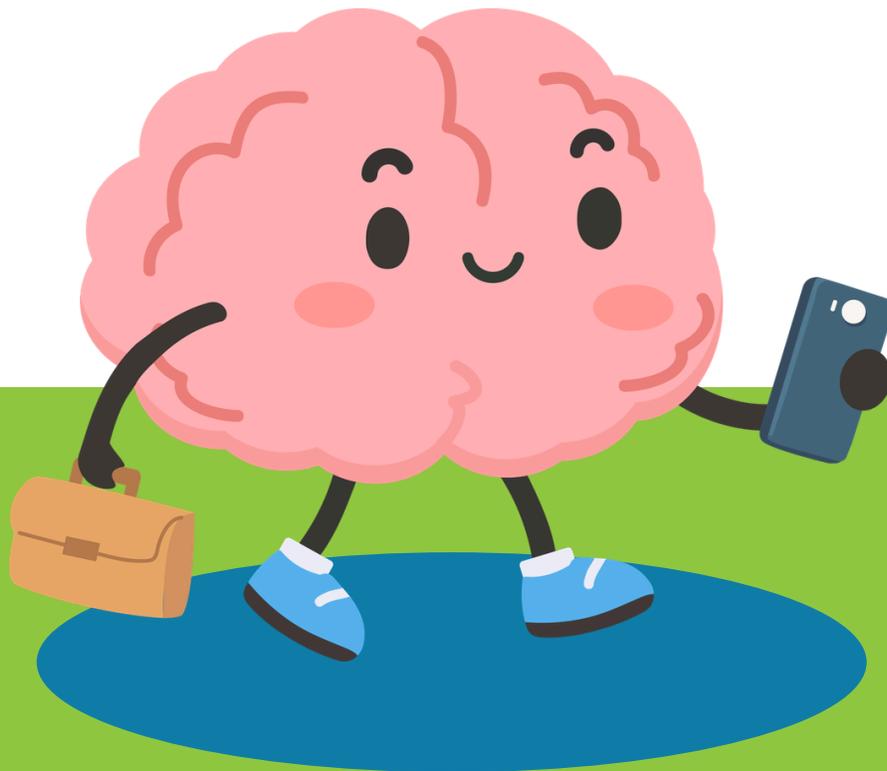




HOW TO MAKE THE WORKPLACE MORE NEURO-INCLUSIVE

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES



A practical framework to help you assess your environment and implement meaningful adjustments, ensuring neurodiverse groups are supported and able to contribute their best work without unnecessary barriers.

What is Neuro-Inclusivity?

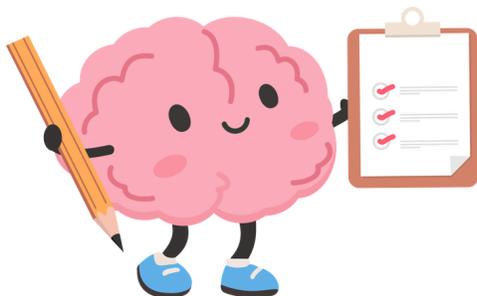
Neuro-inclusivity is a critical step towards a fully inclusive society.

Neurodivergent individuals often face barriers in education, employment, physical spaces, and services. Creating more inclusive policies, practices, and environments begins by considering these challenges from the outset. The first steps toward inclusion are awareness and acceptance. Recognizing that people experience the world differently and embracing these differences as a natural part of human diversity. Together, awareness and acceptance lay the foundation for environments where everyone feels respected, supported, and able to participate.

Equity over equality.

While equality (the sameness of treatment for all), lays the groundwork for basic rights, equity addresses deeper imbalances that are in place. By recognizing different circumstances that individuals face, businesses can allocate resources to ensure specific needs of diverse communities are met in order to achieve fair outcomes.

Organizations can better champion neurodiversity by fostering an inclusive and accommodating work environment that recognizes, respects, and supports the unique needs and strengths of neurodivergent employees.



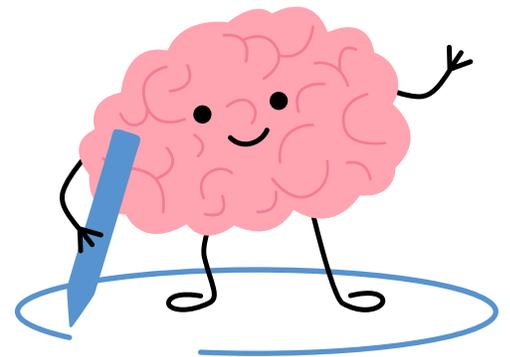
How can organizations better support neurodivergent staff members?

Flexible work environment

Flexibility in work arrangements is vital in accommodating the diverse needs of neurodivergent employees. Providing options for flexible working hours, remote work, or personalized job arrangements can empower neurodivergent individuals to optimize their productivity while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Resources for staff

Organizations can also enhance support by improving mental health resources, such as offering comprehensive insurance coverage for mental health services.



Acceptance, empathy, and understanding

Acceptance plays a pivotal role in creating psychological safety (a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking) and a supportive workplace culture for neurodivergent individuals.

Recognizing that the workstyles and preferences of neurodivergent staff may differ from traditional norms is key in enabling these individuals to thrive. Organizations should establish clear feedback channels to understand the current inclusive practices and the ways to improve it.

How can organizations better support neurodivergent staff members?

Staff education

Ongoing education and awareness initiatives for all staff on neurodiversity and acceptance can foster a more inclusive and understanding workplace culture. By promoting empathy, respect, and appreciation for neurodiversity, organizations can cultivate a harmonious work environment that celebrates the unique contributions of all employees, including those who are neurodivergent. Training for staff can go further by incorporating training on neuro-inclusive communication and collaborative practices.

Resources for staff

Additional supports may also include training formats to be modified to better support diverse learning needs, such as sharing materials in advance, offering recordings or written summaries, or providing additional orientation or induction training to allow more time for processing and integration.

Feedback processes may also be adjusted, such as delivering feedback in written form, scheduling dedicated reflection time, or structuring conversations in a more predictable format. In some cases, executive functioning coaching may also be beneficial. This type of support focuses on strengthening skills such as planning, prioritization, time management, and organization, often through workplace coaching approaches grounded in psychology. Together, these strategies can help create an environment where individuals are better equipped to engage, learn, and perform effectively.

Universal Design: everyone wins!

Sometimes the accommodations being implemented for neurodivergent staff can also be beneficial to neurotypical staff, increasing productivity and job satisfaction all around.

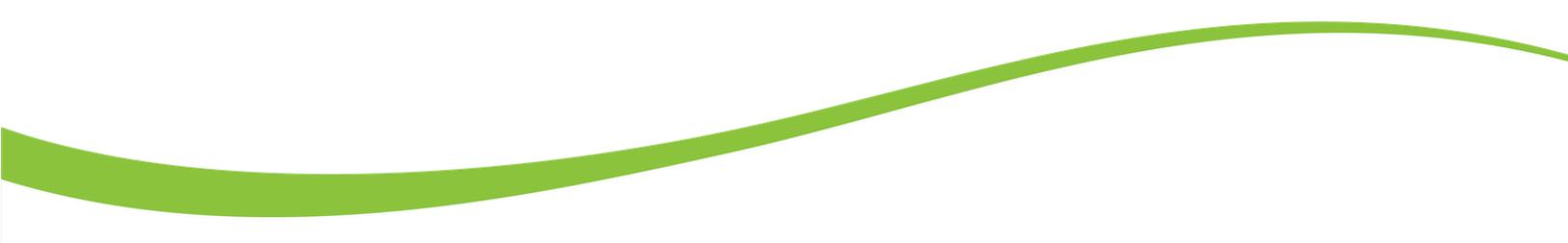
When accommodations are framed as universal design, they:

- Reduce the need for disclosure
- Remove stigma
- Increase belonging
- Improve organizational culture overall

Many “neurodivergent accommodations” are simply good management practices.

When spaces, services, and systems are intentionally designed to be accessible from the outset they reduce barriers, duplication, and the need for individual accommodations. Clear signage, flexible policies, intuitive technology, and multiple ways to access information create smoother experiences for all users, not just those with identified disabilities. Accessibility improvements, even when introduced later, strengthen trust, expand reach, and often reveal efficiencies that benefit everyone.

The result is greater efficiency and stronger outcomes. Organizations spend less time troubleshooting preventable challenges, staff can focus on meaningful work, and individuals are empowered to participate fully.



Universal Design

Some universally beneficial considerations for the workplace include:

Clear communication

- Written agendas shared in advance of meetings
- Clear expectations, deadlines, and success criteria
- Meeting summaries and action items clearly defined
- Explicit feedback (no relying on vague cues)

Clarity signals respect for your staff or colleagues' time and efforts, ensures everyone is working towards the same goals, and reduces anxiety and cognitive load. Setting clear expectations and indicating next steps following discussions also prevents misunderstandings and improves accountability. All of these aspects are beneficial to the entire workplace, while also supporting staff who may process information differently (auditory vs. written).

It's just good practice!

Some other considerations that lend to universal design in the workplace include:

- Structured turn taking - for example, use the “hand-up” feature built-in to virtual meeting software when taking turns to speak or contribute
- Clear work flows and processes
- Transparent decision making
- Quiet rooms
- Adjustable desks
- Inclusive menu options

Accessible Materials

Ensure documents are accessible (AODA compliant materials)

Documents must comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to ensure accessibility for all users, including formatting for those using assistive technologies.

- Include alt text (descriptions) for all images used in documentation and utilize descriptive hyperlinks
- Refrain from using emojis (they interrupt the flow of screen readers)
- Within most Microsoft programs, including Outlook, Word, and PowerPoint, there is a built in feature called the “Accessibility Checker” that will indicate areas that can be improved for AODA compliance. [Information on how to use this feature.](#)
- Separate headings from the body of your text (rather than simply bolding text) to assist individuals using screen readers.

You can also access the [WebAIM contrast checker](#) to ensure the colours you are using throughout your materials allow for a high enough contrast to ensure that readers with visual disabilities are able to perceive the content on the page.

Foreground

Hex Value
#FFFFFF

Color Picker Alpha
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Lightness

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Hex Value
#8DC63F

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Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Fail**

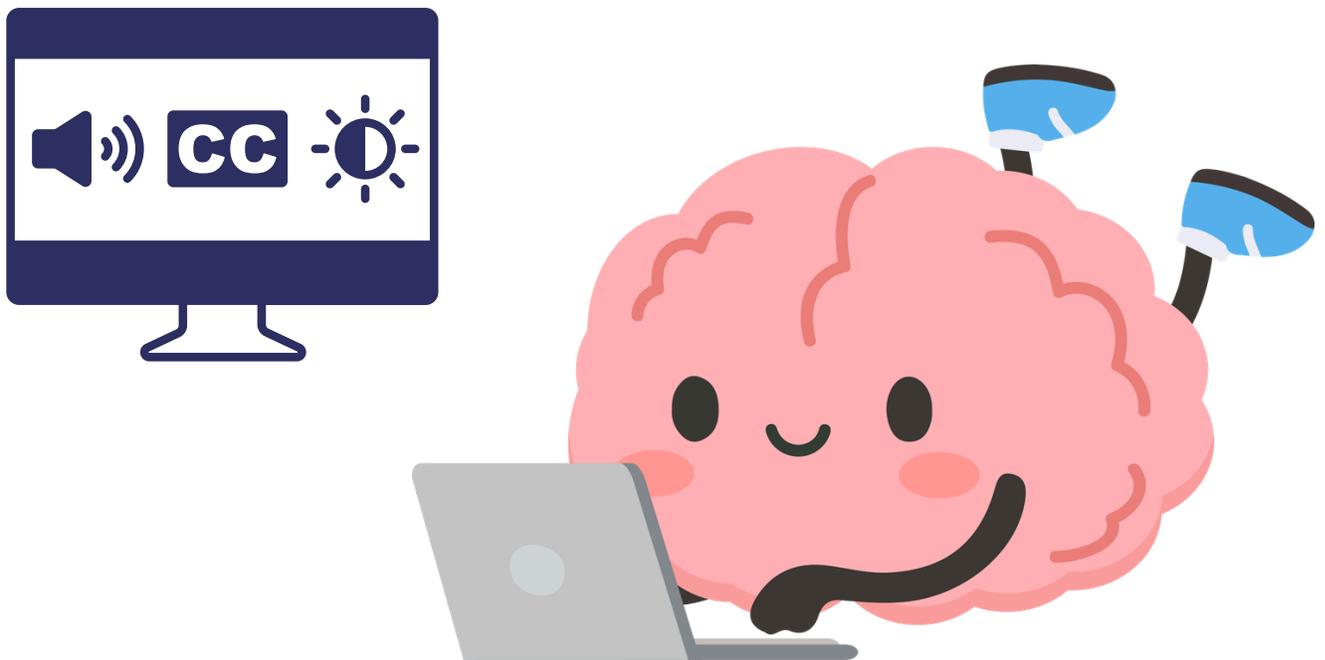
WCAG AAA: **Fail**

Accessible Materials

Ensure your website is accessible

Ensuring your website is compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) ensures that people with disabilities can independently navigate, understand, and interact with your content, whether they use screen readers, keyboard navigation, captioning, or other assistive technologies.

Beyond meeting legal obligations, AODA compliance strengthens your organization's credibility and reach. Accessibility improves usability for everyone; enhancing clarity, readability, and overall user experience.



Enhancing the physical space

Lighting and sound

Avoid fluorescents, and allow for adjustable lighting where possible. Incorporating sound-absorbing materials to help maintain a quieter atmosphere also reduces sensory overload.

Paint

Incorporate soft colour palettes without busy patterns or high contrast. Muted colours and off-white surfaces to reduce glare can be beneficial to those with sensory sensitivities.

Flexible spaces

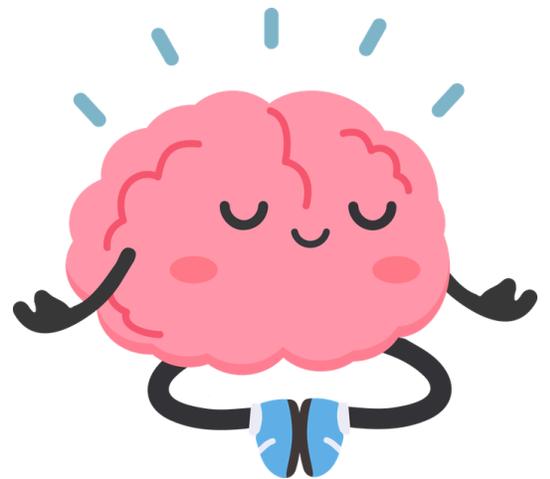
Where possible, allow staff to choose where to work from each day by offering a variety of spaces that suit the worker's needs. Such as a collaborative space, a private quiet zone, etc.

Calm spaces

Ensure there is a dedicated area where employees can go to regulate and recover from the impact of overstimulation.

Nature

Incorporate nature wherever possible, such as the use of natural materials like wood, plant life, allowing views of the outdoors, or access to natural sunlight.



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Enhancing the physical space

Tools and Assistive Devices

Access to assistive technologies and practical tools can play an important role in enhancing both accessibility and productivity in the workplace. These supports may include software that assists with reading, writing, and organization, such as text-to-speech or speech-to-text programs, task management applications, digital planners, or tools that support focus and time management. In other cases, assistive technology may involve features that reduce cognitive load, such as screen readers, visual organizers, captioning, or adjustable display settings. Practical tools might also include templates, checklists, or structured workflows that help make expectations clearer and tasks easier to navigate.

Workstation set-up

Some helpful workstation adjustments can include the use of dual screens to improve concentration, as well as whiteboards and other aide memoires to assist in information recall. The option to utilize a standing desk as well as a wobble board improves the employee's access to movement through the day.



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