

# Different Types of Listening



This resource was produced by Indigo therapists with funding received from Telethon 2021

---

*All bodies and brains learn and listen, not all in the same way.*

*“Whole Body Listening” is a common classroom strategy where children show they are listening by sitting, looking, and being still and quiet.*

*For many neurodivergent individuals, these skills are extremely difficult, may cause stress, or are simply not possible.*

*When asked to “sit still”, “pay attention”, or “look”, these individuals are being asked to perform their listening to suit others.*

---

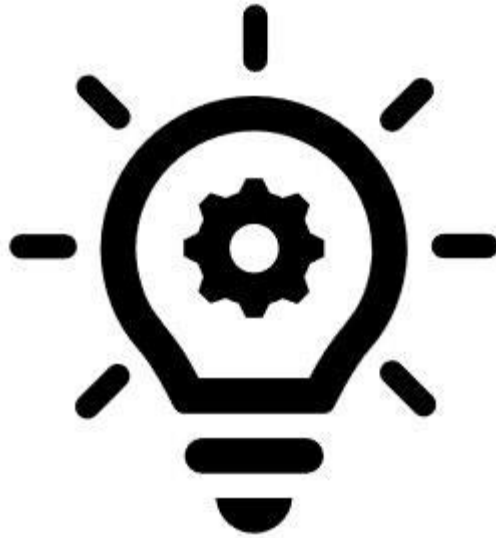
## What is Neurodiversity

---

*Neurodiversity means that someone thinks, learns, attends, processes differently to the way the majority (neurotypical) of society does.*

*It is a term coined in the 1990s to describe a new social justice movement towards neurological diversity being recognised, accepted, and respected.*

---



## Aim

---

*To improve recognition of neurodiversity in the classroom.*

*To reduce the extra pressures faced by neurodivergent students navigating a neurotypical world.*

*To teach children and adults that all bodies and brains learn and listen in different ways.*

---

**Whole body listening**  
**A tool, not a rule**

Brains process information differently

Ears need different noises or no extra noises

Some people move or flap their hands as a way to regulate themselves

Some people need to move their body to stay regulated, attend, and feel comfortable

Some people need to move their body to stay regulated, attend, and feel comfortable

Eye contact can be uncomfortable, overwhelming, difficult, or even painful

Verbal stims can help processing sensory input like chewing can help regulate

brain thinking

eyes looking

ears listening

mouth closed

hands in lap

crossed legs

quiet hands

calm feet

(Sautter, 2016)

---

*“If I’m asked not to fidget, it becomes hard for me to listen because I’m so focused on not fidgeting. I’m not moving, but I’m not listening either.”*

Adult with ADHD, reflecting on experiences in education

---

## Recognising, accepting, and respecting neurodiversity in the classroom

---

### **Recognise:**

---

- *What does listening look like for different students*
    - *Talk to the student*
    - *Talk to families*
    - *Talk to therapy teams*
  - *Work together to look for signs the student is listening*
- 

### **Accept:**

---

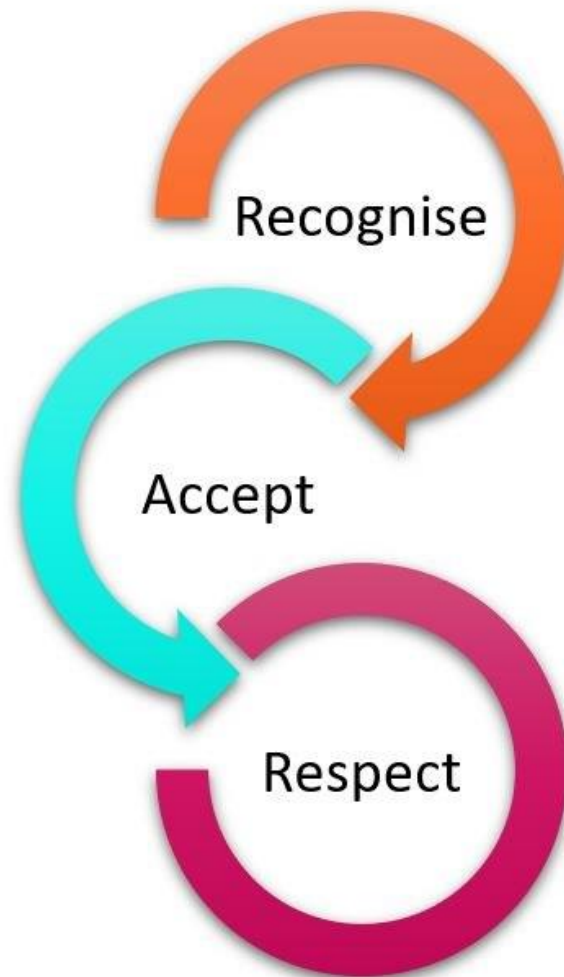
- *Use visual tools to talk about listening looking different for everyone (toys, wall posters, sorting...)*
    - *Incorporate visuals into everyday discussions*
  - *Talk explicitly about how different students are listening*
    - *Reinforce with all adult visitors to the classroom*
-

---

*Respect:*

---

- *Use language that includes a diverse range of experiences*
  - *Help incorporate accommodations into the classroom*
    - *Help students advocate for themselves*
    - *Help create individual visual tools*
- 



## How I listen

The diagram consists of five vertical rectangular boxes of different colors, each with a specific icon and text. From left to right: a light blue box with eyes and 'My eyes...'; a pink box with an ear and 'I need...'; an orange box with hands and 'My hands...'; a light red box with a person and 'My body...'; and a yellow box with lips and 'My mouth...'. Below these five boxes is a white box with a dashed line and the text 'My name'.

### Plan to support different types of listening

---

*It can be helpful to think about how different students listen in order to ensure their needs are met.*

*In the planning process, consider what the student might be doing when they are listening:*

---

- *What are their eyes doing*
  - *What are their hands doing*
  - *What sounds seem to help / hinder*
  - *What are their bodies doing*
  - *What are their mouths doing*
-



For more information

---

*For more information visit our website: Telethon: Country Kids Communicate  
([indigosolutions.org.au](http://indigosolutions.org.au))<sup>1</sup>*

*Download this as a PDF document: Different Types of Listening<sup>2</sup>*

 *Phone: 08 9381 0600*

 *Web: [www.indigosolutions.org.au](http://www.indigosolutions.org.au)*

 *Email: [help@indigosolution.org.au](mailto:help@indigosolution.org.au)<sup>3</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.indigosolutions.org.au/our-services/services-for-schools/telethon-country-kids-communicate>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.indigosolutions.org.au/docs/default-source/telethon-resource-sheets/02\\_differenttypesoflistening.pdf](https://www.indigosolutions.org.au/docs/default-source/telethon-resource-sheets/02_differenttypesoflistening.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><mailto:help@indigosolution.org.au>