

The Neurodivergent Tapestry:  
Rethinking Difference & Strengths  
Part of The Unfolding Neurodivergent Journey Series  
Video Course  
Steven Kapp, PhD

Video Course  
CPD hours: 3 / CE credits: 3



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**Opening the Series: Why This Session Matters**

The neurodiversity paradigm has moved from activist circles into clinical conversations—but what does it actually mean for therapeutic practice? **This opening session cuts through the buzzwords to examine how reframing neurodivergence as natural human variation reshapes everything from assessment to intervention.**

Dr. Steven Kapp brings a rare combination of rigorous academic research and insider perspective to this foundational question. As both a leading researcher in autism and disability studies and an autistic scholar, he bridges the gap between what the science actually shows and what neurodivergent communities have been saying for decades. His work has consistently challenged deficit-based narratives, not through rhetoric, but through empirical evidence about how developmental difference functions in real lives.

This session explores the historical roots of how we've understood autism and related neurotypes—from early pathologisation through the emergence of neurodiversity as a social movement and scientific framework. Kapp will trace how cultural narratives have shaped clinical practice, often in ways that created harm while claiming to help. More importantly, he'll demonstrate what changes when we start from a position of cognitive pluralism rather than disorder.

For clinicians, this represents a paradigm shift with immediate practical implications. How do you assess strengths when your training focused on deficits? What does "support" mean when the goal isn't normalisation? How do you hold space for genuine struggle while resisting the impulse to pathologise



difference itself? These aren't abstract philosophical questions—they determine whether therapy becomes a site of validation or another place where neurodivergent clients learn to perform acceptability.

Kapp's approach is neither naively celebratory nor traditionally medical. **He examines the real challenges neurodivergent people face—while locating many of those challenges in systemic barriers, sensory environments, and relational misattunement rather than inherent pathology.** This distinction matters tremendously for how clinicians conceptualise their role and measure therapeutic success.

The session moves between three scales: the biological (what creates neurological difference), the social (how environments and power structures shape experience), and the clinical (what actually helps). You'll leave with a framework for thinking about neurodivergence that acknowledges both individual variation and collective identity, both neurodevelopmental differences and disability justice, both scientific rigor and lived expertise.

This is the foundation the rest of the series builds from—an invitation to examine not just what you know about neurodivergence, but how you know it, and whose voices have been centred or marginalised in that knowledge.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the core principles of the neurodiversity paradigm and its implications for therapeutic practice
2. Identify how historical and cultural narratives have shaped perceptions of neurodivergence
3. Apply neurodivergence-affirming principles to promote inclusion and strengths-based understanding in clinical contexts

### About Steven Kapp

**Dr. Steven Kapp** is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Portsmouth and a leading researcher in autism, disability studies, and neurodiversity. As an autistic scholar, his work combines rigorous empirical research with advocacy for participatory approaches that centre neurodivergent voices. His research has examined topics ranging from self-advocacy and identity to the ethics of autism interventions, consistently demonstrating how neurodivergent perspectives reshape scientific questions themselves. Kapp's publications have influenced both academic discourse and clinical practice, offering evidence-based challenges to deficit models while articulating what neurodiversity-affirming support actually looks like.

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