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# Rethinking Neurodivergence: Stories of Culture, Resistance, and Radical Self-Honour Peer Connections and Glimmers of Us - A Pride Week Letter from GRANN

### Dear Neurokin,

As June blossoms into Pride Month, we're celebrating the vibrance, strength, and joy of our Autistic & Neurodivergent LGBTQIA2S+ community - because our identities, our stories, and our presence matters. This week is extra special. From **June 10–17**, the world marks **Neurodiversity Pride Week**, a global movement *by and for* Neurodivergent people. It's a time to honour our authentic selves, speak our truths, and celebrate the many ways we think, feel, and connect.

Then, on **June 18**, we proudly celebrate **Autistic Pride Day** - a day founded by Autistic people to affirm our identity, culture, and perspective. It reminds us that Autism isn't something to be fixed - it's something to be *understood*, *supported*, *and celebrated*.

In celebration of *Neurodiversity Pride Week* and *Autistic Pride Day*, we are sharing something sacred: *our words, our rhythms, our truths.* These written pieces are not just articles. They are glimmers. Glimmers of selfhood in a world that often misunderstands us. Glimmers of joy, resistance, unmasking, burnout, kinship, and sacred stims. Glimmers of what it means to be *proudly Autistic, proudly Neurodivergent,* and *proudly ourselves* - today, this week, and in every quiet moment we've ever doubted we belonged. These are stories for anyone who's ever: masked so well they forgot who they were, stimmed in secret, cried in the staff toilet, info-dumped with joy only to be met with silence, felt "too much" in a world that was never enough.

We offer you poetry, prose, fragments, echoes, manifestos, and gentle rage. We offer you laughter and tiredness and the shimmering thread of recognition.

> We offer you **us**. Because *Pride isn't just a parade or a post*. It can't be sold. It's a **practice**.

A refusal to disappear. A celebration of survival. A love letter to our ways of feeling, being, and becoming.

Welcome to our Autistic & Neurodivergent newsletter this week. May it hold you the way we hold each other: softly, fiercely, and without condition. With all our stimmy love,

> In solidarity, *The Collaborators* @ <u>GRANN</u>

## Anti-Ableist & System-Critical Narratives and Polyvocal Commentary

Pride is not just parades. It's also protest.

Autism and Neurodivergence are not the problem. Systems that erase, punish, or pathologise it are.

From school to work to healthcare, we are constantly told to mask, shrink, blend in. But inclusion that demands assimilation is not liberation, it's control with a smile.

We need more than "awareness." We need access. We need respect. We need to be believed when we say, "That's too loud", "That's not working for me", or "That hurts me".

Let's name the real issues: inaccessible workplaces, sensory-hostile events, gatekept diagnoses, and the exhausting demand to constantly explain ourselves to people who aren't listening.

And let's uplift the real solutions: community care, stim-affirming spaces, body doubling, creative expression, peer-supports, rest as resistance. This week, and every week, let us honour the ways we resist, survive, and reimagine. "Masking is not safety. Burnout is not inevitable. Survival should not be the goal - thriving is."

This piece is written as a *polyphonic chorus* - a blend of voices, quotes, and raw truth from the Autistic and Neurodivergent community, entwined into a systemic call-out and call-in. It invites belonging while naming harm.

### "We Know What's Broken: A Collective Letter From Neurokin" -Assembled by GRANN, Written in Many Voices

"You keep saying we're 'so brave' for existing in a world like this. Why not just make the world less cruel?"

We are tired of being inspirational simply for surviving. Tired of being told we are "difficult" while systems remain violent. Tired of being assessed, managed, fixed, softened, included - but never *listened to. Never belonging*.

### We were never the *problem*.

### The Design Flaws Are:

School systems that reward compliance over sensory needs. Job markets that call flexibility a benefit, then punishes us for using it. Mental health systems that pathologise our distress, then ignore the source. "Inclusion" that still asks us to mask, disappear in the crowd, to belong.

"They told me I could be myself, but only if it looked and sounded like them."

"I was praised for 'coping well.' I was actually dissociating."

This isn't inclusion. It's **compliance theatre.** We know the difference.

### What We Want:

Support that doesn't start with "you must first prove your struggle". Access needs met without debate or delay. Communication that respects our rhythms - individualised - slow, fast, looping, AAC, silence. Autistic joys and glimmers celebrated, not just tolerated. Safety that doesn't depend on our ability to explain ourselves calmly while in distress.

"I'm allowed to stim. I don't owe you stillness".

"I shouldn't have to trauma-narrate just to get basic support".

### We're Already Building It:

In group chats, in body doubling sessions, in the soft hum of stim rooms and the quiet nod of shared overwhelm - we are *creating spaces where we are not problems to be solved*, but people to hold space for. We are not waiting for institutions to catch up. We are making our own systems. Messy, mutual, imperfect, and more honest than anything we've been offered.

### A Note to Each Other:

We believe your meltdown was not a failure. We believe your unmasking was an act of resistance. We believe your needs are not inconvenient. We believe you.

"You don't need to be productive to be valuable."

"You are not too much. You were never too much. The world was just too narrow."

> This is a proclamation. Not a neat solution. A signal flare. A collective hum. We are here. We are exhausted. We are dreaming louder than ever. Join us.

Social CHANGE is a FTEAM E EFFORT

Neurodivergence as Culture, Not Condition

We're not broken versions of a mythical "normal" - we are part of a living, breathing culture with our own rhythms, languages, and ways of being.Autism is not a diagnosis we carry alone - it is a shared identity shaped by our stories, our stim dances, our deep dives, our way of noticing what the world misses.

From sensory-seeking to info-dumps to parallel presence, our ways of connecting and communicating are valid and meaningful.

We do not need curing; we need recognition. We are building culture with every infodump thread, every shared burnout survival tip, every meme that makes us laugh so hard the echolalia takes over for a week.

So, this Neurodiversity Pride Week, we say: *We belong. We have always belonged.* And we are not waiting for permission to claim space anymore.

"We are not alone. We are not new. We are not mistakes. We are culture."

### "We Are Not a Diagnosis" -By a GRANN Community Member & Contributor

We are more than a cluster of symptoms in someone else's manual. We are culture. We are community. We are rhythm and resistance. We are the quiet in a world that won't stop shouting. We are sound in a world that fears its own echo.

For too long, the stories about us have been written *about* us - not *with* us or *for* us. We've been categorised, pathologised, fixed, framed, and misunderstood. Autistic and Neurodivergent people are often expected to translate ourselves into neurotypical language, tone ourselves down, mask our movements, and measure our worth by how close we come to seeming "normal."
But what if we stopped trying to be understood in their terms, and just wrote our own?

### Culture is Community

Autism is not just a clinical descriptor. It's a shared experience of the world - a culture that includes our ways of moving, thinking, feeling, communicating, and resisting.

We have our own dialects: info-dumps, stim dances, echolalia loops, pebbling.
We gather in groups where parallel play is honoured, not pitied.
We find home in body doubling, in shared silences, chewable jewellery.
We build online spaces that move at the pace of our nervous systems.
This is culture. This is community.
We don't have to wait for permission to celebrate ourselves.

### The System Isn't Broken - It Wasn't Built For Us

Let's be clear: we are not the problem. The systems are. Autistic & Neurodivergent people are disproportionately criminalised, institutionalised, unemployed, and excluded not because of our minds, but because of a world that wasn't designed for us. When people say, "You just need to try harder to fit in," what they mean is "We've decided this way of being is right, and yours is not."
We are taught to mask, suppress, and endure until we burn out.
We are praised for "passing" even as we fall apart.
We are blamed for our distress, then denied the tools that could minimise or prevent it.
What if we stopped asking to be included in their rooms and at their tables, and

started building our own?

Would they notice then? Would they find fault in our craftsmanship, or just tear it down like they do us?



# Unmasking the Writer: Neurodivergent Voices, Neurodivergent Forms

We write the way we live: with spirals, sparks, tangents and depth. Let's say this clearly - if your thoughts don't come out in neat paragraphs and polished soundbites, that doesn't make them less valid.

In fact, the very form of your writing can be *a protest* and *a celebration*. Write like you stim. Write like you're info-dumping to your best friend. Write in fragments, in nonlinear joy, in "this made sense to me at 2am and I'm keeping

it."

Tell us the truth about what it means to be you. About the stim breaks between each sentence. The way you've rewritten this line ten times because masking runs that deep. The way language both holds and fails us. We don't need permission to be messy.

"This paragraph took four days, three naps, one meltdown, and a cup of tea reheated 15 times. That's still writing. That's still worth reading."

"This is Not a Neat Article (and That's the Point)" -by A GRANN Community Member & Contributor Who Writes in Spirals I started this piece four days ago.

Wait...no, five. Because Wednesday didn't count. I was too loud on the inside to

type.

Anyway.

This is a newsletter piece, allegedly.

A tidy little square of writing.

One beginning, one middle, one end.

Except I'm not a straight-line thinker (walker, or talker).

I am spirals.

I am scatter.

I am tabs open in my brain that do not close on cue.

\* Interruption #1:

I stopped writing to rub a soft fabric square between my fingers. (Still doing it. Still soft). Staring blankly in enjoyment. Where were we? Ah. Writing. They tell us "clarity is kindness," but I've never felt more lied to. Clarity, sometimes, is just neuronormative performance. A deep breath before you mask. A sentence that's perfectly paced for someone else's comfort. But this? This is my rhythm. Staccato. Tangent. Stim. (Wait, bird. Hold on.)

# Interruption #2:

Did you know the satin bowerbird *curates* blue objects to woo a mate? Like, literally builds an aesthetic. I respect that. Sometimes I think my writing is a collage. A mash-up of academic brain and poetic override and childhood diary voice. Like my sensory profile but in words:

tactile prose

shiny facts

deep feelings I only express with metaphors.

People ask,

"Why can't you just say what you mean?"

Because I am saying what I mean.

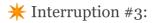
You're just not listening deeply enough. Or listening like you know me at all.

Here is a list of things I deleted while trying to make this "coherent":

A paragraph about stimming during thunderstorms.

A rant about Zoom fatigue and tiny talk boxes.

Three different metaphors about mushrooms. (One was good. I might bring it back later, elsewhere.)



What comes next took me "lost" moments and uncounted minutes. Not because I didn't know what to say. But because I needed to stim, scroll, freeze, dissociate, unfreeze, microwave tea, and blink at a blank doc first. This is not a call to clarity. This is a call to clarity. This is a call to chaos. To the gentle kind. To the kind where our words don't line up neatly but you *feel* them anyway. To the kind where you can leave blanks, because like you, there is still so much still to be written. This is the part where I don't wrap it up with a bow. Because there is no bow. Only threads.

And I'm still crafting.

**(6)** If you're reading this and thinking, "Wait, this is how I write too,"

Hi.

Welcome.

There's a seat for you here - even if you fidget the whole time and forget what you were going to say.

Especially then.

Written under a weighted blanket, with an audio loop of rain and dishwasher hum. Estimated stim breaks: 14. Estimated re-reads: 9. Final draft status: Enough.

### A Note from the Author (Hi, I'm One of You)

This submission took me days more than I thought it would. Not because I didn't know what I wanted to say, but because I had to stim through every paragraph. I started and stopped fourteen times. I lost my train of thought during a threehour deep dive on birds with asymmetrical ears (yes, that's real and incredible).

I forgot to eat. I forgot to stop.

I also gave myself permission to write like this. Like my full self. But I remembered something else:

#### I'm not alone in this.

This is how we write. This is how we live. It's not less. It's not broken. It's *ours*.

Let's Write Our Own Futures Let's reject the shame. Let's write the stims into the story. Let's centre each other's voices and quiet the noise of people who keep speaking for us. Let's treat our neurodivergence not as a diagnosis to manage but a culture to honour.

### We are GRANN. We are neurokin. And we are not here to be fixed. We are here to flourish.



# Stimming as Sacred Rhythm: Autistic Poetics and New Ways of Knowing

As we celebrate **Neurodiversity Pride Week** and **Autistic Pride Day**, we honour not only who we are - but *how* we express, create, and understand the world.

A growing body of Autistic-led writing is reshaping how neurodivergence is represented - not through clinical observation, but through lyricism, metaphor, and sensory truth. This is the rise of *Autistic Poetics*: writing that resists neat categorisation and embraces internal worlds, embodied perception, and nonlinear storytelling.

It doesn't always explain. It doesn't always follow a beginning-middle-end structure. Instead, it *feels* its way through.

You might read a piece where hyperfocus becomes time travel. Where burnout is described as fog swallowing language.

Where stimming is not "self-regulation," but a kind of music only our bodies hear.

This writing honours the *felt* experience of being Autistic - the textures, the overwhelm, the magic. It says:

"The sound of a fridge hum is a scream in a cathedral, and I'm supposed to smile through it." "I spoke three languages by the time I was four. None of them were words."

These aren't "symptoms." They're stories. They're sacred. *Autistic Poetics* doesn't ask to be translated. It exists in its own brilliance. It makes space for echolalia, for rhythm, for repeated phrases and sensory loops. It leaves room for the pause between thoughts, the overwhelm between footsteps. It speaks in fragments. It dares to say *this, too, is language*. So this Pride season, we invite you to: Write your internal weather report. Turn your sensory experience into metaphor. Speak not for permission or approval, but for resonance - with yourself or with those who *already understand*.

Whether it's in a poem, a voice memo, a meme, or a doodle that only you understand - that's still pride. That's still power.

This is how we document our world - on our terms, in our voice, in our language.

### Happy Autistic Pride Day.

May your words sing, echo, hum, or just sit quietly beside you, and still be valid.

### "The Shape of a Tuesday" -By Someone Who Has Always Noticed Too Much

Today the light is too loud. It spills across the tiles in cruel angles, shouting in geometry I can't ignore. People say, "Just open the blinds!" but they don't understand: sunlight has teeth, and sometimes, I bruise just from standing still. I am a tuning fork walking through a world of static. I vibrate with every fluorescent hum, every forgotten beep. The fridge is arguing with the ceiling fan. The tap is dripping in Morse code. The dog three houses down is barking a prophecy I can't unhear. Someone asks me a question. I try to answer. I forget the first word by the time I reach the second. Speech swims away from me, slippery. So I stim. I rub my knuckles, the motion is circular. I press my palm into my sternum. I become the rhythm I cannot find in the conversation. They look at me like I've glitched. But this is not a glitch. It is a sacred pattern. A homecoming. It is how I know. Burnout comes softly. Not with fireworks, but with fog. Everything becomes heavier. My favourite foods feel like cardboard. Even blinking becomes a task to remember. And still, they say: "You were fine yesterday." But yesterday, I was surviving. Today, I am a ghost. Hyperfocus is my sanctuary. Not obsession. Not pathology. But a portal. Give me an hour and a niche and no interruptions. Watch me dissolve into the pixels of research.

Let me map the language of birdsong or rebuild ancient cities from coded texts.

Let me speak fluent mushroom taxonomy.

Let me return, not emptied, but full.

Let me live there, just for a while.

I am not a malfunction.

I operate as designed.

I won't do small talk.

But I will notice the way your voice falters when you're sad.

I will remember the name of your childhood pet and how you stir your tea.

Somewhere out there, someone is rubbing their feet together like a cricket right

now. They don't know I'm thinking of them. But I am. This is the shape of my Tuesday. It may not look like yours. But it's real. And it's *enough*.



(c) Want to add your voice and contribute to a future GRANN newsletter or collective piece? Share your own neuro-wiggly, tangential truths. Your inner echolalia songs, or creatively scribbled stims. All forms of communication are welcome.

<u>Email GRANN</u>, send a voice note, or a meme. Whatever fits your brain. Let's archive the beauty of our ways of knowing. We will hold what you share with care. Submissions always open.

# Body Doubling & Parallel Play Sessions -Launching June 16!

At GRANN, we believe everyone deserves to feel safe and seen, especially during Pride. So, we're delighted to launce something special this week:

GRANN Body Doubling & Parallel Play Sessions
We're excited to share that GRANN's online Body Doubling and Parallel
Play sessions will begin today, Monday 16 June, as part of a new communityled trial!

These gentle, *neuro-affirming spaces* are here to support motivation, connection, and co-regulation - whether you're working through a to-do list, starting something creative, or just want company while doing your own thing.

Body Doubling: Need help getting started or staying on task? Join a quiet virtual space where we sit together - no pressure, no expectations, just coexisting.

Parallel Play: Crave presence over conversation? This is a shared space for peaceful companionship - bring your knitting, drawing, admin, or just yourself. No demands here.

Prefer 1:1 support? We're trialling individual sessions too. Let us know what feels best for you and chat with our Psychosocial Rehabilitation Consultant (& Rehabilitation Counsellor/Child Educator in training)

🗓 Trial Timetable

Monday 16th June: 10am – 11am Body Doubling Tuesday 17th June: 2pm – 3pm Parallel Play Wednesday 18th June: 10am – 11am Body Doubling Thursday 19th June: 3pm – 4pm Body Doubling Friday 20th June: 9am – 10am Parallel Play

We're still taking **Expressions of Interest** for both individual and small group sessions (2–8 people max).

📧 Email us at: **enquiries.grann@gmail.com** 

Or message us on **Messenger** Let us know what kind of support feels good for you. These sessions are **community-led**, **flexible**, and **low-demand** - come

exactly as you are.

More info will be shared on Facebook and in upcoming newsletters. We're so excited to sit beside you, in whatever way feels safe.



# GRANN Website Launching June 18, for Autistic Pride Day!

We are *so proud* to announce that the official **GRANN website** -<u>www.grann.com.au</u> - will be launching **Wednesday, June 18**, in celebration of **Autistic Pride Day**!

GRANN is an Autistic and Neurodivergent-led organisation built on community care, authenticity, and connection, and now we have a digital home that reflects

all of that and more.

What you'll find on the site:

- About GRANN and our values
- Event info & session bookings (like Body Doubling & Parallel Play)
  - Resources and guides for neuro-affirming living
    - Newsletter archives and GRANN updates
- A growing hub for Autistic and Neurodivergent-led projects and advocacy

This website has been designed with **accessibility**, **clarity**, **and community needs at the core** - no clutter, no jargon, just a welcoming space made *for and by* Autistic & Neurodivergent people.

Why launch on Autistic Pride Day?

Because **Autistic Pride is about self-definition, visibility, and celebration**. We're proud of who we are - and proud to offer this space where our community can find support, connection, and each other. We can't wait to share it with you. Visit <u>www.grann.com.au</u> starting June 18 and let us know what you think. We value your feedback in making the site more accessible and community minded.



### **Books about Autism and Neurodivergence**

### Identity, Advocacy & Lived Experience

*Your Safe Space: Creating A Home Where Autistic Children Thrive* by Jo Gaunt A compassionate guide offering practical strategies to create nurturing, sensory-friendly environments that support autistic children's growth and well-being.

### Drifts by Natasha Burge

A lyrical memoir exploring the author's experiences of displacement and selfdiscovery across continents, culminating in her late diagnosis of autism and a deeper understanding of her Neurodivergent identity.

### Convenience Store Woman by Sayaka Murata

An offbeat tale of Keiko, a woman who finds solace and identity in the routines of a convenience store, challenging societal norms and expectations of conformity.

### The Deep by Rivers Solomon

An Afrofuturist novella about the descendants of African slave women thrown overboard, now living underwater, exploring themes of memory, trauma, and identity through the lens of speculative fiction.

### Raising the SENbetweeners by Lisa Lloyd

A candid and humorous guide for parents navigating the challenges of raising Neurodivergent children who don't neatly fit into mainstream or special education categories. Now it All Makes Sense by Alex Partridge a candid memoir detailing the author's journey from founding major digital media platforms to grappling with mental health challenges, culminating in a life-changing ADHD diagnosis at 34.

### Middle Grade & Tween Reads

*Vivi Conway and the Sword of Legend* by Lizzie Huxley-Jones A magical adventure featuring Vivi, an autistic girl who discovers her destiny tied to Welsh legends, embracing her Neurodivergence as a source of strength.

*Moojag and the Auticode Secret* by N.E McMorran A dystopian, cli-fi mystery where neurodivergent protagonists uncover secrets in a society that suppresses difference, celebrating neurodiversity and resistance.

*Rune: The Tale of a Thousand Faces* by Carlos Sanchez An imaginative journey of self-discovery as Rune, a shapeshifter, navigates a world that fears difference, learning to embrace his unique identity.

### Young Adult & Teen Fiction

Ellen Outside the Lines by A J Sass

Ellen, a queer, Autistic teen, embarks on a school trip to Spain, facing challenges that push her out of her comfort zone and into personal growth.

#### Tornado Brain by Cat Patrick

A Neurodivergent girl investigates her friend's disappearance, using her unique perspective to unravel the mystery while navigating complex emotions.

#### Under Dogs by Chris Bonnello

In a world where Neurodivergent teens are underestimated, a group of misfits becomes unlikely heroes, challenging oppressive systems with their distinct abilities.

### *Tilly in Technicolor* by Mazey Eddings

A heartfelt romance between two Neurodivergent teens who find connection and understanding amidst the chaos of a European internship.

#### Notes on My Family by Emily Critchley

A witty and poignant coming-of-age novel narrated by 13-year-old Lou, who observes her eccentric family with sharp insight and dry humour, highlighting themes of identity and belonging.

At the End of Everything: The World Never Wanted Them. They Refuse to be Forgotten by Marieke Nijkamp A gripping YA novel where teens abandoned in a juvenile facility during a deadly plague must band together to survive, confronting themes of trust, resilience, and systemic neglect.



### *Neurokindred* <u>http://neurokindred.com/</u>

A therapeutic journey for those in the post identification space, reflecting on what happens next and what could have been.

*Viv Dawes, Autistic Advocate* <u>https://www.autisticadvocate.co.uk/</u>

A neuro-affirming, LGBTQIA affirming and trauma informed advocate, trainer, consultant and author.

Dr Alice Nicholls

<u>https://www.dralicenicholls.com/</u> Learn how to get what you need to live an inspired and energised life free from

Autistic Burnout.

Autism Centre of Excellence <u>https://www.griffith.edu.au/research/arts-education-law/institute-educationalresearch/themes/autism-centre-excellence</u> Lead positive change by learning about autism, develop your specialist knowledge and provide great support for autistic people.

> Sandra Thom-Jones, The Autistic Professor https://www.autisticprofessor.com/

A proudly autistic academic, advocate and mother - sharing her views and learning experiences as a woman 'on the spectrum'.

Amanda Moses Psychology

https://www.amandamosespsychology.com.au/

A collection of training, resources, and free content all aimed at helping you learn evidence-based psychological practice in a digestible way.

### **Resource Spotlight**



### Const forget to share your thoughts on the GRANN Inc. Name Change Survey closes end of June

Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc. is evolving! We're exploring a name that better reflects our vision, values, and growing impact as an Autistic & Neurodivergent-led social enterprise.

We're committed to keeping the acronym "GRANN Inc." to honour our roots, but we'd love your views in helping shape what it stands for moving forward. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts by filling out the form via the link below or via the QR code.

### https://forms.office.com/r/8f59ac9RE9

Thank you for contributing to the future of GRANN Inc. Your views help ensure we stay community-led, inclusive, and affirming of Autistic and Neurodivergent identity.



# **Rosella Park School** is excited to announce that they will be hosting a **Post-School Support Expo** this September!

They are currently inviting agencies, organisations, and service providers to register their interest in exhibiting. This is a fantastic opportunity to share your programs and services with senior students preparing for life beyond school. Check out the brochure for more details and how to get involved.

Date: Tuesday 2nd September Time: 9:30am - 11: 30am Contact: Jo-Anne Leeson at <u>jlees37@eq.edu.au</u> or ph: (07) 4976 8333

Know a group or service that might be interested? Please share the brochure with them - let's make this a valuable and inclusive event for all senior students across our district!



# Rockabilby & Neurokin Events- Supporting RAD Artists

Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?

Did you know that RAD artists are the lowest paid people in the Australian creative industries?

Want to be part of a collective action to improve the payment and representation of and services for RAD artists?

Rockabilby & Neurokin Events are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf and Disabled artists from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.

We won't let RAD artists die from exposure! Featured artists will be paid \$10 per tshirt sold with their design on it. Express your interest & submit a design (they don't have to relate to disability) <u>https://forms.gle/Wcd4enEdL9sMQTsXA</u>







### **Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network**

Inc.

enquiries.grann@gmail.com

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