



**SUPER**  
WELLNESS

# Embracing Neurodiversity

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Supplementary Document





# What is Neurodiversity?

## The Definition

*"Neurodiversity is the acknowledgment and acceptance of the natural variation in neurological traits and functions within the human population, emphasising that differences associated with conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia are part of the spectrum of human diversity, each with unique strengths and perspectives."*

- **Judy Singer**, an Australian sociologist, coined "**neurodiversity**" to **advocate for the equality and inclusion** of "**neurological minorities**." Originally applied to conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, **it now extends beyond specific diagnoses**.
- The term 'neurodiversity' gained prominence in addressing stigmatised or pathologised neurological differences, aiming to **shift the focus from viewing them as disorders needing fixing to recognising them as natural variations in human cognition**.





# The terminology

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## Neurodiversity

A concept that recognises and celebrates the natural diversity of neurological differences in the human population. It emphasises acceptance and accommodation rather than normalisation or 'cure'.

## Neurodiverse

An adjective used to describe a group or environment that includes a variety of neurological differences and embraces diversity within the neurodivergent community. It encompasses a broad range of neurodivergent experiences.

## Neurodivergent

An adjective used to describe individuals whose neurological development and functioning differ from the societal norm. It is embraced by those with conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.

*In practice, these terms are often used interchangeably, varying by personal preference and conversation context. It's advisable to be attentive to individuals' self-descriptions and use the language they prefer in discussions about neurodiversity.*

# Neurodivergent & Neurotypical

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*In the context of neurodiversity, "**neurotypical**" is a term often used to describe individuals **whose neurological development and functioning are within the typical or expected range**. It is not intended to pathologise or stigmatise, but rather to acknowledge that there is a range of neurodiversity in the population, and **neurotypicality is just one part of that spectrum**.*

When comparing neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals, it's important to note that these terms **are not** rigid categories, and there is significant variation within each group. However, some general differences might be observed in the following areas:

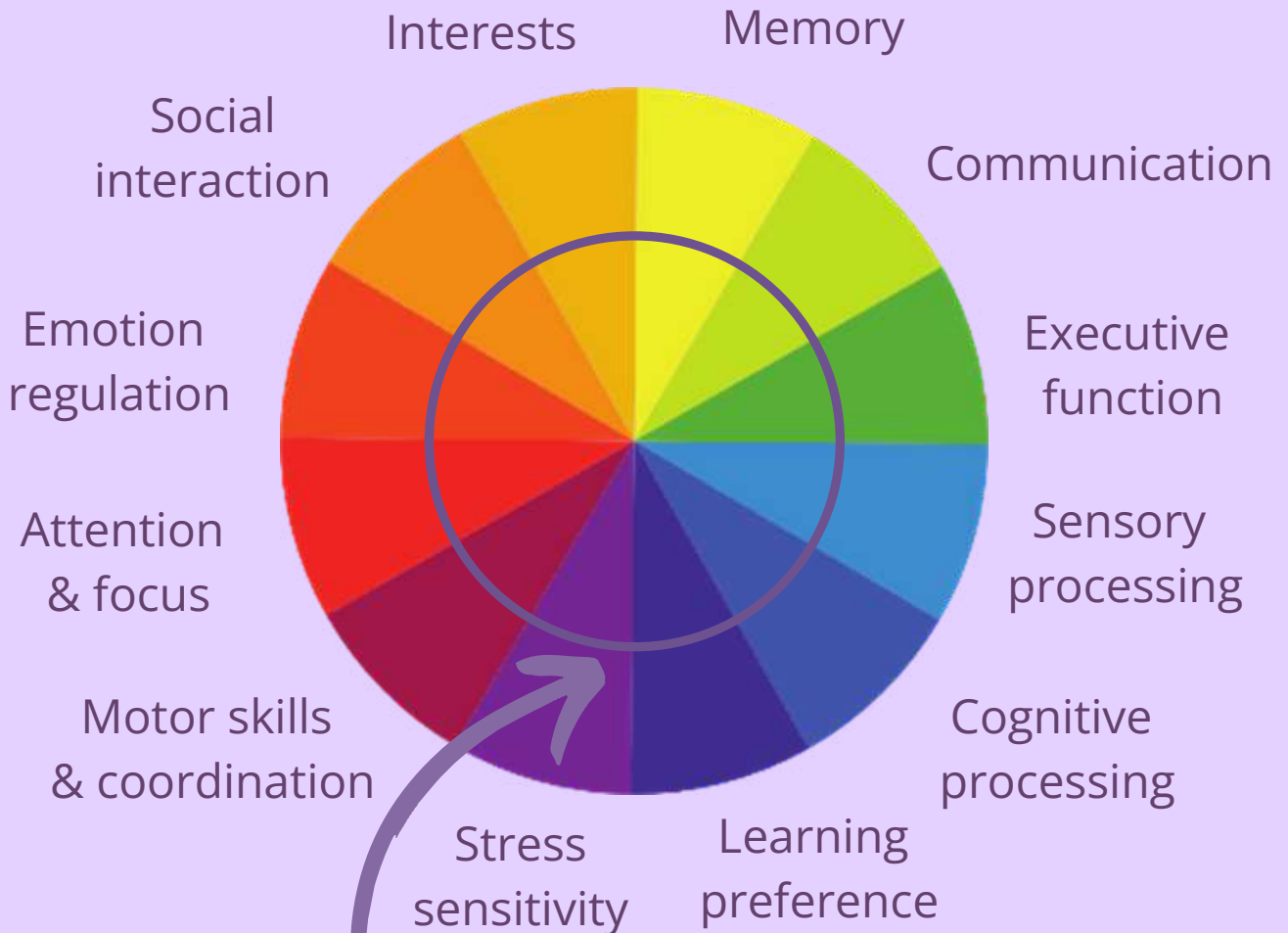
- Cognition
- Communication
- Sensory processing
- Executive functioning
- Social understanding
- Learning styles



## This is what people think neurodiversity is:



## What it is more similar to:



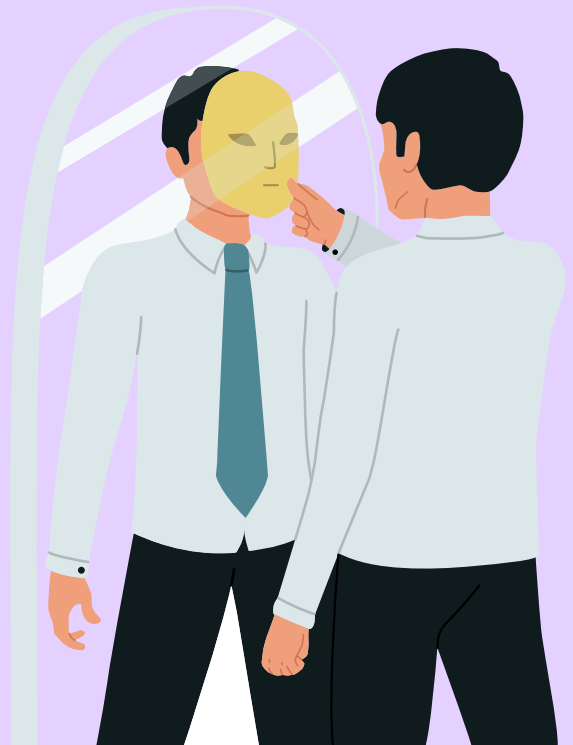
*This baseline circle represents the approximate position where neurotypical traits may sit on the neurodiversity spectrum.*



The first graph, depicting a linear spectrum from neurodiversity to neurotypicality, perpetuates the misconception of neurodiversity as a simple binary concept. In contrast, the second graph, a pie chart, accurately portrays the complexity of the spectrum of neurodiversity, showcasing some of the diverse traits of humanity.

# Masking & neurodiversity bias

**Masking** is a **coping strategy** employed by neurodivergent individuals, involving the **suppression or alteration of natural behaviours to conform to societal expectations**. While masking can help navigate certain environments, it may come at a **cost to mental health and wellbeing**, as it requires significant cognitive effort and emotional energy.



**BREAK  
THE  
BIAS**

**Neurodiversity bias** refers to the tendency to favour or discriminate against individuals based on their neurodiverse conditions or neurological differences. It involves preconceived notions, stereotypes, and unfair judgments about people who fall outside the perceived "neurotypical" norm. This can manifest by: stereotyping, micro-aggressions, exclusions etc.

# Neurodivergent conditions you may have heard of...

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## **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD):**

A developmental disorder characterised by challenges in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviours. It is a spectrum, meaning individuals with ASD may present a wide range of symptoms and abilities.

## **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):**

A neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. It can affect individuals across the lifespan.

## **Dyslexia:**

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that affects reading, spelling, and writing. It is not related to intelligence and is often associated with difficulties in phonological processing.

## **Dyspraxia (Development Coordination Disorder):**

Dyspraxia is a condition that affects motor coordination and planning. Individuals with dyspraxia may experience challenges in activities requiring coordination, such as writing or tying shoelaces.

# Neurodivergent conditions you may have heard of...

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## **Tourette's Syndrome:**

Tourette's syndrome is a neurological condition characterised by repetitive, involuntary movements and vocalisations known as tics. Tics can range from mild to severe.

## **Intellectual Disabilities:**

Intellectual disabilities involve limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviours. These conditions manifest before the age of 18 and impact daily functioning.

## **Dyscalculia:**

A learning disorder that is characterised by a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics.



*These listed neurodivergent conditions are not exhaustive; neurodiversity encompasses a wide range of conditions. Each is unique and varies from person to person. Further research is encouraged for a comprehensive understanding.*

# Strategies for an inclusive workplace

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*Embracing sustainable neuro-inclusion necessitates the collective input of all employees, involving **cultural change** driven by leaders to instil intrinsic neurodiversity awareness, **practical change** through designing workplaces for diverse thinkers and promoting personal learning and development through a cognitive lens, and **process change** integrated into every element of the employee journey, from recruitment to retention and progression.*

1

Cultural change

2

Practical change

3

Process change



# Strategy 1: Providing reasonable accommodations

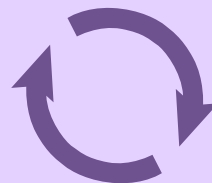
*Providing reasonable accommodations involves offering tailored workplace adjustments to support diverse needs. This enhances employee comfort and productivity by addressing individual requirements, fostering a sense of belonging. Here are some ways this can be done!*



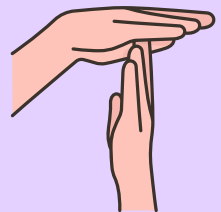
*Clear detailed instructions*



*Remote working*



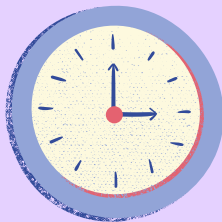
*Task rotation*



*Breaks in long meetings*



*Task management tools*



*Flexible work hours*



*Inclusive technology*



*Flexible dress code*



*Job carving*



*Mentor program*



*Sensory-friendly environments*



*Visual aids*

# What is **inclusive technology** & what are **sensory-friendly environments**?



Inclusive technology, within the context of neurodiversity, involves developing and utilising technological solutions tailored to accommodate diverse cognitive abilities. Examples include; software with customisable interfaces catering to different sensory preferences, communication tools such as text-to-speech or speech-to-text functionalities, visual aids, interactive tools for engagement, virtual reality platforms simulating diverse scenarios for training, and specialised apps addressing specific neurodivergent needs.

Creating a sensory-friendly work environment involves adapting spaces and practices for individuals with diverse sensory sensitivities. This includes adjustable lighting, noise reduction measures like soundproofing, ergonomic furniture, flexible desk arrangements, and a fragrance-free policy. Factors like temperature control, access to natural light, and minimised fluorescent lighting are considered. Organisations may provide sensory tools or spaces, such as fidget toys or designated quiet rooms, to support employees in managing sensory challenges.



# Strategy 2: Adjusting recruitment & onboarding process

*Adjusting the recruitment and onboarding process involves modifying processes to attract, integrate, and support a diverse talent pool. This ensures a welcoming and accessible entry for neurodivergent individuals, promoting diversity and innovation. Here are some ways this can be done!*



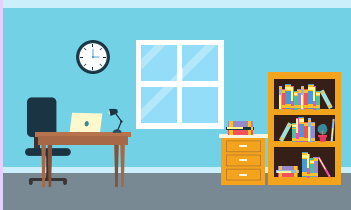
*Simple job adverts & descriptions*



*Adjust interview process*



*Create jargon handbook*



*Provide info on work environment prior to the first day*



*Understand individual challenges & strengths*



*Ask applicant what they need*



*Tailored communication styles*



*Neurodiversity recruitment initiatives*



*Individualised training plans*

# How to adjust interview process



**Clear Communication and Expectations:** *Provide clear communication about the interview process in advance, including details on what to expect, interview format, and any assessments.*

**Flexible Interview Formats:** *Offer flexibility in interview formats, allowing candidates to choose the method that suits them best, whether it's in-person, virtual, or through alternative communication methods.*



**Structured Interview Questions:** Use a structured interview format with clear, concise questions to help candidates understand expectations and provide well-organized responses.

**Sensory Considerations:** Be mindful of sensory considerations, providing a quiet and neutral environment. Consider offering options for natural lighting, reducing artificial lighting, and minimising distracting sounds.



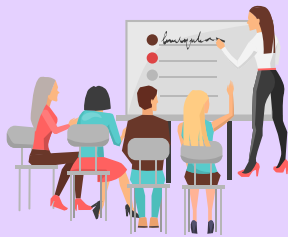
**Training for Interviewers:** Conduct training for interviewers to enhance their awareness of neurodiversity and provide guidance on inclusive interviewing techniques.

**Offer Accommodations:** Inquire about specific accommodations that candidates might require during the interview, such as visual aids, additional time, questions in advance, breaks, interactive assessments etc.



# Strategy 3: Fostering culture & acceptance

*Fostering culture and acceptance involves cultivating an environment that values and celebrates neurodiversity. This boosts morale, collaboration, and overall employee satisfaction by promoting a culture of acceptance and understanding. Here are some ways this can be done!*



*Neurodiversity awareness training*



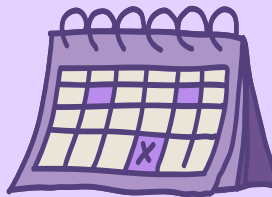
*Elect a neurodiversity champion*



*Employee resource & support groups*



*Incorporate neurodiversity into company values, policies & procedures*



*Celebrate neurodiversity awareness dates*



*Recognition program for inclusive behaviours*



*Accessibility audits*



*Flexible social events*



*Inclusive language guidelines*

# How to incorporate neurodiversity into company values, policies & procedures

## Company values

- Inclusivity:** *Commit to embracing diverse perspectives, including neurodivergent individuals.*
- Diversity Appreciation:** *Value cognitive diversity, recognising the strengths of neurodivergent individuals.*
- Equal Opportunities:** *Advocate for equal opportunities and success for neurodivergent employees.*

## **Equal Employment Opportunity Policy:**

*Communicate a comprehensive policy including neurodiversity as a valued aspect.*

**Accommodation Policy:** *Implement a clear policy for requesting and providing accommodations.*

**Anti-Discrimination Policy:** *Establish a strong policy prohibiting discrimination against neurodivergent individuals.*

## Policies

## Procedures

**Equal Employment Opportunity Policy:** *Communicate a comprehensive policy including neurodiversity as a valued aspect.*

**Training Programs:** *Develop training for awareness and understanding of neurodiversity.*

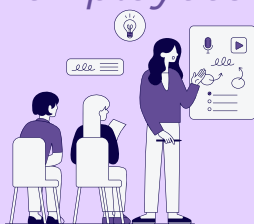
**Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** *Establish procedures for gathering feedback to continually improve inclusivity.*

# Strategy 4: Feedback & continuous improvement

*Fostering culture and acceptance involves cultivating an environment that values and celebrates neurodiversity. This boosts morale, collaboration, and overall employee satisfaction by promoting a culture of acceptance and understanding. Here are some ways this can be done!*



*Regular feedback from neurodivergent employees*



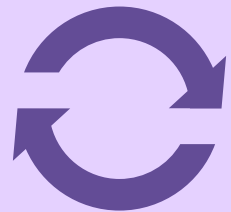
*Regular training for all staff to enhance understanding*



*Regularly review policies & procedures*



*Form a committee to address inclusivity*



*Establishing feedback loop*



*Actionable feedback platforms*

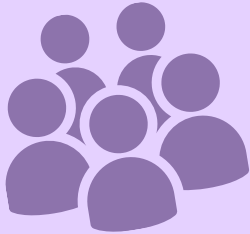


*Anonymous surveys*



*Focus groups*

# How to establish feedback loop



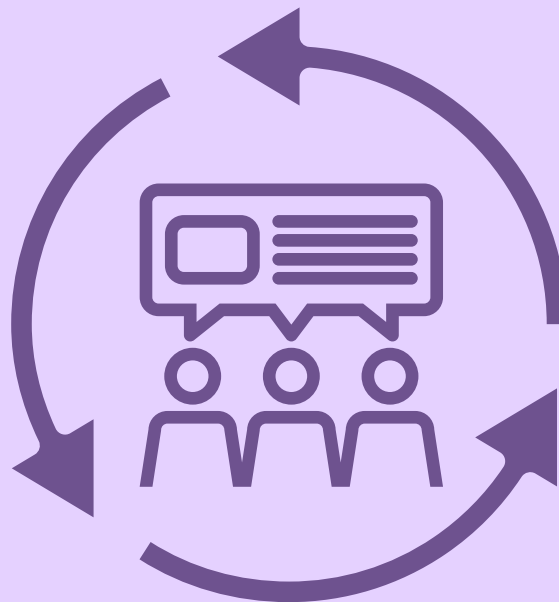
**Neurodiversity Task Force:** Form a task force responsible for overseeing the feedback loop's effectiveness and implementing improvements.

**Open Channels:** Establish accessible feedback channels, such as suggestion boxes, designated emails, and anonymous surveys.

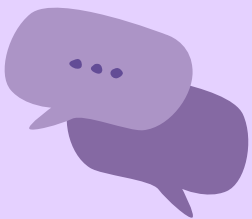


**Regular Check-Ins:** Schedule routine 1-to-1 check-ins to discuss experiences, challenges, and suggestions with neurodivergent employees.

**Feedback Analysis & Action:** Regularly analyse feedback, identify recurring themes, and respond promptly with actionable changes.



**Diverse Feedback Methods:** Offer varied feedback methods (written, verbal, visual) to accommodate different communication preferences.



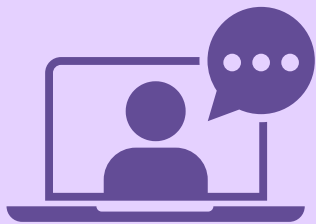
**Utilise Online Platforms:** Implement online forums for anonymous feedback, fostering a safe space for open communication.

**Focused Sessions:** Host specific sessions or workshops dedicated to neurodiversity, encouraging open discussions and feedback.



# Strategy 5: Promoting awareness & education

*Promoting awareness and education involves initiating educational initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity. This enhances empathy, reduces stigma, and fosters a more informed and supportive workplace community. Here are some ways this can be done!*



*Host workshops & webinars*



*Invite external speakers or experts*



*Provide resources to keep employees informed*



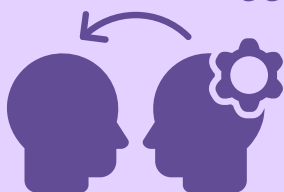
*Include neurodiversity awareness in onboarding process*



*Include neurodiverse perspectives in company communications*



*Promote neurodiversity awareness dates*



*Neurodiversity mentoring program*



*Neurodiversity Panel Discussions*

# Resource ideas

1

**Neurodiversity training:** Basic modules covering neurodiversity, workplace inclusion, and effective communication.



2

**Webinars and workshops:** Engaging sessions featuring neurodiversity experts and success stories.



3

**Reading list:** Books, articles, and guides exploring neurodiversity, personal experiences, and workplace inclusion.

4

**Podcasts and videos:** Accessible content sharing neurodivergent voices and experiences.



5

**Inclusive language guide:** A resource for respectful and unbiased communication on neurodiversity.

6

**Interactive learning platforms:** Modules, quizzes, and scenarios for ongoing learning about neurodiversity.



7

**Employee resource groups (ERGs):** Networks for sharing resources, experiences, and providing mutual support.

8

**Newsletters:** Regular updates on neurodiversity, success stories, and upcoming events.



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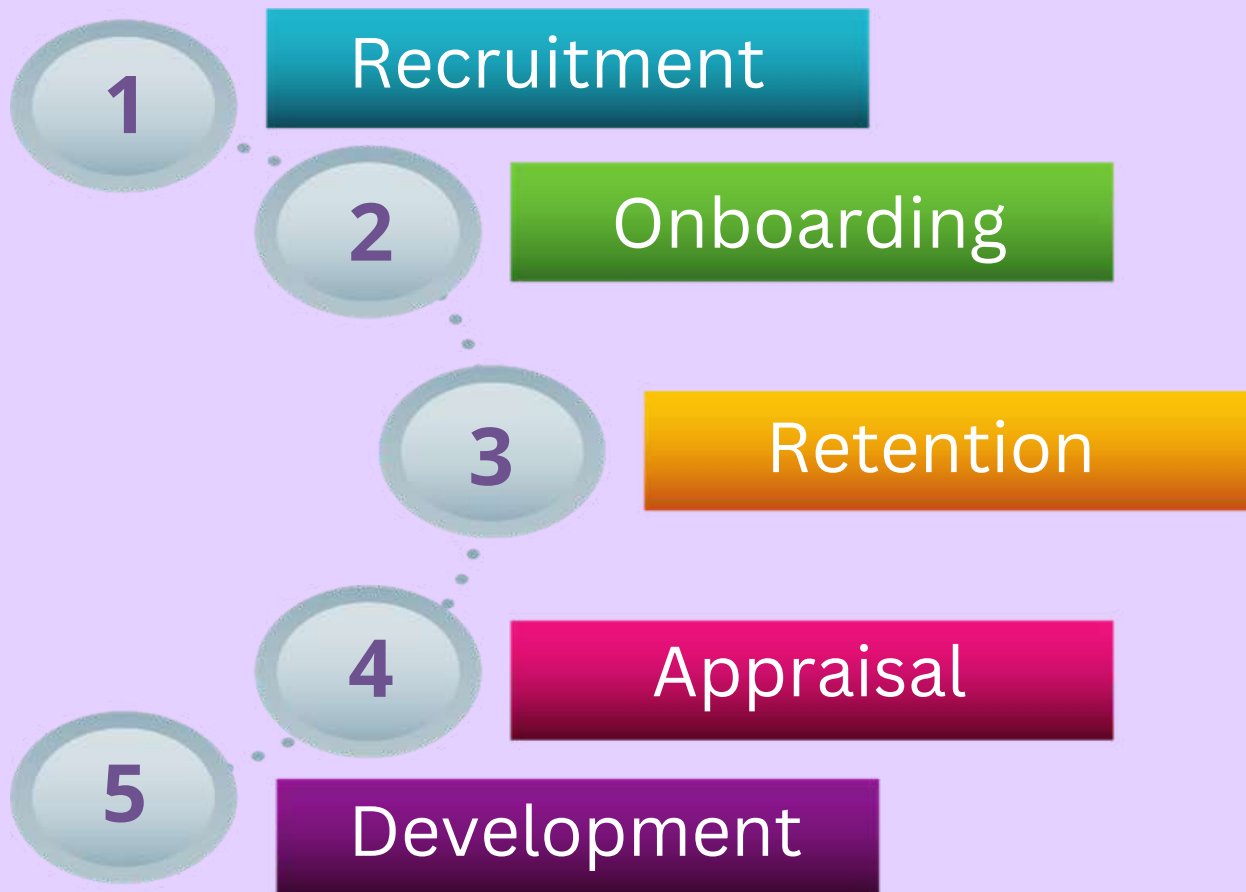
**Intranet section:** Dedicated space on the company intranet with neurodiversity resources and links.

10

**Collaboration with organisations:** Partnerships with neurodiversity advocacy groups for additional resources and expert speakers.



# Being neuro-inclusive throughout the employee lifecycle



*Neuro-inclusivity across the employee lifecycle is vital for cultivating a workplace that values diverse minds. From recruitment to career development, embracing neurodiversity fosters innovation, enhances team dynamics, and contributes to a compassionate workplace culture. Recognising and accommodating neurodiverse needs at every stage ensures a more inclusive and supportive environment, unlocking the full potential of the workforce.*

*Here are some descriptions of each stage of the employee lifecycle and examples illustrating how this can be effectively implemented.*

### **1. Recruitment:**

Ensure diverse talents are recognised and valued from the start, fostering a culture of openness and diversity during hiring.

#### **Examples:**

- Craft clear and straightforward job adverts and job descriptions.
- Actively promote a diverse and inclusive workplace in job adverts.
- Implement blind recruitment practices to mitigate bias.
- Engage applicants in open conversations about their needs.
- Customise interview and assessment processes to ensure inclusivity.

### **2. Onboarding:**

Create a neuroinclusive onboarding process for a smooth integration, setting the tone for an inclusive workplace from day one.

#### **Examples:**

- Provide information on the work environment well before the first day.
- Develop a jargon handbook to facilitate a smooth transition.
- Take time to understand individual challenges and strengths.
- Assign a buddy or mentor for new neurodivergent hires.
- Offer flexibility in onboarding process to accommodate individual needs.

### **3. Retention:**

Cultivate a neuroinclusive environment for ongoing engagement, satisfaction, & retaining valuable talent in an appreciative workplace.

#### **Examples:**

- Maintain an optimal & stable work environment.
- Identify factors that engage & motivate neurodiverse employees.
- Cultivate an open, supportive, & inclusive workplace culture.
- Establish mentorship programs
- Climate surveys for employee satisfaction & identify areas for improvement.

### **4.Appraisal:**

Implement neuroinclusive performance management for fair evaluations that consider diverse strengths and contributions.

#### **Examples:**

- Identify skills gaps & implement initiatives for improvement.
- Monitor performance changes closely, offering support.
- Conduct regular check-ins & provide mentorship opportunities.
- Provide training for managers on effectively supporting neurodiverse employees.
- Encourage peer support networks.

### **5. Development:**

Tailor development opportunities to neurodiverse strengths, ensuring equal access to skill growth and career advancement in a diverse workforce.

#### **Examples:**

- Set ambitious, supported goals for neurodiverse employees.
- Involve neurodiverse individuals in key project teams for diverse perspectives.
- Tailor training programs to neurodiverse needs & preferences.
- Integrate neurodiversity training into broader organisational initiatives.
- Establish clear career progression for neurodiverse employees.



# Personal strategies



*Here are some strategies that you can personally implement into your life, to be more neuro-inclusive.*

## 1. Educate yourself

Take the initiative to educate yourself about neurodiversity and other forms of diversity.

## 2. Promote inclusive language

Be mindful of the language you use. Avoid making assumptions or using language that may unintentionally exclude others.

## 3. Active listening

This involves giving your full attention, showing empathy, and seeking to understand their viewpoints without judgment.

## 4. Support communication & learning styles

Recognise and respect diverse communication and learning styles. Adapt your communication style to create an inclusive dialogue.

## 5. Be open to different perspectives

Encourage open discussions where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas.

# Personal strategies continued

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## 6. Offer help & flexibility

Be supportive, offer help when needed, and acknowledge diverse needs for flexible work arrangements or accommodations.

## 7. Participate in inclusion activities

Participate in workplace inclusion initiatives through training, joining employee groups, or supporting neurodiversity programs.

## 8. Celebrate differences

Acknowledge and celebrate colleagues' uniqueness by recognising achievements, birthdays, or cultural observances.

## 9. Avoid stereotypes

Challenge and avoid stereotypes for neurodivergent individuals or any group; treat each person as a unique individual.

## 10. Model inclusive behaviour

Demonstrate inclusive behaviour in your interactions with others. This can inspire those around you to follow suit.

Here are some useful resources you might want to explore at your own pace for self-education.

# Useful resources

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## Websites:

- **Neurodiversity in the Workplace:** A comprehensive online resource (<https://neurodiversityemploymentnetwork.org/>) for creating inclusive workplaces, providing information and tools.
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** Offers resources and support (<https://askjan.org/index.cfm>) for workplace accommodations, including information for neurodivergent individuals.
- **British Psychological Society on Neurodiversity in the Workplace:** Provides insights and resources (<https://www.bps.org.uk/search?term=neurodiversity+work>) on the psychological aspects of embracing neurodivergent talent.

## Books:

- **"The Power of Different: The Link Between Disorder and Genius"** by Gail Saltz: Explores the connection between mental conditions and exceptional talents.
- **"The Neurodiverse Workplace: An Employer's Guide to Managing and Working with Neurodivergent Employees, Clients and Customers"** by Victoria Honeybourne: Offers practical strategies for supporting neurodivergent employees.
- **"Neurodiversity at Work: Drive Innovation, Performance and Productivity with a Neurodiverse Workforce"** by Amanda Kirkby and Theo Smith: A concise guide for HR professionals on attracting and engaging a diverse workforce.

## Podcasts:

- **The Neurodiversity Podcast** by Emily Kircher-Morris features conversations with leaders in psychology, education, and beyond, focusing on positive impacts for neurodivergent individuals.
- **'Neurodiversity at Work'** by Workology, hosted by Jessica Miller-Merrell, delves into workplace neurodiversity with insights from experts and real-life experiences.

