

Crash Course

Neurodiversity 101



➤ Introduction to Neurodiversity

NEURODIVERSITY is the idea that there are many different healthy human neurotypes, none of which are necessarily 'right' or 'wrong'.

Neurodiversity includes all neurotypes—even those we consider 'the norm'! Some societies and environments may privilege certain brains (i.e. those we consider 'normal') and disadvantage others (i.e. Autistic brains, ADHD brains, etc.).

For example, we now understand that cultural diversity can enrich our society, and that racism can create inequality. Similarly, acknowledging Neurodiversity helps us to understand that we can value all that people with different types of brains and neurotypes have to offer, and acknowledge that stigma, ableism, and inequality can create barriers to inclusion within Neurodiverse populations.

Neurodiversity Accessibility: 3 Key Points

1

Sensory Processing

Neurodiverse populations can vary widely in how they process sensory information.

Lights might seem brighter and sounds louder. Fidget toys may help with processing information. Environmental accessibility is key to inclusion!

2

Cultural Sensitivity

Neurodiversity culture challenges cultural norms and stigma that create inequality.

This requires moving beyond 'awareness' and towards 'acceptance'; sourcing knowledge from the community and shifting perspectives on disability!

3

Strength-Based Approach

Each neurotype has different strengths and limitations—even those that fall within the 'norm'.

Wherever possible, try to work with the positives of Neurodiversity, and acknowledge that many of the limitations can be offset through accessibility!

Neurodiversity Placemaking

DIY Sensory Room

✍ Creating a Sensory Room

A **SENSORY ROOM** is an environment created specifically with the intention of facilitating Neurodiversity Accessibility.

A **Sensory Room** is a private room set up to minimise overwhelming sensory stimuli. Public spaces are often filled with bright lights, loud sounds, and a cacophony of smells, physical sensations, and social pressures. Sensory Rooms offer a soothing escape from these overstimulating public spaces. An existing classroom, office, or other small space can become a sensory room with just a few minor changes!

Sensory Room Plan



Lighting

Aim for soothing atmosphere

Avoid

- Overhead lighting
- Fluorescent Lighting
- White light bulbs

Use:

- Window lighting
- Floor or Table Lamps
- Yellow / Warm light bulbs



Sound

A quiet environment with as little noise as possible is best

Don't Use

- A noisy setting
- Loud conversations
- Music
- Noisy activities
- White light bulbs

Do Use:

- A quiet room
- Quiet conversations
- Provide earplugs
- Quiet places to relax (i.e. beanbags)



Smell

Avoid scents that can trigger headaches, nausea and discomfort

Avoid

- Perfumes, scented deodorants, etc.
- Food in the room
- Near high-scent areas (i.e. cafes)

Use:

- A sign on the door requesting that no scents are worn in
- Signs throughout requesting no food



Culture

Offer options for self-soothing and positive sensory activities

Avoid






- A sterile look
- Limited privacy [i.e. all glass walls]
- Negative symbols and languages [see cultural sensitivity guidelines provided]

Use:

- Free fidget toys
- Colouring books
- Optional social colour coded stickers
- [Green = talkative / red = quit time]






Neurodiversity Accessibility Checklist

✓ Classroom/ Lecture Theatre Events

1. Culture		
	<p>Be culturally aware!</p> <p>Work in collaboration with the Neurodiverse community. Review the Neurodiversity Information pamphlets provided. Ensure that any materials that you produce follow the cultural sensitivity guidelines. Seek guidance from the Neurodiverse community when shaping your plans / materials.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Environment		
	<p>Sensory accessibility is a key factor!</p> <p>Plan for a Neurodiversity friendly event. Classrooms and lecture theatres can be very overstimulating and socially overwhelming. Fluorescent and/or overhead lighting, noisy conversations, and group dynamics can present challenges. Keep lights and noise to a minimum.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Safe Space		
	<p>Provide Safe Spaces! Be mindful that public speaking or group work can be stressful. Give students an option of whether to socialise or answer verbal questions. Offer a choice: let participants choose to learn independently OR in small social groups. Independent learning options can help to regulate energy levels and retain information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Adjustments		
	<p>Enhance Equity!</p> <p>Present using a variety of styles: slides with images, charts, etc. Catering to a variety of learning styles can facilitate accessibility for a diverse group. Use written bullet-points to prompt discussions and/or communicate clearly. Use <i>Sans Serif</i> fonts like Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri to facilitate reading across neurotypes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. What to Expect		
	<p>Communicate expectations clearly! Help participants plan for your event in advance. Use your promotional materials, websites, etc. to clarify what to expect on the day. Anything from dress-code, to sensory environment, to 'what to bring' can be helpful. Also be sure to promote your chosen accessibility features to encourage attendance.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Neurodiversity Accessibility Checklist

✓ Large Events and Festivals

1. Culture		
	<p>Be culturally aware! Work in collaboration with the Neurodiverse community. Review the Neurodiversity Information pamphlets provided. Ensure that any materials that you produce follow the cultural sensitivity guidelines. Seek guidance from the Neurodiverse community when shaping your plans / materials.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Environment		
	<p>Sensory accessibility is a key factor! Plan for a Neurodiversity friendly event. At large events like festivals, be conscious of 'hot spots' of sensory overstimulation. If environmental alterations are not possible, consider providing a sensory heat map in any information materials you produce. Make this available both in advance and on-site.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Safe Space		
	<p>Provide Safe Spaces! Having a place to recharge can help regulate energy levels. Ensure that your large event has a safe sensory retreat where participants can recharge. Check if there is a sensory room near your venue or consider providing one on the day. Clearly sign directions to the sensory room from the busiest areas of your event.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Adjustments		
	<p>Enhance Equity! The right combination of accommodations makes a big difference. Consider which types of sensory and accessibility accommodations you can provide. This may involve offering buckets of earplugs and/or fidget toys at registration tables. While you may not be able to offer a perfect sensory environment, try to meet halfway.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. What to Expect		
	<p>Communicate expectations clearly! Help participants plan for your event in advance. Use your promotional materials, websites, etc. to clarify what to expect on the day. Anything from dress-code, to sensory environment, to 'what to bring' can be helpful. Also be sure to promote your chosen accessibility features to encourage attendance!</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>






Neurodiversity Accessibility Checklist

✓ Online Teaching and Events

1. Culture		
	<p>Be culturally aware!</p> <p>Work in collaboration with the Neurodiverse community. Review the Neurodiversity Information pamphlets provided. Ensure that any materials that you produce follow the cultural sensitivity guidelines. Seek guidance from the Neurodiverse community when shaping your plans / materials.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Environment		
	<p>Sensory accessibility is a key factor!</p> <p>Plan for a Neurodiversity friendly event. When teaching or hosting events via video conferencing, ensure that all microphones aside from that of the speaker are muted prior to commencing. If you are designing an online space or a slide deck, try to use muted colours and avoid a bright and overstimulating setting.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Safe Space		
	<p>Provide Safe Spaces! Be sure to indicate whether the event is being recorded. Particularly if recording is on, make microphone and camera use optional, and allow participation via microphone <u>and</u> written comments. Be mindful that it can be difficult knowing when or how to contribute in a video call. Some participants may not be comfortable with speaking or submitting written ideas. Offer the opportunity to send private messages to the host, who can then read them out anonymously.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Adjustments		
	<p>Enhance Equity!</p> <p>Engage with participants using multiple teaching methods. Try creating activity slides in PowerPoint in lieu of handouts, and enable participant mark-up options—this may include options to draw, brainstorm, fill out charts, link/match up terms and definitions, etc. You can also use options like voting to bolster participation rates. Use written bullet-points to prompt discussions and/or communicate clearly. Use <i>Sans Serif</i> fonts like Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri to facilitate reading across neurotypes.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. What to Expect		
	<p>Communicate expectations clearly! Help participants plan for your event in advance. Use your promotional materials, websites, etc. to clarify what to expect on the day. Also be sure to promote your chosen accessibility features to encourage attendance.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Neurodiversity Accessibility Checklist

✓ Guided Tours

1. Culture		
	<p>Be culturally aware! Work in collaboration with the Neurodiverse community. Review the Neurodiversity Information pamphlets provided. Ensure that any materials that you produce follow the cultural sensitivity guidelines. Seek guidance from the Neurodiverse community when shaping your plans / materials.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Environment		
	<p>Sensory accessibility is a key factor! ePlan for a Neurodiversity friendly event. Advise your tour leaders to make a trial run in advance, taking note of sensory hotspots. Triggers may be: fluorescent lights, bells and alarms, multiple/loud conversations, etc. Advise guides to introduce triggering spaces before entering, and limit time spent there.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Safe Space		
	<p>Provide Safe Spaces! Plan a safe space into your tour and give participants a break. Taking time to recharge alone can help regulate energy levels and limit overstimulation. For a campus tour, this might look like 5 minutes of alone time to explore the gardens. For a library tour, 5 minutes for students to find their discipline section on Level 3.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Adjustments		
	<p>Enhance Equity! The right combination of accommodations makes a big difference. Consider which types of sensory and accessibility accommodations you can provide. This may involve offering buckets of earplugs and/or fidget toys at registration tables. While you may not be able to offer a perfect sensory environment, try to meet halfway.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. What to Expect		
	<p>Communicate expectations clearly! Help participants plan for your event in advance. Use your promotional materials, websites, etc. to clarify what to expect on the day. Anything from dress-code, to sensory environment, to 'what to bring' can be helpful. Also be sure to promote your chosen accessibility features to encourage attendance!</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Neurodiversity

Cultural Sensitivity



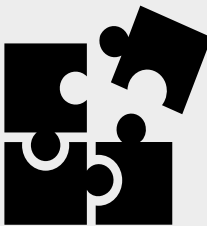
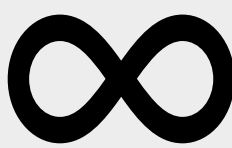

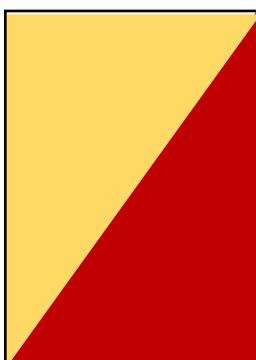
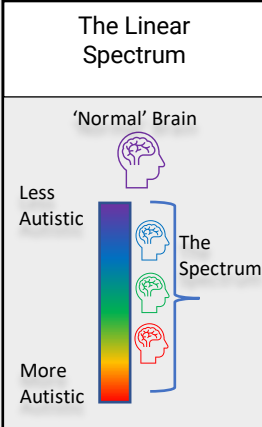
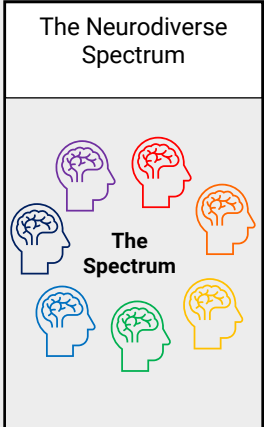
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Language

Instead of	Try this	In lieu of	Consider using	Explanation
Person-First Language	Identity First Language	Person with Autism (person-first)	Autistic Person (identity first)	Most Autistic people prefer Identity-First language, but ask each individual for their preferred terminology.
Low / High Functioning	Low / Complex / High Support Needs	Person who has low-functioning / high-functioning Autism	Autistic person with lower/complex support needs	Functioning is often based largely on available support systems, reasonable adjustments, and environmental accessibility--not individual capability.
Mild / Severe Autism	Person on the Autism Spectrum	Person who suffers from Mild / Severe Autism	Person on the Autism Spectrum	Suffering, Mildness, and Severity are outdated terms that came from an era when Autism was considered a disease. Many Autistic people now find them offensive.
Autism Spectrum Disorder / Condition	Autism	ASD / ASC / Developmental Disorder	Autism	Autism is now understood by many as a different Neurotype, not a disorder or condition
Asperger's Syndrome	Autism	Asperger's / High Functioning Autism	Autistic Person ('with lower support needs')	Asperger's no longer exists as a diagnostic term. Assume 'Autism' over Asperger's, but respect a person's right to identify as Asperger's if they choose to retain this term.
Autism Awareness	Neurodiversity Pride, Celebration, or Acceptance	Autism Awareness Month/Day/Event	Neurodiversity Pride, Celebration or Acceptance Month/Day/Event	Many Autistic people prefer not to promote 'Autism Awareness', as it often positions Autism as a problem to be aware of. Consider changing the tone of your event to 'Celebrating' Neurodiversity.



✍ Symbols and Culture

Instead of	Try this	In lieu of	Consider using	Explanation
The Puzzle Piece Symbol	<i>The Infinity Symbol</i>			Some Autistic people find the puzzle piece offensive as it positions Autism as a problem to solve. The infinity symbol represents Neurodiversity.
The Colour Blue	<i>Any other colour</i> (Yellow or Red often used)			Blue is considered by some to have associations with an 'old way' of thinking of Autism as a disease. Red/Yellow are used by more recent campaigns.
A Linear Spectrum	<i>A Neuro-Diverse Spectrum</i>	<p>The Linear Spectrum</p> 	<p>The Neurodiverse Spectrum</p> 	<p>The Linear Spectrum <u>only</u> includes brains that are 'disordered' (i.e. only Atypical brains are 'on the spectrum'). The Neurodiverse Spectrum includes <u>all</u> brains. It recognises multiple Neurotypes, which each have unique strengths and differences—like cultural diversity!</p>