

Neurodiversity Concept

Time: 30 minutes

Day 1

The first lesson of the week introduces the concept of neurodiversity to the students. Kids should leave this lesson understanding that “Neurodiversity means that all our brains are different.” This is perhaps the most important message in neurodiversity advocacy. It’s deceptively simple, but by dedicating the first day to understanding it, we give kids a foundational base of knowledge to build on for the rest of the week.

Summary

Materials

1. Paper
2. Crayons/Markers
3. Storybook/Video player

Responsibilities

Lesson lead: Manage activities and guide discussions throughout the lesson, and ensure students’ safety.

Students: Participate in activities and discussions.

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|---|---|----------|
| Opening to lesson—Optional(3 mins) | Students share ideas and participate as I fill out the blank K-W-L organizer with the whole class, using large chart paper. | 1 |
| Storybook (5 mins) | Read: <u>All My Stripes: A Story for Children with Autism, read by Shaina Rudolph and Danielle Royer</u> (5:00) | 2 |
| Disucssion (3 mins) | Ask questions about the book: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Zane was worried that his ‘autism stripe’ was the only one people would notice. What are some of Zane’s other amazing stripes?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Zane’s autism spectrum means his brain works a little differently, like when the loud school bell bothered him.2. What is one special ‘stripe’ you have?<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. If all the zebras only had one single stripe, would they be as beautiful or interesting? Why is it awesome that we all have different stripes in our classroom? | 3 |
| Activity 1 (3 mins) | Drawing Activity: Show that even when everyone does the same thing, their brains work differently. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give students the drawing supplies2. Tell them simple instructions to draw a circle, add two lines, and attach another circle to the side of it3. Have everyone hold their drawing up. Even though we had the same instructions, our brains came up with different ideas. This shows how we think differently! | 4 |

Equality and Fairness (accommodations)

Time: 30 minutes

Day 2

- **Core Message:** "Fair means giving everyone what they NEED, not giving everyone the SAME thing."
- **Summary:** This day builds on Day 1 by connecting different brain needs to the concepts of equity and fairness, teaching kids why individual accommodations are necessary.



| Materials | Responsibilities |
|--|---|
| 1. Band-aids/stickers 2. Storybook/Video Player | Lesson lead: Manage activities and guide discussions throughout the lesson, and ensure students' safety. Students: Participate in activities and discussions. |
| Check-in (10 mins) | Begin with questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> • If one person is cold, should everyone wear a jacket? • If one person can't see the board, should everyone get glasses? • If one person is hungry, should we all eat again? Have students answer these questions and transition to introducing the topic of needs and equality in neurodivergence. Display the fence image attached to the slideshow. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes giving everyone the SAME thing isn't actually fair. • FAIR means giving everyone what they NEED. • Link to Day 1 lesson: Some people need different things to learn or feel comfortable because we all have different brains. <div style="text-align: right;">1</div> |
| Read storybook—Optional (4 mins) | Read: <u>Read Aloud Not Fair Won't Share by Sue Graves</u> (3:30) <div style="text-align: right;">2</div> |
| Discussion for book—Optional (5 mins) | Questions to ask students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did the characters feel when someone wouldn't share? How could you tell from their faces or bodies? 2. Why is it hard to share sometimes? Is there a toy in our classroom that we find hard to share? 3. In the story, did making things fair mean everyone had to play with the exact same toy at the exact same time? Or did it mean making sure everyone got what they needed to have fun? 4. How can we practice sharing and fairness in our classroom? <div style="text-align: right;">3</div> |



Day 2 cont.

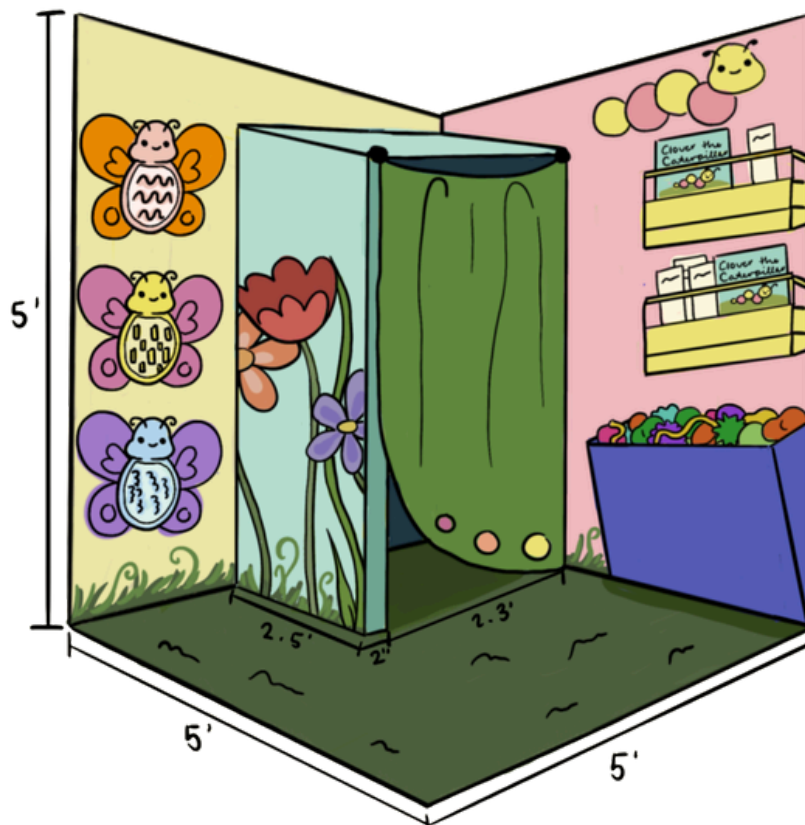
Band-aid activity - [more details here](#)

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Can use stickers and imagination if no Band-Aids

- Call up the first volunteer. Have them read their injury aloud.
 - Example injuries include:
 - a. I scraped my knee at recess (requires a Band-Aid)
 - b. I broke my arm falling off my bike
 - c. I have a really bad headache
 - d. I have a bloody nose
 - e. Any other injury that does not require a Band-Aid to solve
- Give everyone the exact same treatment by placing a Band-Aid on their wrist
- Repeat this for however many volunteers there are
- Lean into the absurdity, students laughing, etc.
- Defend your choices using the word "equal" and by claiming you are being completely fair because everyone received the exact same treatment.
- Students will refute, prompting the "aha moment," to show that equality is not always fair. Both are important.

**Demonstration
(15 mins)**



Day 3

- **Core Message:** "Everyone has their own way of communicating, and that's okay!"
- **Summary:** This day transitions from general brain differences to focusing specifically on communication. Students learn that sharing thoughts and feelings goes beyond spoken words, helping them build empathy for those who use actions, expressions, or alternative methods to express themselves.



| Materials | Responsibilities |
|--|--|
| 1. K-W-L Organizer 2. Slides/Cards 3. Storybook/Video Player | Lesson lead: Manage activities and guide discussions throughout the lesson, and ensure students' safety. Students: Participate in activities and discussions. |
| Check-in (10 mins) | Define the topic of communication/sharing ideas... 1 Students share ideas and participate as I fill in the blank <u>K-W-L organizer</u> with the whole class on large chart paper. |
| Read book (10 mins) | <u>A Day With No Words by Tiffany Hammond:</u> 2 <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kHWFVI7miY</u> |
| Discussion + Connection (5 mins) | Questions to ask: 3 1. The boy in our story doesn't speak. How does he talk to his mommy and share his big thoughts? a. Tablet/computer b. His eyes c. Hugs d. Other forms of non-verbal communication 2. How do you think the boy feels when people in the park don't understand him? 3. What can we do to be a patient, kind friend to someone who communicates differently? |
| Activity 1 (10 mins) | Cards: Show students different modes of communication that different people may need through different visual cards 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will then pair up and write 1-2 sentences about how we all communicate in different ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Examples include: ◦ I smile when I am happy. ◦ I wave to say bye. ◦ I frown when I am sad. |



Day 3 cont.

Wrap-up/Final Discussion (5 mins)

- It is important to respect everyone, regardless of the way they communicate
- To be good people, we must:
 - Be patient, pay attention (look, listen, think), try different ways to understand

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Applying Concepts

Day 4

Time: 30 minutes

Summary

- **Core Message:** "Our differences show up in how we live, play, and learn every day, and fairness means helping everyone get what they need."
- **Summary:** This day bridges foundational concepts—like unique brains, equity, and communication styles—and applies them to real-world, everyday scenarios. Through video observation and an active game, students practice recognizing and accommodating diverse needs in a classroom setting.

| Materials | Responsibilities |
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| 1. Slides/Scenario Cards 2. Storybook/Video Player | Lesson lead: Manage activities and guide discussions throughout the lesson, and ensure students' safety. Students: Participate in activities and discussions. |
| Intro—Optional (5 mins) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever heard of Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, or Bill Gates? These are some very famous inventors and creators who thought differently and created fantastic new things. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Make sure to remind them that neurodivergence is NOT the same as brilliance, but it CAN be • If everyone thought the same way, we wouldn't be able to think out of the box and invent. • Can you imagine living in such a world? There might be no computers, no planes, no lightbulbs or electricity... things would be pretty crazy! <div style="text-align: right;">1</div> |
| Video + Discussion (10 mins) | Video that depicts a scenario in which someone is neurodivergent and needs to communicate differently, with appropriate accommodations. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sesame Street: Meet Julia (Full Clip 10 Min)</u> (Finger painting 0:00-3:49)</p> <div style="text-align: right;">2</div> |
| Video + Discussion (10 mins) | Pause and play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause when: the guy says, "There are lots of ways to paint" • Ask: Did Julia paint the same way as Elmo and Abby? What worked best for Julia? Pause and play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause when: Julia says, "See your painting? Yes" • Ask: Big Bird talked to Julia, but she did not answer right away. Does everyone communicate in the same way? <div style="text-align: right;">3</div> |

Day 4 cont.

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| Video + Discussion (10 mins) | <p>Pause and play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pause when: “You’re bouncing like a rubber ball”• Ask: How did Julia show her friends that she wanted to play, even when she did not use many words? <p>After the video:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is fairness always giving everyone the exact same thing, or is fairness helping everyone get what they need?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ That's why Elmo used his fingers while Julia used a brush.• What are some different ways people can communicate besides talking?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Julia used her body to communicate and sometimes needed to be asked again.• What is something that helps you learn, play, or feel comfortable that might be different from what someone else needs?• What can we do if a friend thinks, plays, learns, or communicates differently from us? |
| Activity 1 (10 mins) | <p>Take students outside and find a clear area that provides a linear gradient where they can place themselves. For each of the following scenarios, 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pick a side to represent each option for the scenario• Ask students to go to the side that makes more sense• Ask students on opposite sides why they chose the side they did<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ If students are in the middle, ask them why... do they think both sides are correct? Why? <p>Remember to mention that oftentimes, more than one issue can exist at the same time. That’s why there are no wrong answers.</p> <p>Depending on time, pick just a few scenarios. There’s no need to do them all.</p> <p>SCENARIO 1</p> <p>One end: My ears feel too full. Other end: I cannot find the words. Read aloud: A student sits under the table when music plays in class. Ask: Is this student's body feeling something big from the music, or are they trying to tell us something they cannot say out loud?</p> <p>SCENARIO 2</p> <p>One end: I talk differently. Other end: My body needs something different. Read aloud: A student waves their arms and jumps around instead of raising their hand to answer. Ask: Are they showing us they have an answer in a different way, or does their body just need to move?</p> |

Day 4 cont.

Activity 1 cont. (10 mins)

SCENARIO 3

One end: Their brains work differently.

Other end: They need something extra so it is equal.

Read aloud: One student gets to use a fidget toy during storytime, but no one else does.

Ask: Is it that this student's brain needs something to help it focus, or is it about making sure everyone gets what they need?

SCENARIO 4

One end: They are talking differently.

Other end: They need extra help, so it is equal.

Read aloud: A student uses a tablet that speaks for them while everyone else uses their voice.

Ask: Is the tablet just a different way of talking, or is it something the student needs for the class to be fair for them?

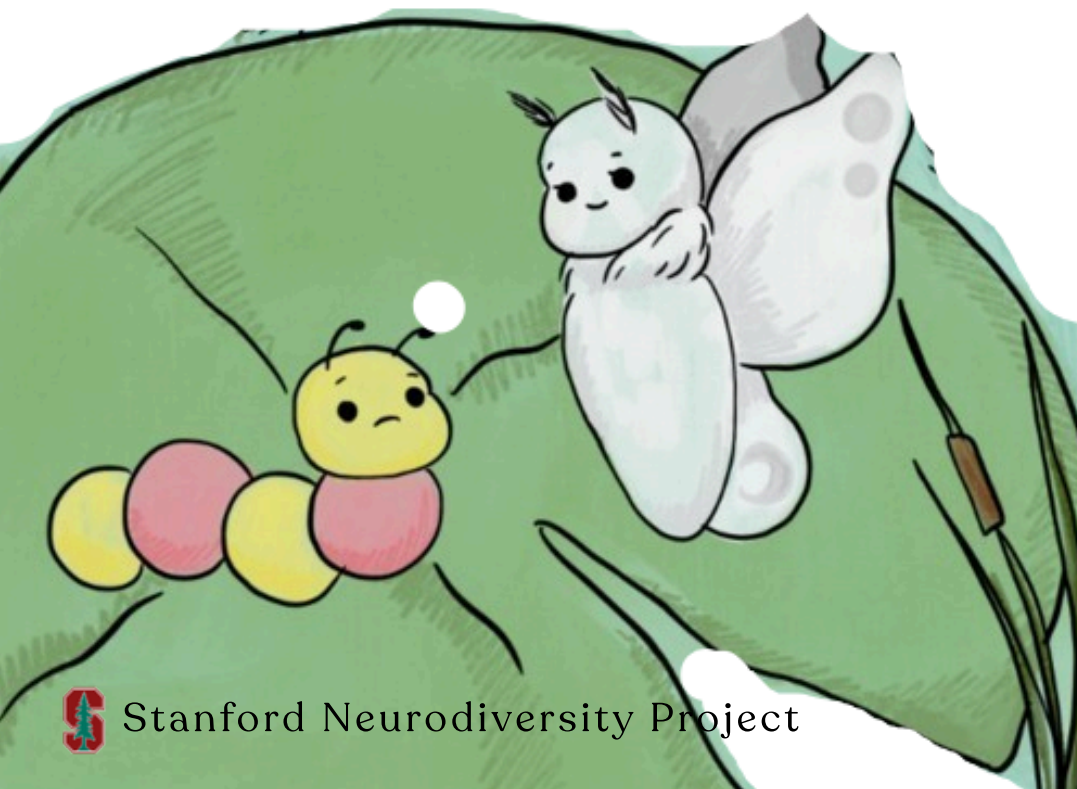
SCENARIO 5

One end: Their body is feeling something big.

Other end: They are showing us what they need.

Read aloud: A student cries and pulls a friend's hand toward the water fountain.

Ask: Is their body feeling really upset and thirsty, or are they trying to tell their friend something?



Day 5

- **Core Message:** "Differences in what we think or do are what make us cool and interesting—not bad in any way!"
- **Summary:** The final day is a celebration of individuality and a wrap-up of the week's themes. Students experience firsthand how unique brains naturally interpret things differently through an upbeat dance activity, followed by a reflective drawing project to solidify their commitment to acceptance.

Summary

Materials

1. Music Player
2. Chalk

Responsibilities

Lesson lead: Manage activities and guide discussions throughout the lesson, and ensure students' safety.

Students: Participate in activities and discussions.

Activity 1 (10 mins)

Take the class outside for another activity surrounding different thinking.

Play a song:

[\[No Copyright Background Music\] Upbeat Summer Indie Rock | Trendy by Aylex](#)

- Ask each student to start dancing to it at the exact same time. Let them dance for a while, then stop.
- Ask the students: "Did you notice anything different about your dances?"
- After their response, ask the students once again: "Well, why do you think you guys all did different dances?"
- Adapt based on the response, but overall the answer should be: "As we all learned this week, we are all made differently, think differently, and have different brains - that is why we all did different things when the music came on!"

Play a different song:

[Best dance songs 2024 🌈 Party songs 2024 ~ Songs that make you dance](#)

- Let them redo the activity once more.
- This can be done about 3 times to demonstrate the consistency of different movements and highlight the actual points.
- Teachers can point out specific movements or comment on how one person dances compared to another to remind students of the activity's point.
- Try to encourage students, commenting on each dance and saying one part of it that is good, cool, or interesting. At the end of these, make sure to say: "All of these dances were really cool, and I thought they were all so interesting! Don't you guys think so too?"

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Day 5 cont.

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| Activity 1 cont. (10 mins) | Conclusion: "As you guys can see, everyone does things differently and interprets things as simple as music so different from everyone else. We are always thinking differently all the time! My brain might be cartwheeling, while your [point at student] could be jumping through the air. The fact that our dances were different didn't make them any less amazing - right guys!" → "Differences in what we think or do are what make us cool and interesting - not bad in any way." |
| Activity 2 (10 minutes) | Conclusion: This activity can be done either with chalk outdoors or on printer paper indoors. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the prompts on this worksheet to summarize the week's topics and prompt students to reflect.• Teachers can either print and distribute the worksheet or give the prompts verbally and allow students time to draw for each prompt.• Preferably, allow them to go one prompt at a time. After each prompt, students can walk around the class and read/look at other people's work, or they can show it to the class and describe what they drew /wrote.• Teachers should correct any lasting misconceptions, but as long as students arrive at the general conclusion that differences should be accepted, there should be minimal correction. <p>*For the first prompt specifically, if the students would like to act out / show the class what they believe "thinking differently" means, they can do so, and the teacher should offer the option. Due to the fact that they learned much of the concept through activities and actions, this might be easier</p> |

