



# Joel Kottman

Advocate. Author. Speaker.

Author of I'm an Odd Duck: Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity



Joel Kottman helps educators, families, and communities better understand neurodiversity through lived experience so they can create environments where every brain has room to thrive.

## Website

[joelkottman.com](http://joelkottman.com)

## Email

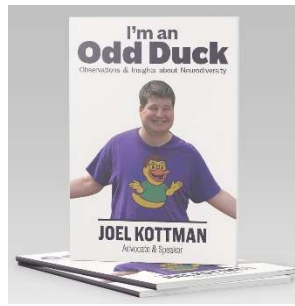
[connect@joelkottman.com](mailto:connect@joelkottman.com)

## Speaking Inquiries

Available for keynotes, workshops, panels, and community events

## Response Time

Joel personally responds within 24–48 hours



## POSITIONING STATEMENT

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Joel Kottman is a neurodiverse author, speaker, and emerging advocate who helps schools, universities, families, and communities better understand the lived experience of neurodivergent individuals.

Drawing from his own educational journey, Joel offers honest, human-centered reflections on belonging, communication, social expectations, self-advocacy, and the kind of support that helps neurodivergent people thrive.

Joel speaks from lived experience, not from a clinical or consulting background. His value is his perspective: the ability to help educators, families, and organizations ask better questions, build genuine empathy, and start more meaningful conversations about inclusion.

## SHORT BIO

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Joel Kottman is an emerging neurodiverse author, speaker, and advocate who helps schools, universities, families, and communities better understand the lived experience of neurodivergent individuals.

A college graduate with a degree in Communication Studies, Joel draws from his own journey to speak about belonging, self-advocacy, social expectations, and the support neurodivergent people need to thrive. His book, *I'm an Odd Duck: Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity*, is for fellow odd ducks, families, and educators who want a more compassionate, honest look at the neurodiverse experience.

## MEDIUM BIO

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Joel Kottman is an emerging neurodiverse author, speaker, and advocate whose work focuses on helping schools, universities, families, organizations, and communities better understand the lived experience of neurodivergent individuals.

A college graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies, Joel speaks from personal experience about the hidden challenges many neurodivergent people face: unspoken social rules, the pressure to mask, the pain of being misunderstood, and the deep need to belong.

His book, *I'm an Odd Duck: Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity*, offers a candid, personal look at the experience of neurodiversity through the eyes of someone who has lived it. His presentations are designed to build empathy, encourage better questions, and help educators, families, student-support professionals, and community leaders think more carefully about how neurodivergent people are seen, supported, and included.

Joel's strengths are his lived-experience perspective, his communication background, and his ability to give voice to what neurodivergent people may be experiencing but don't always know how to express.

## FULL BIO

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For Joel Kottman, college was not just about classes, assignments, and graduation requirements. It was also about trying to understand a world full of hidden expectations.

As a neurodiverse student, Joel often found himself navigating social dynamics that were never explained out loud. He experienced the confusion of unspoken rules, the exhaustion of trying to fit in, the pain of being misunderstood, and the lasting impact of bullying and exclusion.

Those experiences shaped who Joel is today, and what he believes is possible.

Joel holds a Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies and uses his background in communication, storytelling, and lived experience to help others better understand the experience of neurodiversity. He has spoken to community groups, schools, and faculty at the University of North Georgia, where his perspective was described as uniquely meaningful because it came from someone who had lived the experience firsthand.

His new book, *I'm an Odd Duck: Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity*, grew out of his desire to help students, families, educators, and communities see neurodiversity with more clarity, compassion, and honesty.

Joel's presentations are rooted in personal experience and reflection. He speaks about self-advocacy, social expectations, inclusion, misunderstanding, and what it can feel like to be a neurodiverse student searching for a place to belong.

Joel brings something different to the conversation: an inside view. A voice that says, "Here is what it was actually like. Here is what helped. Here is what didn't. Here is what I wish someone had understood sooner."

## SIGNATURE SPEAKING TOPICS

### **Understanding the Neurodiverse Experience**

What does it actually feel like to be a neurodiverse student navigating school, college, and community life? Joel draws on his own experience to help audiences develop a more honest, human understanding of how neurodivergent students think, communicate, and navigate learning and social environments, and why that understanding matters.

### **Neurodiversity and Self-Advocacy**

Self-advocacy sounds simple. In practice, it requires students to identify their own needs, communicate them clearly, and navigate systems that were not designed with them in mind. Joel speaks honestly about what self-advocacy looked like for him, and what students, families, and educators can do to make it more possible.

### **"Different not Less"**

Neurodivergent individuals can experience challenges in learning and living environments that can cause sensory overload, social communication challenges, and bullying. Joel helps audiences understand these challenges in real ways and the strategies that helped him feel more supported, understood, and included.

### **Preparing Neurodivergent High School Students for College Success**

The transition from high school to college is one of the hardest moments for neurodivergent students, and one of the least discussed. Joel speaks with families, students, and educators about what that transition really involves: the hidden social curriculum, the shift in support structures, and the tools students need before they arrive on campus.

#### **Speaking Formats**

- Guest talk or presentation
- Breakout session
- Panelist
- Book talk or author conversation
- Q&A with faculty, parents or students
- Virtual or hybrid formats available

#### **Best-Fit Audiences**

- Colleges, universities, high schools and transition programs
- Disability resource and accessibility offices
- Educators, counselors, and student-support professionals
- Families, caregivers, and parent groups
- Advocacy, nonprofit, community, and faith-based organizations

# I'm an Odd Duck

Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity

In *I'm an Odd Duck*, advocate and speaker Joel Kottman shares lived insights into the experiences of neurodivergent people. The book serves as an entry point for educators, families, organizations, and fellow odd ducks seeking a more honest understanding of neurodiversity, belonging, and support.

This book does not offer a clinical framework or a research-backed intervention model. It offers something rarer: a real story, told with warmth and specificity, by someone who lived it. Readers will find themselves recognizing people they know or recognizing themselves.

Who This Book Is For

- Neurodivergent readers who want to better understand their own experiences
- Families supporting a neurodiverse person they love
- Faculty and instructors who want to understand their students better
- Student life, accessibility, and disability resource professionals
- High school counselors and transition program staff
- Organizations, congregations, and community groups working to build more inclusive spaces

## Why This Book Matters Now

High school, college, work, and community life can be academically, socially, and emotionally demanding. But for many neurodivergent people, the harder part is decoding the hidden curriculum: social expectations, communication norms, sensory environments, and self-advocacy systems that are rarely explained out loud. There are plenty of books written about neurodivergent people. There are very few written by a neurodiverse person who has lived it.

## Publication Details

**Author:** Joel Kottman

**Status:** Forthcoming

**For updates:** [joelkottman.com](http://joelkottman.com)

## Bulk & Classroom Orders

Bulk pricing available for campuses, orientation programs, disability resource centers, and classroom adoptions.

[connect@joelkottman.com](mailto:connect@joelkottman.com)

## MEDIA ANGLES & INTERVIEW TOPICS

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Joel is available for print, digital, radio, television, and podcast interviews.

### Strong Story Angles

- Why many neurodivergent people spend years decoding expectations that were never explained
- What families, educators, and communities often miss about neurodiversity
- The difference between being accommodated and feeling like you truly belong
- How bullying, masking, and misunderstanding shape the neurodiverse experience
- Why self-advocacy can be difficult when someone is still learning what they need
- How schools and communities can create more room for neurodivergent people without singling them out
- What it means to be an “odd duck” in a world built around unwritten rules
- Why lived experience matters in conversations about neurodiversity

### Joel’s Strongest Themes

- Belonging as a prerequisite for learning and growth
- The exhaustion of masking
- Being invited to the table vs. merely tolerated
- The gap between what institutions intend and what people experience
- Finding community, confidence, and joy as a neurodiverse person
- Advocacy that starts with honesty, not performance

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Joel is most comfortable in conversational formats where there is room for honest, thoughtful exchange.

### About His Story & Book

- What inspired you to write *I’m an Odd Duck* and who did you write it for?
- What do you wish someone had told you before you started college?
- What was the moment you realized your college experience was meaningfully different from your peers?

### About Neurodivergent People

- What do people most commonly misunderstand about neurodivergent people?

- What are some “hidden rules” of school, work, campus, or community life that neurotypical people may not even notice?
- What does self-advocacy look like when someone is still learning what they need?
- What helped you feel a genuine sense of belonging in college—and what got in the way?

### For Educators, Families, and Communities

- What is one thing a teacher, professor, parent, or community leader could do differently tomorrow to better support neurodivergent people?
- What is the difference between making accommodations and creating belonging?
- How can families support a neurodiverse student or young adult without taking over?
- What do you hope schools, families, and communities take away from your work?

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“Joel, you were truly the star of the show, and the discussion was much more meaningful because you were a part of the conversation. I can only relay information, but you can speak from experience. That means so much.”

— Tracey Y. Hurd, MEd, Director of Student Accessibility Services, University of North Georgia

“Your presentation was great! It was enlightening to hear your experiences, good and bad, and your perspective. You widened our understanding of neurodiversity and reinforced the values we should hold around all kinds of differences among people.”

— Stell Simonton, First Existentialist Program Guild

### PAST SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

|                                                               |                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| “Different not Less”                                          | Lumpkin County High School, Dahlonega, GA              |
| “Being Different”                                             | Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Auburn, AL   |
| “Conflict in the Classroom” panel discussion with the faculty | University of North Georgia                            |
| “Being Different”                                             | Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Columbus, Georgia |

## AT A GLANCE

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|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name</b>               | Joel Kottman                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Role</b>               | Author, Speaker, Neurodiverse Advocate                                                                                          |
| <b>Book</b>               | I'm an Odd Duck: Observations & Insights about Neurodiversity                                                                   |
| <b>Education</b>          | B.S. in Communication Studies                                                                                                   |
| <b>Primary Topics</b>     | Neurodiversity, college transition, belonging, self-advocacy, social expectations, inclusion                                    |
| <b>Best-Fit Audiences</b> | Colleges, universities, high schools, families, student-life professionals, disability resource offices, advocacy organizations |
| <b>Speaking Style</b>     | Personal, reflective, warm, conversation-focused                                                                                |
| <b>Formats</b>            | Keynote, breakout, panel, workshop, Q&A · in-person, virtual, or hybrid                                                         |
| <b>Core Perspective</b>   | Lived experience as a neurodiverse college graduate                                                                             |

## CONTACT & BOOKING

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**Joel personally reads and responds to every inquiry. You can expect a reply within 24–48 hours.**

### Speaking Inquiries

Workshops, panels, facilitated discussions, and Q&As.

### Media & Press

Available for print, digital, radio, television, and podcast interviews. Press kit provided upon request.

### Podcast Invitations

Joel is a natural podcast guest for shows focused on education, mental health, neurodiversity, and student life. Comfortable with recorded and live formats.

### Book & Bulk Orders

Bulk pricing available for campuses, orientation programs, disability resource centers, and classrooms. Inquire about *I'm an Odd Duck* adoption.

### Partnerships & Collaborations

Open to partnerships with nonprofits, advocacy organizations, educational publishers, and accessibility-focused initiatives aligned with lived-experience values.

**connect@joelkottman.com** · joelkottman.com