



SUPERCALM

Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

NEURO AFFIRMING CHECK IN STATION

SUPPORTING DIVERSE REGULATION STYLES



LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS THAT FOCUS ON NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES
& EFFECTIVE ACTION STRATEGIES



SUPERPATHWAYS - Movement Circuit



SUPER STAR GYM - Deep Pressure Station



SUPER CLIMBER - Transverse Regulation Wall



UNIVERSAL

- No wrong or right way
- Movement can be adapted
- Aim for a positive experience
- Child led movement
- Childs preferences & sensory needs at the heart of the choice of movement.
- Encourages 'free' play to meet their needs

NON PRESCRIPTIVE

No strict routine sequence, just guided movements that support the specific needs / preferences of the child

VISUAL CONSISTENCY

- Offers consistency to support the nervous systems drive for a safe physiological state.
- Offers staff a structured framework that is easy to action with no equipment.

IMAGINATIVE

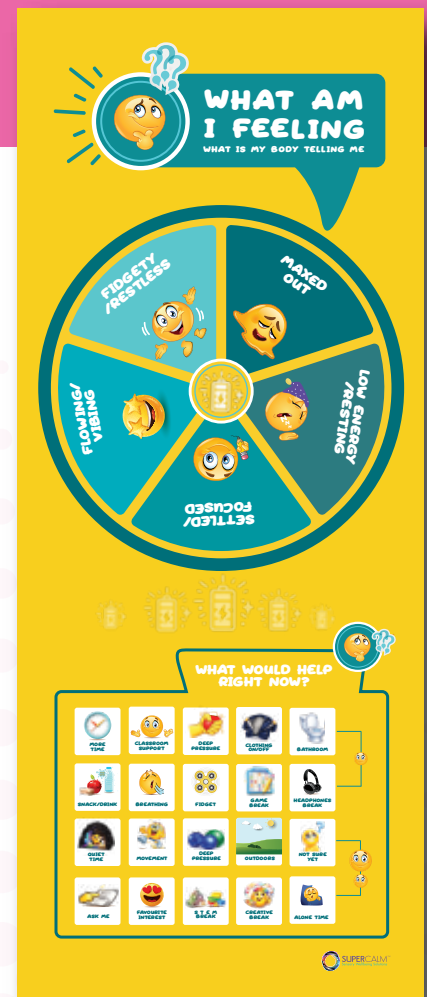
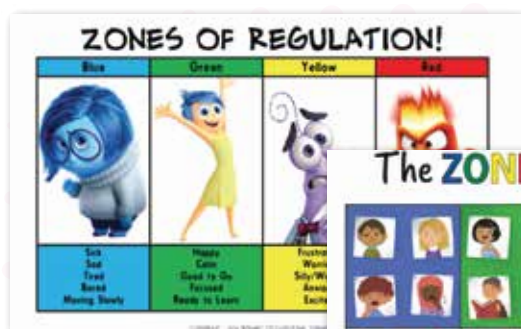
Focused on capturing a childs' magination to empower them to engage fully in a child led imaginative sensory regulating activity.

EVIDENCE INFORMED DESIGN

Using Proven Principals Of Occupational Therapy To Offers Studnets The Opportunity To Benefit In The Longerterm From Purposeful Movement

BODY AWARENESS

WHY ARE WE MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONAL EMOTION IDENTIFICATION MODELS TO FOCUS ON NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES ?



The shift from deficit-based language to strengths-based understanding is not about ignoring challenges; it is about recognising that regulation, safety, and autonomy underpin learning. When language moves from managing behavior to understanding regulation, we move from control to inclusion

Moving from deficit-based, behavior-management language to regulation-informed, strengths-based language is a fundamental shift in how we understand neurodivergence

It represents a move from Compliance → Collaboration, Control → Co-regulation, Managing → Understanding.



Major shift in modern education:

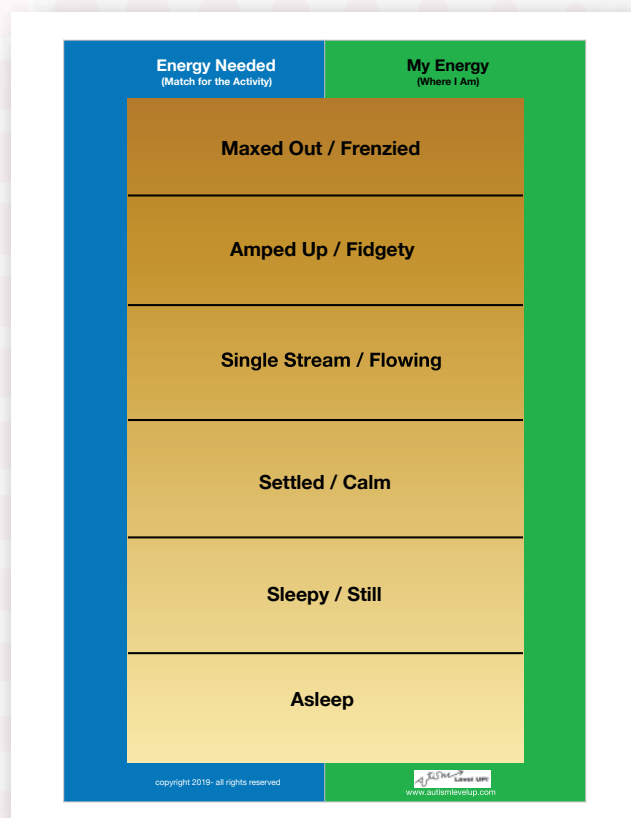
A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH

AUTISM LEVEL UP - THE NEURO AFFIRMING APPROACH FOR DIVERSE REGULATION STYLES

In our SUPERCALM programme, we encourage schools to use the Autism Level UP! Energy Regulation visuals in place of the Zones of Regulation. Its founders, Dr Amy Laurent and Dr Jacquelyn Fede, were driven by a shared commitment to developing an autistic-informed approach that respects each person's lived experience, autonomy and individual ways of regulating.

This approach moves away from categorising emotions into colours or suggesting that students should always return to a particular "zone." Instead, students learn to notice their current energy level, understand what their body may be communicating and identify the supports they need. No energy state is good or bad—it is information.

<https://autismlevelup.com/tools-supports/>



➡ The website offers free resources to download to use as tools to get started on your path to supporting diverse regulation styles.

FOCUS ON NERVOUS SYSTEM STATES

WHAT AM I FEELING?

MY BODY FEELS

- HOT/COLD
- SCARED
- LOW ENERGY
- HURT IN PAIN
- SICK
- HUNGRY
- THIRSTY
- NEED TOILET

MY SENSORY SYSTEM

- TOO LOUD
- TOO BRIGHT
- TENSE SMELL
- VISUALLY TOO BUSY
- NEED PRESSURE
- NEED MOVEMENT

MY THINKING BRAIN

- OVER THINKING
- FOCUSED - HYPER FOCUSED
- UNINTERESTED
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- CURIOUS
- STUCK

MY BODY ENERGY

- FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE
- MAXED OUT
- HIGHLY MOTIVATED
- FOCUSED
- NEED TO STIM
- SLEEPY

MY SOCIAL BATTERY

- SOCIALLY TIRED/ NEED ALONE TIME
- LOOKING TO CONNECT
- UNDER STIMULATED
- NEED TO STIM
- FEELING UNCOMFORTABLE
- NEED A SENSORY BREAK

WHAT WOULD HELP ME RIGHT NOW?

- BREATHING
- DEEP PRESSURE
- SNACK/ DRINK
- FIDGET TOY
- ADULT SUPPORT
- HEADPHONES
- NEED TO STIM
- NEED MOVEMENT
- NEED TOILET
- NEED PRESSURE
- NEED MOVEMENT
- NEED TO STIM
- SLEEPY
- NEED TO STIM
- SLEEPY
- NEED TO STIM
- SLEEPY

SUPERCALM™
Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children



**WHAT IS
HAPPENING
IN THE BODY
& BRAIN**

**WHAT
SUPPORTS
OR ACTIONS
ARE NEEDED**

A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH:

1

REINFORCE NEURO-NORMATIVE EXPECTATION

Traditional check-in systems e.g. ZONE OF REGULATION are often used to assess whether a student is “ready to learn”, **with calm or regulated** states positioned as the expected or preferred outcome.

This can unintentionally reinforce **neuro-normative expectations***, where being calm, quiet, and compliant is viewed as the standard for engagement.

Students naturally experience a wide range of states, and not all learners regulate in the same way.

When certain states are prioritised over others, students may feel pressure to present as calm, even when this does not reflect their internal experience.

Impact on students:

- This can lead to:
- Masking or suppressing authentic responses
- Prioritising compliance over communication
- Reduced opportunity to express needs
- Delayed or ineffective support

Neuro-affirming shift:

A neuro-affirming approach recognises that all nervous system states are valid.

Rather than asking whether a student is “ready to learn”, the focus shifts to:

- understanding the student’s current experience
- identifying what support is needed
- creating conditions that enable engagement

This supports authenticity, autonomy, and more meaningful participation.

***neuro normative expectations** — holds neurotypical behaviour, thinking & communication as the “**correct**” / “**preferred**” standard to which all individuals are expected to adapt to meet these norms.

Zone of Regulation



WHICH ZONE DO YOU THINK IS THE EXPECTED STATE?



SUPERCALM'S

Neuro Affirming Check In Tool
Based on the 'Autism Level Up' Model



A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH:

2

THEY CAN UNINTENTIONALLY REINFORCE "GOOD VS BAD STATES"

Visual systems such as thermometers or zones often rank emotional states (e.g. green = calm, red = heightened), which can imply that some states are more desirable than others.

This can lead students to focus on managing their behaviour to meet the neuro normative expectations, with an underlying goal of appearing "calm" rather than communicating their actual experience.

Impact on students:

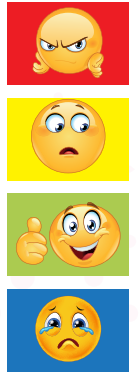
- This can lead to:
- Masking or suppressing authentic responses
 - Prioritising compliance over communication
 - Reduced opportunity to express needs
 - Delayed or ineffective support

The Wider Impact

This can shape perceptions in several ways:

- Staff may interpret students in heightened or dysregulated states as more "challenging", rather than recognising underlying needs
- Peers may begin to associate certain students with "negative" behaviours or states
- Students themselves may internalise these messages, viewing their own experiences as "bad", "wrong", or something to hide

Zone of Regulation



3

THEY CAN OVERLOOK THE PRIMARY DRIVERS OF BEHAVIOUR

Traditional check-ins rarely include:

- Sensory needs
- Body states (hunger, pain, fatigue)
- Cognitive load
- Social Demands
- Energy Levels

Yet these are often the primary drivers of behaviour



A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH:

4

THEY FOCUS ON EMOTIONS, NOT UNDERLYING NEEDS

Emotions (e.g. angry, sad, worried) are surface level experiences they don't explain the **'WHY'** a student feels that way.

When a student selects the word or visual "angry" from a limited choice system, it provides very little information to guide effective supports.

To offer meaningful support, it is important to understand the **WHY** driving the emotional response. This is often linked to underlying factors such as the student's sensory system, social battery, physical state, cognitive load, or overall energy level.



Providing students with opportunities to identify and communicate these underlying needs allows for more accurate understanding and more appropriate individualised support.

5

THEY ASSUME ALL STUDENTS CAN IDENTIFY EMOTIONS

Many traditional emotion-based chart systems rely on students being able to recognise and label their 'How do you feel' emotion. However, this is not a universal skill, some neurodivergent students, including many autistic learners, may experience differences in accurately identify or label feelings such as "angry", "anxious", or "frustrated" due to:

- Interoception differences
- Sensory processing differences
- Alexithymia (difficulty identifying feelings — and that's valid.



A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH:

6

LANGUAGE CAN FEEL ABSTRACT AND INACCESSIBLE

To support meaningful communication, students benefit from more concrete and relatable options.

These may include:

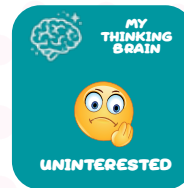
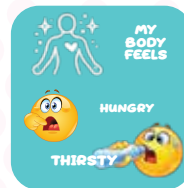
- "too loud" / "too bright"
- "thirsty" / "hungry"
- "uninterested"
- "need to stim"
- "need alone time"

ABSTRACT



=

MORE CONCRETE



Concrete language is easier to recognise, connect to, and communicate.

This leads to more accurate self awareness, communication which in turn can offer more effective individualised support.

7

NO PATHWAY TO EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

Traditional emotion-based chart systems often focus on naming emotions without providing a pathway for what to do next to support effective regulation.

Effective regulation requires understanding:

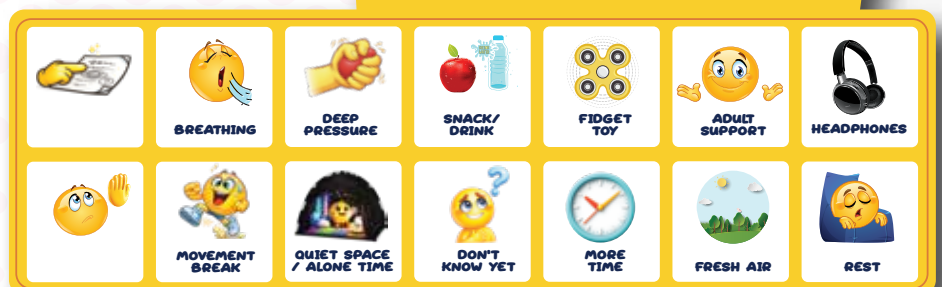
- what is happening in the body and brain
- what is contributing to the emotional response
- what support or actions are needed

Without this, students may develop the ability to identify the emotion, the source of the emotion but remain dysregulated without tools to address the source.

Ideally we are aiming for the student to rely less on adult prompts /interventions and develop successful regulating strategies independently.

SUPPORT PATHWAY

WHAT WOULD HELP ME RIGHT NOW?



Major shift in modern education:

A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH



Neuro-affirming language emphasises respect, acceptance, and positive representation of neurodivergent individuals.

SCAN - PDF GUIDES

FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS



BLAME LENS



NEURO AFFIRMING LENS

BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS ATTITUDE

FIX THE CHILD

CONSEQUENCES TEACH SKILLS

INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS CAPACITY

ADJUST THE ENVIRONMENT

SUPPORT ENABLES SKILLS

STRESS RESPONSE BEHAVIOUR

When we measure a child against a neurotypical benchmark, neurodivergent communication, processing, and differences are framed as **deficit**. This can unintentionally **pathologise natural neurological variation**. Norm referenced language subtly implies there is a:

1 RIGHT WAY TO RESPOND

2 TYPICAL WAY TO PROCESS

3 CORRECT EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Shifting to regulation informed language supports calmer systems, safer classrooms, and more confident inclusive practice. The focus shifts away from enforcing conformity over prioritising a students sense of safety and authenticity.

1 IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Many neurodivergent individuals prefer identity-first language, which puts their neurodivergence at the forefront of their identity.

For example:

"Autistic person" instead of "person with autism"

2 AVOIDING NEGATIVE TERMINOLOGY

Language develops and changes over time, terms that were once considered to be appropriate may not be appropriate today. Language used by and for the neurodivergent community refrains from using language that implies a deficit or a problem. For example: Use "neurodivergent" instead of "disordered"

3 FOCUS ON POSITIVE TERMINOLOGY

Neuro-affirming language focuses on positive descriptors to emphasize strengths and positive traits.

For example:

"Detail-oriented" instead of "obsessive"

"Seeks control over their choices" instead of "Defiant"

4 EMPOWERING LANGUAGE

Use language that empowers and validates the experiences of neurodivergent individuals - NO TRAGEDY LANGUAGE.

For example: "Autistic Person" instead of "suffers with Autism"

Neutral and objective descriptions, describe behaviors and characteristics neutrally without judgment. For example:

"Stims by hand-flapping" instead of "exhibits abnormal repetitive behavior"

"Communicates non-verbally using AAC/ or using gestures / typing / device" instead of "non-verbal".

**RATHER THAN
'PEOPLE
WITH AUTISM'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**AUTISTIC
PERSON**

**RATHER THAN
'PEOPLE
WITH ADHD'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**ADHD
PERSON**

**RATHER THAN
'DISORDER'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

NEURODIVERGENT

**RATHER THAN
'DIFFERENTLY
ABLED'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

DISABI-

**RATHER THAN
'HIGH OR LOW
FUNCTIONING'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**VARIABLE
SUPPORT NEEDS:
VARY ACROSS
ENVIRONMENTS
& OVER TIME.**

**SUPPORT NEEDS ARE CONTEXTUAL
THEY ARE NOT FIXED TRAITS**

**RATHER THAN
'ARGUMENTATIVE'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**ANALYTICAL
THINKER
QUESTIONS
LOGIC**

**RATHER THAN
'RIGID'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**VALUES
CONSISTENCY &
STRUCTURE**

**RATHER THAN
'INFLEXIBLE'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**VALUES
PREDICTABILITY
& CONSISTENCY**

**RATHER THAN
'REPETITIVE
BEHAVIOUR'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**STIMS BY
FLAPPING
HANDS**

**RATHER THAN
'NON-VERBAL'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**COMMUNICATES
NON-VERBALLY**

**RATHER THAN
'CANNOT
SPEAK'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**COMMUNICATES
USING (METHOD)**

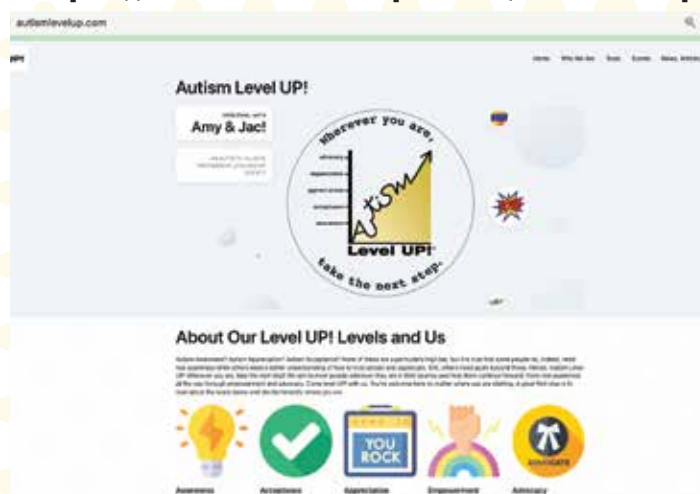
**AS IT CAN ERASE COMPETENCE & IMPLIES
INABILITY RATHER THAN COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCE**

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

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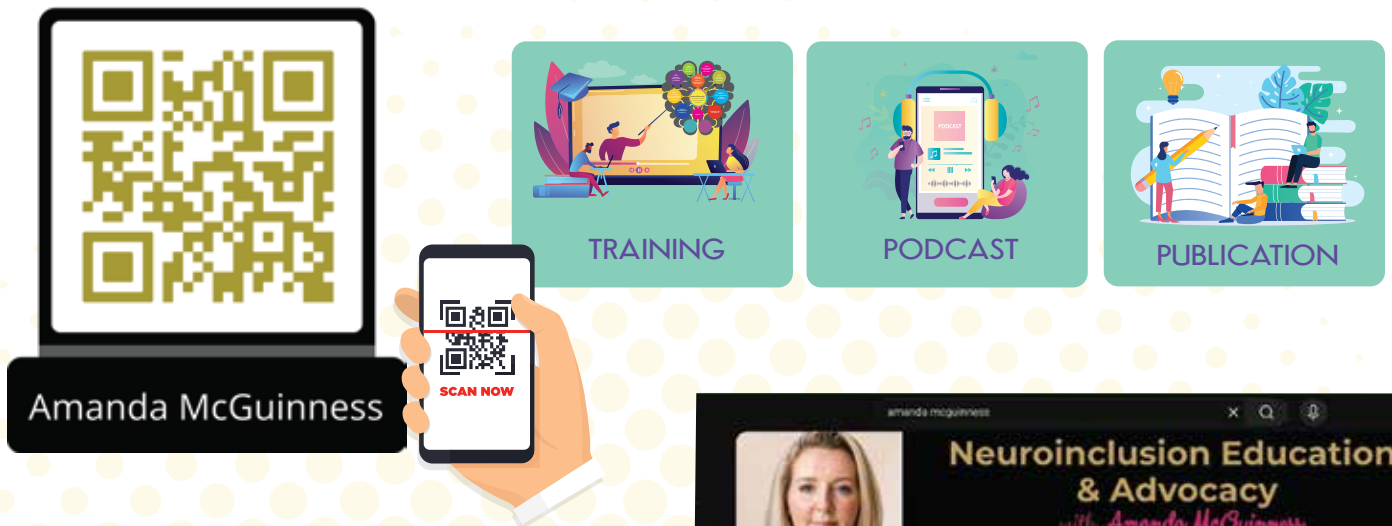
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The website offers free resources to download to use as tools to get started on your path to supporting diverse regulation styles.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES



For further learning, we recommend Amanda McGuinness's YouTube channel. Amanda is an Irish Autistic advocate, Autism and PDA specialist, educator and founder of Little Puddins. Drawing on lived experience, professional knowledge and her experience as a parent of neurodivergent children, Amanda provides accessible guidance on regulation, sensory experiences, communication, PDA and inclusive practice. Her videos encourage school staff to consider what a student may be communicating through their actions and to adapt the environment, language and expectations—moving the focus away from compliance and towards safety, autonomy and meaningful participation.



RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES



TRAINING

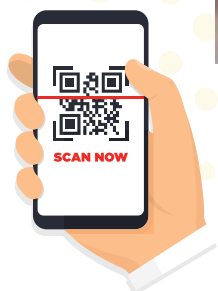


PODCAST

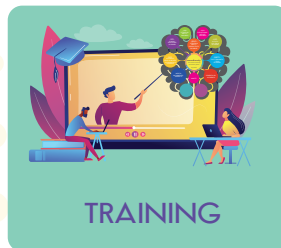


PUBLICATION

The Middletown Centre for Autism website is available resource for schools committed to inclusive practice. With free podcasts, training opportunities, & evidence informed guidance tailored to educators, it provides practical support that can enhance understanding, strengthen relationships, and improve outcomes for autistic and neurodivergent students.

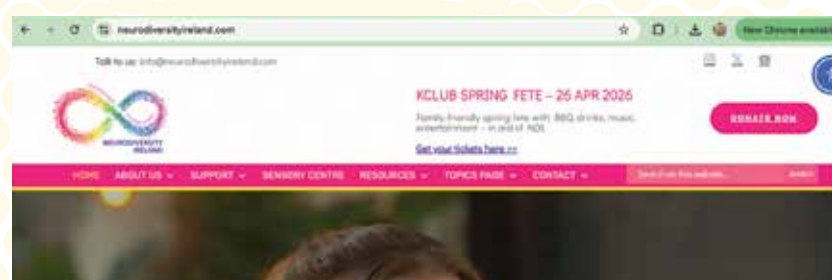
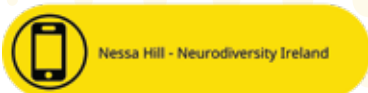


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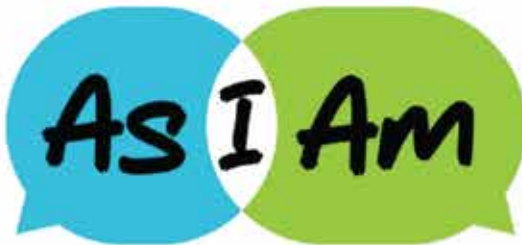


Neurodiversity Ireland is an organisation focused on promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of neurodivergent people across Irish society. Grounded in the neurodiversity paradigm, it recognises neurological differences such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia as natural variations of human development rather than deficits to be fixed. Neurodiversity Ireland provides advocacy, awareness initiatives, educational resources, and community engagement aimed at supporting schools, workplaces, and public services to adopt inclusive, strengths-based approaches. Their work centers lived experience and promotes environments where neurodivergent individuals can thrive.

<https://neurodiversityireland.com/>



RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

**IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY**

ASIAM is Ireland's national autism charity, working to create a society in which autistic people are accepted, understood, and supported to thrive. Their core goal is to promote inclusion, equality, and access to opportunities across education, employment, and community life. AsIam provides a wide range of trusted resources, including published research, policy guidance, training programs for schools and organisations, and practical supports such as visual resources and toolkits. Their work is grounded in autistic voice and evidence-based practice, making them a reliable and valuable source of information for educators and families alike.



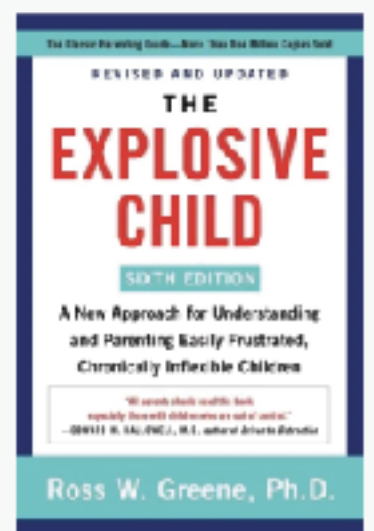
- ➔ **Research & Policy**
Published research reports on autism in Ireland
- ➔ **Training & Professional Learning**
Autism awareness training for schools
Whole-school inclusion programs
Webinars and online learning modules
CPD opportunities for educators
- ➔ **Education Supports**
Guidance for inclusive classrooms
Practical strategies for supporting autistic students
- ➔ **Practical Tools & Visual Supports**
Visual schedules and communication supports



RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

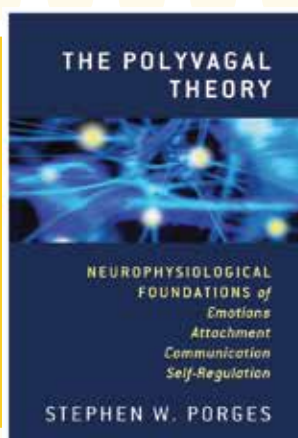


Dr. Ross Greene is a clinical psychologist & the originator of the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach. His work re frames challenging behaviour as a signal of stress and unmet needs rather than willful defiance, emphasizing that “kids do well if they can.” Through his writing and the organisation Lives in the Balance, he supports schools and families to build collaborative, regulation-focused, and relationship centered environments.



RECOMMENDED

THE POLYVAGAL THEORY BY STEPHEN W. PORGES





SUPERCALM

Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

OUR MISSION

To design and deliver innovative sensory regulation tools & practical know how that empowers educators to create accessible, safe inclusive learning environments.

By combining evidence based practice with practical design
SUPERCALM aims to support schools in building the tools, skills, awareness & confidence needed to nurture every child's' potential and promote genuine
Neuro-affirming environments where neurodivergent learners can thrive.

OUR MOVEMENT
BREAKS WORK
WONDERS
for everybody



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