



A Manager Quick Reference
Guide

Supporting Neurodivergent Talent



HR CHEAT SHEET

neurodivergence

HR Role: Fix the System, Not the Person

Neurodiversity in the workplace means recognizing that employees think, learn, and process information differently including those with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia.

Organizations that understand and support these differences often see stronger innovation, better retention, and benefit from strengths like deep focus, creativity, and technical precision.



Shift Training

What is “Autism”? to “How to Manage Different Thinking Styles”.



Teach Managers

Providing clear instructions and flexible schedules aren't special treatment - they help **everyone**.



Interview Reform

Consider sending interview questions 24 hours in advance. Test the candidate's ability to do the job (thinking and strategizing vs. how to improvise socially under pressure).



Encourage Managers to Review Process

If your neurodivergent employees are struggling with a specific process (like a nightmare expense report system), that process is likely broken for everyone. Use their struggle as a signal to fix it for the whole company.

Instructions

Distribute the manager cheat sheet on the following page to all managers, supervisors, and trainers. Allow for questions and open discussion.



MANAGER CHEAT SHEET

neurodivergence

What is Neurodivergence?

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Structure and Strengths



The "Must-Do List"

Some neurodivergent brains can suffer from decision paralysis when everything looks like a priority.

Be the compass, explicitly separate "mission critical" from "nice-to-haves."



Body Doubling

Allow or encourage [body doubling](#) for task initiation, which can be helpful for executive dysfunction.

Body doubling is when two (or more) people work side by side, either in person or virtually, without necessarily collaborating.



Feedback Loops

Ask: "How do you prefer to receive feedback?"

Some may prefer written feedback that they can process privately before discussing it to avoid emotional flooding, while others may want direct and in-the-moment feedback to avoid trying to pick up on non-verbal cues.

What Not How...

Stop caring about how they get there. If they need to pace around the room to think or draft emails in a dark room, let them. Judge the result, not the ritual.

Communication Tips

Neurodivergent brains often run on specifics. Nuance, sarcasm, and reading between the lines are easy ways to create errors.

Don't	Do	Why?
Say: "ASAP"	Give specifics: "Thursday at 2pm"	Ambiguity is the enemy of execution.
Only give instructions verbally.	Follow up with a bulleted list: "Here's what we agreed on and what is due."	It's not micromanagement, it's a roadmap.
Assume everyone works the same way.	Encourage your team to write a " How to Work With Me " one-pager.	Knowing that one person needs silence to process while another needs to talk it out can save you months of misunderstandings.
Reduce putting employees on the spot.	Send meeting agendas 24 hours in advance.	This allows processing time and reduces anxiety about being "put on the spot."

Low Lift - High Impact Accommodations



Sensory Control: Normalize noise-canceling headphones, desk lamps, sunglasses, or hats indoors. If it blocks out distractions, it boosts productivity.



Fidgeting: Normalize movement. Doodling, pacing, or using fidget toys often increases focus for neurodivergent brains, rather than distracting from it.



Camera-Optional: Eye contact on video calls is performative and exhausting. Let folks turn the camera off so they can focus on your words, not on masking their facial expression.



Flexible Hours: A 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM schedule might be significantly more productive than 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM for someone with sleep-onset struggles.