

EAP Newsletter – February 2025

Understanding and Supporting Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the different ways that people's brains work and process information. No two people are the same in how they view their environment and respond to it. Additionally, people have different strengths and challenges based on how their brain functions.

Understanding the Terms

Neurodivergent is another related term. This is used to describe people whose brains developed differently from most people, affecting how they function. People who aren't neurodivergent are referred to as neurotypical.

Neurodivergent is often used in the context of people with autism spectrum disorders, other neurological conditions, or learning disabilities. However, other people may identify as neurodivergent, including those who have not received a formal diagnosis.

The term neurodiversity was first coined by a sociologist named Judy Singer in the late 1990s. She wanted to encourage a more positive view of neurodivergence rather than labeling people as normal or abnormal.

Signs of Being Neurodivergent

People who identify as neurodivergent have different preferences from most people when it comes to social interactions, learning environment, and communication. For example, an individual who is neurodivergent might struggle to filter out external stimuli and cannot function in an environment with loud noises or bright lights.



An individual might also struggle with:

- Focus and concentration
- Organizing thoughts
- Disruptions to their routine

It's also important to note that someone who is neurodivergent has many unique strengths as well, which may include innovative thinking, attention to detail, and taking the initiative in certain situations.

Promoting Acceptance and Inclusivity

Let's look at some ways that you can promote acceptance and inclusivity of neurodiversity in various settings, including the workplace.

1. Consider how you communicate. Everyone has different preferences in how they communicate with others. Someone who identifies as neurodivergent might struggle to communicate with others for various reasons. For example, they might prefer written communication, such as email, versus a phone call so they have more time to think about what they want to say. They might prefer to see work assignments or updates in writing. Often direct and concise communication is ideal. You can ask them directly about their preferences.
2. Take the time to listen. Make sure to give individuals time to speak or respond. It might take someone who identifies as neurodivergent more time to formulate what they want to say or to find the right words.
3. Avoid making assumptions. Get to know someone as an individual rather than making assumptions. No two people are the same.
4. Offer a flexible work environment when possible. Individuals who consider themselves neurodivergent might excel with certain accommodations, such as being able to wear headphones at times to block out background noise.

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21 Things You Can Do While You're Living Through a Traumatic Experience

1. Take immediate action to ensure your physical safety and the safety of others. If it's possible, remove yourself from the event/scene in order to avoid further traumatic exposure.
2. Address your acute medical needs (e.g., If you're having difficulty breathing, experiencing chest pains or palpitations, seek immediate medical attention).
3. Find a safe place that offers shelter, water, food and sanitation.
4. Become aware of how the event is affecting you (i.e., your feelings, thoughts, actions and your physical and spiritual reactions).
5. Know that your reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event. You are not "losing it" or "going crazy".
6. Speak with your physician or healthcare provider and make him/her aware of what has happened to you.
7. Be aware of how you're holding up when there are children around you. Children will take their cues from the adults around them.
8. Try to obtain information. Knowing the facts about what has happened will help you to keep functioning.
9. If possible, surround yourself with family and loved ones. Realize that the event is likely affecting them, too.
10. Tell your story. And allow yourself to feel. It's okay not to be okay during a traumatic experience.
11. You may experience a desire to withdraw and isolate, causing a strain on significant others. Resist the urge to shut down and retreat into your own world.
12. Traumatic stress may compromise your ability to think clearly. If you find it difficult to concentrate when someone is speaking to you, focus on the specific words they are saying and work to actively listen. Slow down the conversation and try repeating what you have just heard.
13. Don't make important decisions when you're feeling overwhelmed. Allow trusted family members or friends to assist you with the necessary decision-making.
14. If stress is causing you to react physically, use controlled breathing techniques to stabilize yourself. Take a slow deep breath by inhaling through your nose, hold your breath for 5 seconds and then exhale through your mouth. Upon exhalation, think the words "relax", "let go", or "I'm handling this". Repeat this process several times.

15. Realize that repetitive thinking and sleep difficulties are normal reactions. Don't fight the sleep difficulty. Try the following: Eliminate caffeine for 4 hours prior to your bedtime, create the best sleep environment you can, consider taking a few moments before turning out the lights to write down your thoughts thus emptying your mind.
16. Give yourself permission to rest, relax and engage in non-threatening activities. Read, listen to music, consider taking a warm bath, etc.
17. Physical exercise may help to dissipate the stress energy that has been generated by your experience. Take a walk, ride a bike, or swim.
18. Create a journal. Writing about your experience may help to expose yourself to painful thoughts and feelings and, ultimately, enable you to assimilate your experience.
19. If you find that your experience is too powerful, allow yourself the advantage of professional and/or spiritual guidance, support and education.
20. Try to maintain your schedule. Traumatic events will disrupt the sense of normalcy. We are all creatures of habit. By maintaining our routines, we can maintain a sense of control at a time when circumstances may lead us to feel a loss of control.
21. Crises present opportunities. Cultivate a mission and purpose. Seize the energy from your experience and use it to propel you to set realistic goals, make decisions and take action.

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