

BIFF and FFC for ADHD Women

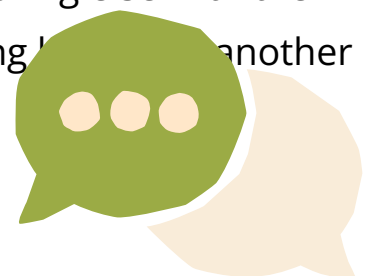
Differences in Neurotypical and Neurodivergent experiences

As a neurodivergent woman, it's very important to have a way to communicate effectively. You may experience the world differently than neurotypicals. It's important for you to be able to communicate your experiences and how you understand the world.

Here are some of the ways your experience might differ:

Emotions: As an ADHD or autistic woman, you may experience emotions more intensely and might often need to regulate them to prevent feeling overwhelmed. Being taught the wrong communication approach can exacerbate these issues.

Recognition of Emotions: You may be proficient at recognizing congruent emotions while struggling with incongruent ones. For example, a person saying one thing but communicating something else with their body language might confuse you, or saying one thing but another might as well.



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Differences in Neurotypical and Neurodivergent experiences

Empathy: It's possible that you have high affective empathy (feeling what others feel) but low cognitive empathy (understanding others' thoughts) because you think differently about the world.

Nonverbal Communication and Body Cues: You may often be sensitive to the energy of others, which could allow you to understand nonverbal cues and body language well, especially amongst other neurodivergent people, or you may have become adept at reading energy as a compensatory mechanism.

Words: Words may be highly significant to you, especially if you are autistic. You could value deep meaning, and detailed information, and often take things literally.



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Differences in Neurotypical and Neurodivergent experiences

Social Rules: You may have your own social norms that differ from neurotypical ones.

Different Value System: It's possible that you value internal achievements more than external rewards. For example, many autistic people prize honesty, justice, and truth over social norms.

Skills and Abilities: Your abilities may vary based on your environment and stress levels. This might be important to communicate.

Reactions to Stress, Pain, and Overwhelm: You may be hypersensitive to pain, including social rejection, and might respond to extreme stress with meltdowns or shutdowns, which can be misinterpreted by neurotypical individuals.



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Differences in Neurotypical and Neurodivergent experiences

Neurotypical people use some strategies in communication that may differ from adhd and autistic or audhd (autistic and adhd) people. Some notable differences include:

- **Small Talk:** Neurotypicals often use small talk as a form of social bonding, or to begin connections. On the other hand, many neurodivergent individuals, particularly those who are autistic, find small talk less engaging and prefer more direct, in-depth conversations on subjects of interest.
- **Handling Silence:** Neurotypical people often fill silence in a conversation to maintain a social connection, whereas neurodivergent individuals, especially autistic individuals, might be comfortable with longer pauses, using them for processing information and formulating responses.



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Differences in Neurotypical and Neurodivergent experiences

Some ways neurotypical people might communicate differently.

- Indirect Communication: Neurotypical people frequently use indirect language, hints, or nonverbal cues to express thoughts or make requests. However, neurodivergent individuals communicate more directly, **prioritizing clarity and specificity.**
- Social Conformity: Neurotypical individuals often adhere to social norms and conventions, even if they're unspoken. However, neurodivergent individuals **place less emphasis on conformity, constantly prioritizing honesty, authenticity, and individuality.**
- Emotion Regulation: While neurotypical individuals often modulate their emotional reactions based on social expectations, neurodivergent individuals **might express their emotions more freely and intensely.**



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Understanding Alexithymia

Alexithymia is a personality trait affecting approximately 10% of the population, characterized by difficulty in identifying, describing, and communicating emotions. This trait is **particularly prevalent among neurodiverse individuals such as those with ADHD, Autism,** and certain mental health conditions.

Experts like Dr. Megan Neff believe that alexithymia, **not autism or ADHD**, contributes to the difficulty in identifying feelings in oneself and others, as well as deciphering social cues in situations with neurotypical people.

Tools to improve emotional identification can be helpful for people with alexithymia, such as **body scans** or the **feelings wheel**.

However, **communication “formulas” that use feelings as part of their recipe** can also induce stress in those with alexithymia.



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Non Violent Communication

When searching for a suitable model for communication, Nonviolent Communication (NVC) seemed like an excellent choice for our flourish group because it inherently supports **self-compassion, empathy,** and authentic **self-expression.**

Nonviolent Communication was developed by Dr. Marshall Rosenberg, a clinical psychologist, in the 1960s. Driven by his desire to understand the root cause of violence in the world, Rosenberg sought to create a tool that could help individuals communicate more compassionately and effectively, thereby minimizing conflict. This method emphasizes empathy, genuine respect, and understanding. It aids in the expression of honest feelings and needs while simultaneously considering the feelings and needs of others.

NVC encourages individuals to navigate conflicts effectively, perceive feelings as indicators of needs, and understand universal human needs. However, NVC might present challenges for neurodivergent people. Because **feeling finding can be challenging for many neurodiverse people,** NVC might cause anxiety or be an unhelpful model of communication. Despite this potential challenge suitable adaptations can be made.



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Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

The Four-Step Process of NVC

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) can be broken down into a four-step process:

- **Observation:** State the facts we observe that are affecting our sense of well-being.
- Feel free to share how we **feel** about what we observe. The challenging, vulnerable, and sometimes dangerous (part at work or with unsafe people) or complex (if you struggle with alexithymia).
- **Needs/Values:** State what we need or value that is causing our feelings.
- **Request:** The concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives.

Applying the NVC Model: An Example

Here's an example:

- **Observation:** "When I see you leaving the dishes in the sink..."
- **Feeling:** "...I feel frustrated, angry, hopeless, overwhelmed, etc..."
- **Needs/Values:** "...because I have a need for cleanliness in the spaces we share."
- **Request:** "Could you please do your dishes after your meal?"

NVC's key principle is that it emphasizes compassion as the motivation for action rather than fear, guilt, or shame. It's all about empathetic understanding and giving from the heart.



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Fact Focused Communication

The Facts-Focused Communication Formula (FFC)

The Facts-Focused Communication Formula (FFC) is modeled after NVC. It prioritizes observation, facts, needs, and requests. It serves as a practical tool for addressing situations that reduce emotional complexity, which can be particularly beneficial if you deal with alexithymia and struggle with emotional identification.

Applying the FFC: Steps and Examples

The first step of the FFC involves objectively stating what you have observed without adding personal judgments or evaluations. Let's take the example of a colleague's belongings frequently spilling into your workspace.

Step 1: **Observation:** "Your items frequently extend into my desk area."

Step 2: **Facts:** "It's challenging to locate my materials and access my computer."

Step 3: **Needs:** "I require a clear workspace to perform my job efficiently."

Step 4: **Request:** "Would you be willing to keep your items within your designated area? Or, could we please explore an additional storage solution?"

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FFC EXAMPLES

Here is a personal example of how you might use this formula:

*You might say: "I've noticed that you often leave your dishes in the sink" (**observation**).*

*"When you do this, it means I have to clean them before I can cook" (**facts**).*

*"I need a clean and organized kitchen to cook in" (**needs**).*

*"Would you please clean your dishes after using them?" (**request**)*

Here is a workplace example. In this example, you are talking to a person you supervise.

*You might say: "I've seen that you often interrupt me during meetings" (**observation**).*

*When this happens, it disrupts my train of thought, and I struggle to communicate effectively (**facts**).*

*I need to be able to get my thoughts across in the meetings and be heard (**needs**).*

*Would you be willing to hold your thoughts to the end of the meeting? (**request**)*

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FFC EXAMPLES

Here are examples of how to use FFC in your relationships.



Need :
More Alone Time

Observation: *"I've noticed that we have been spending much time in social settings recently."*

Facts: *"After these social gatherings, I often find myself feeling very tired. It impacts my ability to concentrate on work and my hobbies."*

Needs: *"I need more quiet time to recharge. It's important for maintaining my energy levels and functioning effectively in my daily tasks."*

Request: *"Is it possible for us(or would you be willing) or (what do you think about the possibility) to have fewer social engagements? Alternatively, I could have some time alone at home while you attend certain events. This would help me balance my energy better."*

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FFC EXAMPLES



Praise

Observation: *"I've noticed that there are times when critical comments are made about the way I do certain tasks."*

Facts: *"These comments make it hard for me to finish the tasks, and I shut down."*

Needs: *"I need support and encouragement."*

Request: *"Could we focus on positives and encouragement, that would actually help me get more done? "*

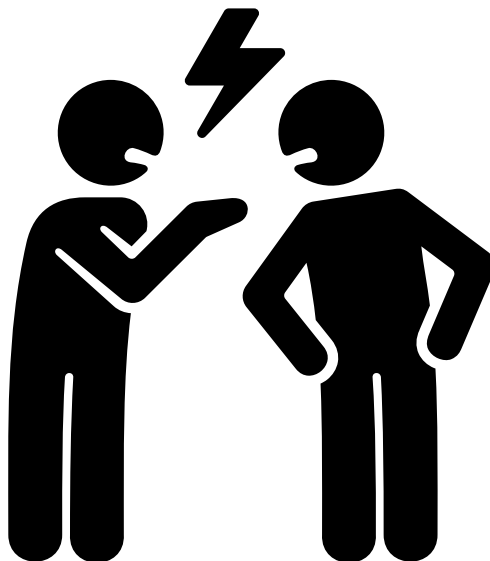
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The BIFF Formula

Another approach to communication I've found helpful is the BIFF (Brief, Informative, Friendly, and Firm) Communication Formula.

BIFF is traditionally used in high conflict or situations where you must deal with someone with a complex personality. I often teach it to my clients in high-conflict divorces. It can be used in three situations:

1. With hostile people
2. In the case of your RSD being activated to help regulate you
3. To communicate something challenging to keep you from going off track.



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The BIFF Formula

How to Use the BIFF Formula

The BIFF Communication Formula is composed of the following elements:

1. **Brief:** Keep your response short, concentrating on the most critical and pertinent points.
2. **Informative:** Stick to facts, data, and necessary information, refraining from personal emotions, opinions, or justifications.
3. **Friendly:** Keep a friendly tone throughout your response, using polite greetings and ending on a positive note.
4. **Firm:** Clearly and assertively express your main point or desired action, leaving no room for unnecessary back-and-forth.



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The BIFF Formula

Tips for Implementing BIFF Responses

- **Avoid Apologies:** Especially when dealing with antagonistic communication, do not feel compelled to apologize unless it's justified. An apology might sometimes be construed as an admission of guilt and can potentially escalate the situation. The one exception is if your RSD is activated, and you are using BIFF when taking feedback in a situation at work or home where you are accepting accountability for a mistake.
- **Ignore Personal Attacks:** BIFF responses are not designed to counter personal attacks. Keep your focus on the key issue, not the emotions or aggressive language used by the other person.
- **Don't Provide Unnecessary Advice:** Do not give advice or propose solutions unless they are requested or extremely relevant to the situation.

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Tips for Biff

- **Stay Above Admonishments:** Avoid pointing out others' mistakes as it won't solve the problem. Stay away from reprimanding or criticizing, which often leads to defensive reactions and can escalate the situation.
- **Refrain from Defending Yourself:** Keep in mind that hostile messages are more about the sender's inability to handle their emotions than about you. Do not feel the need to defend your character or actions in response to unfounded accusations.
- **Practice Self-Control:** Remember that the primary goal is to defuse the situation. Avoid responding to hostile remarks in a similar manner. By remaining calm and composed, you showcase maturity and control over the situation.
- **Consistent Practice:** BIFF responses may not come naturally at first, much like any new skill. They require practice. The more you use them, the more comfortable and effective you become. Regularly revisit this formula and these tips for improvement.

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Biff Examples

Examples of BIFF Responses

Here are some examples of BIFF responses to difficult, hostile people:

1. **Hostile Message:** *"You're always late for our meetings! It's clear you don't respect anyone else's time."*

From a coworker, hostile, possibly true

BIFF Response: *"Hi [Name], I understand the importance of punctuality in our meetings. For future meetings, I'll make it a priority to be on time. Thank you for bringing this to my attention."*

2. **Hostile Message:** *"You never listen to my ideas in our group projects. You think you're the only one with good suggestions."*

From another student, hostile, unfounded

BIFF Response: *"Hey [Name], I value your input and want to ensure that all voices in our group are heard. Let's take some time in our next meeting to go over your ideas. I appreciate your contributions to our project."*

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Biff Examples

Examples of BIFF Responses

3. **Hostile Message:** "You're so careless. You've lost all the important documents. Now, what are we going to do?"

From a coworker, you did it.

BIFF Response: *"Hello [Name], your concern about the missing documents is noted. I apologize for this misstep. Currently, the priority is to recover them. I'll initiate a thorough search and check for any electronic copies. Your patience is appreciated during this process."*

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Biff Examples

In these examples, the BIFF responses remain brief, informative, friendly, and firm. They focus on problem-solving and maintaining a positive tone without admitting fault unless required or escalating the situation.

Modeled after examples from the High Conflict Institute Website.

A Family Member Example:

Anna's Email:

"Great, just great. I missed my important client meeting because of you. Some brother you turned out to be! I've been telling you for weeks that I needed a ride today because my car's in the shop. But no, you were too busy with your own stuff. Thanks to you, my boss is furious, and I'm on thin ice at work. It's like you don't even care. I thought family was supposed to help each other out. Guess I was wrong about you. Don't expect me to bail you out next time you need something!"

Mike's Response:

"Hi Anna, I'm sorry to hear about your meeting. As I explained, there was an emergency at my job that I couldn't ignore. However, I'm willing to help you with transportation for the rest of the week while your car is still in the shop. Let me know your schedule by tonight, so I can arrange my work accordingly. If I don't hear from you by then, I'll assume you've found another solution. Hope you can sort things out at work. --Mike."

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Biff Examples

High conflict personalities that rope you in:

Text from Dad: *"What a joke! You can't even get her to school on time. Every time she's with you, she misses something important. You're completely irresponsible. I'm going to tell the court how unfit you are. And those shoes you sent her back in? Pathetic. She needs proper things, not your cheap choices."*

Mom's Response: "Thanks for the update. I'll make sure she has a new pair of shoes for her upcoming school event. Also, I've arranged a ride for her to get to school on time. Let me know if there's anything else she needs for school."



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Biff Examples

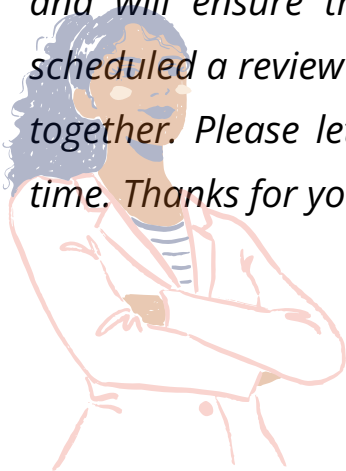
A Workplace Example:

Email from Coworker B:

"I can't believe how disorganized you are! It's because of you that our presentation was a disaster. You didn't even check the slides properly! Now, our team looks incompetent in front of the whole department. You better start taking things seriously or I'll have to report this to our manager. Everyone's talking about your poor performance!"

Your Response:

"Hi Coworker B, I understand your concerns regarding the presentation. My apologies for any oversight. I've already started reviewing the slides and will ensure they are up to standard for our next meeting. I've scheduled a review session for tomorrow afternoon to go over everything together. Please let me know if that works for you or suggest another time. Thanks for your feedback. – [Your Name]"



BIFF!

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BIFF for RSD

Here are some examples of using BIFF if you feel RSD is activated:

Comment: "I noticed you've been coming in late to meetings recently. I wanted to check in and remind you work starts at 9."

BIFF Response: *"Thank you for your concern. You're right, I have been late to meetings. I do apologize for my tardiness. I've been dealing with some personal issues, but I'm working on resolving them. I appreciate your understanding and will be on time moving forward."*

Feedback: "Your presentation was really informative, but it might be even better if you incorporated some visuals to keep the audience engaged."

BIFF Response: "Thanks for the feedback. I agree, visuals could really enhance the presentation. I appreciate your input and will definitely incorporate it next time."

Feedback: "I've noticed that you're often quiet in team discussions. Your insights are valuable and we'd love to hear more from you."

BIFF Response: *"I appreciate your feedback. Sometimes I need a little more time to formulate my thoughts before I feel comfortable sharing. However, I understand the importance of active participation and will make a conscious effort to speak up more in future discussions."*

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GROUP BIFF

Group Exercise Worksheet: Applying BIFF and FFC (OFNR) Techniques

In today's exercise, we're going to work on using BIFF (Brief, Informative, Friendly, Firm) responses and the Facts Focused Communication FFC or OFNR (Observation, Fact, Need, Request) approach in real-life situations.

As a reminder, you have the worksheet pictograms attached to the exercise. As well.

Exercise

A close family member, who often criticizes your life choices, sends a harsh message about your recent decision to switch careers.



Family Member's Message: *"I heard you're changing jobs again. When will you settle down and take life seriously? You're always chasing fantasies and it's embarrassing. You need to grow up and make some real decisions."*

Your neighbor, known for being confrontational, sends you an aggressive message about your car being parked slightly over the boundary line of your shared driveway.



Neighbor's Message: *"You've parked your car over the line again! It's like you do this just to annoy me. Move it immediately, or I'll have it towed. I'm sick of your carelessness."*

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GROUP BIFF

Group Exercise Worksheet: Applying BIFF and FFC (OFNR) Techniques

Background: In your household, you've been taking on a disproportionate amount of chores and responsibilities, leading to feelings of frustration and exhaustion.

Your Task: Apply the FFC formula to express your concerns to your housemates or family. Could you identify the factual pattern of chore distribution, your need for a more balanced and fair sharing of responsibilities, and an explicit request for a specific change or a meeting to discuss a new arrangement?

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GROUP FFC or OFNR

Group Exercise Worksheet: Applying BIFF and FFC (OFNR) Techniques

Background: In your household, you've been taking on a disproportionate amount of chores and responsibilities, leading to feelings of frustration and exhaustion.

Your Task: Apply the FFC formula to express your concerns to your housemates or family. Could you identify what you observe and the factual pattern of chore distribution, your need for a more balanced and fair sharing of responsibilities, and an explicit request for a specific change or a meeting to discuss a new arrangement?
Observation + Facts+Needs+Request

FORMULA TO HELP YOU COMMUNICATE FFC



Facts Focused Communication

WHEN COMMUNICATING TO SOMEONE ABOUT ISSUES
WITH LOVED ONES OR AT WORK

Observation

Facts

Needs

Requests

EXAMPLE

OBSERVATION:
"I'VE NOTICED THAT I NO LONGER HAVE
TIME TO
PURSUE MY PERSONAL INTERESTS OR
HOBBIES."

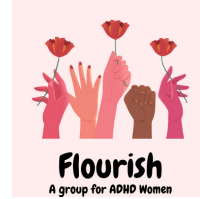
FACTS:
"BETWEEN WORK, TAKING CARE OF THE KIDS,
AND HOUSEHOLD CHORES, MY SCHEDULE IS
TYPICALLY FILLED."

NEEDS:
"I NEED SOME PERSONAL SPACE AND TIME FOR
REJUVENATION AND PURSUING MY
INTERESTS"

REQUEST:
"WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO WATCH THE KIDS
ON SUNDAY FOR TWO HOUR SO I COULD GO TO
MY BOOK CLUB?"



FORMULA TO HELP YOU
COMMUNICATE
IN
DIFFICULT
SITUATIONS BIFF



Brief Informative Friendly Firm

WHEN GIVEN FEEDBACK
WHEN ASKING FOR SOMETHING
WHEN DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

Don't apologize
unless you know
you
made a mistake

Ignore
personal
attacks

Don't defend
yourself
against any
attacks.

EXAMPLE

AGGRESSIVE EMAIL: "WHY
HAVEN'T YOU REPLIED TO MY
EMAILS YET?"

BRIEF: "DEAR [NAME],"

INFORMATIVE:
"I'VE RECEIVED YOUR EMAILS
AND UNDERSTAND THE
URGENCY OF YOUR REQUESTS"

FRIENDLY:
"I APOLOGIZE FOR ANY DELAY"

"I'M WORKING ON YOUR
REQUEST AND WILL RESPOND
BY THE END OF DAY TODAY. I APPRECIATE
YOUR PATIENCE."



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