

Neurodivergent Family Systems:  
Intergenerational Patterns & Relational Dynamics  
Part of The Unfolding Neurodivergent Journey Series  
Video Course  
Samantha Hiew, PhD

Video Course  
CPD hours: 2



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#### When the Whole Family Is Wired Differently

Most clinical training treats neurodivergence as an individual phenomenon—a child to assess, an adult to diagnose. But neurodivergence doesn't exist in isolation. It runs through family systems, shapes intergenerational patterns, and creates relational dynamics that conventional family therapy frameworks often miss entirely.

**Dr. Samantha Hiew brings a rare trifecta to this work: research expertise in neurodivergence, lived experience as an AuDHDer diagnosed at 40, and deep practical knowledge from building one of the world's largest communities for neurodivergent women.** Her perspective illuminates what becomes visible when you stop treating neurodivergence as the "identified patient's problem" and start seeing it as a family ecology.

This session examines the lived reality of multi-neurotype households where communication styles, sensory needs, and emotional regulation patterns don't just differ—they sometimes actively clash. Where one person's necessary stimming is another's sensory nightmare. Where a parent's executive function challenges intersect with a child's need for structure. Where undiagnosed neurodivergence in parents creates invisible labor, inherited shame, and patterns of disconnection that span generations.

Hiew's framework centres intersectionality in ways that transform clinical understanding. How does late diagnosis in mothers—often triggered by their children's assessments—reshape family narratives? How do cultural expectations about motherhood, gender performance, and "good parenting" compound the



challenges neurodivergent parents face? How do siblings navigate households where one child's needs for routine conflict with another's need for spontaneity?

The session moves between systemic patterns and practical strategies. You'll learn to recognise the signs of inherited narratives—where parents unconsciously transmit their own experiences of shame, masking, or misunderstanding to children still forming self-concept. You'll explore how diagnostic timing shapes family dynamics differently: the adolescent who grows up validated versus the parent discovering their neurodivergence decades into parenthood. You'll examine how intersecting factors—race, class, migration, queer identity—layer additional complexity onto neurodivergent family life.

**What makes Hiew's approach distinctive is her refusal to pathologise while acknowledging real struggle.**

Neurodivergent families aren't broken systems needing repair—they're systems operating under frameworks designed for different neurologies. The therapeutic task isn't normalisation but translation: helping family members develop shared language, recognise different nervous system needs as legitimate rather than problematic, and build communication patterns that honour rather than erase neurodivergent ways of being.

This means moving beyond surface-level accommodation toward deeper relational repair. It means helping families identify where disconnection comes from misattunement rather than malice. It means supporting parents in processing their own diagnostic journeys while holding space for their children's experiences. It means recognising that co-regulation looks different when multiple family members have different regulation needs.

For clinicians, this session offers a framework for working with neurodivergent families that starts from validation rather than deficit, from curiosity rather than correction. You'll leave with concrete strategies for facilitating conversations that centre multiple truths, reduce shame, and build toward sustainable patterns of connection that respect everyone's neurobiology.

### Learning Objectives

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

1. Identify common patterns of intergenerational neurodivergence and their impact on communication, attachment, and family functioning
2. **Recognise how intersectional factors—such as gender, culture, and diagnosis timing—influence identity formation within neurodivergent families**
3. Support families in developing shared neuro-affirming language that reduces shame and fosters mutual understanding
4. Apply practical strategies to strengthen co-regulation, communication, and resilience within multi-neurotype households
5. Facilitate family therapy conversations that centre validation, curiosity, and collaborative meaning-making rather than correction or normalisation

### About Samantha Hiew

**Dr. Samantha Hiew** is the author of *Tip of the ADHD Iceberg*, a compassionate and practical guide to navigating life after diagnosis and learning how to self-advocate with clarity and courage. An AuDHDer, scientist, and storyteller, she is the founder of ADHD Girls, a platform that has transformed how the world understands and supports neurodivergent women and global communities. Diagnosed with ADHD at 40 after years of feeling lost in a world that didn't quite fit, she built the community she wished had existed for her. With a PhD in cancer research and communications, Samantha bridges science and story to humanise neurodiversity. Through her pioneering AuDHD Advanced Practitioner Programme and Neurodivergent Phoenix Convention, she brings together lived experience, trauma-informed science, and collective healing.



She has spoken to more than 100,000 people, trained over 100 FTSE companies, and led landmark events including *ADHD & Autism in Women: Missed, Dismissed & Reclaiming Your Voice*. Recognised as a Difference Maker by PBS America and Positive Role Model for Gender at the National Diversity Awards, her work has been featured in *The Guardian*, *Forbes*, *Psychology Today*, and numerous other major media outlets.

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