


# Neurodiversity **Awareness Training For Construction Workbook**




**Provided by:** Interclass

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## Exercise: Set up your training session

What are your objectives with this training?

1. If this training were to be ideal, it would be like what?

2. What would be happening around you that would let you know it was working well?

3. At the end of this training what will you be able to do that you can't do now?

**Actions:**




## Neurodiversity Awareness

Increased awareness of neurodiversity is essential for building environments where individuals with different cognitive abilities feel understood, respected, and supported. **1 in 4 construction workers** consider themselves neurodivergent. In the workplace, recognising neurodiversity fosters innovation, enhances productivity, and promotes a culture of inclusion. Some strengths include in the Venn diagram:






- What are your thoughts on including Mental Health conditions as a neurominority?

- What are the similarities between these conditions?

- What are the differences?

- Flipping the narrative to focus on the strengths.

| **Actions:** |
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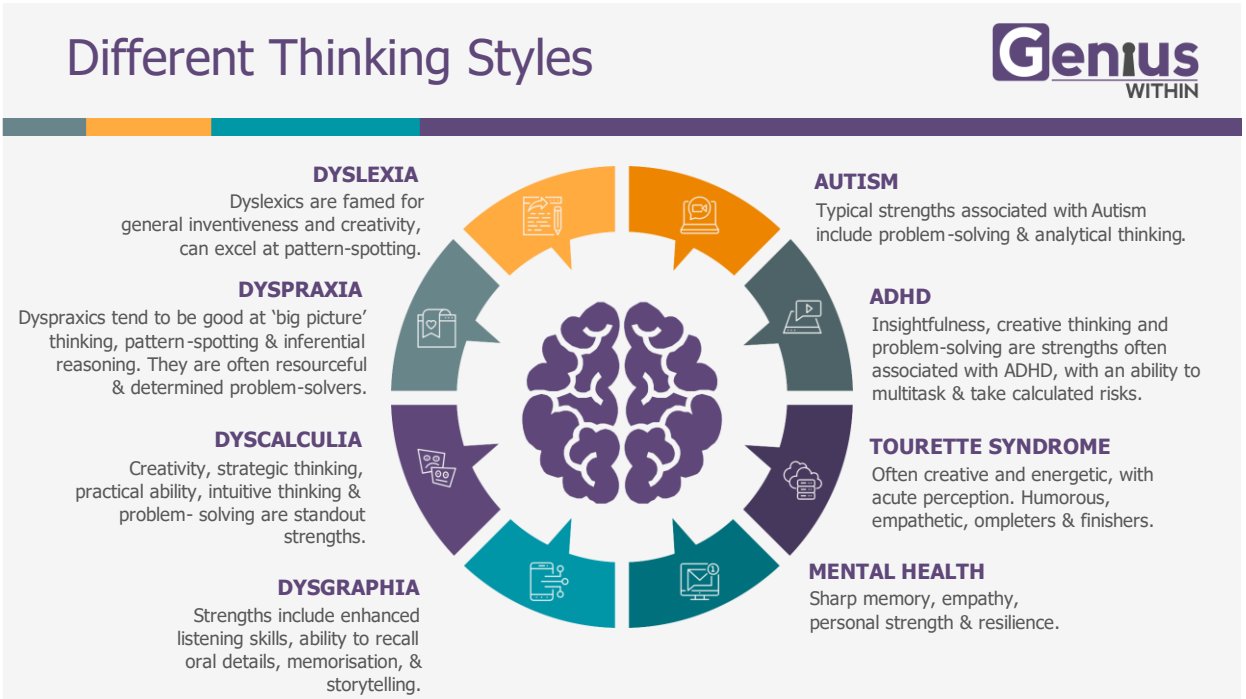
## Language

- Neurodiversity | refers to the whole human species, that our neurological and cognitive profiles are diverse.
- Neurominority | an umbrella term including ADHD, Autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, Tourette syndrome, some mental health conditions and acquired brain injury.
- Neurodivergent / Neurodistinct | a term to apply to an individual who is a neurominority. The tide has turned on the use of neurodiverse for an individual, so we now use only neurodivergent or neurodistinct unless a direct quote from




someone else. There has been lot of debate of these terms but essentially those who associate with neurodivergent are of the opinion that a single person cannot be diverse, whereas those who like neurodiverse are relating the diversity to within the single person, as in the spiky profile. There is a paired blog on our website where Judy Singer and Nancy Doyle have a respectful dialectic exchange as to both sides.

- Ableism | the process of discriminating against disabled people, either directly through pejorative terms and explicit exclusion or indirectly.
- Alternatives to 'disabled' | we don't use terms like differently abled unless it is an individual's preference. The word 'disabled' is not a bad word.
- The superpowers narrative. | Whilst we like to focus on the strengths that can be a part of a having a spiky profile to help maximise potential, it is best to avoid referring to them as superpowers unless directly quoting an ND individual as this can be perceived as dismissive and a form of toxic positivity.






- Intersectionality | refers to how an individual's social identity can overlap to create privilege or barriers in accessing employment (as well as in other areas of life). For example, Black, gay Autists are likely to face more discrimination as they belong to three marginalized groups.
- Staying up to date | It is our responsibility to stay up to date on terminology, as a company, we represent neurominorities, and thus we are ethically obliged to listen to how neurominorities describe themselves/ourselves. We cannot rely on our own internal networks, we need to scout for changes in the discourse or narrative, just as we would if we were racial justice or LGBTQ+ advocates. The Genius Within social media channels are a great place to stay up to date, as is Nancy Doyle's social media and Forbes blogs. We also have a list of useful self-advocacy accounts that will help.

## Neurotypes

➔ Reflecting on the different neurotypes, what have you heard and understood about their characteristics and experiences? What are your key takeaways from this understanding?

| **Actions:** |
| --- |
| |




## What conditions are included

**Applied, developmental neurominority:**

- Conditions which people are born with and relate to applied educational skills such as reading or motor control
- Not considered to be a health condition

**Clinical, developmental neurominority:**

- Conditions which people are born with and relate to behavioural skills such as attention, self-control and communication.
- These are considered health conditions

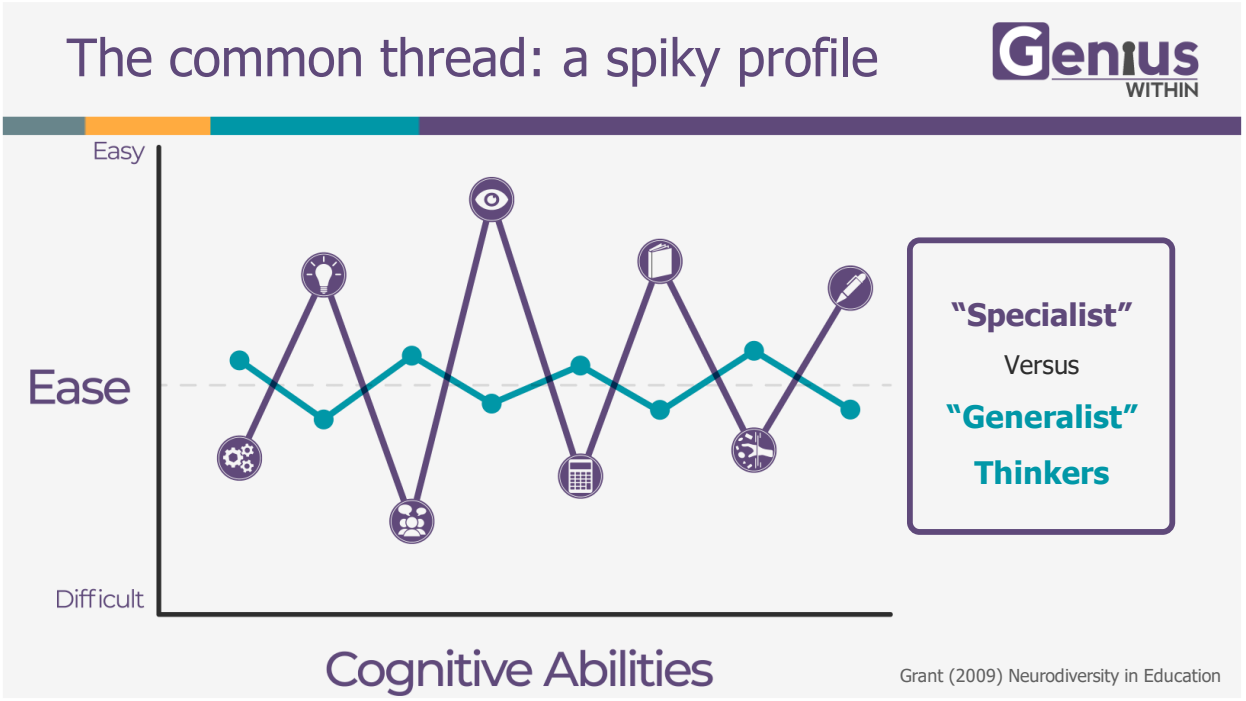
**Acquired (to develop) – transient:**

- Develops in response to a health condition such as anxiety or depression.
- Symptoms or traits are not always present, therefore there is potential to return to 'neurotypical' as they may come and go, however short-term support and adjustments are required.
- Could return to 'neurotypical' if health condition resolves

**Acquired (to develop) – chronic:**

- Symptoms or traits may may be more consistent and therefore may require longer-term and/or permanent adjustments and supports
- Develops in response to a health condition
- Potentially resolves as injury heals or worsens as health deteriorates

## Spiky Profile




Everyone is different and should not be expected to do the same thing. This slide demonstrates the differences in neurocognitive functions between neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals.

**Common Strengths:**

- Perceptual Reasoning – This is 3D, visual spatial processing skills. It can be a stand-out strength for dyslexics.
- Verbal Comprehension - strengths in explaining what you mean, making connections between ideas, understanding a wide range of words and concepts.

**Common Challenges:**

- Working Memory – this is how well an individual can temporarily hold, manipulate and use a limited amount of information, therefore may be struggling to remember what someone has just heard to remember what someone has just said




- Processing Speed – this refers to the speed at which a person can understand and react to information they receive. This can be visual, auditory or movement and can lead to challenges with time management, organisation, planning and prioritising, dealing with distractions.

**Reflection:**

- Can you identify which is the neurotypical and which is the neurodivergent (spiky) profile in the image?
- How can this spiky profile have an impact in the workplace?

| **Actions:** |
| --- |
| |

## Additional language DO's and DO NOTs

- Use identity first language (i.e. Autistic person, **not** person with Autism). However, as above, be respectful of individual preferences.
- Avoid the use of high or low functioning labels. An alternative term that is sometimes used is high or low support needs. Also avoid severe and profound.
- The terms Deaf, Autistic and Black should be capitalised as they are referring to specific identities/communities.
- Avoid medicalised and deficit-based terms like 'condition' unless absolutely essential and context appropriate.
- Although these are company guidelines, our community is not homogenous. We




must remember that some people might chose to identify as a "person who suffers with dyspraxia" rather than a "dyspraxic person" to reflect their personal lived experience of marginalisation and disablement. Though others in the ND community might find this offensive, it is not our place to judge. It therefore is Genius Within's policy is to put speech marks around phraseology which differs from this guide and name it as a direct quote, but to allow the individual their voice in naming their own experience

## Reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

The Equality Act 2010 provides that employers must make reasonable adjustments where a provision, criterion, or practice applied by or on behalf of the employer, or any physical feature of premises occupied by the employer, places a person at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who do not have a disability. The most common and effective reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent individuals consist of the following:

- Formal awareness training
- Workstation adaptation
- Executive functions / Strategy coaching
- Schedule Flexibility
- Assistive Technology
- Supervisor / Manager input






- How do you understand the concept of reasonable adjustments in construction, and how might these adjustments support inclusivity and accessibility in the workplace?
- Can you identify any examples or opportunities for implementing such adjustments in your current or future projects?




# Case Study

James is a highly skilled **site manager** known for his **exceptional ability to interpret construction drawings and creatively solve problems on-site**. His talent for thinking outside the box has helped his team overcome numerous challenges, often saving time and costs for the project. However, James has **dyslexia**, which makes certain aspects of his role particularly challenging.

- He struggles with completing **daily diaries**, which require detailed written or typed records of site activities.
- **This task takes him longer than his peers and sometimes delays the project's reporting**

James approaches you, his line manager, and explains:

- Writing these diaries has become a source of stress, but he wants to ensure it doesn't affect the team's performance.

**Question**: How would you support James in overcoming this challenge? What tools, systems, or adjustments could you implement to help him?




# Case Study

Dave, a newly hired site supervisor, is a hardworking and skilled professional. However, his supervisor, John, notices that **Dave often appears restless, struggles to stay focused on tasks, and seems overwhelmed in noisy environments with heavy machinery, drilling, and other loud construction activities**. Understanding that noise sensitivity, John decides to take proactive steps to help Dave thrive.

**Discuss in your groups:**

- How can construction teams implement practical adjustments to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for workers who face challenges such as sensory overload or difficulty focusing on tasks?
- What specific strategies would you recommend to help someone like Dave thrive on-site while maintaining productivity and safety?




## Key Takeaways for Supporting Neurodivergent Staff in Construction

### General Principles

- **Clear Instructions and Task Breakdown**: Provide step-by-step instructions to help individuals with ADHD or similar conditions stay organised and focused.
- **Visual Aids**: Use visual reminders, signage, and colour-coded systems to reinforce information and support memory retention.
- **Routine and Structure**: Establish predictable routines to reduce anxiety and create a sense of stability.
- **Regular Check-ins**: Supervisors should conduct regular check-ins to provide feedback, support, and address concerns proactively.
- **Awareness and Training**: Educate staff about neurodivergence through toolbox talks, discussions, and training to foster understanding and inclusivity.
- **No-Blame Culture**: Create a psychologically safe environment where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities.

### Job-Specific Examples

1. **Project Managers**
    - **Advance Planning**: Provide detailed schedules and communicate project milestones in advance to allow staff time to prepare.
    - **Flexible Planning Tools**: Use collaborative planning tools that accommodate diverse ways of working.
    - **Supportive Communication**: Avoid jargon and provide clear, direct communication during meetings and updates.
2. **Site Supervisors**




- **Designate Quiet Spaces**: Establish safe areas where workers can retreat to manage sensory overload or reduce stress.
- **Noise Management**: Conduct noise surveys and communicate planned noisy activities well in advance.
- **Hand Signals and Radios**: Ensure workers wearing ear defenders have access to non-verbal or radio communication to maintain safety.

3. **Construction Workers**
   - **Buddy Systems**: Pair workers with supportive peers or mentors who can provide guidance and social support.
   - **Task Adaptation**: Assign tasks that align with individual strengths and provide reasonable adjustments for challenges (e.g., more frequent breaks for physically demanding tasks).
   - **Regular Feedback**: Offer constructive, immediate feedback to reinforce positive behaviours and improve performance.
4. **Health and Safety Officers**
   - **Risk Assessments**: Include considerations for neurodivergent workers in safety assessments, such as tailored PPE options.
   - **Early Warning Systems**: Implement mechanisms to flag safety concerns or performance issues early to address them effectively.
   - **Accessible Training**: Ensure health and safety training is inclusive, using clear, straightforward language and visual aids.
5. **Subcontractors**
   - **Fair Payment Practices**: Pay promptly to alleviate financial stress and promote mental well-being.




- **Resource Allocation**: Ensure teams are adequately resourced to prevent burnout and maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- **Shift Work Considerations**: Rotate shifts and provide adequate breaks to mitigate the impact of long hours.

6. **Human Resources**
    - **Inclusive Job Adverts**: Explicitly welcome neurodivergent applicants and highlight willingness to make reasonable accommodations.
    - **Disclosure Opportunities**: Include induction questions to encourage disclosure of neurodivergent conditions in a supportive manner.
    - **Reasonable Adjustments**: Develop policies to accommodate individual needs, such as flexible working hours or task modification.

**Practical Support Measures**

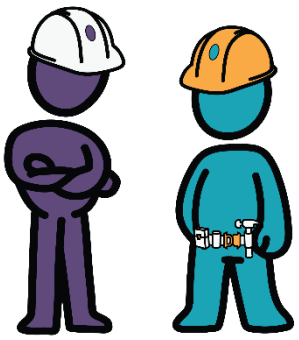
- **Toolbox Talks and Training**: Provide awareness training to all staff to build an inclusive culture.
- **Mentorship and Buddying**: Offer one-on-one support to help neurodivergent workers build confidence and integrate into teams.
- **Healthy Boundaries**: Encourage manageable workloads and discourage excessive overtime.
- **Fair Practices**: Adopt fair and transparent management practices to reduce stress and foster trust.

**Reflective Question:**

Reflecting on the strategies outlined, which do you think would be the most impactful in supporting neurodivergent individuals in your workplace? Based on your specific job




role, what adjustments or practices could you implement to better support neurodivergent colleagues or team members? Additionally, consider the practical support measures suggested— which do you think would be easiest to implement, which might present challenges, and how could you overcome these challenges






## Supporting colleagues

**Discussion:** How can we support each other to work at our best?




**Actions:**




## Clean feedback

How to give Clean Feedback | Clean Learning - Clean Learning

**The Clean Feedback Model:**

Feedback says as much about the giver as the receiver

Giving Clean Feedback means describing what you have seen or heard and keeping it separate from what you have taken the behaviours to mean.

Clean Feedback is about separating actions from the interpretation

**Clean Feedback explores:**

- What has gone well
- What has not gone well
- And what you would like to be different

**Why give feedback in this way:**

- It respects different interpretations of the same event
- It helps you understand where other people are coming from and to make sense of their behaviours
- It trains you to be clear about what you are giving feedback on and why
- It helps to de-personalise when things are not going well, by referring to the behaviour not the person
- It resolves business discrepancies by referring to the actions and the impact






## Exercise: Feedback and Consolidation

1. **One thing the trainer did well was ….**

Evidence:

Impact:

2. **One thing that didn't work well was ….**

Evidence:

Impact:




**3. One thing that really stood out for me was:**

Evidence:

Impact:

**4. One thing I am going to do differently as a result of the training is:**

Evidence:

Impact:

**5. I am going to find out more about:**

Evidence:

Impact:




## Additional Reading and Resources

### Case Law

Find decisions on Employment Tribunal cases in England, Wales and Scotland from February 2017 onwards - Employment tribunal decisions - GOV.UK

Find Case Law on judgements and decisions from 2001 onwards - Find Case Law - The National Archives

Case Law: EAT Decision involving Neurodiversity and Discrimination - Ashtons Legal

UK: recent tribunal cases highlight importance of neurodiversity awareness | Herbert Smith Freehills | Global law firm

Neurodiversity and Employment Tribunal cases: a 2023 update | Womble Bond Dickinson

### Additional Reading

What is Clean Feedback? - Clean Learning

How to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process - Personnel Today

7 Ways To Welcome Neurodiverse Candidates

Neurodiversity and the Recruitment Process: How to Build a Truly Inclusive Hiring Experience | IELA

### Book

Neurodiversity Coaching: A Psychological Approach to Supporting Neurodivergent Talent and Career Potential - Neurodiversity Coaching: A Psychological Approach to




Supporting Neurodivergent Talent and Career Potential (Coaching Psychology): Amazon.co.uk: Doyle, Nancy, McDowall, Almuth: 9781032436524: Books

Learning from Neurodivergent Leaders: How to Start, Survive and Thrive in Leadership - Learning from Neurodivergent Leaders: How to Start, Survive and Thrive in Leadership: Amazon.co.uk: Doyle, Dr. Nancy, McDowall, Professor Almuth: 9781805011422: Books

## Videos

**Clean Language** – TEDxMerseyside - Caitlin Walker - Clean Questions and Metaphor Models

**Feedback** - https://www.ted.com/talks/leeann_renninger_the_secret_to_giving_great_feedback

**Understanding executive functions** - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkYWwbjj7Yw

## Articles

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Asasumasu, K.. Neurodivergence. In Wiktionary.org; 2022 [cited 2022 Sep 24]. Available from: https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/neurodivergent

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