



# Understanding Neurodiversity

A workplace guide to neuro-inclusivity



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# A focus on neurodiversity

We all have different brains that work in different ways, and neurodiversity refers to all the unique ways in which we can exist, think, process information, feel, and behave. This includes what we know as neurotypical and neurodivergence.

Being neurodivergent brings a wealth of unique strengths, thinking patterns, enriched problem solving skills, creativity and productivity.

So, it not only makes perfect business sense to bring the best ideas to the workplace, it's in our DNA as well **#ValueAllViews**.



# First, a few definitions

## Neurodiversity

We all have different brains, different ways of thinking and behaving. Neurodiversity describes the idea that there is no 'right' way of experiencing and interacting with the world.

## Neurodivergent

A term used to describe people whose brains process, learn or behave differently from what we may consider typical or neurotypical. This may include people with:

- autism
- attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- dyslexia
- dyspraxia
- Tourette syndrome and
- obsessive compulsive disorder.

It is not uncommon for a range of conditions and neurological variances to coexist.

## Neurotypical

A term used to describe those who are not neurodivergent. Neurotypical is a better description than 'normal' since no one's brain is entirely 'normal' and neuroscience shows us that there is no such thing as a normal brain.

# Benefits of neurodivergence

No two brains are alike. To truly embrace the diversity we all bring to the workplace, it requires seeing what makes others unique, as a strength.

And that starts with changing our mindsets on what may be seen as a 'challenge' to taking the time to understand the strengths neurodivergence brings to the workplace.

Condition	Examples of strengths
Autism	Attention to detail and logical thinking
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	High energy levels and takes calculated risks
Dyscalculia	Strategic and intuitive thinking
Dysgraphia	Listening skills and memorisation
Dyslexia	General inventiveness and pattern spotting
Dyspraxia	Pattern spotting and inferential reasoning

# Eight ways you can support neurodiversity in the workplace

Everyone's experience of neurodivergence will be different. It's important to be mindful and respectful that people may or may not be comfortable discussing their personal circumstances including their diagnosis, identity or preferred terminology.

## 1. Ask the person about their preferences

Ask the person about their individual needs and how they work best. Don't expect the individual to provide an immediate response, as they may prefer to provide feedback later or in writing.

## 2. Use inclusive and nonjudgmental language

Language is powerful. If the person has disclosed their neurodivergence ask how they want to be addressed. They are the experts of themselves. Respect a person's preference for terminology and language. Always check with them if unsure.

## 3. Avoid assumptions and bias

We are all unique and if you know one neurodivergent person, then you know one neurodivergent person. Be mindful of assuming what you know and mistakenly stereotyping. Reflect on whether we surround ourselves with 'like minded' thinkers or may be quick to dismiss styles not aligned to the majority.

# Eight ways you can support neurodiversity in the workplace

## 4. Use clear and concise communication

A quick and easy way to do this is by giving instructions that follow a three-part format: What do you need, by when, and why.

You can also check if people prefer face to face or written communications and use existing QBE tools and resources.

## 5. Listen more, talk less

Listen and whilst you may be keen to support, try not to interrupt. The person may seek your support but, they will know what they need and when they need it, so let them advise you of their needs.

## 6. Prioritise mental health and wellbeing

The impact of masking neurodivergence can be exhausting. This may be more likely if the person hasn't disclosed their neurodivergence or is compensating for their traits. Masking can lead to excessive fatigue and burnout which may require time to recover and rest.

Carers of neurodivergent family members can also experience overwhelm and it's important to encourage carers to prioritise their wellbeing and mental health.

# Eight ways you can support neurodiversity in the workplace

## 7. Take the time to understand how you can support

Sharing a diagnosis is a personal choice. If an experience is shared with you, thank the person and take the time to understand how you can support. See the support section for alternative contacts if that is the individual's preference.

## 8. Support workplace adjustments

There are a range of simple adjustments that can be made to support neurodivergent colleagues be at their best. This may include flexible start and finish times, desk location, breaks between meetings, lighting, quiet areas etc. The person will know what they need and when they need it, so let them advise you of their needs.



# Workplace inclusion and support

A range of resources and support pathways



Set up a complimentary account to gain access to member-exclusive events and a community hub to support neurodivergence in the workplace



Tips to have an R U OK? conversation with neurodivergent friends, family members and colleagues



Diversity Council Australia shares ten guiding principles about recruiting neurodivergent talent

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ADHD Australia provides support for families of neurodivergent people



Creating an autism  
inclusive Australia.

Tips by Amaze to understand and support autism

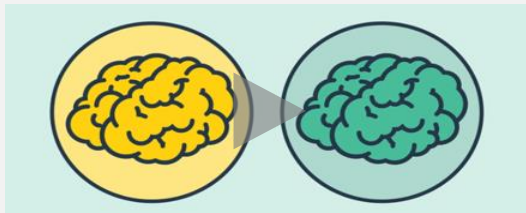


Style guide principles by British Dyslexia Association to support accessibility of written material

# Learn more



HSBC employees share their lived experiences of ADHD, dyslexia, autism, Aspergers syndrome, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and their perspectives on the strengths they bring to the workplace.



British Dyslexia shares a one-minute explainer of neurodiversity.



Developed by Differing Minds, this video covers:

- What is neurodiversity?
- Neurological conditions
- What is it like to be neurodiverse or neurodivergent?
- How can neurodiversity be supported in the workplace?

For more information, visit

[www.qbe.com/au/careers/culture/neurodiversity](http://www.qbe.com/au/careers/culture/neurodiversity)

