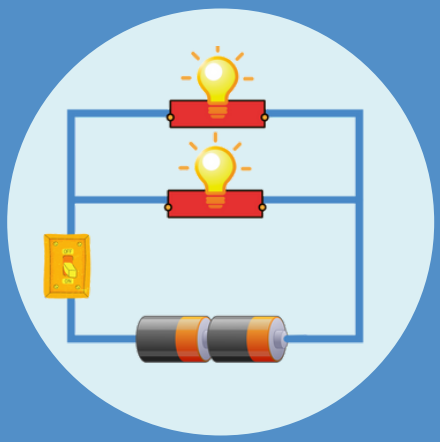
PATHWAYS

Understanding and Celebrating **Neurodiverity**

Aim:
- To understand what neurodiversity means and why it is worth celebrating.

Activity

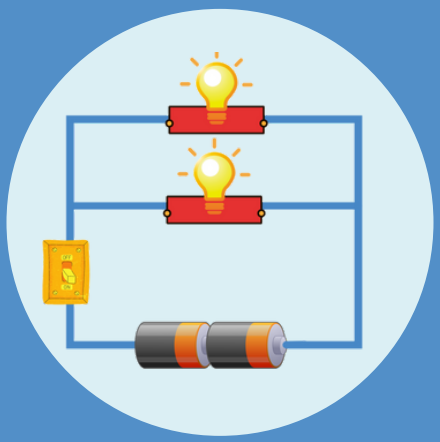
Electric Circuits



Activity:
- Making electric circuits.
Children need bulbs, wires and a battery (additional items such as switches are optional).

Activity

Electric Circuits



Your goal:
make the bulbs light up

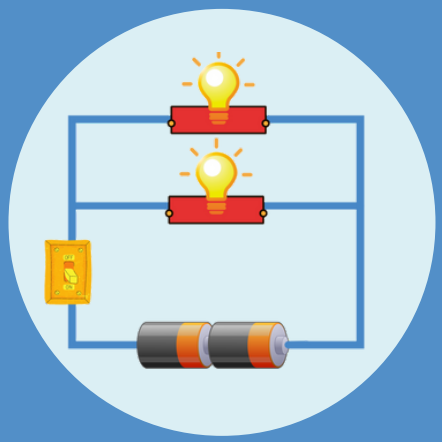
Your challenge:
find more than one way of making the bulbs light up

(by finding different ways of connecting the wires to the battery and bulbs)

Explain:
- The goal is to make the bulbs light up.
- The challenge is to find more than one way of making the bulbs light up. This means finding different ways of connecting the wires to the battery and bulbs (i.e. creating different circuits).

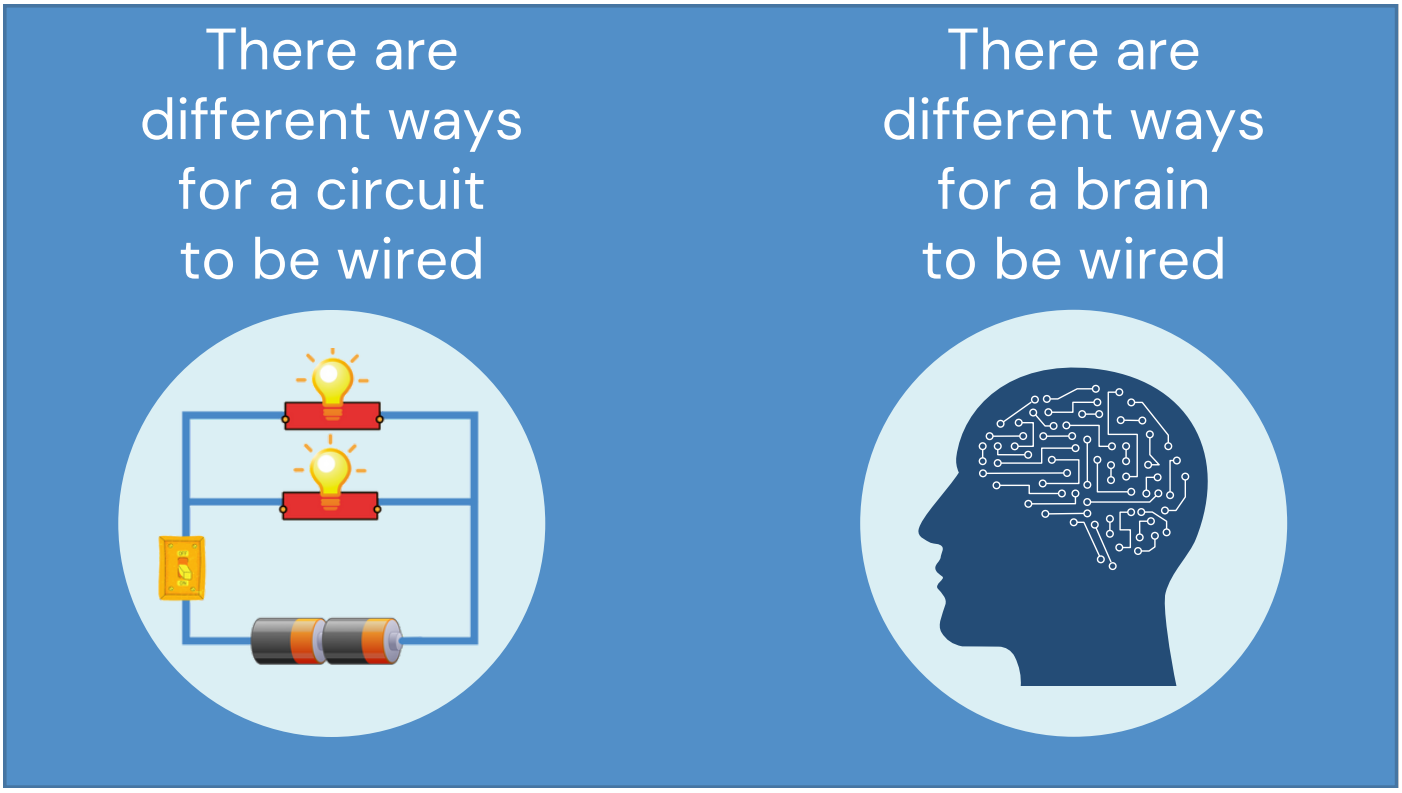
Activity

Electric Circuits

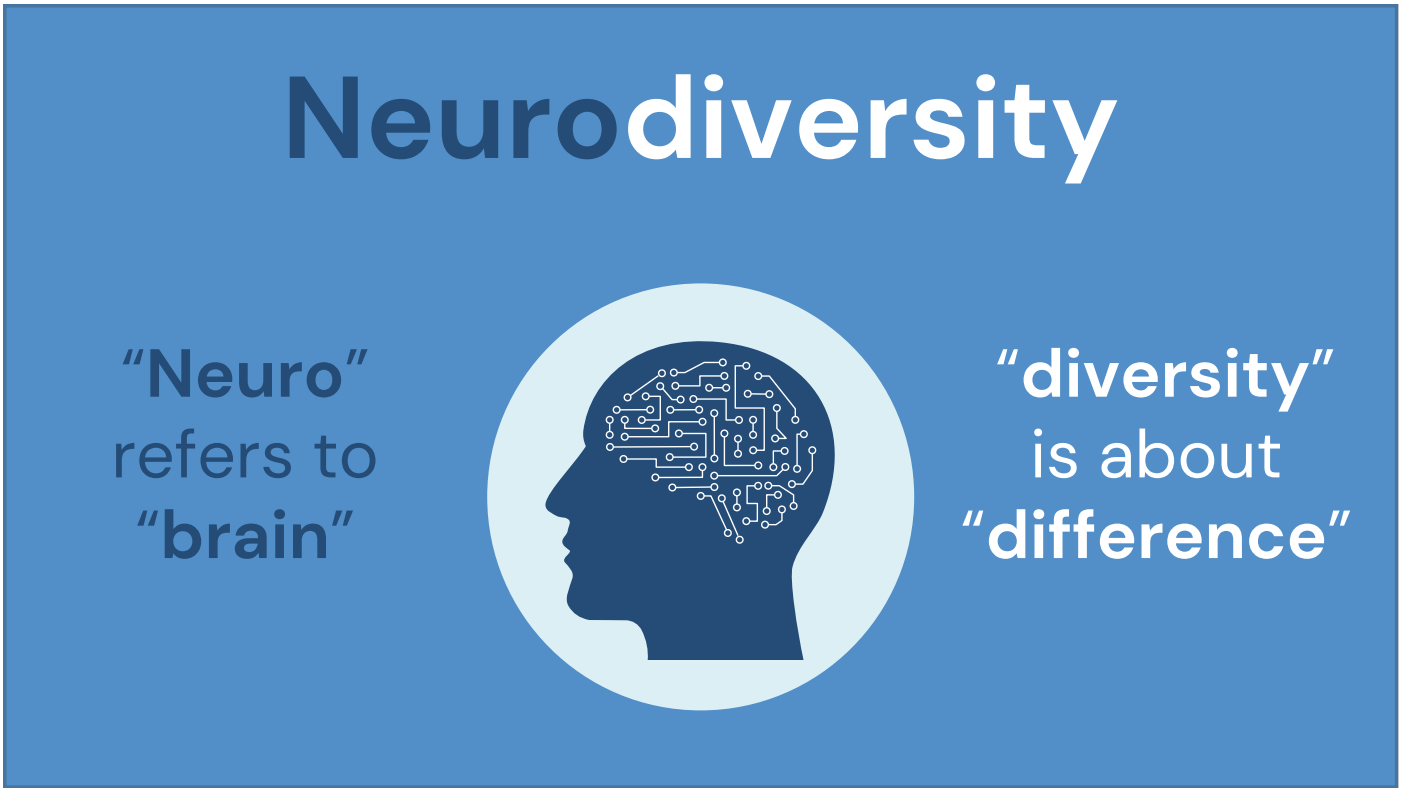


There is more than one way to create a circuit and make the bulbs light up.

Discuss the children's findings:
- Were they able to find more than one way of connecting the wires and making the bulbs light up?
- They should have discovered that there is more than one way for the bulbs and battery to be wired together.
- Explain that none of the ways (or circuits) is better or worse; each achieves the aim of lighting the bulb up.

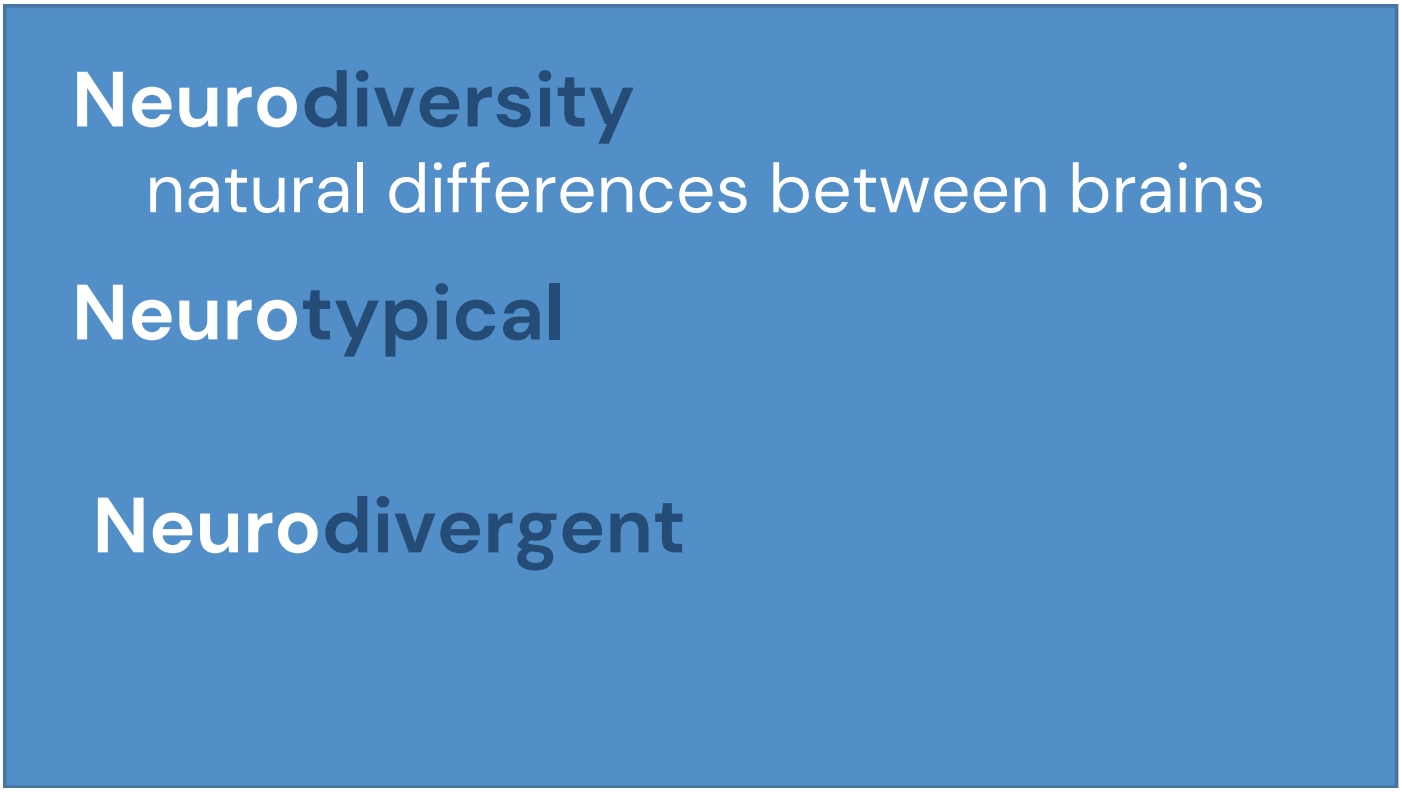


Explain:
- Just as a circuit can be wired in various ways to work, our brains can also be wired differently.
- There is no best way for a brain to be wired.
- There may be some benefits and challenges associated with each of the ways of wiring (for both circuits and brains!) but no way is superior than another.

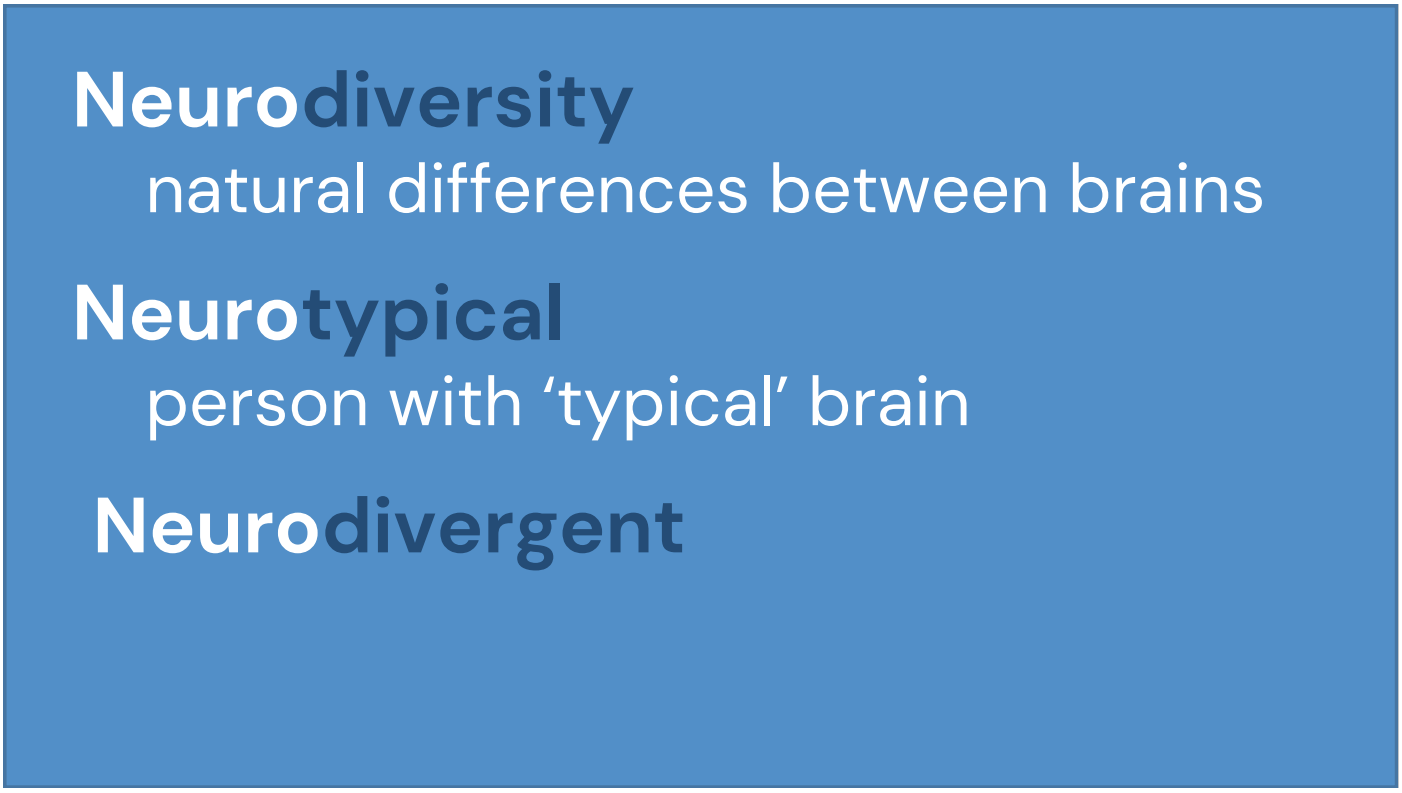


Explain:
- These brain wiring differences are known as neurodiversity.
- The word ‘neuro’ refers to 'brain' and 'diversity' is about 'difference'.
- Importantly many of these differences between brains are natural differences.
- The differences in our brains lead to differences in how we think and behave.

Explain:
- We'll talk more about some of these differences soon, but first it's helpful to understand a few more terms.



- We know that neurodiversity means ‘natural differences between brains’...



- So if we say someone is 'neurotypical' it means they have a more 'typical' brain...

Neurodiversity

natural differences between brains

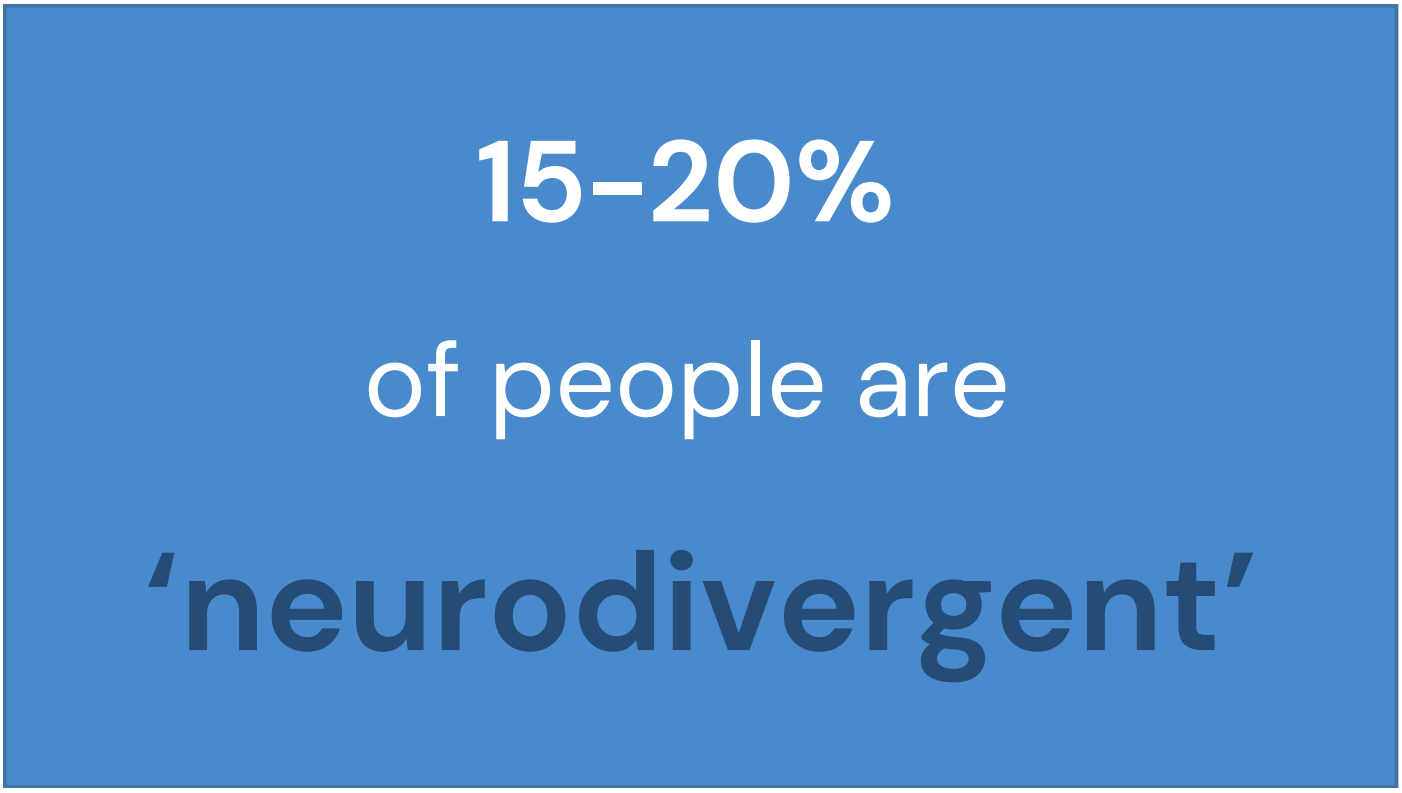
Neurotypical

person with ‘typical’ brain

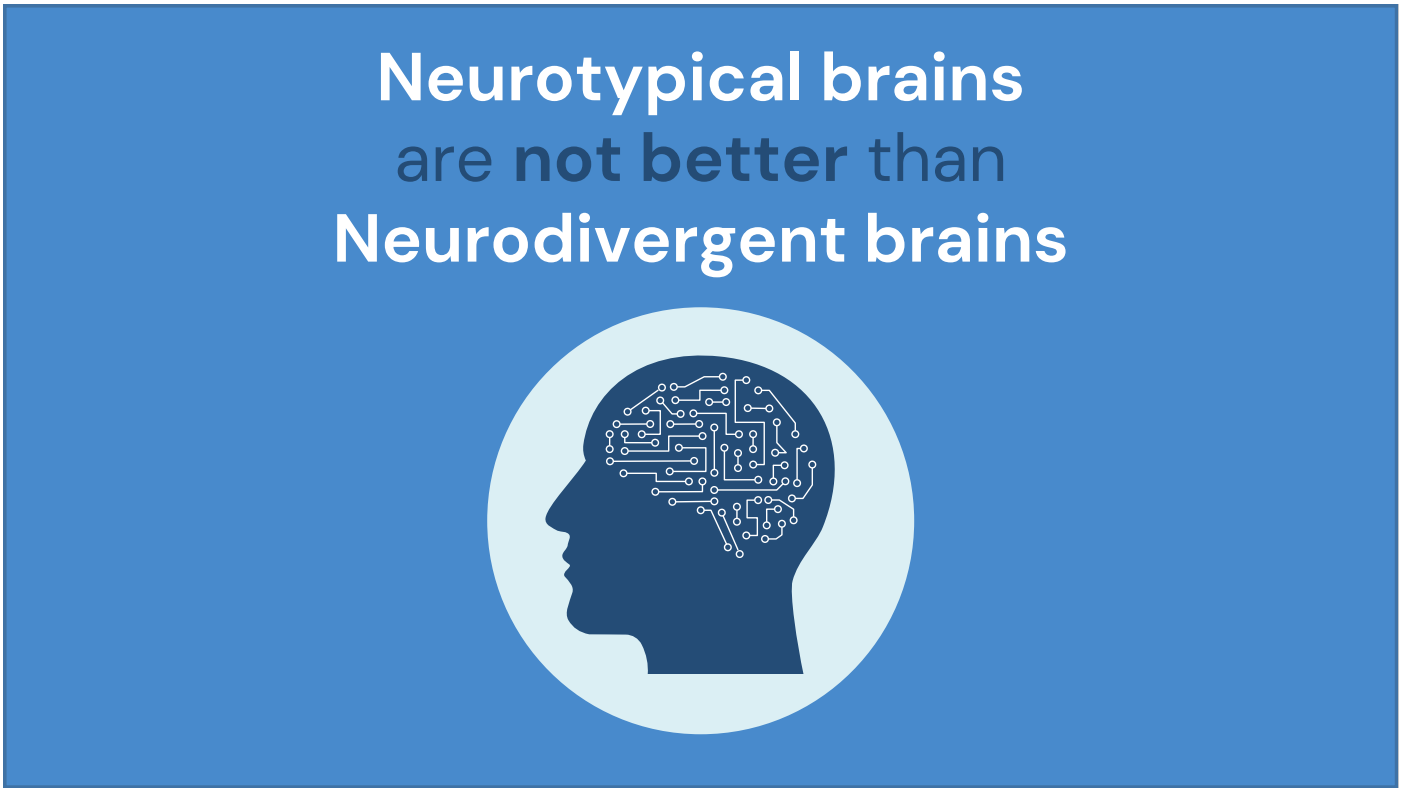
Neurodivergent

person with differently functioning brain

- And if we say someone is ‘neurodivergent’ it means they have a differently functioning brain.

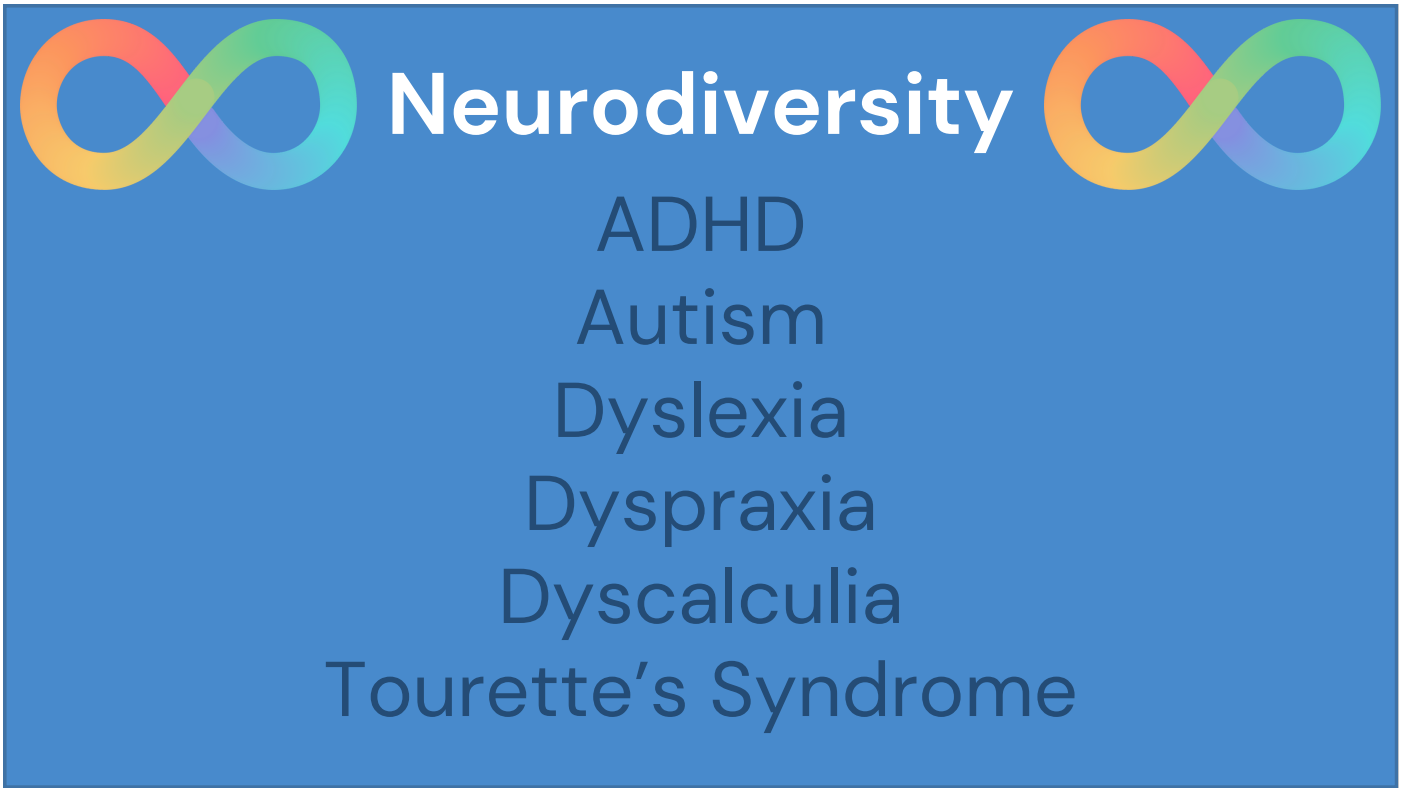


- Although we talk about 'typical' and 'divergent' brains, it is actually thought that between 15-20% of people are 'neurodivergent' in some way.
- So whilst the 'neurotypical' brain is still the more common and 'typical type', it is really not by that much.
- (You may want to explain/remind children that 20% means 1 in 5 people, or find other ways of demonstrating it).

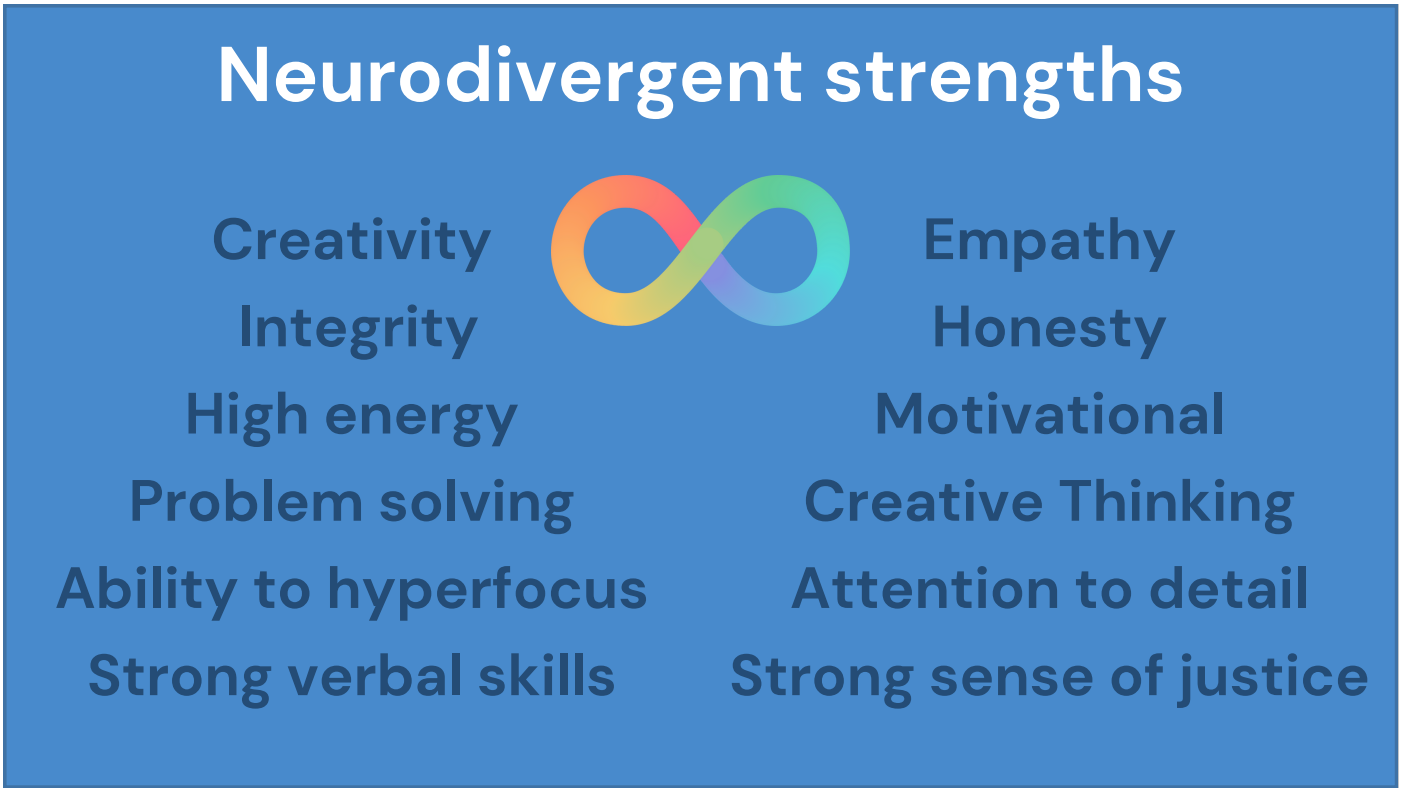


- Being the more common type of brain does not make neurotypical brains better than neurodivergent brains.
- Each type of brain has particular strengths and challenges.

Ask:
- Can the children think of any types of neurodivergence?



- These are some of the most common ones:
Autism
ADHD
Dyslexia
Dyspraxia
Dyscalculia
Tourette's Syndrome



Explain:
- There are strengths and challenges associated with every type of brain.
- We couldn't possibly list all the strengths which are associated with being neurodivergent, just like we couldn't list all the strengths which are associated with being neurotypical.
- BUT, these are some of the common ones:

Creativity
Integrity
High energy
Problem solving skills
Ability to hyperfocus
Strong verbal skills
Empathy
Honesty
Being motivational
Creative thinking
Attention to detail
Strong sense of justice

Neurodivergent challenges

The biggest challenges are when places and activities are designed for neurotypical people not neurodivergent people

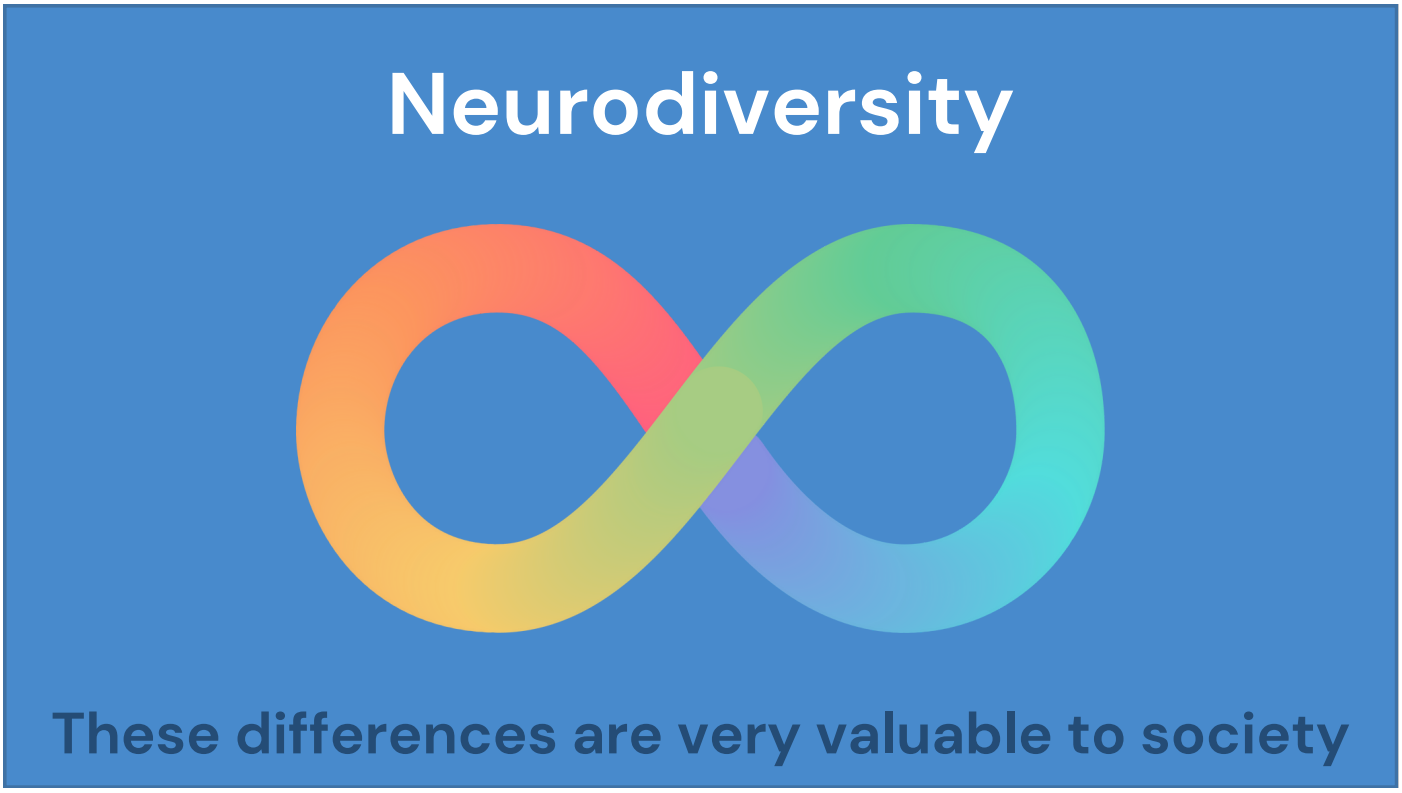
Explain:
- Because there are more neurotypical than neurodivergent people, lots of things around us are set up for neurotypical people and don't always suit neurodivergent people.
- The biggest challenges for many neurodivergent people are when places and activities are designed
for neurotypical people and not for them.
For example:
- if your brain works best when your body is moving around but you are expected to sit still.
- if your brain works best when you can focus on a task or activity until it is completed, but you're expected to stop it before you finish.
- if your brain is super sensitive to noise and the shop, cafe or even classroom you're in is really noisy.

Discussion:
- These are all famous people who are successful and well known for what they do.
- Which of these people do you think are neurodivergent?

Explain:
- They are all neurodivergent.

Daniel Radcliffe - dyspraxic
Greta Gerwig - ADHD
Nicole Adams - ADHD
Satoshi Tajiri - autistic
Tom Holland - dyslexic
Billie Eilish - Tourette's syndrome
Ant McPartlin - ADHD
Greta Thunberg - autistic
Armani Williams - autistic
Maggie Aderin-Pocock - dyslexic
John O'Kane - autistic
Tylan Grant - autistic

- Being neurodivergent does not need to stop you from achieving whatever you want to in life. In fact, the strengths associated with neurodivergence may well help you.



Explain:
- This rainbow coloured infinity symbol represents Neurodiversity.
- I hope we've shown that these natural differences between brains are really common and also really valuable to society.
- If we all thought the same way, not only would the world be a less interesting place but lots of the technology, inventions, artwork, films and books which we enjoy would not exist - because many of them were created by neurodivergent people.
- Neurodivergence is to be celebrated and valued.

PATHWAYS

Thank you!

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