Superpowers Debate

Let’s talk about it

You might hear people say that being neurodivergent is a 'superpower'. While this is usually meant as a compliment, the community has mixed feelings about it.

Here are a few reasons why this word can be tricky:

- It can hide the hard parts. Focusing only on special talents risks ignoring the practical support, adjustments, and accommodations that people actually need
- It creates pressure to be amazing. People can feel like they have to be a 'genius' or 'extraordinary' just to be accepted
- It doesn't fit everyone. Many people feel that their neurodivergence is a disability, not a special power

Recognising strengths is great, but it's also important to acknowledge the barriers people face every day. Here are some ways to keep the conversation inclusive.

- Let the person decide. If someone calls their own neurodivergence a superpower, that's their choice. If they don't, don't use that term with them
- Be specific about strengths. Instead of using 'superpower', try complimenting a specific skill like great problem-solving or creative thinking
- Offer support regardless. Make sure people feel valued for who they are, even on days when they aren't feeling super

Useful links

- From Deficit To Superpowers: Is It Ableist To Focus On Neurodivergent Strengths?
- Beyond Stigmas and Superpowers: A Balanced Neurodivergence Narrative
- Musing on ableism, neurodiversity, shame and superpowers