# Neurodiversity
# Training Workbook For HR & Leaders In Construction




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## Exercise: Set up your training session

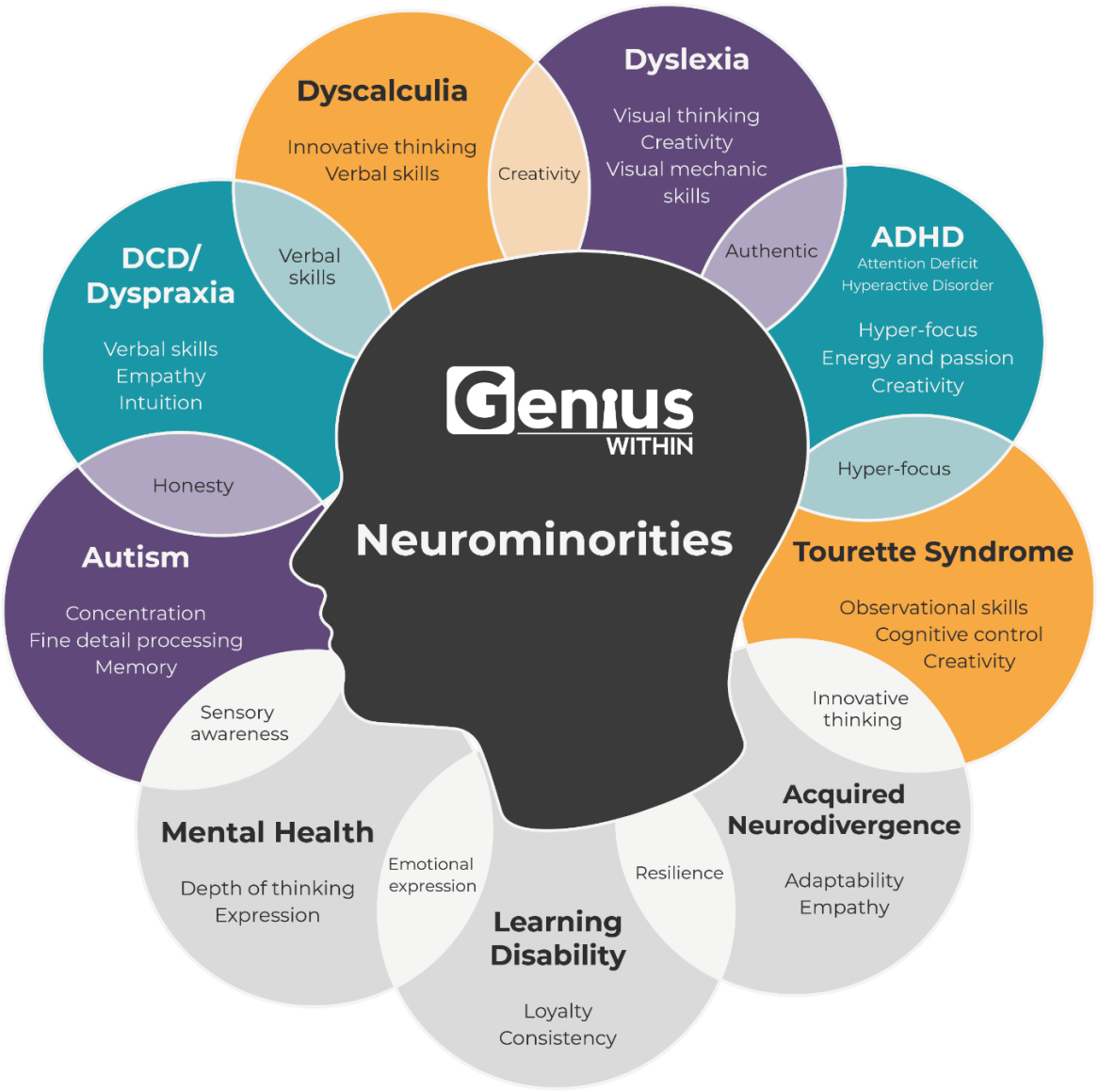
What are your objectives with this training?

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

**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:




## 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.



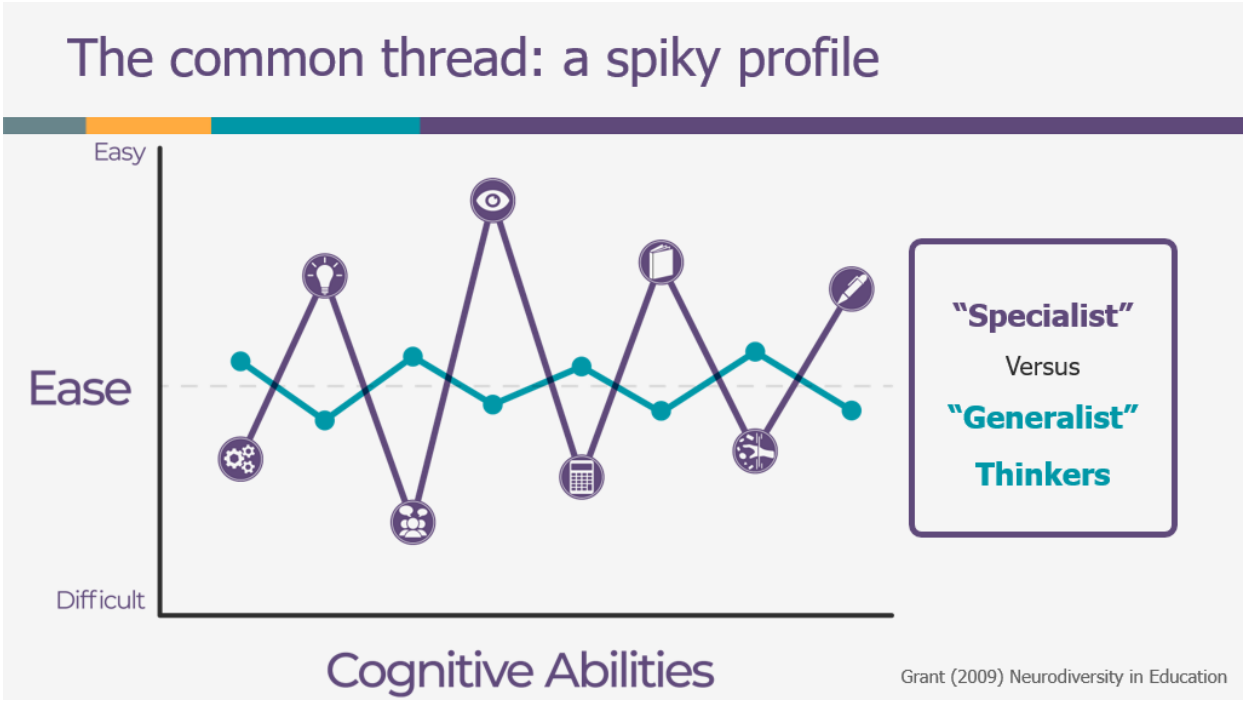

- Intersectionality | refers to how an individual's social identity can overlap to create privilege or barriers in accessing employment (as well as in other areas of life). For example, Black, gay Autists are likely to face more discrimination as they belong to three marginalized groups.
- Staying up 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.

## 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

## Spikey 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:**

- How can this spiky profile have an impact in the workplace, especially in the construction sector?

**Actions:**




## 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




# Case Study

Jo has worked for ABC Constructions for the last 3 years. Jo has moved around in the business and struggled with relationships with each of their Team Leaders. Jo is autistic. They are "right" about everything and talk in a loud, assertive manner. They do not like being told what to do and often refer to other colleagues and company in a very disparaging way. Everyone who does not agree with Jo is in their opinion "an idiot".

Jo's autism diagnosis came late in life. ABC Constructions organised and paid for the diagnosis and subsequently coaching to support Jo. They have struggled to come to terms with this diagnosis, but it has explained many of the things that they do that others consider to be odd or irritating.

Jo has difficulty with their communication style and the impact it has on others, they require very detailed instruction when starting a new piece of work and need regular oversight so that they can ask questions. This causes friction between Jo and their colleagues who feel that Jo requires too much supervision for someone of their level.

Jo will not share their autism diagnosis with anyone other than their current Team Leader and will not discuss using a workplace passport that would capture all the adjustments required. The workplace passport is part of company's approach to workplace adjustments.

Jo has been off sick for the last 6 weeks after a dispute with a colleague. The colleague told Jo that he did not have time at that moment to explain a tasking. Jo reacted badly to this. Jo has recorded their sick time as an "injury at work".

Jo has said that they are now ready to return to work and their line manager needs to plan to conduct a return-to-work meeting.

# Case Study

**The line manager needs your help in preparing for the return-to-work discussion,** they are feeling anxious based on prior experiences with Jo because in previous meetings:

- Jo has become angry, writing things down aggressively, labouring the point as they are writing.
- Jo has reminded his line manager of the bullying complaints that they have raised about previous line managers, calling them idiots.

**Discuss in your groups:**

1. What does the line manager need to tackle at the return-to-work meeting?
2. How does the line manager set that meeting up for an effective discussion with Jo?




## 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?

## 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?




**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



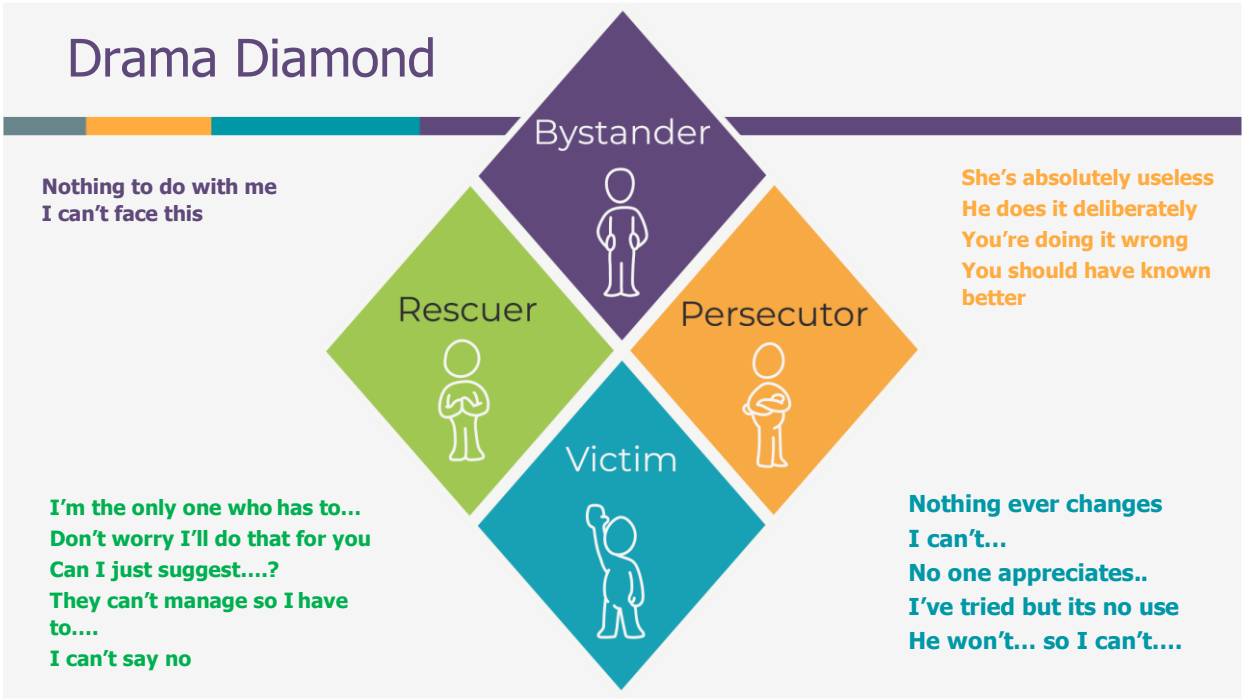

workers build confidence and integrate into teams.

- **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:**

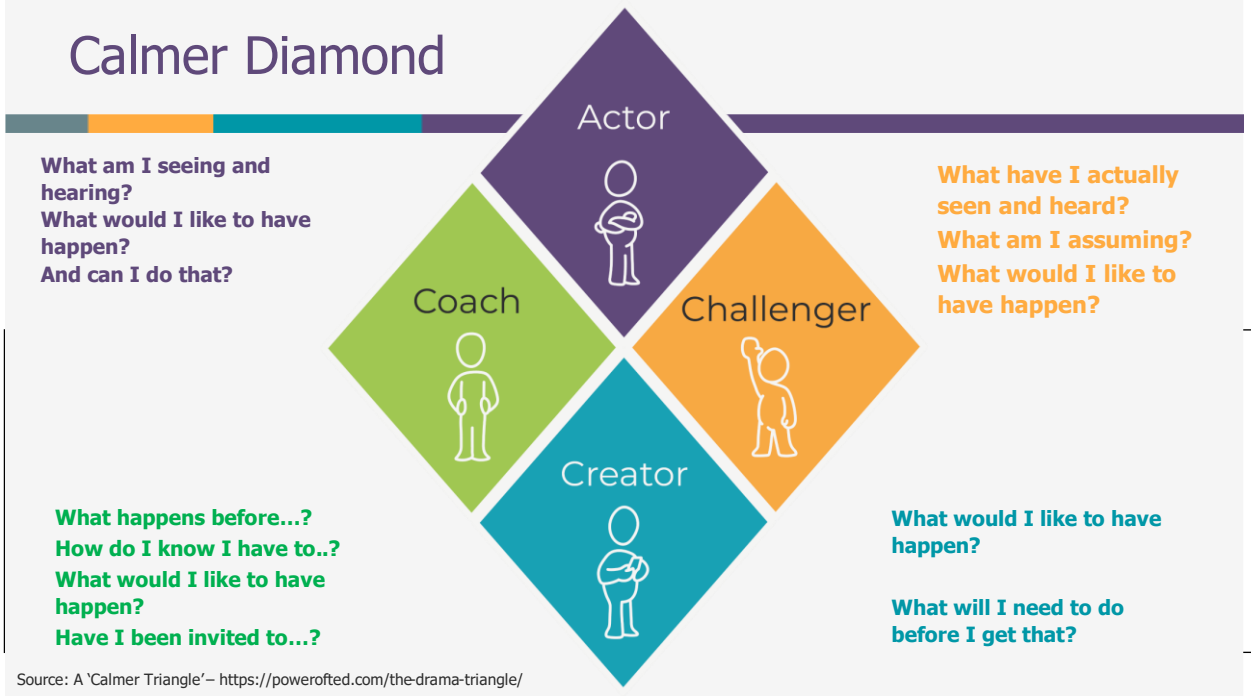
Reflecting on the strategies outlined, which do you think would be the most impactful in supporting neurodivergent individuals in your workplace? Based on your specific job role, what adjustments or practices could you implement to better support neurodivergent colleagues or team members? Additionally, 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?

## How to move from Drama to Calmer Diamond in the Workplace




- As leaders which roles do you recognise from your own experience, think of examples from your teams or colleagues you work with?

**Actions:**




Source: A 'Calmer Triangle'– https://powerofted.com/the-drama-triangle/

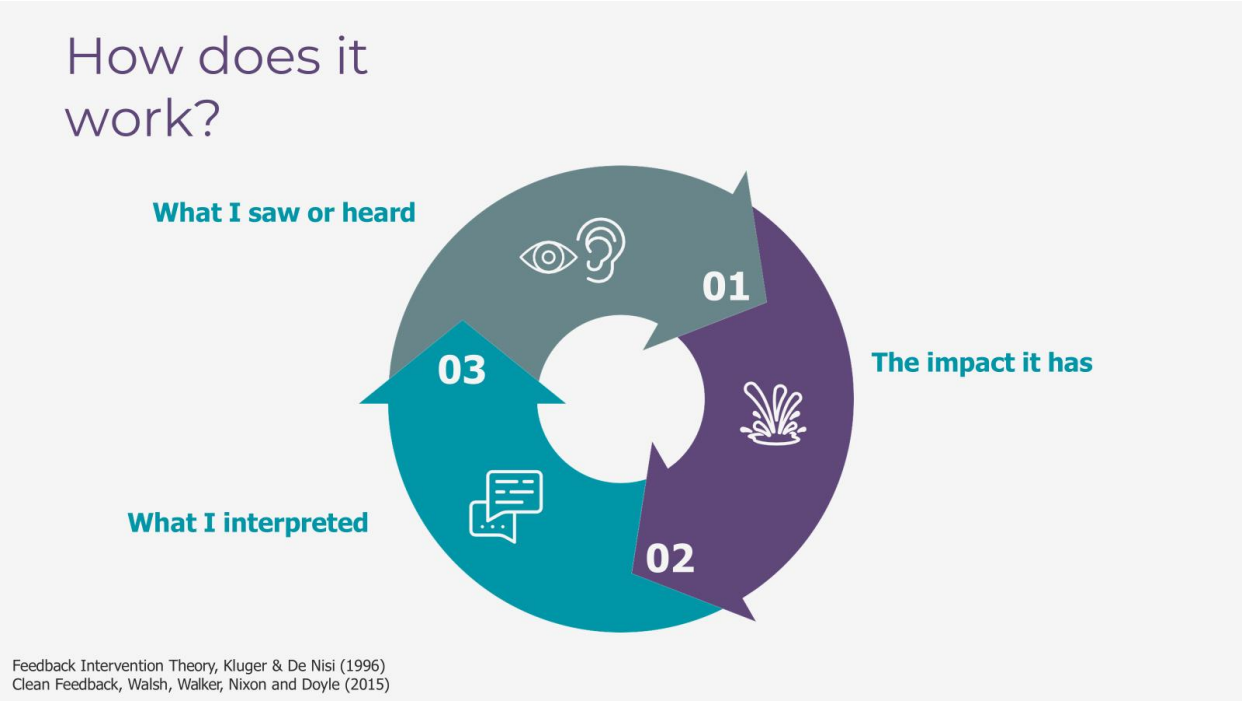



- How does knowing this information help you when you try to resolve conflict with a neurodivergent colleague?

**Actions:**

| |
|---|
| |

## Clean Feedback




- 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

## Start thinking about

- Using information from today, how can you support employees to work at their best?




## Exercise: Feedback and Consolidation

**Using the clean feedback method that was discussed above provide a clean feedback to the trainer about the training.**

1. **One thing that worked well in this training:**

Evidence:

Inference:

Impact:

2. **One thing that didn't work well in this training:**

Evidence:

Inference:

Impact:

3. **What work better for this training:**

Evidence

Inference:

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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