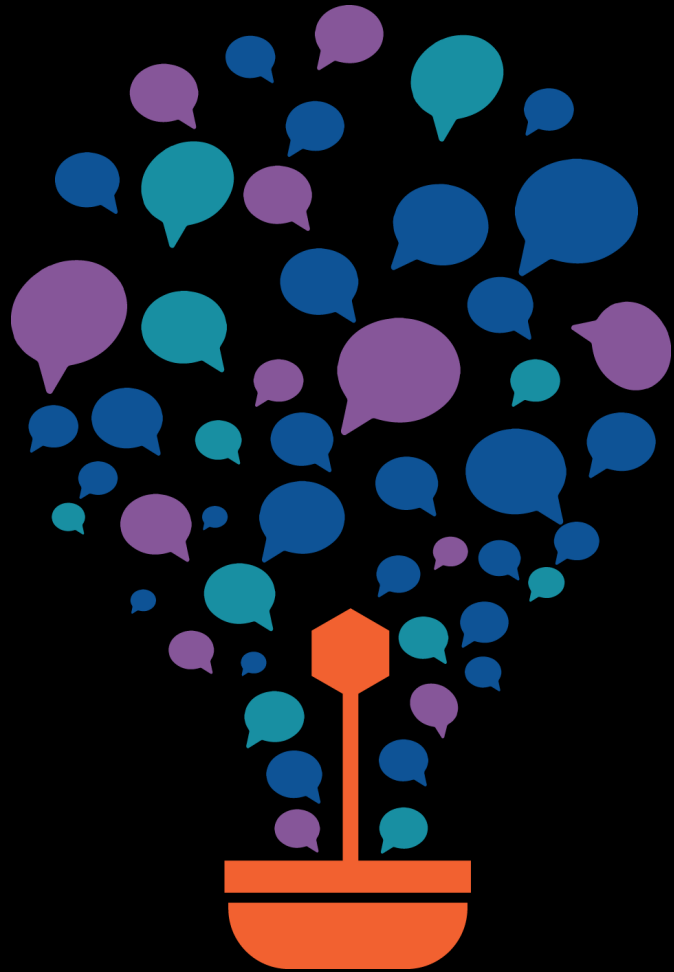


Neurodiversity at Work



Live Educate
Transform Society
(LET'S)

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**You're Participation
is Valued.**

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Safer Spaces



Othering

The labeling of individuals and groups as 'different' is part of the process of creating social hierarchies, which represents the foundation of oppression. Throughout most human societies, particular groups have consistently been 'othered', marginalized and discriminated against.

Us versus Them

Many Canadians' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours toward Indigenous people remain heavily influenced by colonial stereotypes, entrenched in a mentality of 'us versus them'. The positioning of Indigenous people as an idealized or demonized 'other' exaggerates cultural differences and reinforces racialized generalizations.

Decolonialization work aims to break down interpersonal, societal, and systemic barriers and it must include how we perceive and interact with neurodivergent and/or disabled individuals.

Language:

- neurodiversity,
- neurodivergent,
- neurodivergence,
- neurotypical
- neuronormativity
- neurospicy

Neurodiversity

Is the idea that neurological differences like Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Down's Syndrome, Tourette's, etc. are natural variations of the human genome.

Neurodiversity

Focuses on the need for accommodation and assistance, rather than saying people with these conditions are defective or in need of being cured, a message they get all too often. Talk of curing attacks the person's very essence or being.

Neurodiversity

Says that a person who is neurodiverse deserves to be accepted and supported as they are, not be forced into being like others or passing as able-bodied or fitting the societal ideal.

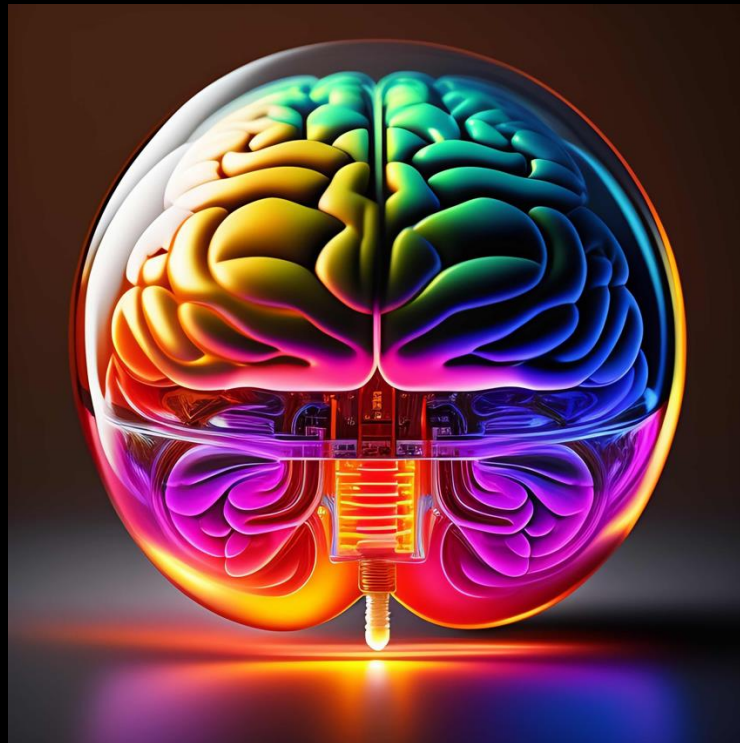
Neurodiversity

In the late 1990s, Judy Singer, a sociologist who is autistic, came up with the word neurodiversity. Singer's objective was to shift the focus of the conversation away from the view of the differences as deficits, disorders, and impairments.

Singer challenged, and continues to challenge the perspective that neurological diversity is a negative. Singer asserted that neurological differences should be recognized and respected as a social category.

Neurodivergent

An adjective that describes people who have a neurodivergence.



Neurotypical

A term used to describe individuals whose brain develops and functions in ways that are considered typical, usual, and/or expected by society.

Neuronormativity

- **Neuronormativity is the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and a centering and idealization of the neurotypical brain and identity.**
- **Neuronormativity pushes neurodivergent people to the margins of society, creating inequity and disadvantage.**
- **Neuronormativity views neurodivergent people as other and less. This leads to exclusion, harm, and limited opportunity.**

Neurospicy 🌶️

- Neurospicy is used by some people as a way to inject humour and personality into the term. It is often accompanied by the red pepper emoji (shown on this slide).
- Some people don't like this term because they feel it reduces the seriousness and importance of the term neurodivergent. The decision to use it – or not – is individual.

Examples of Neurodiversity



ADHD

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects the nervous system, including the brain, during development from childhood to adulthood. ADHD can manifest through impulsivity, hyperactivity, distractedness, and difficulty following instructions and completing tasks. Other individuals may experience issues with time management, staying on topic, rationality, and articulation, or may exhibit lower risk aversion or impulsivity.

Alzheimers

Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia. It's a progressive disease that affects the parts of the brain that control language, memory, and/or thought. It can seriously impact a person's ability to go about their daily life.

Anxiety

- 1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder.**
- 2. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)**
- 3. Panic Disorder**
- 4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**
- 5. Social Anxiety Disorder**
- 6. Agoraphobia**

1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

If a person constantly worries, even when there is no obvious reason, and they are unable to control it, they may have generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

Generally, not diagnosed until worrying happens most days for at least 6 months.

2. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

When a person has a pattern of unwanted thoughts and fears (obsessions) that lead them to do repetitive behaviors (compulsions). This can interfere with daily activities and cause significant distress. Trying to stop or ignore the obsessions can sometimes increase anxiety



3. Panic Disorder

Repeated bouts of unexpected fear, accompanied by physical symptoms like dizziness, heart beating fast, and shortness of breath. People can experience silent panic attacks in which they experience the symptoms internally but do not show them on the outside.

Panic Attack versus Anxiety Attack

The terms panic attack and anxiety attack are often used interchangeably but they are different conditions. A panic attack involves fear with physical symptoms as described on the previous slide. An anxiety attack is caused by a stressful experience or situation.

4. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post traumatic stress disorder can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event, series of events or set of circumstances. It can affect affect mental, physical, social, and/or spiritual well-being and feelings of safety.

5. Social Anxiety Disorder

When one feels overwhelmed at even the thought of interacting with others or going through everyday social situations. People with social anxiety often also have a fear of being watched, evaluated by others, judged, and/or rejected. They try to avoid situations that will trigger these feelings. In these situations, their flight or fight response kicks in and/or they may have anxiety or panic attacks with accompanying physical sensations.

6. Agoraphobia

Involves avoiding places and situations, out of fear, that may cause panic and/or feelings of being trapped, embarrassed, and helpless. The fear stems from the feeling that there is no easy way to escape or get help. Agoraphobia can be extremely overwhelming. It is developed after experiencing panic attacks and a desire to avoid future panic attacks.

Aphasia

Aphasia can result from a stroke, a traumatic impact and/or damage to one's brain. The brain has a part, the Broca's Area, which is in charge of speech, and Wernicke's Area, which is in charge of understanding. If one or both of these areas are injured, aphasia can result. Aphasia ranges in severity. For some, it may be unnoticeable, for others, it can be extremely severe, and the person may be unable to speak or understand language.

Autism

Autism is a neurological developmental condition that affects how one perceives and navigates the world and socializes with others.

The term "spectrum" is associated with autism as the autistic experience includes a wide range of characteristics and severity including: repetitive speech, struggles dealing with change, multitasking, mandatory actions, or understanding different perspectives, and stimming.

Autistics can also be impacted by sensory issues, such sensitivity to light, sounds, and/or touch.

Societal Expectations

Often, dialogue about autistics and their neurodivergent behaviors centres on the idea that there is “norm” to which they’ve deviated. These social constraints are imposed on people consciously and unconsciously and used alongside discriminative social expectations by individuals and society. When people appear to be different from this supposed norm, they are blamed, told they need to be fixed, cured, and ridiculed. This can lead to alienation and exclusion as their diversity is not understood or valued. Often, conversations about autism neglect to talk about the discrimination and societally imposed barriers autistics experience.

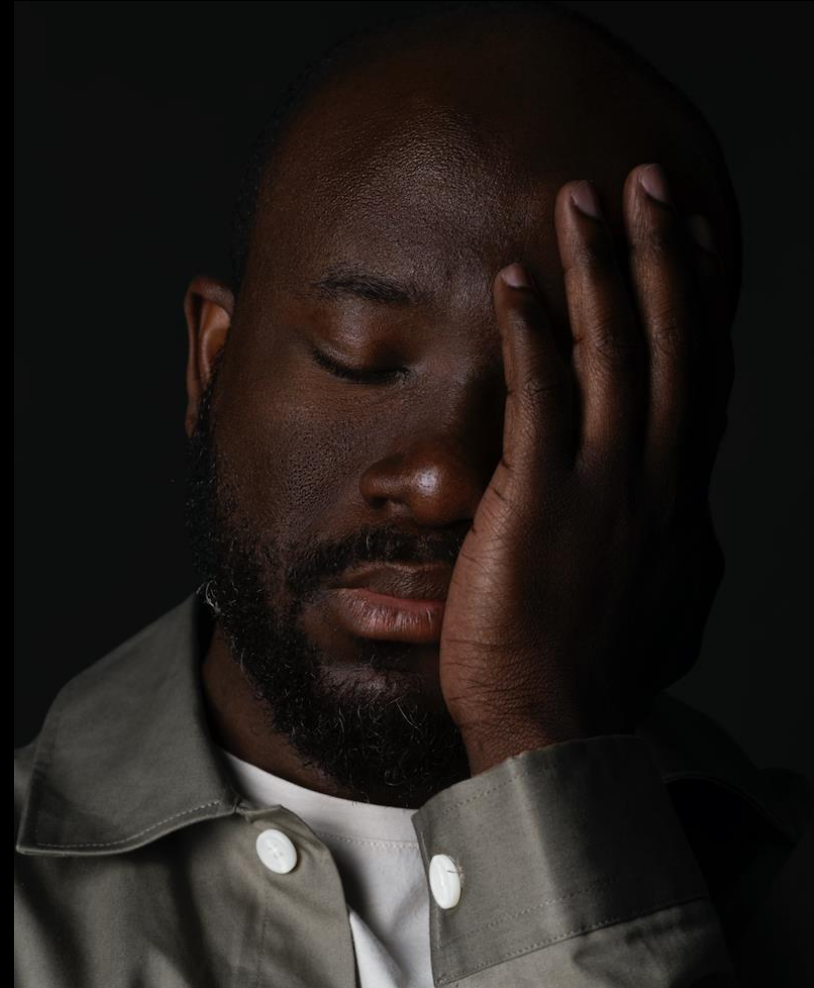
No one way to be autistic

There is no one way to be autistic. Autistics use a saying by Dr Stephen Shore “When you meet one person with Autism, you’ve met one person with Autism”.

This speaks to the broad spectrum of autistic people and experiences. Some may speak, others may communicate in different ways, Some may have other disabilities, others do not. Some need help day to day and others are function independently.

Depression

A mood disorder that that affects a person's body, mind, and senses. It is a persistent feeling of sadness, loss of interest, and/or emptiness Depression affects how one feels about themselves, their lives, their relationships, their roles in communities and society.



Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning disability that is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, poor spelling, problems in reading comprehension, and reduced reading which can affect a person's vocabulary and understanding of references. It can also include problems with short-term memory, processing information, and timekeeping, time management, and organization.

Dysnomia

Dysnomia affects a person's ability to recall words, names or objects. This is demonstrated by word finding pauses, Individuals with dysnomia exhibit word finding difficulties characterized by word finding pauses, faulty word selection, and roundabout speech where an abundant amount of words are used to express an idea.

Misophonia

People with misophonia are affected emotionally by common sounds. Examples include breathing, yawning, or chewing. These noises create a fight-or-flight response that triggers anger and a desire to escape. Misophonia can lead to isolation, as people with this condition try to avoid these trigger sounds. It can seriously impact functioning, socializing, and ultimately mental health.



Sensory Processing Disorders

Conditions in which the brain has difficulties receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses, including hearing, taste, or touch. It can affect multiple senses. People with sensory processing disorders can be under or over reactive to things in their environment that they struggle with.

Tourettes

Tourette Syndrome or tourettes is a condition of the nervous system that causes people to have "tics". Tics are sudden twitches, movements, and/or sounds that people do repeatedly. They are unable to stop themselves from having these tics. There are 2 types of tics, motor and vocal. Motor tics are movements of the body. Vocal tics are sounds that a person makes with his or her voice.

Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic brain injuries are the result of a violent blow or a jolt to the head and/or body. This can include falls, car accidents, sports injuries, blows to the head, explosive blasts, and/or a bullet or object piercing one's brain. Some traumatic brain injuries are temporary while others have long-term symptoms.

Other types of neurodivergence:

Borderline personality disorder,

Down syndrome,

Epilepsy,

Intellectual disabilities,

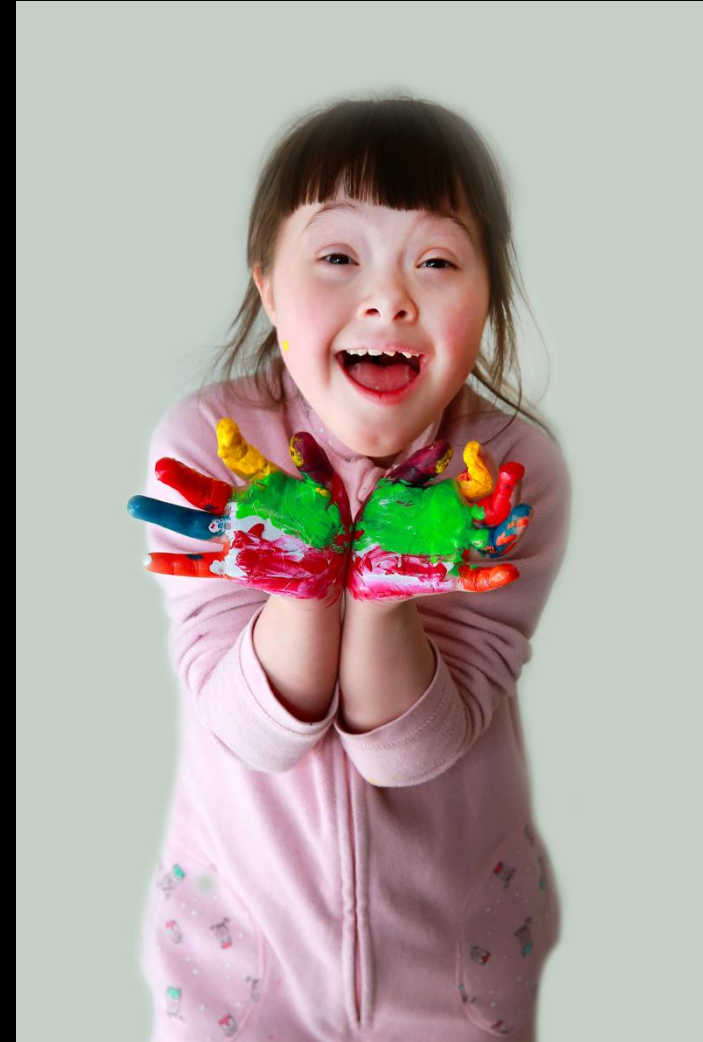
Hyperlexia,

Irlen Syndrome

Seasonal affective disorder,

Strokes,

Tinnitus





Terms Associated with Neurodiversity

Autistic/Allistic

You may see the terms autistic and allistic. Allistic is the term for non-autistic people.

Just as neurotypical is the term for non-neurodivergent people.

Comorbidity / Coexistence

Comorbidity refers to the existence of more than one neurodivergence, disability, and/or condition in a person. For example, if a person is diagnosed with autism and dyslexia, those conditions are said to be comorbid.

Coexistence, which has the same meaning as comorbidity, is used by many as an alternative to denote a gentler and less clinical approach in its description.

An example of neurodivergences that can be co-existing are autism and depression. Research suggests autistic people may be more likely to experience depression than non-autistic people and estimates that it affects up to half of all autistic people at some point in their life.

The National Comorbidity Survey Replication found that 47% of all adults with ADHD have at least one anxiety disorder. A recent study found that adults with ADHD are 2 to 4 times more likely to also be diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

“From personal experience, living in a world where everything tends to be too loud and confusing, and nothing is designed to suit the way you’re wired is really challenging. I’ve been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder alongside autism which is not a surprise at all to me. Many of my neurodivergent friends have the same (or similar) cocktail of mental health challenges to deal with on top of their neurodivergent experience.”

Emotional regulation

The ability to regulate one's emotions. This can include recognizing when one is nearing overwhelm and how to take steps to manage these feelings. Some neurodivergent people have poor impulse control which can lead to making decisions without thinking things through or having risky behaviors. Neurodivergent people may swing from one extreme to another or cycle through emotions as they can have difficulties recognizing and responding to their emotions.

Emotional Dysregulation

A term for when a person's emotional response is poorly regulated

Some neurodivergent people have poor impulse control which can lead to making decisions without thinking things through or having risky behaviors. Neurodivergent people may swing from one extreme to another or cycle through emotions as they can have difficulties recognizing and responding to their emotions.



Emotional regulation is the ability to effectively manage and respond to one's own emotions by self-regulating. This can include recognizing when one is nearing overwhelm or overwhelmed and how to take steps to manage these feelings. We all have various ways of regulating our emotions throughout the day.

Disassociation

Dissociation is a broad term for a wide range of ways in which people cope with trauma and/or stress, escape reality, or need to detach from environments or situations.

Dissociation can cause people to neglect necessary tasks and retreat from the real world into one's imagination, whether in books, movies, music, video games, or other methods. Some people create vivid dream lives or alternative realities in their mind that they escape to.

INCUP

Interest

Novelty

Challenge

Urgency

Passion

Masking

This can include changing things like:

tone of voice

facial expressions

eye contact

**speech patterns, and
body language.**

**Masking and camouflaging can cause
immense stress for neurodivergent people.**

Importance of Social Media



Stimming

Refers to behaviours often used by people with autism to provide stimulation, assist with calming down, add concentration or shut out an overwhelming sound. Examples include rocking back and forth, skipping, vocalising or making repetitive noises, flapping hands or spinning round.



Job descriptions should use language that makes it clear that neurodivergent folks are not only welcome but wanted and supported.

Some job descriptions include requirements that may deter neurodivergent folks from applying. It is important to consider what is a requirement, what is a preference, and what is a hope for.

Keep in mind that neurodivergent folks are literal and they will take the information in the job description literally.



Amelia Bedelia



“Amelia Bedelia, the sun will fade the furniture.
I asked you to draw the drapes,” said Mrs. Rogers.
“I did! I did! See,” said Amelia Bedelia.
She held up her picture.

Language that indicates requirements like team environments and communication skills may keep neurodivergent folks from applying.

Employers should be specific about whether tasks are essential.



Provide information about job opportunities in multiple formats. For example, text in plain language, video and/or audio recordings.

Interviewing can be stressful and anxiety-inducing for neurodivergent folks.

It is important to make sure the environment is comfortable and not sensorily overwhelming.

Try to limit distractions and have adaptable environments. For example, have dimmers for lights, close the door to limit noise, provide the choice of natural light, etc.

Offer various formats for interviews, including written responses.

Providing questions in advance or having a written option allows them the time they need to think out their response.

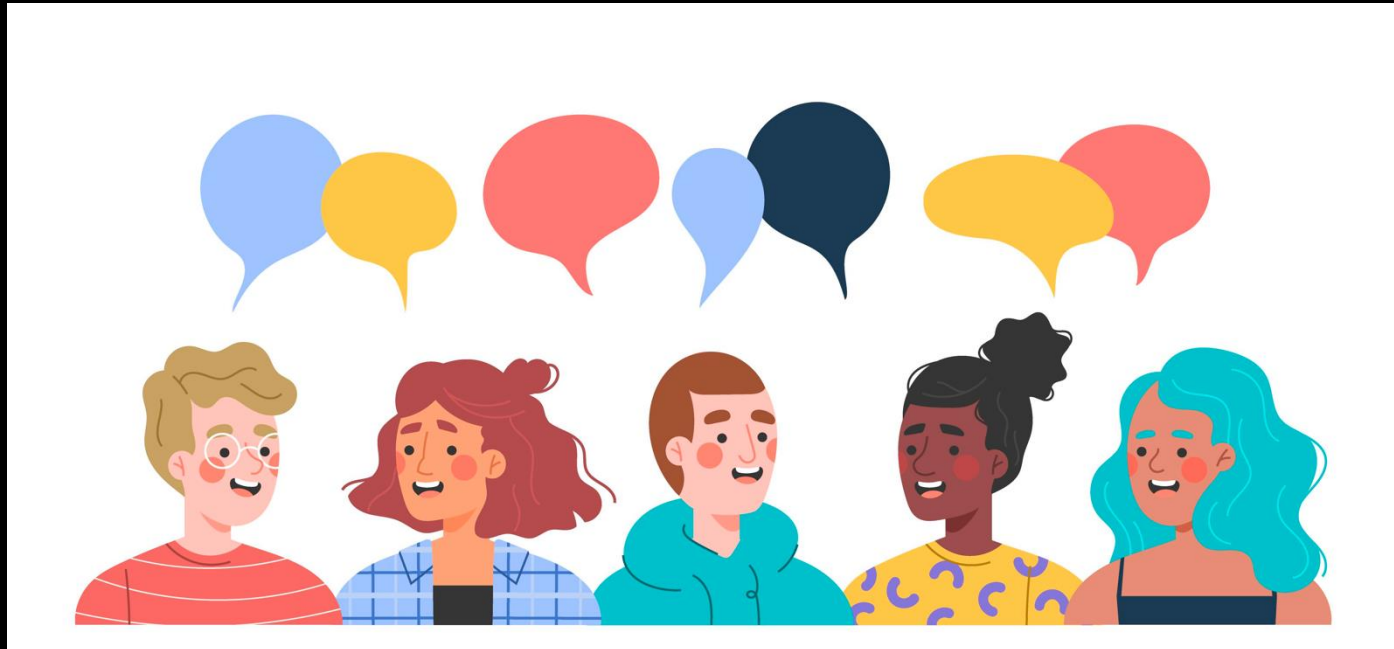
It can also help to describe, in detail, in advance, what the interview process looks like.

Ask the potential employee what can be done to help with the interview process.

Neurodivergent folks have communication styles that may be different to how non-neurodivergent folks communicate. It is important that the person/people doing the interviews is aware of these differences and alters their expectations.

Unfortunately, a neurodivergent person's ability to do the work can be completely overlooked because they may not meet certain societal expectation. Focus on skills.

- Neurodivergent people tend to not engage in small talk – or do so with anxiety.
- They prefer to have deep conversations about that which is important to them instead of inane chatter that they see little purpose to.



“They are likely to prefer the dialogue which is going on in their head to participation in “meaningless” social chit-chat with others.”

Neurodivergent people tend to communicate in a problem-solving way.


We do well with direct, precise, well-organized communication.

Neurotypical people often speak in ways that are coded, ambiguous, indirect.



Neurotypical people have linear conversations. They follow expected routes. Neurodivergence folks don't have linear conversations. We often bounce from one thing to another and the person we are communicating with doesn't understand how we got from one thing to another.





Neurodivergent people are
sometimes told they are
overexplaining or sharing too
much information.

“The literal copy and pasting of how context is playing out in my brain seems the most sincere way to share knowledge but I can see how it would annoy others.”

“because you know that one missed point of information means the NT in question will surely be lost but you don't know which point of information it is.”

"I have to give out every single detail I notice
or I will die"

"An answer without context is, to me, not an answer
at all. It is a factoid, pointless and irrelevant and easy
to forget. The context IS the answer. The factoids
derive from it. Not the other way around."



“When all someone asks is ‘what time is it’ you have a tendency to build them an entire clock”.”

Many neurodivergent folks take conversations literally.

Because some neurodivergent people are so literal,
they are often perceived as rude or blunt.



“When Heather turns their highly honed critical appraisal skills on the people around them, honesty may be translated into unintended hurtfulness.”

Trevor Noah explains how his
ADHD brain works...



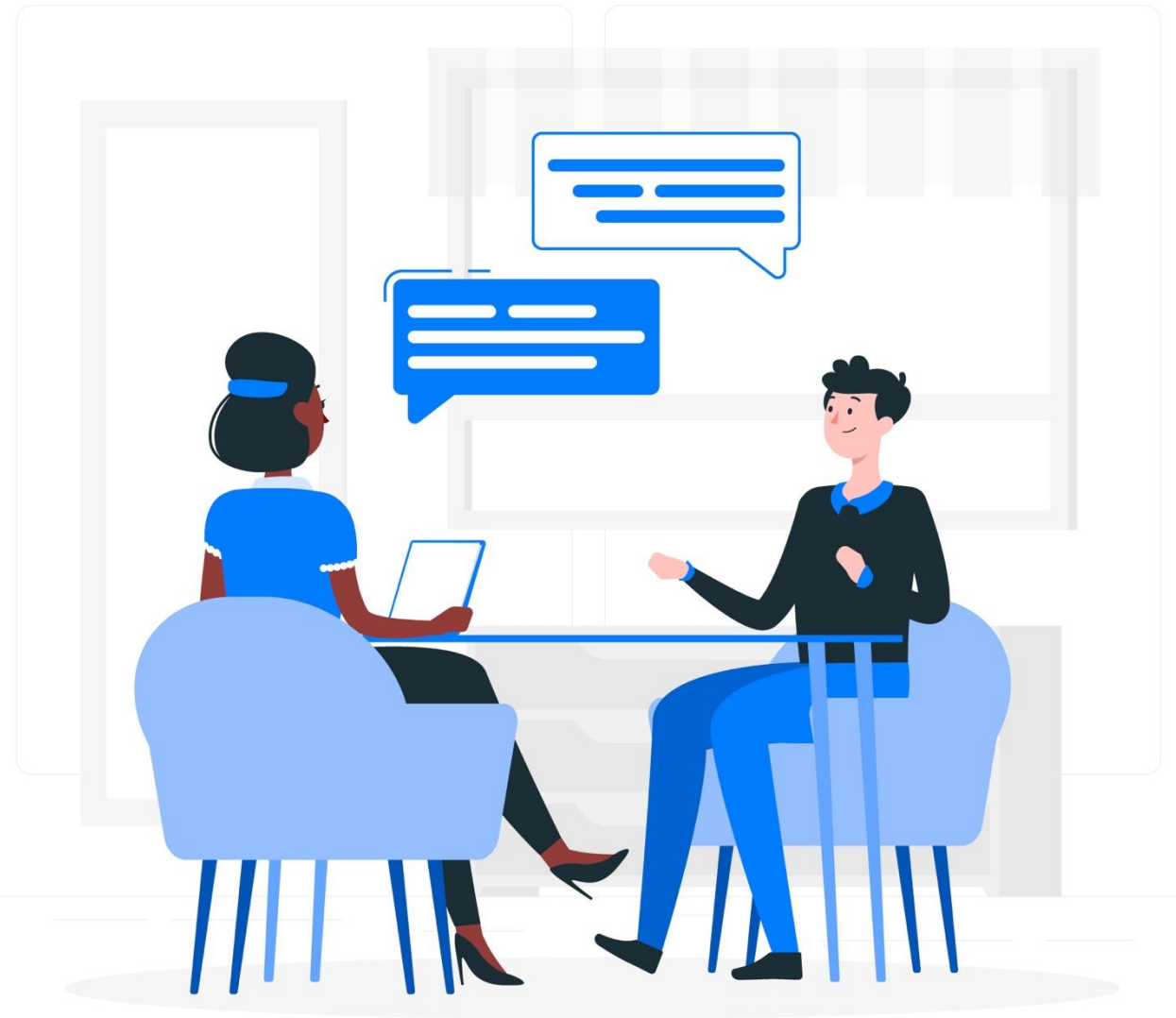
Some employers utilize a skills-focused approach over the typical type of interview. This offers an opportunity to establish whether a potential employee has the skills that are needed for the position and how they handle or problem-solve the task.

During the interview, open-ended and abstract questions should be avoided.

For example, instead of saying “tell me about past jobs” , ask “what is a recent project you worked on and how did your participation lead to its success”.

It is okay to politely tell a potential employee that they are talking too much.

People who are neurodivergent can share a lot, for a variety of reasons. You can politely cut in and say “thank you, that is enough for that question, my next question is...”



Let potential employees know that it is okay for them to bring an advocate to the interview.

This person may help to rephrase questions, clarify what the interviewer is saying, prompt responses, and generally help with communication.

If an advocate is present, ensure the focus is on the neurodivergent person.

All too often, companies decide to hire neurodivergent people without doing anything to address the work environment's culture.

Ensuring the culture of a company is conducive to neurodivergent people is reliant on ongoing education for all levels of staff and management.

This lessens the probability of microaggressions, unconscious biases, and ableism that neurodivergent folks often experience.

Neurodivergent staff may have accommodations that need to be met.

It is important to have accessible, easy to understand methods for employees to share access needs

Nothing about us without us in a term popularized by the disability movement. It means that nothing for disabled people should be created without disabled people. The same is true for neurodivergent folks.

It is important that the methods to access accommodations is built with neurodivergent people to ensure ease of use.



Employees in HR departments should be comfortable talking about neurodivergence.

Their ability to support and offer guidance is important to staff feeling comfortable disclosing their neurodivergence and needs.

Workplaces that want to increase diversity and work to create an equitable environment, should be a positive environment for all employees.

Staff should not need to disclose a disability or say they are neurodivergent in order to get their needs met.

Accessibility that works for disabled and neurodivergent folks can also benefit non-disabled and non-neurodivergent staff.

Many neurodivergent folks don't disclose due to fear of how they will be treated.

Some wait until they have time to experience the work culture and whether it is conducive to their disclosing.

This is a barrier to the success of neurodivergent folks because they may require accommodations in order to perform in their job.

For far too long, non-neurodivergent folks have been speaking on behalf of us and that model does not properly meet our needs or speak to our experiences.

While education is vital, it doesn't affect the culture if there is no follow-through.

Follow-through includes creating employee groups that are identity based for people to talk about their shared experiences and help the company create ways to ensure and increase equity and diversity.

Create an accessibility protocol for the work environment.

Provide concrete examples such as flexible hours, noise-cancelling headphones, ability to work from home, closed captioning in online meetings, etc.

Motion is an essential part of neurodivergent emotional processing.





Use the colour system.

“Having ADHD is so much more than being easily distracted. It involves a lifetime of living with a brain that isn’t able to easily compartmentalize. Not being able to compartmentalize or create separations between tasks, thoughts, ideas, and outcomes feels like living with everything occurring at the same place and time at once in your mind.”

This was one of the best
portrayals of ADHD



LET'S



Parallel Play/ - Body Doubling





Parallel Play

Penguin Pebbling

