

PUBLISHING NEURODIVERGENT AUTHORS: ETHICAL COLLABORATION STRATEGIES

GW Ethics in Publishing
Conference | Dr. Angela Kingdon

NEURODIVERGENT AUTHORS STRUGGLE IN PUBLISHING

- Neurodivergence in society vs. representation in publishing
- Estimated 15–20% of the population is neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.) Because of monotropism this is likely to be HIGHER in Publishing.
- Neurodivergent authors (and frankly publishing staff) needlessly navigate sensory challenges, executive functioning obstacles, and inaccessible communication styles alone.
- With more awareness of ND needs, authors will more easily meet milestones and deliver stronger final manuscripts.

ETHICS FRAMING: WHY THIS MATTERS

- Publishing equity is not only about who gets published, but how the process is structured.
- Current processes often require masking, leading to burnout and stalled projects.
- Harm: Exclusion of unique voices, loss of trust, reduced diversity of thought.
- Benefit of adapted practices: Retention of ND authors, stronger author–publisher relationships, more authentic and original work.

FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATIONS



- Offer multiple communication modes (email, chat, shared docs, video, etc.)
- Encourage both spoken and written participation
- Share preferences early, minimize jargon, and provide agendas in advance
- Summarize key points and check for shared understanding

PACING WITH CARE



- Normalize different working styles and rhythms
- Allow asynchronous decision-making
- Build in time for reflection and iteration
- Prioritize emotional regulation and flexibility over rigid deadlines

REFLEXIVE COLLABORATION



- Discuss neurotypes, sensory needs, and working preferences openly (like sharing pronouns)
- Identify potential clashes without blame and explore compassionate compromises
- Revisit agreements regularly and adjust processes collaboratively

A QUICK-REFERENCE GUIDE FOR ASSESSING AND IMPROVING WORKFLOWS FOR NEURODIVERGENT AUTHORS

- Discuss mutual executive functioning, sensory sensitivities, and emotional regulation needs openly at beginning of the working relationship leading by example.
- Review templates, tools, or processes for cognitive accessibility making adjustments/accommodations as needed.
- Provide multiple communication options (email, shared docs, calls, video chat with transcription and/or video on/off)
- Discuss in advance how feedback is best received. Assess bottom-up vs. top-down processing style
- Offer off-line processing time. Agree to no on-the-spot decisions
- Assign a point person outside of the dyad to go to for empathy mismatches.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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