



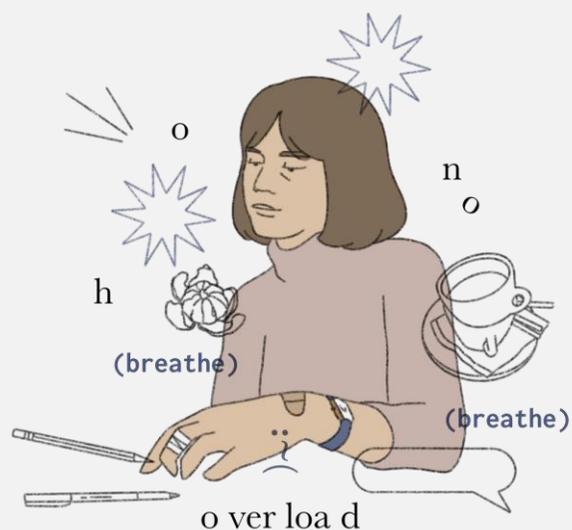
Supporting neurodivergent mental health as a colleague

a quick-reference resource

Supporting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is essential for fostering a productive, inclusive, and positive environment.

This resource provides guidelines and strategies to help create a workplace where every employee, regardless of their mental health status or neurological differences, can thrive.

Colleagues who are neurodivergent are more likely to experience co-occurring mental health conditions. For example, research has shown that approximately 80% of autistic people will experience depression in their lifetime^{1,2}. 94% of autistic people will experience anxiety¹.



Why is this?

- The stigma around neurodivergent conditions can lead to decreased self-worth, social isolation and higher rates of mental ill health.
- In addition to minority stress, the sensory differences that many neurodivergent people experience are a huge source of anxiety as well as challenges around change.
- Negative attitudes and a lack of understanding from other people which can lead to loneliness and feelings of isolation.
- Differences in understanding relationships.
- Sometimes characteristics associated with neurodevelopmental conditions can be mistaken for mental health conditions, which can in turn make it difficult to get the right support.

Universal best practice

Below are some examples of neuroinclusive best-practice which you can apply within your team:

- Plan meetings in advance to avoid last-minute meetings which can be stress inducing
- Share meeting agendas ahead of time to allow for processing and preparation
- Avoid planning back-to-back meetings by checking calendar schedules
- Take the time to understand how your colleagues prefer to work and communicate so you can align where possible e.g., some people would prefer calls in the morning
- Respect different ways of working within your team
- Understand that not everyone will want to participate in social events
- Use clear and direct language to avoid miscommunications
- Treat any information shared with you about neurodivergence or mental health confidentially, unless explicitly told otherwise by the individual

Mental health and wellbeing at work

Spotting the signs

- **Changes in Physical appearance:** A colleague's personal grooming or appearance has slipped.
- **Lack of motivation:** Decreased motivation at work
- **Emotional changes:** Tearful or angry, sad
- **Withdrawing:** A reluctance to communicate
- **Increased Absenteeism:** Arriving late or time off
- **Poor performance:** Changes in their work output and focus

What can I do?

As a colleague you have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace environment is a safe and pleasant place to be for everyone you work alongside.

- Align to neuroinclusive best practice
- Undertake neurodiversity and mental health awareness training to learn about neurodivergence and the different mental health conditions
- Be kind and supportive to everyone on your team
- Recognise and respect different approaches and ways of working
- Make sure everyone is included in social events (even if the person normally declines)
- Call out discriminatory or exclusionary behaviours/practices in the workplace.

Signposting resources

Your organisation may have a lot of internal resources, initiatives and policies that relate to support for mental health and neurodivergence. Having an awareness of what your organisation is doing will allow you to share this information with your colleagues should they share any challenges with you.



Examples within your organisation

Please note that the following examples are not exhaustive, and you should do some research into what is available within your own organisation.

Employee wellbeing team

Health insurance

Mental health employee resource group

Mental health first aid network

Neurodiversity employee resource group

Organisational health and wellbeing initiatives

Policies e.g., workplace adjustments or phased returns to work

Employee helplines

REFERENCES

1. National Autistic Society (2021). Good Practice Guide for Professionals Delivering Talking Therapies for Autistic Adults and Children. [online] Available at: <https://s2.chorus-mk.thirdlight.com/file/24/asDKIN9as.klK7easFDsalAzTC/NAS-Good-Practice-Guide-A4.pdf>.
2. Lever A., Geurts H. M. Psychiatric Co-occurring Symptoms and Disorders in Young, Middle-Aged, and Older Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. (2016). J Autism Dev Disord.1916-1930. doi: 10.1007/s10803-016-2722-8. PMID: 26861713; PMCID: PMC4860203.

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