

# When I First Felt Different<sup>TM</sup>

**A Neurodivergent Spiral of Life<sup>TM</sup> Tool --Layer 1: Safety & Believability**

is for adults with Autism, ADHD, and Complex Trauma  
(and those who love them) who want gentle recognition of early  
difference without pressure to explain, justify, or relive the past.



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**by Barbara (Blaze) Lazarony, MA, LMFT**

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# Understanding Early Differences

*Safety begins when your experience is believable—to you.*

Many neurodivergent adults sensed they were different long before they had words for it.

This tool is not about diagnosing the past, proving harm, or reconstructing memories. It is about noticing when your nervous system first recognizes that the world expects something different from you.

You do not need clear memories.

You do not need a story.

You do not need certainty.

Even one small recognition is enough. Use this tool slowly.

You may enter anywhere, skip sections, or stop at any point.

*You don't need to use every part of this tool. Early awareness is support.*



# My Early Differences Map

*People notice difference in different ways. You may recognize more than one.*



## Body Signals

*You may have noticed:*

- Becoming overwhelmed faster than others
- Needing more rest or recovery
- Strong reactions to sound, light, touch, or movement

*Permission:*

You are allowed to trust your bodily knowing.



## Social Experience

*You may have noticed:*

- Confusion about unspoken rules
- Feeling out of sync or out of step
- Watching others to learn how to belong

*Permission:*

You can honor your own voice and internal rhythms.



## Emotional Worlds

*You may have noticed:*

- Feeling emotions very intensely
- Feeling disconnected or shut down
- Being told you were “too much” or “too sensitive”

*Permission:*

Your emotions are simply data and information.



## Expectations & Performance

*You may have noticed:*

- Regularly trying harder to get it right
- Becoming responsible early
- Hiding uncertainty or asking fewer questions

*Permission:*

Your adaptation was brilliant and exactly on point.

# How My System Learned to Stay Safe

*When difference isn't recognized or supported, the nervous system adapts.*

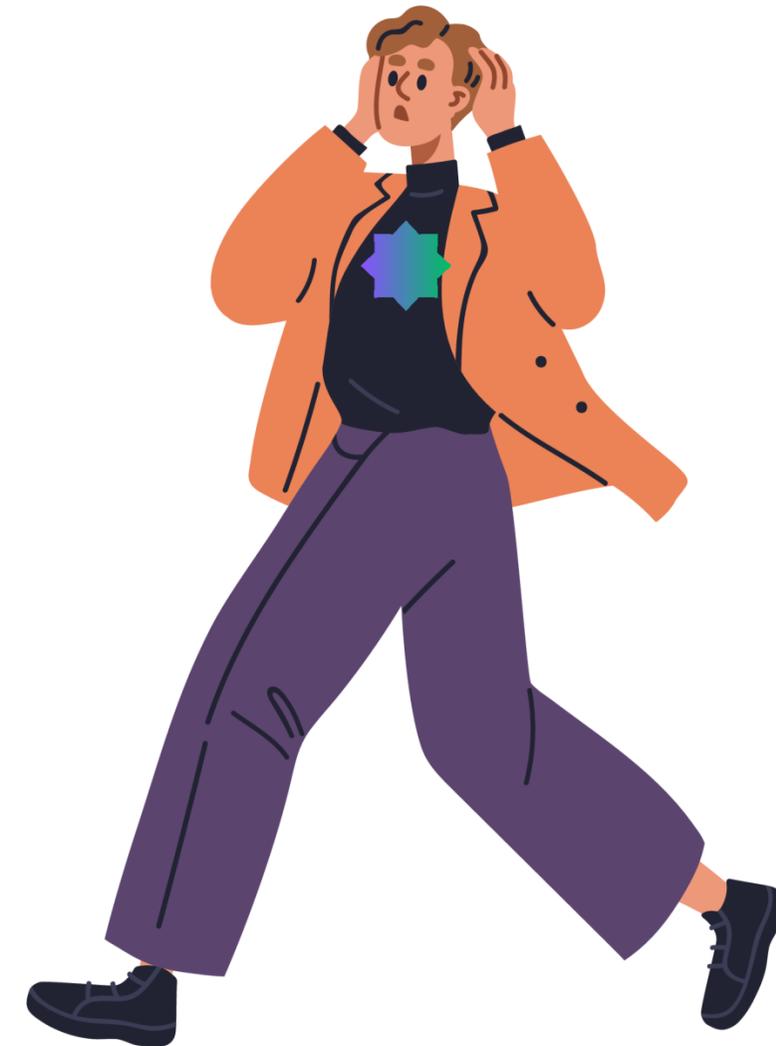
You may have learned to cope by:

- Staying quiet
- Being helpful
- Becoming very capable
- Masking confusion
- Pulling away
- Becoming hyper-independent
- Watching carefully
- Trying not to need much

Orientation:

These were not mistakes.

These were the ways your system tried to protect you.



# Needs Map

*What I Needed Then (and Still Deserve Now)*



At that time, what would have helped your system feel safer?

You may circle, write, or simply notice:

- More time
- Clearer explanations
- Gentleness
- Protection
- Being believed
- Being left alone
- Predictability
- Permission to go at my pace

Permission:

Needing support does not mean you were weak.  
It means your system was responding honestly.

# Integration

*What This Recognition Gives Me Today...*

What does recognizing my early differences help me understand about myself now?

Nothing here is evidence against you.

It is evidence of your adaptation.



**Safety Note:**

If reflecting on early differences brings up distress or feelings of risk, please reach out for support.

In the U.S., you can call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

If you are outside the U.S., please contact local emergency services or a crisis line in your country.

You are allowed to take yourself seriously.

# References

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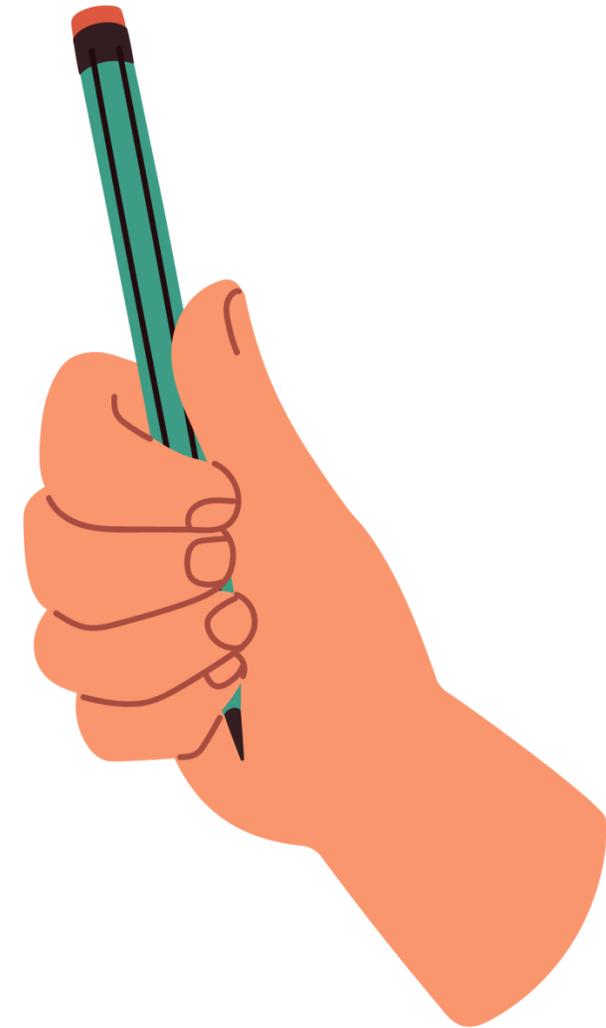
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# About Barbara (Blaze) Lazarony



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Barbara (Blaze) Lazarony, MA, LMFT, is a neurodivergent therapist and guide who supports neurodivergent adults and couples in understanding themselves—and each other—without shame or pressure to change. Her work is grounded in the integrated reality of her own neurodivergent nervous system: misattunement, care, fatigue, and the steady desire to be met as you are.

After decades of clinical practice and lived integration, Blaze shaped the Neurodivergent Spiral of Life™ to provide language and structure for experiences that are often unnamed or misunderstood. Through her work, writing, and on her Love on the Autism Spectrum podcast, she offers clinical clarity with compassionate pacing, supporting people to slow down, feel safer in their bodies, and build relationships that fit their real nervous systems with steadiness, consent, and earned authority over time.