

THINK DIFFERENTLY, LEAD BETTER

Neurodiversity Tips for Managers



Insights and tips on supporting neurodiverse colleagues curated by Trainees on the New to Nature Programme



INTRODUCTION

New to Nature aims to support young people to enter the environment sector from diverse backgrounds, including those with a disability or long-term health condition. This includes neurodiverse Trainees, who not only have brought creativity and unique skills to their roles but also took the time to share new insights into what support is required for neurodiverse employees to thrive.

It's estimated that around 15% of the UK population is neurodivergent, which can bring different strengths and challenges depending on the barriers within the workplace and wider society. Achieving diversity, inclusion and equality in the workplace goes beyond demographics. Recognising neurodiversity is about ensuring a space where everyone's brain function is valued by creating a work environment that caters to different learning styles, communication preferences, and sensory needs.

By embracing neurodiversity, we create a level playing field where everyone can excel based on their unique strengths, rather than working around unnecessary barriers. This nurtures a more respectful, communicative and understanding work culture, benefiting all employees and the organisation, by unlocking a wealth of talent, innovation, and problem-solving approaches.

If you are a manager or colleague in an organisation that is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion and have some knowledge of neurodiversity then this document sharing top priorities and specific adjustments from neurodiverse trainees is for you!

Still wondering 'what is neurodiversity?', [find out more here](#) and in the resources section.



Supporting Neurodiverse Colleagues: Top Priorities

When asked about their journey with neurodiversity and adjustments in the workplace, Trainees shared that it can be exhausting at times but also an opportunity to learn what works for them and find areas in which they can grow. Operating in a neurotypical world and workplace can lead to regular burnout, often due to having to conform to certain behaviours and ways of working (also known as masking) and the anxiety that can come with asking for support.

The following top priorities came through from Trainees experience, for managers and organisations as a whole.

Explore barriers and make adjustments. The Equality Act 2010 supports reasonable adjustments for neurodiversity, with no requirement for formal diagnosis for support to be put in place.

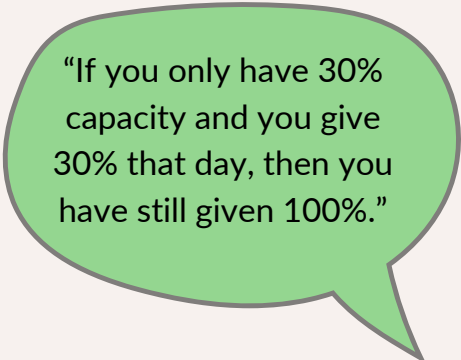
Educate and train all colleagues. Normalise conversations about employee support and adjustments - it shouldn't have to fall on individuals to explain their neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity can be tiring but empowering. Young people need support to find what works for them and freedom to experiment with different adjustments.

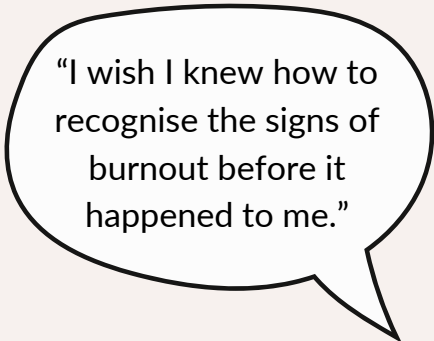
Individualised support is key. Wellbeing and mental health discussions should form part of your support.

Patience from colleagues is vital. Adjustments take time for employees who have not received support in the past.

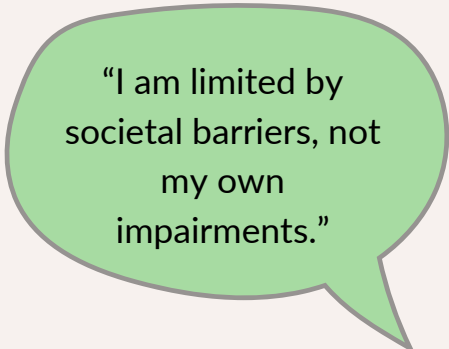
Supportive policies benefit everyone. Consider employee wellbeing services, medical leave, and being flexible around calling in for sick leave.



"If you only have 30% capacity and you give 30% that day, then you have still given 100%."



"I wish I knew how to recognise the signs of burnout before it happened to me."



"I am limited by societal barriers, not my own impairments."

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGERS

Discussing neurodiversity involves openness, trust, asking questions with genuine curiosity, and being open to receiving questions in return.


Flexible working is a great way to support neurodiverse employees to work at more productive times of the day and to take short breaks throughout the day.

Sensory sensitivities can be an issue for many neurodiverse employees leading to overstimulation, so enabling the use of headphones, choosing a desk in a comfortable place or having access to a quiet room can be invaluable.

Communication skills can vary for neurodiverse groups. For example, people with dyslexia and ADHD can often take longer to digest written and spoken communication, while people with ASD prefer very clear, unambiguous communication. Everyone is different, so exploring communication and learning styles can be useful.

Planning tools can be a vital aid for memory, concentration, and organisation challenges. Explore planning techniques and principles together and use online programmes to break projects down into manageable tasks.

New to Nature Wins



"I'm able to have open discussions with my manager about ways of supporting my ADHD - I work somewhat flexibly, taking breaks when needed but working longer days (suits me!)"

"9-day fortnight changed my life!"

"Thanks to the N2N placement, I no longer panic when talking to larger groups of people - my confidence has improved so much."

"Thanks to the training I was able to make use of the breaking barriers fund as it helped me to think of useful tools! I now have a Remarkable e-pad for notetaking and it's helped SO much!"

"I've enjoyed the chance to have monthly catch ups with my Youth Employment Coach."

TOP TIPS FOR MANAGERS CONTINUED

Ask specific questions about how we're doing and how work suits us rather than general 'How are you doing?' as that can be much harder to answer.

Check-in with people when scheduling meetings - some people prefer chunks of meetings, others need breaks in between them.

Monthly check-in regarding mental health, communication, or any small issues, before they get bigger.

Remember, facial expressions can vary with neurodiverse groups - being quiet or not smiling doesn't mean they're not happy, there isn't any way to fix it.

Work alongside sessions or quick check-ins on workload priorities and admin are useful.

Empower employees, once the right balance of adjustments is found let us manage these ourselves - showing trust and flexibility is vital.

RESOURCES

[Template for exploring Neurodiversity Profile](#) and other resources from [Enna](#)

[Wellness Action Plan template](#) to explore stress management and burnout prevention.

[Access to Work grants](#) helps with equipment, coaching or diagnosis for employees.

Webinars and events from [Neurodiversity Celebration Week](#)

