumptions that are being made:

1) That there is one "right," "normal," "ideal," and/or "healthy" way for human brains and minds to be configured, to function, and to BE, and

2) If your neurological configuration and functioning (meaning your ways of thinking and behaving) are significantly different from the dominant conceptions of "normal," then there is ultimately *Something Wrong With You* (Nick Walker, neurocosmopolitanism.com)

## The Golden Rule of Neurodiversity

*"Respect the bodily, sensory, and cognitive needs of others as you would want your own to be respected, whether or not you understand the reasons for those needs."* **(Nick Walker)**

## What Can You Do?

- Use *collaborative working with* strategies, as opposed to *doing to* strategies - remembering, "Kids do well IF they can" (Dr. Ross Greene, Lives in the Balance)
- Do away with problem-saturated language that perpetuates the dehumanization and oppression of neurodivergent people, and instead use the language of diversity
- See value in all modes of communication, self expression, and intelligence
- Look for strengths and build on interests to encourage self determination, confidence and autonomy
- Challenge societal standards and your own assumptions of "normal," and be grounded in compassion and acceptance, rather than comparison and judgment