

BY YEN CABAG

# KAKAIBA

*a poetry  
reflection book*

ON NEURODIVERGENT KIDS



*The first poetry-reflection book created especially  
for Filipino parents of neurodivergent children.*

Kakaiba: A Poetry Reflection Book on Neurodivergent Kids  
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Disclaimer: This e-book is not intended to be used for diagnosis purposes, treatment recommendation, or stereotyping or generalization of neurodivergent conditions.

Printed in the Philippines.

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SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

# Why I Wrote This Book

When we started homeschooling, it wasn't without its bumps. I always love sharing the story of how, two months into the adventure, this gung-ho newbie homeschooling mom burned out and gave up, and handed everything over to my husband to do! Eventually, we learned from our mistakes and settled into a rhythm, a family dynamic of enjoying excellently-written literature, heart-expanding music, thought-provoking art, and generally, just building a foundation for lifelong learning. It wasn't always perfect, but it was mostly a happy, growing experience, and we were very excited to share the educational philosophy that we loved with other families.

Then our second son came along. When he became old enough for academic lessons, in some areas, he seemed to be hitting a brick wall. But because the Charlotte Mason method that we use advocates a wide curriculum, he thrived in other aspects, so it didn't bother me at first. Besides, one of the foundations of this educational philosophy is that *every child is born a person*, so we heartily believed that this one was certainly different from his older brother, but that didn't mean one was better than the other.

What I didn't count on was how much we would be pushed to learn about the uniqueness of every single child. I am greatly thankful that our educational philosophy already



emphasized the idea of each child being different, and celebrating those nuances. I believe that prepared us to welcome the thought that he may be more different than we thought!

As we struggled with his lessons, it got me researching about possible learning disabilities, and found glaring signs of it in our daily interactions with him. But I wrestled with it because I didn't want a "disability" to "brand" him. It took me several cycles of observing, denial, finding confirmation, denial again, before we finally accepted that he wasn't just being stubborn—something was definitely going on that needed to be addressed.

And it was when we finally embraced these differences that we also started learning that it wasn't something "wrong" that needed to be "fixed." Instead, this is the way he's wired, and we just need to accept it, appreciate his gifts, and work with this knowledge.

I don't claim to be the perfect parent at meeting his needs. But the awareness helped us to adjust the way we parented and educated this neurodivergent (ND) child. And, to my surprise, in the process of getting to know his uniqueness, I found myself also diagnosed with a neurodivergent condition! Everything from my childhood just suddenly made sense, from thinking differently to behaving differently, to feeling constantly misunderstood. And because I found some similarities between myself and this little boy, it helped me to understand him better and lessen the daily friction that we used to have. I say "lessen," although I wish it would've disappeared altogether! But I have to be honest and say, we still have our struggles. As a family, again we've had to make adjustments, and we've found that it's an uphill battle most of the time. Not easy, but worth it.

And it got me thinking: how do other families, homeschooling or otherwise, feel with neurodivergence in the mix? If we're struggling to make sense of everything, to be the best, supportive parents we can be, are there also other families who feel this way? If we face pain and grief that we can't explain to others, is it that way with other parents? Are these things that they can talk about openly only with their therapists and no one else? Or could some of these feelings be best shared with others who are going through the same journey?

A disclaimer is in place: I don't claim to be an expert on neurodivergence, and not even on any specific diagnosis. I am NOT an occupational therapist, and I am greatly blessed by my friendship with an occupational therapist who is helping us through our own journey. For diagnosis and treatments, we believe we need certified professionals! This book is not intended to be a diagnosis tool, nor medical advice for how to treat children in the spectrum or with any specific ND diagnosis. We also acknowledge that neurodiversity comes in so many facets and expressions, so this book does not claim an extensive coverage.

But I am a writer, and one who has lived through neurodivergence myself and who is parenting a child with ND. Through this gift, I dive into the inner world of being misunderstood, being labelled, being different. I take an intimate look at struggling with bigger-than-life feelings, not wanting to but melting down anyway, and not knowing how to recover.

I wrote these poems from a wide variety of perspectives: some of them are from the point-of-view of a neurodivergent child; others are from the parents' perspective, sometimes even a sibling. A handful are observations of beautiful things

from the perspective of these uniquely-wired individuals, though maybe not necessarily focused on traits specific to being neurodivergent. A few are written from an adult's hindsight of a childhood that was wracked with pain because of the lack of understanding from well-meaning, but uninformed adults.

I have no intention of stereotyping or poking fun at the way that neurodivergence manifests, or at the ignorance of people who don't understand it. Instead, I try to turn the lens on how these can affect our relationships, and hope that, through these little introspective pieces, we can grow in our understanding of the ND individuals around us and embrace them for the gift that they are.

*Yen Cabag*

# *How to Use This Book*

**T**his book contains fifty-two (52) poems. You may read them all at your own pace, or you may choose to read one for each week of the year. Some are short, some are longer. Some are lighthearted, others are more emotional. We intentionally laid them out in a way to provide a varied experience for you as the reader.

After each poem, we've included Reflection points, with space to write down your thoughts. Some of the poems come with what we call a "Collection" sheet, where you can doodle or paste some pictures relating to your unique journey as a family.

You don't have to read everything in the order that they come in the book. Feel free to jump around to titles or topics that grab your attention. Or, if you want to go through it systematically, that's also fine.

We hope that, as you go through this book, these insights and suggestions can help expand your own appreciation of the ND person in your life, build up your own confidence either as an ND person as well or as someone in close relationship with them, and improve your overall heart connection as a family.

**SAMPLE**  
*The Poems*

*Mom Ashamed*

Look what your son just did!  
I turn around  
And there he's hid  
Leaving trails  
of tears and tantrums  
Of friends he's upset  
for seemingly no reason.

Look what's going on  
I turn around  
And there he sits  
Schoolwork undone  
Strewing several sheets  
All half-guessed or half-skipped  
No matter how many times  
We've studied these things  
Still he manages to forget  
Every... single... thing!

Look what's happening  
I turn around  
And this time he's  
the one crying  
Upending the whole room  
With his rage and accusation  
While his friends look blankly on  
Not knowing what to do  
with these bigger-than-life  
emotions.  
How do I deal with this  
Day in and day out

Every lesson a burden  
Every challenge a letdown  
Playdates start off fine  
But almost always end with a fight  
And it doesn't help when everyone else  
Just frowns and thinks  
We're just a mess  
How can they know?  
They don't know what's inside  
The heart of this little one of mine  
Sometimes  
I don't think I know either  
It's like I'm blindly groping  
For any hopeful answer.

I can't deal with this  
If I listen to these outside voices  
I can't deal with this  
Unless  
    I embrace his different-ness  
Unless  
    I believe it's not just naughtiness  
Unless  
    I accept it's the way he's designed  
And it's my role to dig and delight.

I can't help his learning  
If I give in to my frustrations  
I can't help his growth  
If I bid him fit another's mold  
Unless  
    I change tactics

And help him learn  
the way he does best  
Because yes  
He does have his strengths  
And it's my role to adjust and bend.

I can't help him relate to others  
If I can't relate to him myself  
I can't help him get along  
Unless  
I'm aware  
    And ready to calm him down  
    Before his nerves go haywire  
But I need to know how to do that  
Before my own defenses fly out the window  
It's my role to model and show.

So I guess it's a journey  
We're taking together  
Of knowing and accepting  
And loving each other  
For who we're designed to be  
No matter how difficult it seems  
It's an adventure  
Where we take one step  
Only one step  
And then another  
    And then another.





## *Reflection*

How do you feel when other people misunderstand you or your neurodivergent child?

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What do you usually do in order to improve your understanding of your child?

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# The Rain

Here comes the sound I've  
always cherished:  
Swish swish swish

Sweet, sweet rain

Sloshing, slapping

Even slamming onto the tin roofs

Crashing, pummeling

Whooshing with the wind

Whatever its strength

Whatever its intensity,

velocity,

ferocity

Rain is my friend

Watching the dripping, slipping,  
sliding

I trace the journey of each little  
raindrop

From the top of the glass window to  
the very bottom

And the sound keeps going

Splashing, crashing, like a river  
stumbling

over rocks and sticks and stones

Shushing, hypnotizing

lulling me to rest

to relax

and breathe easier

Rain is my friend

Closing my eyes, I listen to the sound  
The sound that drowns out all else  
No more yappy arguing  
No TV endlessly droning  
No radios blaring  
Just the sound of rain on the roof  
Shushing, sighing, serenading  
Rain is my friend

SAMPLE

## *Collection*

Draw or doodle a picture of your child relaxing with his favorite things.

**SAMPLE**



## *Reflection*

What sounds help your neurodivergent child relax and re-energize?

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How can you intentionally add these relaxing experiences to your weekly schedule?

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# Blackout

While everyone else yells  
when the power goes out  
I breathe a sigh of relief

Finally

No more TVs blaring a cacophony of  
sounds

that no one really listens to

No more monstrous machinery  
roaring through an endless parade  
of wood and steel and tile

No more behemoth sound systems  
beating and bopping and bleating  
what they call music

but which only causes my insides to  
roll and writhe

Other people's work ceases

But mine begins

Finally

I can think

I can breathe

I can create



## *Reflection*

What things annoy your neurodivergent child?

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What adjustments or accommodations have you made to make things easier for him/her?

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# Can't Sleep

Here she comes again  
With the phone glued to  
her ear

Slipping into the little office  
Attached to my room—so near.

“Please, I’m trying to sleep.”  
She nods  
But I know she doesn’t hear  
She keeps talking on the phone  
Right where I can hear her  
How can I sleep?  
I can hear the drone, drone, drone of  
her voice  
Make it stop  
She won’t stop  
There’s no sleeping  
Until she’s done

Here it comes again  
The blaring sound system across the  
street  
Announcing the latest sale  
Or just mindlessly filling the airspace  
With loud beats and booms and chaos



“Please, I’m trying to sleep.”

I pray

But the noise keeps thumping

The speaker keeps shouting

Right where I can hear it

How can I sleep?

I can hear the thump thump thump of the drum

Make it stop

It won’t stop

There’s no sleeping

Until it’s done

Here it comes again

The roaring machinery come alive

Cutting through wood and steel and tile

Projects never ending

Noise never ceasing

“Please, I’m trying to sleep.”

What can they do?

They’re paid by the hour

I can hear every whirr and roar, louder and louder

It won’t stop

There’s no sleeping

Until they’re done

## *Collection*

Draw or doodle your thoughts about sleep.

**SAMPLE**



## *Reflection*

What helps your neurodivergent child sleep better?

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How do you yourself as a mom/parent sleep better?

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Angsty

Angsty  
Easily-annoyed  
Always complaining

That's their label of me  
Though they never say it  
We all know we all think it

How was I to know  
That the sounds that drove me crazy  
Didn't affect anyone else?

That the constant drumming on the  
table

Or the vibrations of the foot tapping  
against the side of my chair

Were inconsequential to everyone  
else?

That the music in the restaurant  
Was part of its ambience

That drew people in, and drew them  
out

But pushed me away?

How was I to know

That the scent of the new car  
or car freshener

Were sweet to other people

But made me nauseous?

That the car air-conditioning  
Was balm to everyone else  
But gave me a headache?  
That the smell of kitchen cleaners and antiseptic  
sprays  
Were designed to feel good  
But I hated them?

How was I to know  
That the sticky feeling of the spoon handle  
When someone else has handled it before me  
Is nothing to other people  
But I can't stand it?  
That the mud on my slippers  
Which somebody else got there  
Annoys no one else  
But I must clean it?

How was I to know  
That this was how I was created  
More sensitive than usual  
But it's not my fault  
It's not anyone's fault  
I just need to embrace it  
And learn it  
And find ways  
Not to offend anyone else

With how I feel  
about the noise  
or the smell  
or the vibrations

Because they don't hear it  
They may not smell it  
They may not feel it  
But that's OK  
It's just what it is  
Why fight it?  
It's OK  
It's all OK



## *Reflection*

What sensory inputs trigger your neurodivergent child?

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How have you made allowances/accommodation for these?

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## *Til Next Time*

**T**hank you very much for downloading this FREE SAMPLE, our little collection of very personal poems on the subject of neurodivergence. We hope that it has been helpful for you!

**If you would like to purchase the FULL PDF, please head on over to our website:**

**[CharlotteMasonPhilippines.Com/Shop](https://CharlotteMasonPhilippines.Com/Shop).**

If this has been a blessing to you in any way, we would appreciate receiving a message from you. Please feel free to get in touch with us through our Facebook Page, [Facebook.com/charlottesmasonphilippineswebsite](https://Facebook.com/charlottesmasonphilippineswebsite), or email us at [yen@charlottesmasonphilippines.com](mailto:yen@charlottesmasonphilippines.com). We would love to hear from you!



# *Other Resources*

We offer many other resources related to the Charlotte Mason philosophy of education, including:

- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Kinder
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Form 1 (for students in Grades 1 to 3)
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum Form 2 (for students in Grades 4 to 6)
- Talino Charlotte Mason Curriculum High School (for students in Grades 7 to 10)
- Finding Beauty in Hymn Study
- Tatum Family Riches Pack
- Kalikasan Philippine Nature Study Guide
- Galing Copybook Form 2
- Yaman Finance Curriculum
- Sariling Atin (Filipino Grammar Curriculum for Form 2)

and more to come!

For more resources on Charlotte Mason and homeschooling in the Philippines, head on over to [CharlotteMasonPhilippines.Com](http://CharlotteMasonPhilippines.Com). Grab a copy of our free e-book, too, and get the chance to be the first to know our latest updates!

## *About the Author*

**B**ased in Iloilo City, Yen Cabag is a homeschooling mom, writer, entrepreneur, and Charlotte Mason coach, trainer, and advocate, who loves reading, storytelling, and creating just about anything—from kitchen concoctions to stories, articles, songs, curriculum, and crochet pieces!

Growing up, her daily diet included a dose of Sweet Valley Twins, Sweet Valley Kids, and Sweet Valley High, only falling in love with classic books when she started learning and applying the Charlotte Mason philosophy in their homeschool and family life. Since then, her husband Mark has also jumped on the bandwagon, devouring books left and right, despite not having enjoyed it in his younger years. (Score for living books!)

Yen's favorite me-time activity is digging for treasure in one of the many branches of Booksale, while the family also loves walking or biking along the river on Iloilo Esplanade, spending time on the beach, snorkeling in one of the marine sanctuaries that Iloilo is blessed with, or hiking/camping up in the mountains.

Yen and Mark are also champions for fostering and adoption, with two of their three boys coming into the family through this beautiful gift.

Yen graduated magna cum laude for B.S. in Business Administration from the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, and went on to become a licensed teacher. She has also taken up units in Master's in School Management.

SAMPLE



## Y E N C A B A G

Yen Cabag and her husband Mark are champions for building strong families. As a resource creator and coach for the Charlotte Mason homeschooling, Yen has delved into the intricacies of neurodivergence and embracing the gifts that these individuals are.



*Do you want to be intentional at embracing your neurodivergent child's uniqueness, but struggle how to do it? We heard you!*

*The Kakaiba: A Poetry Reflection Book on Neurodivergent Kids is our launching pad for a lifetime of appreciating our child's differences and championing their strengths. We hope that this collection of 52 poems, with guided Reflection points, can be an avenue where you can:*

- *Dive into the world of a neurodivergent child and understand where he or she is coming from;*
- *Expand your perspective of some of the daily battles that we as parents face in this adventure;*
- *Explore the struggles that other parents like you are going through, and know that you are not alone in the journey;*
- *See the world through the eyes of a neurodivergent person to develop greater compassion for them;*
- *Learn how to support the needs of the neurodivergent individuals in your life so you can build a stronger heart connection with them;*
- *Think about ways you can be a better advocate for the neurodivergent persons in your life;*
- *and many more!*

*Every child is born a person.*

*~Charlotte Mason*



**Charlotte Mason**  
**Philippines**