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Hello GRANN community, we've missed you!

It's been a little while since our last newsletter, and like many of you, our volunteers have been riding the waves of study, health, family, and the general busyness of being human. Some of us needed to pause, some slowed right down, and others kept GRANN gently glowing in *low-spoons mode*. We're proud of that, because resting, adjusting, and caring for ourselves is part of living our neuro-affirming values. Now, with a few more pieces of cutlery (not necessarily spoons!) at our disposal, we're feeling ready to reconnect, and it feels *really* good.

In this edition:

- *The Weaponizing of "Professionalism"*- how systems tone-police and silence difference.
- *Rethinking "Simplicity"*- meeting people where they are, not where we expect them to be.
- *Community Reporting*- a handy, template for growing together.
- *This is Me, Neurokind Circles*- our badge-making workshop reflection.

Coming in November:

- *Regeneration & Reconnection*- navigating seasonal affective challenges.
- *Our Kind of November*- building conversations around mental health beyond the mainstream lens, with space for every story.
- *Justice Action Week 2025*- centring disability pride and action through our

own community-led focus, because for us, disability action means justice, not tokenism.

- *Lateral Ableism*- reflecting on harm within community spaces

GRANN has always been about *community over perfection*.
Thank you for walking beside us, for your patience, and for keeping the glow
alive while we recharged.

We're so glad to be back in your inbox, reconnecting with you all.

In solidarity,
The Collaborators @ [GRANN](#)

When “Professionalism” Becomes a Weapon: Neuronormativity and the Policing of Neurodivergent Lives

Professionalism. It's a word that gets thrown around a lot, in workplaces, universities, services, and even advocacy spaces. On the surface, it sounds neutral. Who doesn't want to be “professional”? But for Autistic, Neurodivergent, and Disabled people, professionalism is too often weaponised as a tool of exclusion.

What's really being enforced is not a commitment to fairness, accountability, or quality, values we can all stand behind, but a set of **neuronormative expectations**; unspoken rules about how a “normal” person should look, sound, feel, and act.

The Hidden Curriculum of “Professionalism”

For neurotypical peers, professionalism often feels like common sense, making eye contact, speaking in a certain tone, sitting still, regulating emotions in ways deemed “appropriate.” But this hidden curriculum punishes those of us whose bodies and brains work differently.

- **Eye contact** becomes a measure of honesty, when for many Autistic people it is uncomfortable or even painful.
- **Tone of voice** is judged, even when words are clear. “Too flat,” “too intense,” “too much.”

- **Emotional expression** is pathologised. Meltdowns or shutdowns in overstimulating environments are labelled “unprofessional” instead of recognised as human responses to inaccessible conditions.
- **Work rhythms** are constrained by rigid structures, ignoring Disabled and otherwise Neurodivergent people’s needs for rest, pacing, and flexibility.

In this way, *professionalism becomes code for conformity*, and non-conformity is punished with lost opportunities, silencing, or exclusion.

Weaponisation in Action

This weaponisation shows up everywhere:

- **Workplaces** where disclosure of access needs leads to subtle (or overt) career penalties.
- **Education** systems where “classroom behaviour” standards erase diverse sensory and communication needs.
- **Advocacy spaces** where otherwise Neurodivergent voices are dismissed as “too angry,” “too emotional,” or “not strategic enough,” while neurotypical gatekeepers are praised for being “measured” and “credible.”

The irony is bitter; the very people most impacted by systems of exclusion are told they must package themselves in neuronormative wrapping just to be heard.

Why This Hurts

When professionalism is policed through neuronormativity, it doesn’t just silence individuals, it robs communities of the very perspectives that could transform workplaces, services, and social movements.

Disabled, Autistic, and otherwise Neurodivergent people bring creativity, honesty, and depth of insight precisely because we don’t fit the mould.

When our ways of being are labelled “unprofessional,” organisations and communities lose out on authenticity, innovation, and justice.

Reclaiming and Reframing Professionalism

It doesn’t have to be this way. Professionalism can be redefined, not as rigid conformity, but as **collective accountability, respect, and care**.

- A professional space is one where people’s access needs are met without stigma.
- A professional culture values honesty over performance, lived experience over polish.
- A professional ethic recognises that authenticity and difference are not risks to manage but assets to celebrate.

In short, professionalism should mean creating conditions where everyone can thrive, not punishing people for existing differently.

Our Call to Action

For Autistic, Neurodivergent, and Disabled communities, resisting neuronormative professionalism is part of survival. For allies, it's a call to rethink how you measure credibility, respectability, and worth. The question isn't "How can they be more professional?" but **"How can we dismantle the barriers that keep professionalism from being inclusive?"**

Because professionalism without humanity is just another tool of oppression. And we deserve better.

You hhhh



Beyond “Simplicity”: Rethinking Einstein’s Famous Quote

You’ve probably heard the quote often pinned to Einstein: *“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.”* It sounds wise, almost like a universal rule for communication. But when we look closer, especially through a neuro-affirming lens, it starts to unravel.

Because here’s the thing: *what even is simple?*

For some people, “simple” means short, stripped-back, easy-to-digest. For others, it means concrete detail, the kind of step-by-step explanation that builds a full picture.

What feels clear to one brain can feel vague, or even misleading, to another. And that’s not about intelligence. That’s about neurodiversity.

Autistic and otherwise Neurodivergent people often think in layers, tangents, or precision. We might explain something with the “too much detail” that others

want to cut away. But that detail is the clarity. To oversimplify is to lose the heart of what we actually understand.

So, when people weaponize Einstein's quote, it becomes a way of dismissing us:
"You must not understand it, or you'd say it more simply."

But understanding and communication are not the same thing. You can know something deeply and still struggle to package it in a way that fits someone else's idea of "simple." That's especially true if you communicate differently, through visuals, metaphors, or spirals of thought that don't line up neatly with linear speech.

And it's worth saying, "simplicity" assumes there's a one-size-fits-all audience. But understanding is always relational. It depends on who you're speaking with, how they process, what they already know, what matters to them.

A child might not need simplicity; they might need play.

An Autistic child might not need simplification; they might crave the *exact details* that many adults leave out.

So maybe the problem isn't that we don't understand. Maybe the problem is that we assume communication has to look one way.

A more affirming reframe might be:

"If you understand something, you can share it in ways that reflect your enjoyment or interest in the subject, and people can meet you where you are."

or

"True understanding isn't about simplifying; it's about translating, finding different ways to connect so others can meet you where they are."

or

"If you really understand something, you can share it in ways that create connection, not by making it smaller, but by meeting people where they are."

or

"Understanding isn't measured by simplicity, but by flexibility, being able to express ideas in ways that honour how different minds make meaning."

or

"When we truly understand something, we can hold space for many ways of explaining and receiving, understanding becomes something we build together."

or

"If we really understand something, we can share it in many forms, not to make it simple, but to make it reachable."

Sometimes clarity is simple. Sometimes clarity is detailed. And sometimes, clarity looks like holding space for the *glorious*

Understanding doesn't always mean making things smaller or easier, sometimes it means widening the frame so more people can see themselves in it.

So, what speaks to you most? The simple, the detailed, or the wonderfully complex?

This reimagining honours complexity. It honours multimodal communication. It honours that different brains connect to different styles. And it frees us from the idea that knowledge must be bent until it suits the dominant culture.

Breaking this down further:

1. What is "simple"?

- “Simple” isn’t neutral. What feels simple to one person may feel reductive, confusing, or incomplete to another.
 - For Autistic and otherwise Neurodivergent individuals, detail, precision, and nuance often *is* the point. A stripped-back explanation may lose the integrity of the concept.
 - Equating simplicity with understanding risks dismissing communication styles that are nonlinear, layered, or metaphor-rich.
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2. Whose understanding counts?

- Einstein’s framing assumes a universal audience who will “get it” when something is made simple. But in reality, audiences are diverse; developmental stage, language, processing style, cultural background, and neurotype all shape what counts as “understanding.”
 - A child, for instance, may grasp complexity differently, not less than an adult, but differently. Autistic children might prefer concrete details or systemised explanations, while others might resonate with story or play.
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3. Weaponisation of simplicity

- The quote can be used as a cudgel: “If people don’t get it, you must not understand it.” This delegitimises communicators whose natural style is more complex, tangential, or layered (often neurodivergent styles).
 - It also shifts responsibility unfairly onto the speaker, ignoring the relational nature of communication, understanding is co-constructed.
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4. Knowledge vs. communication

- Understanding something and being able to explain it *in a certain style* aren’t the same thing. Someone may deeply understand a concept but struggle to reframe it into “simple” language because of expressive differences (common in Autistic, ADHD, or language-affected and bilingual folks).
 - Neuro-affirming practice reminds us that communication differences are not deficits, they’re diversity.
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5. Alternative framing

- Reframe the saying for a more inclusive version.
- This honours multimodal communication- visual, metaphorical, detailed, embodied- and acknowledges that clarity emerges not from simplicity, but from adaptability and mutual respect.

✨ Takeaway:

Einstein's quote is catchy, but neuro-affirming critique exposes its limitations.

"Simplicity" isn't always the highest form of understanding.

Sometimes depth, nuance, and complexity are necessary to honour the truth of a concept, and neurodivergent ways of explaining may carry forms of clarity that neuronormative standards overlook.



Community Reporting

"What We Heard, What We're Doing"

🌱 A Handy Template for Growing Together 🌱

At GRANN, we see every community event as part of an ongoing conversation.

Listening, reflecting, and acting on feedback helps us grow stronger, more inclusive, and more connected.

To support this, we've created a simple template:

"What We Heard, What We're Doing."

This tool is here to guide how we capture community voices, reflect honestly on what worked (and what didn't), and commit to meaningful next steps.

It's not just paperwork, it's a practice of accountability, transparency, and care.

By using this template, we remind ourselves that Autistic, Neurodivergent, and

Disabled voices aren't just included, they lead the way in shaping what comes next.



We invite you to adapt this template for your own community work or share your versions with us.

Together, we can keep building better, more transparent ways of listening and learning.

TEMPLATE

Community Event Report - *[Event Name & Date]*

Purpose of the Event: *[Brief summary of the goals and focus of the event.]*

What We Heard:

Key Themes Raised: *[e.g., Need for more lived-experience speakers, concerns about therapies not suiting everyone, desire for more accessibility measures]*

Specific Feedback Highlights: *[Quote or paraphrase anonymous feedback, if appropriate, common concerns or praise points]*

What We Learned: *[Honest reflection about gaps, successes, surprises - acknowledge diversity of views, especially noting if services or presentations were not well balanced.]*

What We're Committing To:

- Short-term actions: *[E.g., Sharing resources post-event, meeting with community advisors]*
- Medium-term goals: *[E.g., Co-designing next event with Autistic community members, review of speaker selection processes]*
- Long-term aspirations: *[E.g., Strengthen local Autistic leadership roles]*

Next Steps & How to Stay Involved:

We will share updates via: *[Newsletter, Social media, Direct email]*

Ongoing feedback can be sent to: *[Contact details]*

Invitation to join planning group for future events: *[Yes/No, details]*

Acknowledgements: *[Thank community members, speakers, volunteers, and attendees.]*

Event Planning Checklist (Neuro-Affirming & Community-Led)

Before the Event

Co-Design & Leadership

- ☐ Are Autistic people co-designing the event from the start?
- ☐ Is there an advisory group or individual/s with lived experience advising on all stages?

Speaker & Content Diversity

- ☐ Are there Autistic speakers and facilitators?
- ☐ Are diverse experiences within the community represented? (e.g., AAC users, cultural diversity, various support needs)
- ☐ Are speakers trained in neuro-affirming language and practices?

Evidence & Service Transparency

- ☐ Are services/therapies presented with transparency about their scope, evidence base, and limitations?
- ☐ Are services/therapies being presented responsibly, with caution against blanket endorsements?
- ☐ Are academic and professional qualifications presented in balance with lived experience?

Accessibility & Sensory Needs

- ☐ Has the sensory environment been considered (lighting, noise, layout)?
- ☐ Is pre-event information accessible (Easy English, plain language, visual supports, timely)?
- ☐ Are communication supports in place (e.g., interpreters, quiet zones)?
 - ☐ Is the venue physically accessible?

Feedback Channels

- ☐ Are there multiple, accessible ways to give feedback (during and after the event)?
 - ☐ Is there a clear explanation of how feedback will be used?

During the Event

Community Voice & Participation

- ☐ Is there open space or structured time for community voices?
- ☐ Are participants encouraged to share their perspectives freely, without judgement or repercussion?

Respectful Practice

- ☐ Are all presenters and facilitators using neuro-affirming language?
- ☐ Is there a plan for addressing inappropriate or harmful commentary if it arises?

Documentation & Communication

- ☐ Is the event being documented (notes, recordings) for those who cannot attend?
- ☐ Is there a clear process for post-event follow-up communication?

After the Event

Follow-Up & Accountability

- ☐ Has feedback been collected and summarised?
- ☐ Has the "What We Heard, What We're Doing" report been drafted and shared?
 - ☐ Have commitments been made publicly and transparently?
- ☐ Is there a process for involving the community in future consultation and planning?

Post-Event Accountability Checklist for Neuro-Affirming Practice to ensure community feedback is valued, actioned, and transparent after events.

Representation & Leadership Review

- ☐ Were Autistic voices visibly leading and co-presenting?
- ☐ Were speakers with lived experience clearly identified and respected?
- ☐ Did the event allow for diverse representations within the Autistic community (e.g., age, communication style, cultural background, support needs)?
- ☐ If gaps were identified, is there a plan to address them for future events?

Feedback Collection & Transparency

- ☐ Were multiple, accessible avenues for feedback offered (e.g., verbal, written, anonymous, post-event online forms)?
- ☐ Has feedback been collated and summarised for community visibility?
- ☐ Are there clear timelines for when feedback outcomes will be shared?
- ☐ Has the community been informed about how their feedback is shaping future actions?

Critical Reflection on Services & Approaches

- ☐ Were services and therapies presented with transparency about evidence base and limitations?
- ☐ Was diversity of need acknowledged (e.g., recognition that there is no one-size-fits-all)?
- ☐ Were alternative services/therapies discussed responsibly, avoiding blanket endorsements?
- ☐ Has the weighting of professional vs. lived experience voices been critically assessed?

Sensory & Accessibility Review

- ☐ Were sensory needs considered (e.g., lighting, noise, seating, quiet spaces)?
- ☐ Was information accessible in advance (e.g., schedules, speaker lists, venue details)?
- ☐ Were communication supports available (e.g., Auslan interpreters, visual supports, clear signage)?
- ☐ Has feedback on accessibility been reviewed and incorporated into future planning?

Future Commitment & Reporting Back

- ☐ Is there a plan to publish a post-event community report or summary?
- ☐ Have future improvement commitments been clearly stated to attendees?
- ☐ Are community members invited to participate in planning future events?
- ☐ Is there a plan for ongoing dialogue beyond the event itself?

Reflective Questions for Organisers:

What surprised us in the feedback?

What power dynamics were present in the event, and how can we address them?

How did we ensure Autistic voices led, and how can we strengthen this next time?

Are there voices or perspectives we missed?

How will we include them next time?

*Downloadable version available on website soon.

GRANN reflection on Our This is me, Neurokind Circles: Creative Online Workshops



Our follow-up *“This is Me - Neurokind Circles”* online badge-making sessions were a joyful celebration of identity, connection, and self-expression through wearable art.

Participants of all ages came together online to design badges that spoke volumes; tiny circles of colour and creativity carrying messages like *“Different, not less”*, *“I regulate, therefore I am”*, and *“Sensory-unfriendly zone.”* Others were vibrant and vivid images reflecting personality, internal conflicts, and dissatisfaction with current government practices.

For some, it was about naming and reclaiming (or reframing) identity; for others, it was simply about creating something that *felt like them*. The beauty of

these sessions was in their gentleness; no pressure to talk, no expectations to perform, just parallel play, creative self-expression, and quiet solidarity.

Across all sessions, the space became what many described as “*a soft place to land*”, a community of understanding where difference was met with warmth and curiosity.

Together, we all explored how creativity can help us connect with our identities, honour our sensory needs, and express parts of ourselves that words sometimes can't quite reach.

What participants shared*:

“I didn’t realise making badges could feel like self-advocacy.”

“There was no rush, no wrong way to create. Just space.”

“I loved seeing everyone’s badges on screen, so much creativity and fun in one place.”

“My child and I joined from different rooms, and somehow we both came away feeling more connected, to ourselves and each other.”

“I loved that there was no pressure to share, but when I did, everyone really listened. That felt rare.”

Every badge became a tiny act of belonging, a wearable statement of pride, identity, and resistance. Participants told us they wore their badges to work, to community events, shopping, or kept them nearby as small reminders of self-worth and connection.

These sessions weren't just about art; they were about *community regeneration*, a gentle reframing of space for Autistic, Neurodivergent, and Disabled voices to create, connect, and be seen on their own terms.

As one participant summed it up perfectly:

“It wasn’t therapy, but it was deeply therapeutic.”

 We can't wait to host more *This Is Me: Neurokind Circle* events where creativity meets advocacy, and everyone's story can shine through art and self-expression. 

Stay tuned for upcoming workshops where we continue celebrating the art of being, becoming, and belonging.

 ***Making connection and wearable acts of resistance, together.*** 

* Permission to share participant comments.

Autistic & Neurodivergent-led Organisations, Supports, & Resources



**Open Supports
List**

**Open Resources
Page**

Autistic & Neurodivergent Books and Authors

Looking for stories that reflect *you* or someone you love?
GRANN's carefully curated 2024 & 2025 Booklists includes powerful titles by
and for Autistic and Neurodivergent people - spanning identity, advocacy,
creativity, lived experience, children's stories, YA fiction, and more.

Whether you're seeking representation, learning, or just a good read that doesn't
pathologise your existence, there's something here for you.

*We'll be back next month with fresh
additions to add to the 2025 Book list.*



Neuro-Affirming Reading List

2024

Neuro-Affirming Reading List

2025

Want to Get Involved? *Volunteer with GRANN*

GRANN is powered by community - and we're always grateful for kind, creative, Neurodivergent-led hands to help shape what we do. Whether you're looking to contribute your time, skills, ideas, or presence, we'd love to hear from you.

Volunteering with GRANN can look like:

- 🖥️ Helping behind the scenes with admin or website content
- 🎨 Co-creating accessible resources or artwork
- 📢 Supporting events, workshops, or advocacy campaigns
- 🧸 Offering lived experience wisdom or gentle peer support

Lived-experience needed and a willingness to show up in your own way.

Flexible, affirming, and low-demand roles available.
We'll always work with your access needs and capacity.

Register below or visit our website www.grann.com.au
and click "Volunteer" in the menu

You can also ✉️ Email us at: info@grann.com.au

🌈 Thank you for helping us build something meaningful, inclusive, and proudly Neurodivergent-led.

📝 Register your interest to volunteer here:

Your Views Matters *We'd Love Your Feedback*

✨ **Share what's working. Tell us what's not. Suggest something new.**

At GRANN, everything we do is shaped by *you*, our community. Your experiences, insights, and ideas help us create spaces that feel safer, more supportive, and more *you-shaped*.

Whether you've joined one of our sessions, explored our website, or just want to share a thought or suggestion - we'd love to hear from you. Your feedback doesn't have to be formal or polished. Honest, imperfect, and heartfelt is welcome.

Access the Feedback Form below or visit us at www.grann.com.au and click "Contact" in the menu.

Prefer to send a message directly or use voice, pictures, or dot points instead of a form? That's okay too. Let us know how we can walk beside you.

✉ Email us at: info@grann.com.au

🧠 Your views helps us build a place to belong, together.
Thank you for being part of it.

📝 **Access our feedback form here:**

Feedback Form



Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc.

info@grann.com.au

You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.



GRANN acknowledges the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we reside and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

Always Was. Always Will Be. Sovereignty Never Ceded.