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**Adventures in Neurodivergent Group Relating: On the Facilitation of a Mutual Aid Group
for Neurodivergent Therapists and Counsellors**

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Since the summer of 2023, borne out of my desire to foster inclusive, neuroaffirming spaces, I have facilitated a weekly 1.5-hour-long virtual mutual aid group for neurodivergent psychotherapists and counsellors. The membership body, presently some 25 persons with a core group of 5-6 regular attendees, has been international—largely from across England, Ireland, and Scotland with some tuning in from the European Union and United States.

Membership is closed in the sense that individuals are screened for interest before being added to the mailing list, but open in that attendance is never mandatory and people who receive the mailings can come one week or the next, no questions asked, as energy levels, schedules, interest, and other circumstances of life allow. There is no requirement for participation upon attendance; members are free to converse verbally or through text chat, or observe as they are able, interested, and comfortable. Some people have attended once or a few times and then not returned, or attended once and returned weeks or months later. Others join occasionally or make a point to attend as often as they can. Membership is, to this point, free of charge and attendees come from a variety of therapeutic training backgrounds and modalities.

Conversation is wide-ranging. We discuss—passionately, at times—matters of therapeutic theory and practice and share some of the happenings in our daily lives. Sometimes one or another of us shares new learnings from a recent training or a book which was of benefit or

interest. We sit together in silence. We examine our different meanings and experiences of being neurodivergent. We read poetry and quotes by which we find meaning and inspiration; discuss television shows or movies. Other times, there is an outpouring of frustration, grief, sadness, irritation, or similar emotion from one or another of us. We celebrate wins and hold space through losses. Often, our dogs or cats make an (always welcome) appearance.

The group is self-sustaining. Members sometimes still meet when I am unable but their schedules allow. We have, to date, cultivated among ourselves a very real sense of community and I regularly perceive a genuine sense of care and concern present in our virtual meetings. Meetings are a place for personal as well as collective reflection, somewhere we can understand ourselves as well as each other. There is no requirement that conversation be strictly cognitive/intellectual or strictly feelings-focused.

One person fondly refers to the group as her “sanity-saving” space. Others enjoy it for its come-as-you-are quality, by which they can just “be” without pressures to conform or mask. The atmosphere is, in a word, *warm* and it has been my experience that those who have joined our endeavor in co-creation of interpersonal space really value having this time with like-minded others, whether that be for the values, interests, work, neurotypes, or other qualities we share or because of what potentialities the space offers.

As facilitator, a term I use loosely, I am not interested in holding power in the group. Although I originated the meetings and send out a weekly email containing the video conferencing link and reminding people of the meeting time (as well as any week-specific changes thereto), I diffuse as much as possible within the meetings themselves any sense of myself as “*the leader*” of the group. Members may feel I am, but to me it is *our* rather than solely *my* group. The group, for me, is a social “we-space” in which I and anyone else in attendance can

openly receive and be received by others. I can, there, transcend the uninformed and, perhaps at times, ignorant “I-space” of my head—alone with my thoughts; isolated within my own perspective, perceptions, and preconceptions—to a more empathic, socially-enjoined place in which I, at least temporarily, understand others just as they are. It is about seeing and accepting others without pretense, without pre-supposing their myriad experiences of the world.

I am very laid back in my “facilitation.” I do not have goals, hopes, or agendas for the group or its members; I am just there to hold space for whatever comes up within whomever shows up to each meeting. Most often, I am quiet—I much prefer to allow space for, as well as engage in my own, quiet introspection. It is, moreover, the collective’s response, person-to-person, which matters, rather than my own as some elevated “leader of the group.”

As I wrote recently (Bolton, 2024), what goes on, for me, in relating to people, is fundamentally about receiving and giving in a curious manner that occurs without any expectation on my part. What really matters to me is providing a safe space for psychological exploration; from this perhaps, or perhaps not, the person or persons I am with will in turn undergo some change which is meaningful to them. Indeed, “[w]hat is most essential is that the person I am with is and feels seen as a person and that I am real and genuine with them. I give them space in which to unfold and, potentially, grow, in their way of being while receiving the gift that is the witnessing of that unfolding” (Bolton, 2024, p. 39).

Regardless of its nature, moment-to-moment sharing in the group has never failed to be received, even if in a way the person sharing does not hope for or expect. Perhaps someone has an objection, or an encouraging word, for what has just been shared, or a resource; or the moment is received with a warm nod and comfortable silence. Congruent and incongruent

functioning and relating alike, whatever each looks like for group members in the moment, is embraced.

This has been just a short statement on my experiences in and perception of the group. If you are a neurodivergent therapist or counselor, at any stage of training or your career, interested in joining our weekly adventures in neurodivergent group relating, please reach out at

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Reference

Bolton, M. J. (2024). What is essential is invisible to the eye: An account of person-centered curiosity. *The Person-Centered Journal*, 27(1), 36–45. <https://adpca.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/PCJ271.pdf>