

Provider Level of Neurodiversity Affirming Psychotherapy Competency Self-Rating Scale & Checklist

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This self-rating system is designed to help neurodivergent-affirming mental health clinicians assess their current level of competence in providing specialized care to sensory neurodivergent individuals¹. It assists providers in understanding their position on the learning spectrum, enabling them to identify areas for personal and professional growth. For comprehensive development in these areas, consider our [New Pathways to Neurodiversity Affirming Therapy](#) training program.

Neurotypical and neurodivergent providers are asked to reflect on their lived-experience, training, professional experience, contemplative practices, and self-work when self-identifying their competency level. Neurodivergent providers are additionally asked to reflect on the unique strengths and perspectives their neurodivergence brings to their clinical practice.

Practitioners can utilize this scale during consultations or on their website to self-disclose their current competence in serving sensory neurodivergent individuals, and to track their growth as neurodiversity-affirming providers.

Please feel free to provide feedback at the email above - I am always looking for ways to improve the resources I create.

Novice: These providers demonstrate openness, acceptance, and a foundational understanding of neurodiversity. While they may possess general clinical knowledge and address a range of concerns, they are in the early stages of developing specialized skills in neurodiversity-affirming care. They are beginning to recognize the influence of systemic factors such as capitalism and ableism on both their worldview and their clients' experiences. They are beginning to identify how their own experiences, reactions (especially countertransference), self-regulation, and authentic presence influence their neurodivergent clients. They are aware of the impact of masking on their own lives, but are still exploring how to unmask. They are in a learning phase, actively seeking to expand their knowledge and skills in neurodiversity-affirming practices.

Intermediate: These providers possess specific knowledge of minority stress, ableism, neurodivergent traits, intersectionality, and neurodivergent trauma. They have sought

¹ Sensory neurodivergent individuals include autists, ADHDers, those with sensory processing differences/disorder (SPD), gifted people, and highly sensitive people.

specialized training (if neurodivergent, this may be a thorough and ongoing process of self-discovery and lived experience integration), including foundational trauma training, to enhance their ability to provide neurodiversity-focused services and have some experience working with neurodivergent clients. They are engaged in the process of deconstructing their own capitalist and ableist perspectives and are actively working to unmask. They consistently identify how their own experiences, reactions (especially countertransference), self-regulation, and authentic presence influence their neurodivergent clients, actively utilizing contemplative practices to deepen this awareness and refine their impact. They actively seek out and integrate self-reflection and supervision with more experienced colleagues, demonstrating a growing commitment to cultural humility and responsiveness. Psychotherapists at this level skillfully attune to and understand their clients' experiences, consistently recognizing and actively supporting them in addressing systemic trauma.

Advanced: These providers are experts in intersectional neurodivergent experiences, autistic culture, and complex mental health. They have extensive specialized training (or if neurodivergent, a profound and ongoing process of self-discovery and lived experience integration that functions as highly specialized training), including advanced trauma training, and a proven track record with neurodivergent clients across various presentations and intersecting identities. Their practice integrates decolonizing perspectives and addresses systemic oppression. They demonstrate a nuanced understanding of neurodivergent trauma, masking, and the double empathy problem, and skillfully navigate relational complexities. Advanced clinicians tailor therapies, excel in differential diagnosis, can skillfully engage in neurodivergent trauma healing, and easily work with complex presentations like meltdowns, alexithymia, and demand avoidance. They actively contribute to the field through advocacy and education, and prioritize self-reflection, supervision, and contemplative practices in order to maintain a high level of cultural humility and responsiveness, and to cultivate the internal regulation necessary for effective co-regulation with their clients. They have done and continue to do extensive work unmasking themselves and working through their own systemic trauma, which deeply informs their profound attunement to and nuanced understanding of clients' experiences. This enables them to skillfully support clients in unmasking and addressing their systemic trauma at the deepest levels.

Neurodiversity-Affirming Psychotherapy Competency Self-Rating Checklist

This checklist serves as a practical self-rating tool for mental health clinicians to assess their competency in providing neurodiversity-affirming care. The ratings (0-3) on the checklist correspond to the foundational, developing, and expert levels of understanding and skill outlined in the preceding descriptions of Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced providers.

Rating Scale:

- 0: No experience or understanding in this area.
- 1: Foundational understanding; beginning to develop skills and awareness in this area.
- 2: Developing competence; possesses specific knowledge and some experience in applying skills effectively.
- 3: Expert-level understanding; demonstrates nuanced expertise and extensive experience in this area.

Please rate your current level of competence (0-3) for each statement:

1. Foundational Understanding of Neurodiversity: I demonstrate a foundational understanding of neurodiversity, including its core principles.
 - Rate: ____
2. Systemic Factors & Bias: I actively recognize and work to deconstruct the influence of systemic factors (e.g., ableism, capitalism) on my worldview and my clients' experiences.
 - Rate: ____
3. Self-Awareness & Clinical Impact: I consistently identify and integrate awareness of my own experiences, reactions (including countertransference), self-regulation, and authentic presence into my work with neurodivergent clients.
 - Rate: ____
4. Masking & Unmasking: I actively engage in understanding and supporting the process of unmasking for both myself and my clients.
 - Rate: ____
5. Specialized Neurodivergent Knowledge: I possess specialized and nuanced knowledge of sensory neurodivergent traits (e.g., Gifted, ADHD, Autistic), and how they are impacted by minority stress and intersectionality.
 - Rate: ____
6. Trauma Care: I have specialized training in trauma and can effectively engage in neurodiversity-affirming interpersonal and systemic trauma healing with clients.
 - Rate: ____
7. Experience with Diverse ND Clients: I have consistent and diverse experience working with neurodivergent clients across various presentations and intersecting identities.

- Rate: _____
- 8. Client Attunement: I consistently demonstrate skillful attunement to my clients' neurodivergent experiences that leads to a deepening of my clients' understanding of and compassion for themselves
 - Rate: _____
- 9. Relational Work: I create a safe-enough space to engage with conflict and harm in therapeutic relationships, maintain regulation when I've caused harm, and engage in empathetic, skillful conflict repair.
 - Rate: _____
- 10. Differential Diagnosis: I am able to recognize sensory neurodivergent traits in both highly masked and marginalized clients (e.g. BIPOC and femme) and apply neurodiversity affirming differential diagnosis.
 - Rate: _____
- 11. Complex Neurodivergent Presentations: I work effectively with complex neurodivergent presentations (e.g., meltdowns, alexithymia, demand avoidance).
 - Rate: _____
- 12. Ongoing Professional Growth: I regularly engage in contemplative practices, self-reflection, and consultation, to enhance self- and co-regulation, cultural humility and responsiveness in my practice.
 - Rate: _____
- 13. Contribution to the Field: I actively contribute to the neurodiversity-affirming field through advocacy, education, or knowledge sharing.
 - Rate: _____

We hope this Neurodiversity-Affirming Psychotherapy Competency Self-Rating Scale and Checklist has been a helpful tool for reflecting on your growth and identifying areas where you already shine.

Ready to take the next step in your professional development? Our [New Pathways to Neurodiversity Affirming Therapy](#) clinical training program is designed to help you build the deep understanding and tools you need to provide truly compassionate and effective care to your neurodivergent clients.

Learn more at:

<https://www.divergentpathscounseling.com/neurodiversity-affirming-psychotherapist-training>