

Neurodiversity Language guide

Workplace Cheat Sheet



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WORDS MATTER

As a WOC who spent part of her childhood living in a small town in Southern Alberta, I know better than most that words matter. They have life-giving power and also the power to kill hope. Even well meaning words, without the tempurance of knowledge can cause wounds. I created this guide to help companies who are moving towards neuro-inclusivity, with the language, concepts and some of the information that they will need to make shifts.

DEFINITIONS

- **Neurodiversity** - refers to neurological variations in how some people naturally think, understand information, interact, and communicate with others.
- **Neurodivergent** - differing in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical or normal.
- **Neurodiverse** - displaying or characterized by autistic or other neurologically atypical patterns of thought or behaviour.
- **Neurotypical** - not displaying or characterized by autistic or other neurologically atypical patterns of thought or behavior.
- **Neuro-inclusive** - a setting or environment that celebrates variability in ways of thinking and appreciates the value of different minds

USE THIS, NOT THAT

Non-visible disability **vs.** Invisible disability

Visibly impacted/not visibly impacted by autism **vs.** Low/high functioning autism

USE THIS AND THAT

Difference and Disorder.

Using the term "disorder" instead of "difference" is often thought to inadvertently stigmatize and pathologize neurodiverse conditions, reinforcing negative stereotypes rather than recognizing the diversity of neurological experiences. However, many people who have these diagnoses, struggle to get their need for accomodation taken seriously when it pertains to a difference, rather than a disability or disorder. alternating between these terms is a workable solution.

Autistic person and Person with autism

As there is a lack of consensus in the autism community regarding which of these terms is most appropriate alternating between them is an inclusive approach

Neurodiverse profiles in the workplace

Autism

Individuals with autism may excel in areas such as attention to detail, pattern recognition, and logical thinking. They typically benefit from clear communication and a structured work environment.



ADHD Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

People with ADHD may have high energy levels and creativity but may struggle with focus and organization. They can thrive with tasks that require innovation and adaptability.



Dyslexia

Dyslexic individuals may face challenges with reading and writing but often have strong problem-solving skills, creativity, and visual thinking abilities.



Tourette's Syndrome

People with Tourette's Syndrome may experience involuntary movements or vocalizations, but many have excellent attention to detail and concentration, making them suitable for roles requiring precision.



Sensory Processing Disorder

Some neurodiverse individuals may have heightened or diminished sensory sensitivity. They may benefit from a sensory-friendly workplace design.



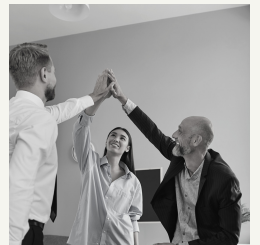
Non-Verbal Learning Disorder

These individuals may have strong verbal abilities but struggle with non-verbal communication and social cues. Clear and explicit communication is crucial.



Asperger's Syndrome

Although this diagnosis is no longer given, it may still exist for people who were diagnosed prior to 2013. At the time, the diagnosis was given to people who demonstrated 5 or more autistic traits, but hit typical language milestones.



ADD Attention Deficit Disorder

Formerly a diagnosis of people with 6 or more symptoms of inattention but no signs of hyperactivity/impulsivity. This has since been switched to ADHD whether or not there is a hyperactive/impulsive presentation.



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1

NEURODIVERSITY TRAINING

Offer brief, regular neurodiversity training sessions to educate employees about neurodiversity and foster empathy and understanding.



2

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS (WHEN POSSIBLE)

Allow for flexible work hours or remote work options when possible, as this can benefit employees who may have varying needs related to commute and workspace preferences.

3

INCLUSIVE MEETINGS

Implement inclusive meeting practices such as providing agendas in advance, designating a facilitator, and ensuring everyone has an opportunity to contribute, which can aid those who may struggle with social interactions or rapid information processing.



4

USE FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATION STYLES

Encourage diverse communication styles, allowing employees to express themselves in ways that suit their neurodiversity, whether it's written, verbal, or visual.



5

ACCOMMODATION AWARENESS

Raise awareness among all employees about the availability of accommodations and the importance of using inclusive language to reduce stigma.