

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Topic:

Authenticity, Projection & the Double Empathy Problem

Purpose:

To explore why interactions between neurodivergent and neurotypical people can feel difficult and how to create safer relational spaces.

Opening Reflection (5 minutes- 10 minutes)

Ask participants:

- Have you ever left an interaction feeling disliked but unsure why?
- Have you ever felt misunderstood without conflict happening?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable or unsettled about an encounter but can't quite connect to what has made you feel this way?

Optional grounding:

“Let's talk about patterns, not blame.”

Key Ideas to Share:

- Miscommunication is mutual
- Difference disrupts expectation
- Discomfort can come from insecurity
- Authenticity challenges social scripts
- PDA, ADHD, Autism and AuDHD often amplify this
- This is relational, not personal

Group Discussion Questions:

What does “authentic communication” look like for you?

When have you felt pressured to mask? Why?

How do you know when someone is uncomfortable?

What assumptions do people make about you?

How can communities reduce relational pressure?

What makes communication feel safe?

Activity (Optional)

“Expectation vs Reality”

In pairs or within the group:

- One person describes a social situation
 - The other/s identifies:
 - expected behaviour
 - actual behaviour
- where misunderstanding could occur

Discuss:

What changed the meaning?

Closing Reflection:

Ask:

“What would change if we saw miscommunication as mutual instead of personal?”

Facilitator Notes:

Avoid:

- diagnosing
- correcting experiences
- pathologising

Encourage:

- shared language
- lived experience
- non-judgment
- curiosity