



Jessica Kingsley
Publishers

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THINKSHEET

Let's talk about neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for the differences between brains and thinking patterns among humans.

When you hear the word "neurodiversity," what do you think of?

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"Neuro" means relating to the brain and "diversity" means the difference among a group of people. What kind of brain differences can you think of?

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What are some ways your brain is different from a friend or sibling?

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"Typical" means usual or most common. Knowing that, what do you think "neurotypical" means?

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"Divergence" means differing from the typical. Knowing that, what do you think "neurodivergence" means?

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If someone in your class is neurodivergent, how should you treat them?

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TEACHER GUIDE

Let's talk about neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for the differences between brains and thinking patterns among humans.

When you hear the word “neurodiversity,” what do you think of?

Any answer is acceptable here! Students may hear the neuro piece and think of a neurologist or neuroscience. Some may hear the word “diversity” and think of race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic, or other types of diversity. Some may hear the word and be unsure.

“Neuro” means relating to the brain and “diversity” means the difference among a group of people. What kind of brain differences can you think of?

What we're trying to do with this question is break down the word into its two basic parts: brain and differences.

What are some ways your brain is different from a friend or sibling?

Students may list their skills or challenges and ways that they are different from others, such as being great at math or struggling with reading. They also may discuss personality differences, like being shy, outgoing, silly, etc.

“Typical” means usual or most common. Knowing that, what do you think “neurotypical” means?

What we're trying to do with this question is break down the word into its two basic parts: brain and typical or “normal.”

“Divergence” means differing from the typical. Knowing that, what do you think “neurodivergence” means?

What we're trying to do with this question is break down the word into its two basic parts: brain and difference.



If someone in your class is neurodivergent, how should you treat them?

This question is a good way to start a conversation about respect in your classroom. You can discuss expectations around kindness and respect as well as bullying.



THINKSHEET

Homemade sensory bottles

Supplies

- Plastic bottle with a cap (e.g., a recycled plastic drink bottle)
- Clear glue, hair gel, or another similar clear fluid
- Glitter, beads, confetti, or similar
- Food coloring (optional)
- Hot glue (optional)

Instructions

1. Fill the plastic bottle about a third of the way with glue or hair gel.
2. Add your desired glitter, beads, or confetti, and food coloring, if you want.
3. Fill the rest of the bottle with hot water, put the cap on the bottle, and shake!
4. Optional: Hot glue the cap onto the bottle.



THINKSHEET

Homemade stress balls

Supplies

- Something to make the stress ball—a balloon is the most common, but I've seen people get creative with socks or other vessels
- Something to fill it with—flour, rice, water beads, Play-Doh, get creative! Just make sure if you are using a sock that you do not fill it with something that can seep through gaps in the fabric

Instructions

1. Fill your stress ball with your desired filling.
2. Secure it closed tightly so that it will not leak. When feeling stressed or anxious, squeeze the stress ball.



THINKSHEET

Upregulating movement break

In order to upregulate, or increase our energy, we need to get our heartrate up! Some ideas include:

- Jumping
- Dancing
- Running
- Skipping
- Hopping
- Leaping
- Jumping jacks
- Brisk walking

Here are some other upregulating sensory strategies:

- Splash cold water on your face.
- Hold an ice cube.
- Have a snack or drink, especially something intense, like a sour apple or a fizzy drink.



THINKSHEET

Downregulating movement break

To downregulate, or calm our energy, it can help to use our muscles and slow our breathing. First, you want to fatigue your muscles! Some ideas include:

- Wall push-ups
- Regular push-ups
- Lifting something heavy, like a weight or a backpack full of books
- Sit-ups
- Wheelbarrow or animal walks
- Using resistance bands
- Exercise bike with heavy resistance

Pick one of these activities and do it for a minute, and then take a break. Continue until you feel calmer!

Then, you want to slow your heartrate with some breathing. Some ideas include:

- Four-square breathing—breathe in for four counts, hold for four counts, breathe out for four counts, hold for four counts, while tracing a square with your finger.
- Alternate nostril breathing—inhale slowly while pressing one nostril gently closed, then switch nostrils and slowly exhale.
- 4-7-8 breathing—inhale for four counts, hold for seven counts, and exhale for 8 counts.
- Straw breathing—use a straw to slow and deepen your breaths.



THINKSHEET

AMAB puberty factsheet

For people assigned male at birth (AMAB), there are lots of things that change during puberty.

Voice drop: When your voice gets lower.

Body hair: Hair may grow on new parts of the body such as the face and the pubic area, and other body hair may thicken.

Growth: Bodies grow bigger and stronger, and may become more muscular. This includes growing taller as well as growth of the penis and testicles.

Erections: When the blood vessels in the penis fill with blood and the penis can feel firmer. This may happen when thinking sexual thoughts, or during puberty; it can also happen randomly.

Nocturnal emissions: Sometimes called a “wet dream,” this is when someone ejaculates, or releases sperm, while they are sleeping. Typically, this only happens during puberty and stops in adulthood.



THINKSHEET

AFAB puberty factsheet

For people assigned female at birth (AFAB), there are lots of things that change during puberty.

Menstruation: Sometimes called a “period,” this is when the body sheds the uterine lining that it builds up to protect an embryo/fetus in the case of pregnancy. It can look like blood, or can be darker or lighter in color, or thicker in consistency. Every person who gets a period has their own schedule, but it is typical to get it once every month. Periods may be irregular at the beginning of puberty. Menstruation can impact other parts of the body, including abdominal cramps, tender breasts, mood changes, back pain, and more. If these symptoms are severe, a doctor can sometimes provide strategies for relief.

Menstruation products:

- Pad: A pad will have one absorbent side and one sticky side. The sticky side should be put on the underwear, with the absorbent side against the vulva. A pad should be changed every 4–6 hours or sooner if it is damp.
- Panty liner: A panty liner is a small pad that can be used for days where a period is lighter.
- Tampon: A tampon is a small thin cylinder of absorbent material that can be inserted into the vaginal opening to absorb menstrual fluid. They can vary in size, shape, and absorbency. Some come with an applicator, which you can use to insert the tampon inside, and some come wrapped individually, which need to be inserted manually. Tampons should be changed every few hours diligently, as not changing them frequently enough can cause toxic shock syndrome.



- Menstrual cup: A small flexible cup that can be inserted into the vagina to catch menstrual fluid. They need to be suctioned to the inner walls of the vagina to prevent leaks. Every few hours or when full, the cup should be emptied into the toilet and replaced in the vagina. They should be rinsed at least twice a day and sterilized at the end of each menstrual cycle.
- Menstrual disc: A small shallow disc that is inserted behind the cervix and the pubic bone that catches menstrual fluid. There are both reusable and disposable menstrual discs. The reusable discs should be cleaned at least twice a day and sterilized at the end of each cycle; the disposable discs should be replaced at least twice a day.
- Period underwear: Underwear with an absorbent layer that can soak up menstrual fluid. Period underwear comes in a variety of styles and absorbency levels. It will need to be washed separately to prevent menstrual fluid from staining other clothing.

Breast and hip development: Breasts will grow and hips will widen.

Body hair: Hair may grow on new parts of the body such as the pubic area, and other body hair may thicken.



THINKSHEET

Let's talk about gender identity

Gender identity is how you see yourself, and how you wish to be perceived by others, as it relates to your gender.

How many gendered words can you think of?

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What are some traits that you consider masculine?

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What are some traits that you consider feminine?

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What are some ways that the gender binary (boy vs. girl) impacts our everyday life?

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What are some examples of ways to express your gender?

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What are some *assumptions* you might make based on gender?

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How would you feel if you were misgendered?

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What are some ways we can accept or affirm someone's gender identity?

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Art activity

Pride Flag collage! Create a Pride Flag with clippings from magazines, newspapers, online images, drawings, and other source material of things that represent your gender.



TEACHER GUIDE

Let's talk about gender identity

Gender identity *is how you see yourself, and how you wish to be perceived by others, as it relates to your gender.*

How many gendered words can you think of?

Some examples may include boy, man, male, girl, woman, female, non-binary, agender, intersex, he/him, she/her, they/them, xe/xir, etc. This is not an exhaustive list, and if students bring up a word that is not on this list, teachers should define or look up definitions and open up the discussion!

What are some traits that you consider masculine?

Some examples may include strong, angry, pants, sports, low voices, facial hair, muscles. This is not an exhaustive list, and it's important to make clear that just because these are traits someone might consider masculine, they do not apply to all masculine people or men.

What are some traits that you consider feminine?

Some examples may include soft, girly, pink, make-up, breasts, pretty, long hair, dresses. This is not an exhaustive list, and it's important to make clear that just because these are traits someone might consider feminine, they do not apply to all feminine people or women.

What are some ways that the gender binary (boy vs. girl) impacts our everyday life?

Some examples include gendered restrooms, sports teams, artistic groups, separated lines at school, separate puberty education, etc.

What are some examples of ways to express your gender?

Some examples include clothes, hair, style, name, pronouns, facial hair, voice, body, etc.

**What are some assumptions you might make based on gender?**

It's important to make it clear in this discussion that everyone makes assumptions based on gender, and that noticing them is the first step in becoming more accepting! We do not want children to feel shamed based on their answers to this. Some examples include assuming a boy likes sports, assuming someone in a dress is a girl, assuming someone with a beard has a penis, etc.

How would you feel if you were misgendered?

Be open to any and all answers here—while some people may not feel upset being misgendered, others may feel triggered or traumatized.

What are some ways we can accept or affirm someone's gender identity?

Some examples include using the correct name or pronouns, allowing someone to play on the sports team or line up in the line that they associate with their identity, having gender-neutral restrooms available, etc.

Art activity

Pride flag collage! Create a Pride flag with clippings from magazines, newspapers, online images, drawings, and other source material of things that represent your gender.

Make sure to have a diverse array of sources so that everyone can find something they identify with.



THINKSHEET

Let's talk about sexuality

How many sexuality labels can you think of?

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In what context might it be important to know someone's sexuality?

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What are some ways that heteronormativity impacts our everyday life?

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What are some *assumptions* someone might make based on sexuality?

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How would you feel if someone made an incorrect assumption about your sexuality?

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What are some ways we can accept or affirm someone's sexuality?

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TEACHER GUIDE

Let's talk about sexuality

How many sexuality labels can you think of?

Some examples include gay, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, etc. This is not an exhaustive list, and if students bring up a word that is not on this list, teachers should define or look up definitions and open up the discussion!

In what context might it be important to know someone's sexuality?

Some examples include if you are asking them on a date or setting them up on a date, if you have a crush on them, or if you are trying to create an affinity space for queer people.

What are some ways that heteronormativity impacts our everyday life?

Some examples include expectations from family and friends, assumptions from people you don't know, traditional family values, like being asked about your "mom and dad."

What are some *assumptions* someone might make based on sexuality?

Someone might assume that gay men are effeminate, that gay women are masculine, that artistic men are gay, etc.

How would you feel if someone made an incorrect assumption about your sexuality?

Any and all answers are fine here! It's important to validate student feelings.

What are some ways we can accept or affirm someone's sexuality?

Some examples include not making assumptions, using neutral language when talking about family systems, etc.