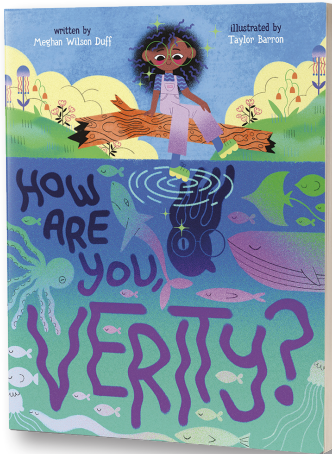




AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Supporting Neurodiverse Kids by Meghan Wilson Duff, PsyD



This is an excerpt from the Reader's Note in *How Are You, Verity?*

You can purchase the full book with 20% off and free domestic shipping [here](#). Enter code **MPKIDS20** at checkout.

What Is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity is a term that describes the diversity of people's brains and minds. It challenges the notion that we're all supposed to develop and learn to do things in the same way and on the same timeline.

Neurodiversity doesn't make a judgment about whether differences are beneficial or disabling or both, just that the different ways that people think, feel, experience their senses, communicate, and move their bodies are valid and part of human diversity.

Though these differences are part of humanity, society can have very narrow expectations for how people should think, feel, experience their senses, communicate, and move their bodies. For those of us who are different, it can be really easy to assume that it is our responsibility to adapt to what is expected. Neurodiversity gives us a way to push back on those expectations and honor our differences.

Some Thoughts for People Supporting Young People

- Providing simple social rules and scripts (like when someone asks, "How are you?" say "Good!") can be helpful, but they don't map onto reality very well in many situations. Make room for talking about how things often vary, like the different meanings and uses of "How are you?"
- Share examples of when you made social mistakes and how you responded to them. For instance, calling a person you recently met by the wrong name. How did you realize you were making a mistake? How did you feel? What did you do? Was it okay afterwards? It's reassuring for young people to realize that even socially savvy people make mistakes and that mistakes don't have to negatively impact relationships.

WWW.APA.ORG/PUBS/MAGINATION/HOW-ARE-YOU-VERITY

- Resist being concerned about young people's intense interests or a love of repetition, especially if the young person is autistic. These often get framed as problematic, but they are different ways of doing things. Reading about monotropism and listening to autistic people's experiences is helpful.
- Support young people's interests, even if those interests seem odd to you. For instance, if the young person loves appliances, like dishwashers or washers and dryers, take a trip to a local appliance store or to the laundromat. Draw them together. Find books about them or even catalogs.
- Make room for enthusiastic sharing by showing the young person you are willing to learn and find what you too appreciate about what they are interested in. This type of sharing can be joyous. It can be a comfort. And it also can be an important connection between people, even if it is not obvious to you at the time.