

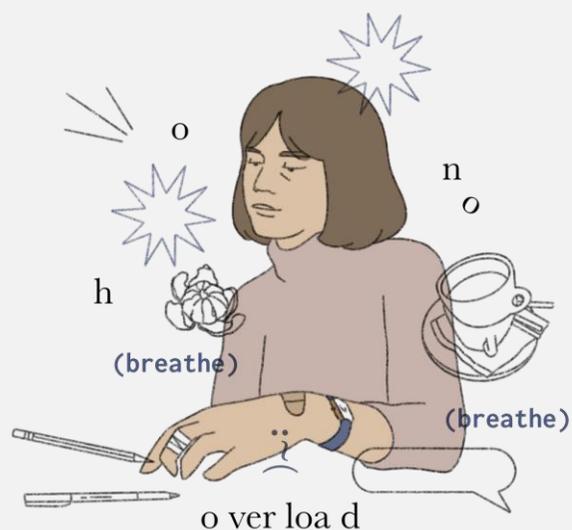


Supporting neurodivergent mental health as a manager

a quick-reference resource

Supporting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is essential for fostering a productive, inclusive, and positive environment. This information provides guidelines and strategies to help create a neuroinclusive 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.



Contributing factors

- Negative attitudes from those who may not understand or accept differences.
- Neurodivergent staff are more likely to experience stigma, discrimination, trauma, not fitting in, low confidence and loneliness.
- Differences in interacting with the world. Having to navigate places which don't meet sensory, processing or communication needs.
- Misdiagnosis. Some experiences of neurodivergence overlap with symptoms of mental health problems. This can make it harder to get the right help.
- Barriers to support. It can take a long time to get a diagnosis for a neurodivergent condition, especially as an adult.
- Impacted by other intersectional characteristics, such as gender, race, sexual orientation or social class.
- Mental health challenges may be exacerbated by experiences of hiding neurodivergent traits, fatigue or sensory overload.

Mental health and wellbeing at work

Creating a mentally healthy workplace

- Open communication without judgement or repercussions
- Continuous organisation wide education and awareness opportunities
- A safe and clear disclosure and accommodations process
- Access to community groups and supports (e.g., ERG's, coaching)
- Embedding neuroinclusion into the full employee lifecycle
- Identify and manage risks related to health and wellbeing
- Fair workloads and time pressures
- Tolerance/margin for errors
- Policies defining appropriate workplace interaction and conduct.
- Psychological Occupational Health Support
- Conducting return to work interviews
- Use wellbeing surveys to understand the employee experience

Promoting awareness and education

Mental Health Training: Provide regular training sessions on mental health awareness. Ensure all employees understand common mental health conditions, the characteristics and how to support colleagues.

Neurodiversity Education: Educate staff about neurodiversity, emphasising the different neurological perspectives and reducing stigma and stereotypes around neurodivergence.

Questions to begin the conversation

It is important to facilitate positive and ongoing conversations with your team on their health and wellbeing so you can identify and implement support and create an open and inclusive culture where people feel like they can be their honest and authentic self without fear of judgement or discrimination.

Here are some examples of questions that could start positive conversations with you team member:

- How are you doing at the moment?/Is everything okay at the moment?
- You seem to be a bit down/frustrated/angry. Is everything okay?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently, and I wondered if you're okay or if there is anything I can do to support you?
- I've noticed the reports are late which is unlike you. Is there anything you would like to discuss?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What would you like to happen? How?
- What support do you think might help?
- Are you aware of our current wellbeing initiative/policy/resource?
- Would you like to discuss some adjustments we can put in place to support you at work?
- Have you spoken to your GP or anyone else about how you are feeling?

Internal support systems

- Provide continuous 1:1 (one to one) check-ins with team members to foster positive and open communication
- Offer a point of contact or buddy systems to support the integration of new employees into teams, during the onboarding and induction phase.
- Continuously share information on how to access to counselling and mental health services available
- Ensure HR Policies support neurodiverse needs
- Mental health or Neurodiversity employee resource groups
- Mental health first aider network
- Organisational health and wellbeing initiatives e.g., helplines, wellbeing apps etc.

Self-care at work

- Remind your team to take regular breaks; rest eyes and move body
- Remind your team to take annual leave throughout the year
 - Encourage positive health habits such as getting fresh air; exercise; eating regular meals; drinking plenty of water
- Support with to-do lists; time management and other executive functioning tasks



Workplace accommodations

Workplace adjustments play a crucial role in supporting mental health by creating an environment that accommodates individual needs and promotes well-being.

By recognising and addressing the specific challenges neurodivergent employees may face in the workplace, organisations can reduce stress, enhance productivity, and improve overall job satisfaction. Ultimately, such adjustments contribute to a healthier, more inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued and empowered to thrive.

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

Assistive technology e.g., speech to text software

Flexibility to have cameras on or off in meetings

Access to low sensory zones within your offices

Noise cancelling headphones

Workplace buddy or mentorship programme

Align to preferred communication preferences

Flexible working practices

Constructive and consistent feedback process

Regular 1-2-1 meetings

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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- [Mind](#)
- [Understanding the law - Supporting mental health at work - Acas](#)

We empower organisations to become authentically neuroinclusive by delivering expert guidance and exceptional IT solutions from our own neurodivergent talent.

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