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6 Mar | Written By Krysia Waldock

# Neurodivergent belonging: a manifesto

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Kryisia Waldock examines belonging as a basic need, how the marginalisation of Neurodivergent people can make it harder to feel more than merely 'present' in a space, and how we can better foster a sense of belonging for Neurodivergent individuals.

**B**elonging has been described as a human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, Neurodivergent people are likely to face more exclusion in all domains of life (see Chapman & Carel, 2022; Mellifont, 2023; Waldock, 2023). In addition, far more focus is placed on disabled and/or Neurodivergent people being present in a space rather than enabling a sense of belonging.

It is therefore important that we as neurodivergent people have input on what belonging looks like when done right and in a manner which is neurodivergent-affirming. At this point, I would like to emphasise that what it feels like to belong is unique to each person. We all have different understandings of what belonging is, notably including belonging as a feeling between people or a group, an affinity for a place or situation or having a role where v and play a part. These are likely shaped by our lived experiences, the identities we hc the situation at hand.

In this light, I want to assert three things.

Firstly, that Neurodivergent people's experiences of belonging and 'what works' may be shaped by what does not work and how we are excluded. We have been excluded and traumatised for who we are and how our bodies and brains are. It is not necessarily the case to just invert what has not worked, but it shows just how important it is to feel a sense of belonging and to not repeat what has not worked.

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# Kryisia Waldock

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