

All minds matter

A guide to
create
neuroinclusive
workplaces



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All minds matter - A guide to neuroinclusive workplaces

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As human beings, we are quick to put others in boxes. Too easily we label people as difficult, weak, antisocial, or even incapable, without ever pausing to understand them. We assume that those who think, act, or feel like us are “normal,” and everyone else must be less. But in doing so, we close our eyes to the value of difference.

But is there really a single way to be human?

Each of us carries a unique pattern of strengths and challenges. What might seem unusual at first glance often holds insights, skills, and perspectives that can enrich us all. Not because they are better or worse, but because they are different.

When we move beyond judgment and create space for diversity of minds, we discover not just inclusion, but also strength. That’s why at WeAreOpen, we believe in workplaces where everyone, including neurodivergent or neurotypical, can feel safe, valued, and able to thrive. Because all minds matter.

Nóra Várady,
CEO,
WeAreOpen



At MSCI, we believe that fostering an inclusive culture means recognizing and supporting the full spectrum of human diversity - including neurodiversity. This is not a niche topic; it touches many of our colleagues directly and indirectly, and it influences how we work, collaborate, and thrive together.

Over the past year, we have seen this very clearly as we built up the All Abilities ERG chapter in Budapest. The engagement, conversations, and ideas that have emerged show how important it is to create workplaces where neurodiverse colleagues feel understood and supported. These are not abstract principles - they translate into daily practices, from how we design our office spaces, to how we approach wellbeing, to how we foster community and belonging.

By sharing our best practices in this whitepaper, we hope to contribute to the broader conversation and to learn from others as well. We know that inclusion is a journey, not a destination - and that we make the biggest impact when we work together across industries and communities.

Rozália Miklós,
Managing Director,
Head of the Budapest Office, MSCI



I have always been fascinated by the countless ways people perceive and interpret the world and how one reality can be described from so many perspectives. Rather than a source of division, I see this as a wealth of perspectives that can inspire and strengthen us.

For many neurodivergent individuals, this richness also comes with obstacles. They may sometimes feel out of sync with the expectations and structures around them. Greater awareness and understanding can change this - opening doors to express their abilities more fully, while helping workplaces notice and value these unique contributions.

By creating environments that are accessible to all ways of thinking, organizations open spaces where people can thrive - and in turn, unlock innovation, creativity, and resilience that benefit everyone.

Zsuzsanna Garaj,
Consulting Psychologist,
Researcher,
WeAreOpen



Introduction

Many of us might know people - diagnosed or self-identified - with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, or other neurodivergent conditions, and these topics are increasingly part of everyday conversations. This growing visibility reminds us that not all minds work the same way - and it's exactly this variety that makes us unique and richly diverse. Yet greater familiarity with the terms doesn't always mean deeper understanding. Misconceptions about what neurodiversity is - and isn't - still persist, making it essential to move beyond surface awareness toward meaningful inclusion.

Business cases clearly show that with the right adjustments, neurodivergent employees contribute unique skills and innovative solutions that boost performance and drive better business outcomes. This diversity also strengthens engagement among neurotypical colleagues, while unlocking a broad pool of talent that can help ease recruitment pressures. The evidence is clear - **investing in neuroinclusive workplaces is a strategic advantage.**

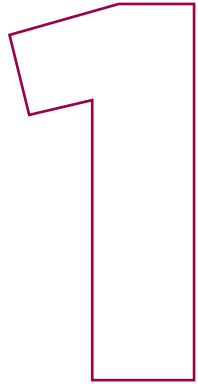
This whitepaper offers a practical guide for organizations, clarifying the concept of neurodiversity, highlighting the needs and strengths of neurodivergent individuals, and outlining best practices for building workplaces where everyone can thrive.

For over a decade, **WeAreOpen** has been promoting inclusive and psychologically safe workplaces in Hungary and internationally. With 1,100 manifesto signatory companies and over 100 partners, we are one of Europe's largest business communities driving inclusion and openness.

We regularly publish knowledge materials that are available at <https://www.nyitottakvagyunk.hu/en/case-studies-and-reports>

If you're committed to building an inclusive and psychologically safe workplace and would like support along the way, feel free to reach out to WeAreOpen at info@nyitottakvagyunk.hu or visit www.weareopen.hu





Understanding neurodiversity

The term “**neurodiversity**” describes the **natural variation in how human brains function and process the world**. Just as we recognize diversity in ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, neurodiversity highlights that cognitive differences are also part of human nature. While of course every brain is unique, this non-medical terminology is most often used to refer to people with ASD (autism spectrum disorder), ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder), dyslexia, or other forms of cognitive difference.

1.1. Key terms of neuroinclusion

Before exploring the topic further, it’s useful to begin with the basics - the language that frames the concept:

Neurodiversity refers to the concept that variations in brain structure and function are natural and normal aspects of human diversity.

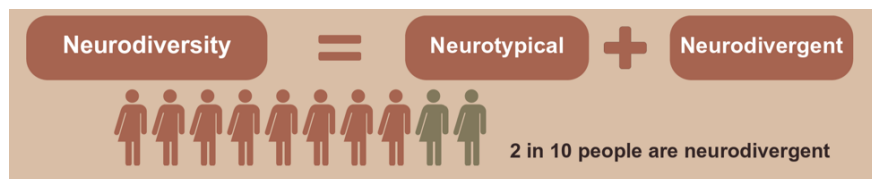
Neurodiverse refers to a group that includes a mix of both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals.

Neurodivergent describes individuals whose thinking, learning, or information-processing differs from what is considered “typical”. This spans a continuum reflecting a variety of ways people behave, perceive, or communicate.

Neurotypical describes individuals whose cognitive patterns align with society’s expectations of “typical” brain function.

Neurominorities include individuals whose cognitive functioning differs from the majority. The term highlights that these groups are minorities not by number alone, but by the social and structural disadvantages they often face in environments designed for neurotypical norms.

Neuroinclusion means intentionally creating spaces - at work, in education, and in society - that welcome both neurotypical and neurodivergent people. It highlights the importance of creating accessible, supportive environments that respect, value, and empower different cognitive styles.



Source: [Guide: How to create a neuroinclusive workplace, Georgia Broome, 2024](#)

This terminology was introduced because **words like “normal” and “abnormal” are not really applicable in this context.** There is no single definition of what is “normal” when it comes to how the human brain functions. Being neurodivergent refers to having different strengths and challenges compared to people whose brains do not share these differences - commonly described as neurotypical.

The term “neurodivergent” emerged in the 1990s and is often linked to sociologist Judy Singer. She framed **neurodiversity as an umbrella concept uniting autistic people with other neurominority groups, such as those with ADHD or dyslexia**, challenging deficit-focused views and highlighting strengths¹. While Judy Singer coined the term, the **Neurodiversity Movement**² itself emerged through the collective activism of autistic self-advocates and disability rights communities. Today, it stands as a global minority-rights campaign, inspiring companies worldwide to adopt more inclusive hiring and talent practices.

Neurodiversity may seem like a niche issue, but prevalence data show it is far more common than we might assume. **Approximately 15 to 20% of the population exhibit some form of neurodivergence**³. When you consider it, there’s a strong likelihood that some of your employees or colleagues are neurodivergent. This makes it clear why it’s essential for workplaces to evolve and adapt in order to meet the needs of this increasingly significant group.

¹ [Hidden Figures In Neurodiversity: Judy Singer, Forbes, August, 2022](#)

² [The neurodiversity movement, National Autistic Society](#)

³ [Unraveling Neurodiversity: Insights from Neuroscientific Perspectives, Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, August, 2023](#)

1.2. The social dimension of neurodiversity: Inclusion over pathology

At first glance, the topic may appear limited to psychiatry and neurology. Yet beyond the medical lens, the social dimensions of neurodiversity are equally important. It is both a concept and a movement that recognizes human cognitive differences and promotes the acceptance and inclusion of neurominorities in society.

However, it’s also important to note that within the neurodiversity movement, there is ongoing debate around self-advocacy and its aims. Some focus on normalizing and accepting neurological differences as natural variations rather than deficits. Others emphasize recognizing disability and the real challenges of atypical neurology, highlighting the need for support⁴. These two perspectives within the neurodiversity movement reflect the broader medical and social models of disability. The **medical model sees disability as an individual dysfunction** to be cured, while the **social model views it as the result of external barriers** and inaccessible environments rather than solely the person’s impairment⁵. In this whitepaper, we follow the social model, emphasizing that inclusion is achieved by removing external barriers rather than “fixing” individuals.

⁴ [Unraveling Neurodiversity: Insights from Neuroscientific Perspectives, Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, August, 2023](#)

⁵ Disability: Controversial Debates and Psychosocial Perspectives; Marks, D., Psychology Press: London, UK, 1999

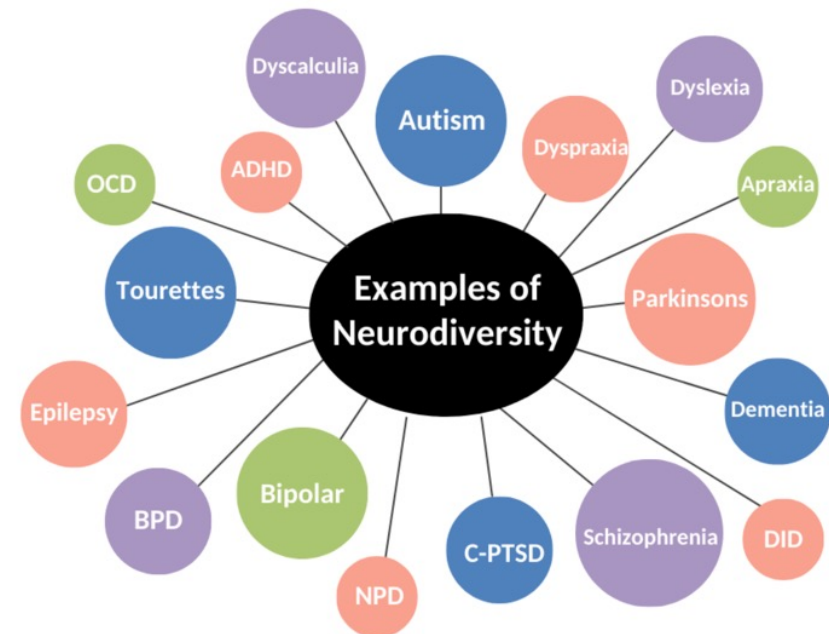
1.3. The neurodiversity umbrella: diagnostic categories, strengths and challenges

Neurodiversity encompasses a range of diagnoses, each associated with distinct traits. Understanding these can help employees, HR professionals, and leaders avoid labeling neurodivergent characteristics as oddities or shortcomings. Instead, they can recognize the unique features and needs of these conditions.

This comprehensive classification helps clarify what falls under the umbrella of neurodiversity⁶. Not all of these diagnoses are equally relevant in workplace contexts, but the most common ones will be described in more detail later.

TYPE	EXAMPLES	IMPACT
Applied developmental neurominority	Learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia)	Primarily affects specific domains (e.g., educational settings), not considered a health issue.
Clinical developmental neurominority	Tourette Syndrome (TS), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)	Broad and crossdomain impact on behavior and communication, currently considered a health issue.
Psychiatric acquired neurominority	Mental illness and psychiatric disorders, (such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, OCD)	Acquired, psychiatric in nature, considered a health issue.
Neurological acquired neurominority	Neurological diseases, brain injury with symptoms like amnesia, aphasia	Acquired, psychiatric in nature, considered a health issue.

Based on the classification above, all of this can be called neurodiversity:

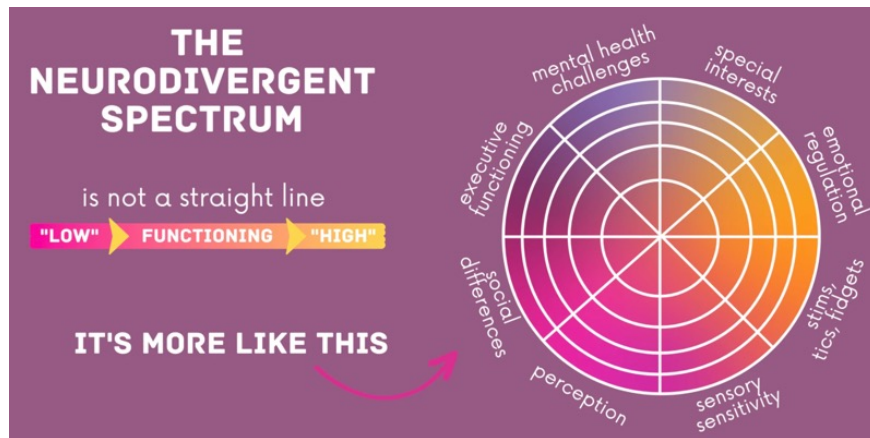


Source: [The neuroaffirming therapist, Vauna Beauvais, 2023](#)

This whitepaper, however, focuses on the **neurodivergent conditions most often seen in workplace contexts: ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and dyslexia**. We outline their key traits, along with the unique strengths and challenges they may present at work.

It's important to recognize that the traits of neurodivergent individuals can vary widely. This means they **cannot be meaningfully described on a simple "high-functioning vs. low-functioning" scale**. Instead, neurodivergence is **best understood as a spectrum**, where each person has areas of both strength and challenge across different domains – and together, these form their unique neurodiversity profile.

⁶ [Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults, British Medical Bulletin, September, 2020](#)



Source: [Keeping Up With... Neurodiversity, Association of College and Research Libraries](#)

1.3.1. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

ASD is a broad condition affecting social skills, communication, and behaviors as well. Each autistic person is unique, with different strengths and support needs - ranging from nonverbal individuals requiring significant daily help to those living and working independently⁷. **"Asperger's syndrome"** once referred to a form of autism with stronger cognitive and language skills. **Today, it is no longer used as a diagnosis** and falls under the broader category of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The neurodiversity movement also promotes acceptance by focusing on strengths rather than deficits. Accordingly, **"Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)"** is increasingly used over ASD, reflecting a shift from a medical to a more empowering, rights-based perspective⁸.

⁷ [What is autism, National Autistic Society](#)

⁸ [Neurodiversity: post-cognitivist foundations of the 3E approach for educational inclusion of autistic](#)

Signs and symptoms in adults

(traits vary from person to person)⁹

- Feeling uncomfortable or unsure in social situations
- Struggling to interpret others' thoughts or emotions
- Finding it hard to understand social rules
- Difficulty maintaining eye contact
- Speaking in a direct or blunt manner
- Taking language literally
- Preferring a consistent daily routine
- Noticing details or patterns that others might overlook
- Having very focused and intense interests

Typical workplace challenges

- Time management
- Multitasking
- Social and communication differences
- Very high need for structure and consistency

Workplace strengths

- Remembering large amount of detailed information
- Other 'specialist individual skills' such as advanced spatial reasoning, drawing or computation
- Innovative thinking
- Detail observation
- High verbal comprehension ability
- Very high level of integrity

⁹ [students with technology, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, February, 2025](#)

⁹ [Signs of autism in adults, Autism Speaks](#)

1.3.2. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Contrary to what the name suggests, **it doesn't mean people with ADHD lack attention - it means they may find it harder to control or focus their attention** on specific tasks. ADHD symptoms generally fall into two categories: **inattention**, which makes it hard for the person to focus, stay on task, or complete activities, and **hyperactivity/impulsivity**, which makes it difficult for the person to stay still, wait their turn, or control spontaneous actions¹⁰.

Signs and symptoms in adults (traits vary from person to person)¹¹

- Difficulty staying focused in tasks, conversations, or meetings
- Appearing distracted or daydreaming while others speak
- Starting tasks but struggling to finish them
- Trouble organizing and prioritizing activities
- Avoiding tedious or boring tasks
- Hyperfocus
- Frequently losing or misplacing items
- Being easily distracted by surroundings or own thoughts
- Frequent fidgeting or restlessness
- Talking excessively or "info dumps"
- Interrupting others, finishing sentences, or speaking impulsively
- Difficulty waiting for one's turn

Typical workplace challenges

- Time management
- Concentration, attention and self-regulation difficulties
- Difficulty with team work
- Maintaining employment

Workplace strengths

- Creative thinking
- Visual-spatial reasoning ability
- Hyper-focus
- Passion and courage

¹⁰ [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\), Cleveland Clinic](#)

¹¹ [ADHD in Adults: 4 Things to Know - National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

1.3.3. Dyslexia

A learning disability that makes **reading and other language-related tasks more difficult**. Dyslexia is classified as a "specific learning disorder," which is typically divided into three main subtypes: reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), math (dyscalculia). A common misconception is that dyslexia is a disease or a sign of low intelligence. Research shows no link between intelligence and dyslexia, and many living with it achieve great success in their professional fields¹².

Signs and symptoms in adults (traits vary from person to person)¹³

- Avoiding reading aloud and feeling uncomfortable with public speaking
- Low self-esteem
- Belief they "read better silently"
- Reading speed and comprehension vary depending on the topic
- Frequently re-reading text to fully understand it
- Reading can quickly lead to fatigue or boredom
- Easily being disturbed by environmental sounds and stimuli
- Relying on others (assistants, partners, colleagues) for written communication
- Feeling uncertain about word choice, punctuation, and spelling when writing, heavy dependence on spell-check tools
- Handwriting is often difficult to read, which can mask spelling issues
- Sometimes writing in all caps, mixing capital letters within words, or frequently abbreviating

Typical workplace challenges

- Literacy, memory, written communication
- Organizational skills, time management
- Stress management
- Social self-esteem

Workplace strengths

- Entrepreneurialism
- Creativity
- Visual reasoning and visual-spatial skills
- Practical skills
- Story-telling ability

¹² [Dyslexia: What It Is, Causes, Symptoms, Treatment & Types, Cleveland Clinic](#)

¹³ [Common Characteristics of Adult Dyslexia, 2008](#)

Organizational value of neurodiversity

Research consistently shows that diverse teams and organizations drive stronger financial performance through greater innovation, higher employee retention and better problem-solving skills^{14, 15, 16}. This equally applies to neurodiversity, as these colleagues bring unique perspectives and a wide range of skills that boost overall organizational performance.

2.1. Diverse skills as collective strength

Diversity of minds makes groups stronger. A striking modern cognitive theory further challenges the traditional, deficit-focused view of neurodiversity, instead framing it as an integral part of human evolution. Known as **Complementary Cognition**¹⁷, this theory proposes that **individuals naturally specialize in different, but complementary ways of seeking and processing information**.

At the group level, these **diverse cognitive strategies interact and collaborate, enabling humans to adapt effectively to complex and ever-changing environments** where no single individual could optimize all forms of problem-solving alone. Diversity in thinking styles, such as detail-oriented focus, big-picture exploration, or creative innovation, created a collective system of “cognitive search” that **made groups far more adaptable and resilient than individuals could be on their own**¹⁸. In modern organizations, a neuroinclusive environment enables neurodiverse teams to turn this collective strength into business advantage.

¹⁴ [One More Time: Why Diversity Leads To Better Team Performance, Forbes, January, 2024](#)

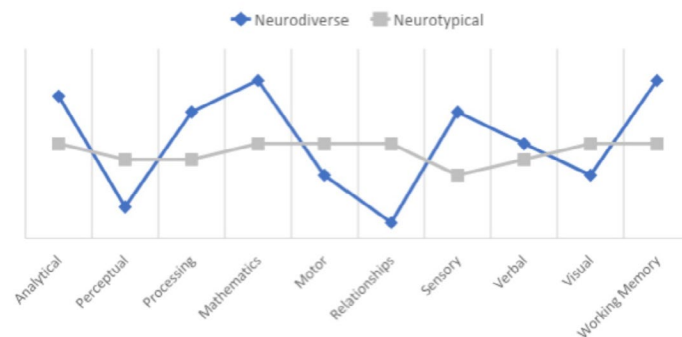
¹⁵ [Diversity matters even more: The case for holistic impact, McKinsey, December, 2023](#)

¹⁶ [ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES: A META-ANALYSIS, International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, April, 2024](#)

¹⁷ [The Evolution of Complementary Cognition: Humans Cooperatively Adapt and Evolve through a System of Collective Cognitive Search, Cambridge Archeological Journal, June, 2021](#)

¹⁸ [The Evolution of Complementary Cognition: Humans Cooperatively Adapt and Evolve through a System of Collective Cognitive Search, Cambridge Archeological Journal, June, 2021](#)

Alongside these collective benefits, it is also important to look at the individual level and understand how neurodivergent profiles may present in the workplace. These colleagues often have a **spiky profile - an uneven distribution of skills**¹⁹. They may excel far above average in some areas while facing significant challenges in others - for instance, exceptional analytical thinking and problem-solving skills paired with difficulties in time management or social communication. Thus, while neurodiversity may involve certain work-related challenges requiring adjustments, it also brings valuable strengths²⁰. When organizations recognize and support spiky profiles, these unique constellations of abilities can fuel more innovative collaboration and stronger collective outcomes.



Example of a neurodivergent spiky profile

Source: [How 'spiky profiles' can highlight the strengths of neurodiverse employees, Reward and Employee Benefits Association](#)

¹⁹ Chapter 2: Focus on strengths: Supporting people who experience difficulties at work, BPS - British Psychological Society

²⁰ Neurodiversity at work: a biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults, British Medical Bulletin, September, 2020

2.2. Strategic benefits of neurodiversity

According to a 2024 research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, **neuroinclusive employers report clear benefits: 63% see improved employee wellbeing, 55% note a stronger company culture, and 52% experience higher employee engagement**²¹.

Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) reported that no other company initiative has generated such a wide-ranging impact as its neurodiversity inclusion and equity efforts. Between 2015 and 2017, HPE's program placed over 30 neurodivergent participants in software testing roles at Australia's Department of Human Services. The results indicated that **neurodiverse testing teams outperformed their peers by 30% in productivity**²². Such programs also have broad positive effects - at HPE, neurotypical employees reported greater meaning and morale in their work, while neurodiverse employees demonstrated stronger loyalty and lower turnover²³.

One of the most significant reports from **SAP** shows that **innovations by their neurodivergent employees have directly contributed to around US\$40 million in savings**, underscoring the strong link between workplace diversity and innovation²⁴.

JPMorgan Chase's Autism at Work program showed that **participating neurodivergent employees made fewer mistakes and were 90% to 140% more productive compared to neurotypical staff**²⁵.

²¹ Neuroinclusion at work report, CIPD, 2024

²² Neurodiversity Is a Competitive Advantage, Harvard Business Review, 2017

²³ Neurodiversity Is a Competitive Advantage, Harvard Business Review, 2017

²⁴ Access to employment: A comparison of autistic, neurodivergent and neurotypical adults' experiences of hiring processes in the United Kingdom, National Autistic Society, January, 2023

²⁵ Neurodiversity And The Workplace, Forbes, February, 2022

The success of these initiatives has proven lasting, suggesting that when neurodivergent individuals are given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, they are highly likely to succeed. In 2020, a comprehensive analysis showed that companies such as SAP, JPMorgan Chase, EY, and Microsoft - each running Autism at Work programs for several years - achieved **retention rates of over 90% within these programs**. Most of the roles filled were in software and hardware technologies, data science, and quality assurance, though not exclusively limited to these fields²⁶.

Although more companies are starting to recognize the benefits of hiring neurodivergent talent, progress is still uneven. According to Deloitte, in 2022, **85% of people with autism spectrum disorder were unemployed**, compared with just 4.2% of the general U.S. population²⁷. One key reason is that, beyond the extra challenges neurodivergent individuals face in job interviews, employer attitudes often remain discriminatory. A 2020 survey found that **50% of UK employers admitted they would not hire a candidate with one or more neurodivergent conditions**²⁸. These numbers represent a regrettable waste of talent and opportunity both for neurodiverse individuals and for the organizations that employ them or could benefit from doing so.

²⁶ [Corporate Neurodiversity Hiring Programs: Scratching the Surface? - Autism Spectrum News, 2020](#)

²⁷ [Neurodiversity in the workplace, Deloitte Insights, January, 2022](#)

²⁸ [Workplace Neurodiversity: The Power Of Difference, The Institute of Leadership](#)

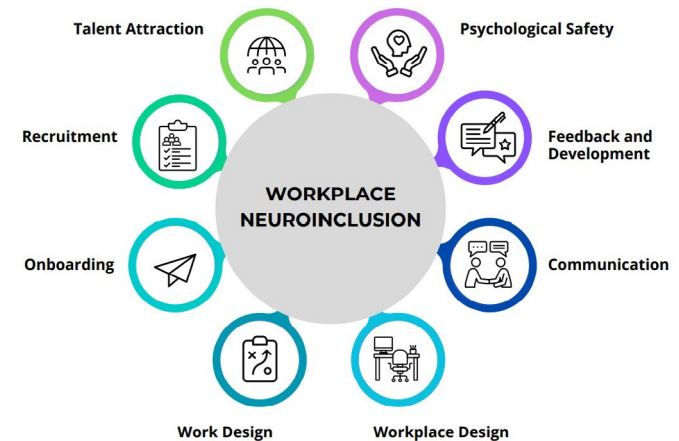
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Building neuroinclusive workplaces

Neuroinclusion is not separate from inclusive workplace cultures but an integral part of them. Inclusion means an environment where everyone can feel safe and comfortable expressing their needs, and can bring in their differences as these are respected and welcome. With this foundation in place, integrating neuroinclusive principles becomes far easier. Building an inclusive culture has many dimensions, for which the **WeAreOpen Inclusive Design framework**²⁹ offers a range of best practices. In this whitepaper, however, **we focus specifically on the distinctive aspects of neuroinclusion.**

A major challenge with neurodiversity at work is that many individuals remain undiagnosed, often being perceived as simply “weird” or “odd” by their colleagues. Even with a diagnosis, employees may hesitate to disclose it, especially in a new role, due to years – sometimes decades – of negative social experiences. This underscores the need for inclusive workplace cultures, where inclusive practices support everyone without requiring disclosure if employees prefer not to share it.

The following recommendations outline how to make hiring and everyday work experiences inclusive, enabling neurodiverse talent to showcase their skills without unnecessary barriers. **We have grouped these into eight topics that cover the key aspects of the employee experience** – from talent attraction and workplace design to fostering a psychologically safe culture.



²⁹ [Inclusive Design, WeAreOpen](#)

3.1. Attracting talent

Attracting neurodiverse talent starts with the very first touch-point: the job posting. The language and messaging used can either invite candidates to see themselves in the role or unintentionally create barriers that discourage them from applying.

- **Universal design** is the practice of designing spaces, tools, and processes so they are usable by the widest range of people from the start, without the need for later adaptations. In recruitment, this means **writing job descriptions that are clear, accessible, and free from unnecessary barriers** – helping more candidates see themselves as qualified and encouraging a broader, more diverse applicant pool.
- Job postings should use **clear, jargon-free, nongendered language** and state that applicants can **request neuroinclusive accommodations**, such as flexible work or quiet spaces.
- Reframe job descriptions with **skills-focused language** and question whether “nice-to-have” traits (e.g., strong communication or networking skills) are truly essential or just habitual requirements. Clearly separate “required” from “preferred” skills.
- Clearly state **whether a role is project- or time-based**, as neurodiverse candidates (especially those with ADHD) may thrive with flexible, project-focused work. Define success and time expectations transparently to help them assess fit.
- When job postings include **inclusive messaging** – for example, explicitly welcoming different ways of thinking – they help attract both neurodivergent and neurotypical candidates.

3.2. Recruiting inclusively

Interviews are often the biggest barrier for neurodivergent candidates. Subtle differences in communication, focus, or behavior can be misread as lack of ability, when in reality they reflect different cognitive styles. Rethinking interview practices is key to unlocking this talent pool.

- **Predictability** is key in neuroinclusive interviews. Sharing steps, timelines, and expectations in advance reduces uncertainty and anxiety, enabling candidates to prepare effectively.
- **Awareness training helps interviewers** see neurodivergent strengths and not mistake certain behaviors for weaknesses. Autistic candidates may face challenges in interviews due to differences in social interaction, such as reduced eye contact, very direct communication, or speaking at length about special interests³⁰. Candidates with ADHD may struggle with focus, impulsivity, or unstructured responses, while restlessness and memory challenges can further affect how their strengths are perceived in traditional interviews.
- Before starting an interview, **ask if the candidate requires any accommodations**. Whether it's a quieter room, additional time to answer, or scheduled breaks, acknowledging these needs helps level the playing field.
- In interviews, **open or ambiguous questions can confuse neurodivergent candidates**. Providing specific context or options – for example, asking “What are two or three key skills you bring that would be most useful in this job?” instead of “Tell me about yourself” – makes it easier for them to focus and showcase their strengths.
- **Look beyond traditional nonverbal cues** and avoid forming judgments based on stance, posture, gestures, hand movements, body orientation, or handshake firmness. These differences do not reflect a candidate's skills, abilities, or potential.

³⁰ [Understanding what neurodivergent employees need to succeed, McKinsey, September, 2024](#)

- Focus on **skills-based tasks with practical exercises** that reflect real job requirements. In its neuroinclusive hiring program, Specialisterne replaced formal interviews with relaxed “hangouts,” then invited promising candidates to assessments using Lego Mindstorms robots and programming kits³¹.
- In case of testing candidates with dyslexia, provide extra time, quiet spaces, and clear instructions to ensure fair assessment. Remember that **typos or spelling errors don’t always reflect ability**, and rethink traditional testing by offering alternatives such as skills-based tasks alongside interviews.

“As a freelance chemical engineer, first client interviews are always the hardest part of my work. I know my subject deeply and get excited about the technical details, but that often turns into long, detailed explanations. I don’t always notice when I’ve lost the other person’s interest, or when I’ve simply said too much.

After some interviews, clients have even told me that I came across as dominating the conversation, when in reality I only wanted to share my knowledge. I try to work on this, but it’s difficult for me to sense when it’s “too much.” That uncertainty makes me anxious, and I worry that people will think I’m strange.

What helps enormously is when interviewers or clients gently, but clearly, guide the conversation. For example, if someone says, “This is really interesting, could you summarize the three key points for us?” - that gives me guidance and helps me feel okay. With that support, I can stay on track, and show my strengths with less anxiety.”

Mark, 43, Freelance Chemical Engineer

³¹ [How Your Business Can Benefit from Neurodiversity. The 8 percent, 2017](#)

3.3. Inclusive onboarding

A well-structured onboarding process is a cornerstone of successful integration. When tailored to the unique needs of neurodivergent employees, it builds confidence, accelerates adaptation, and lays the foundation for sustained performance.

- Provide new hires with a **clear plan for their first days, weeks, and months** – including timelines, training, milestones, and built-in flexibility. Strengthen this by checking in with simple questions about how they learn best, their preference for structure, and who they’d like to meet first - and stay flexible where needed.
- Ensure training materials are **accessible and cater to different learning styles** by offering options such as written resources, videos, and interactive sessions. Some colleagues may learn best through listening, hands-on practice, or discussing written materials.
- Assign a **buddy trained in neurodiversity and share information about support networks, ERGs, or external resources** such as a neurodiversity coach or Employee Assistance Program.
- When planning **team-building activities**, emphasize that joining is encouraged but not mandatory. As not everyone enjoys large, high-energy social events, provide more options so colleagues can choose what feels comfortable.

3.4. Work design

Thoughtful work design plays a critical role in enabling neurodivergent employees to perform at their best. With some accommodations, organizations can remove unnecessary barriers and make day-to-day work smoother and more effective.

- Neurodivergent employees often need **predictability**. If you ask someone with autism spectrum disorder to present or comment without warning, it may not go well. But if they know ahead of time what's expected, they can truly shine.
- **Avoid impromptu meetings where possible** and clearly explain the purpose to reduce anxiety and support planning. **Share an agenda in advance** that outlines the topics, expectations, and desired outcomes.
- Neurodiverse employees often have executive function needs - challenges with skills such as planning, organizing, or shifting quickly between tasks - which can make fast-paced meetings overwhelming. A simple best practice is to **provide a short debrief at the end, summarizing the key takeaways**.
- **Workplace flexibility** promotes equal opportunity by enabling multiple ways of connecting, including remote and asynchronous collaboration. For neurodivergent colleagues, whose energy levels may fluctuate throughout the day, it enables alignment with peak productivity times, recovery breaks after social interaction, and a reduced risk of exhaustion or burnout. At **MSCI, the Future of Work - Hybrid Working Model** supports this flexibility.

"For most of my career, I've thrived in highly technical, specialist tasks where precision and spatial-visual problem-solving are important. But whenever project management responsibilities landed on my desk, I struggled. Coordinating multiple moving parts, managing timelines, and communication with stakeholders always felt overwhelming. I often left meetings feeling "not enough", convinced that my difficulties meant I wasn't cut out for certain roles.

That changed when I was diagnosed with combined-type ADHD and autism. At first, the diagnosis felt heavy, but it also brought clarity and my challenges made sense. Since then, I've developed new strategies to support myself: structured note-taking systems, clearer documentation, and more organized workflows.

I've also learned to communicate openly with colleagues about the type of predictable and structured information I need for successful collaboration. I've shared with my managers as well that I work best in teams where project management is handled by a dedicated colleague, while I can focus on the engineering tasks. At my current workplace, I feel both lucky and relieved that my manager accepted this request."

Tamás, 47, Mechanical Engineer

3.5. Workplace design

Workplace design goes beyond aesthetics - it directly shapes how employees experience their environment and how they perform. By adapting office spaces to accommodate specific sensory and cognitive needs, organizations can create settings where neurodivergent colleagues feel more comfortable, focused, and empowered to succeed.

- A flexible home office policy can be especially helpful for neurodivergent employees (and for everyone else as well), giving them **more control over their environment to manage sensory load and maintain focus**.
- Sensory distractions can make it hard for neurodivergent people to focus at work. To address this, the BBC developed an **open-source “Neurodiversity and Buildings” checklist**³², showing how factors like lighting, acoustics, or layout affect people. Just as buildings are audited for physical accessibility, considering sensory accessibility helps create workplaces that meet everyone’s needs.
- Employees who are **hypersensitive** to sounds, lighting, odors, or temperature may benefit from tools like fans, white noise machines, noise-canceling headphones, or seating located away from kitchens and microwaves.
- At **MSCI**, the **Global Office Design Standards** include an **All Abilities Scorecard** that addresses psychological, cognitive, neurological, and auditory needs - for example, sensitivity to color and texture or enhanced acoustic attenuation.

They also offer **Wellness Rooms** – neutral, calming spaces that provide refuge and respite during a busy workday - along with **opportunities for movement and sensory regulation**, such as ergonomic chairs, height-adjustable desks and tables or walking treadmills.

³² [Neurodiversity and Buildings Checklist - BBC](#)

Dedicated focus areas for quiet work, a variety of work settings with **diverse furniture and equipment to support different thinking and collaboration styles**, adjustable lighting systems tailored to individual needs, and clear wayfinding with visual signage (e.g., labeled cupboards and drawers) all further contribute to a truly inclusive working space.

- The **Job Accommodation Network** is a leading resource offering free expert guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment. Their **Neurodiversity resource**³³ provides practical support for employers, from key accommodation strategies to addressing common workplace challenges.

³³ [Job Accommodation Network](#)

3.6. Communicating with clarity

Communication styles vary widely, and even subtle differences can lead to disengagement or misinterpretation. By paying attention to clarity and adapting practices thoughtfully, employers can create an environment where neurodivergent employees are fully connected to the flow of work and collaboration.

- Typical accommodations for neurodiverse employees include communication adjustments, like **giving clear instructions** with deadlines and priorities - think 'what by when.' For example, instead of saying, "Finish the report soon," say, "Complete the financial report and send it to me by 3pm on Friday."
- Be mindful of sensory load, as some neurodivergent colleagues may need more time to process information, **especially verbally**. Keep a steady pace, allow extra time for questions or decisions, and provide information in writing whenever possible.
- Use **clear, structured written communication**. Keep emails concise with clear subjects, short paragraphs, bullet points, and simple instructions. Support readability with plain fonts, larger text, neutral backgrounds, and avoid bright colors, clutter, or auto-play content.
- Virtual collaboration can create a predictable environment that reduces anxiety and sensory overload, but virtual meetings may still overwhelm some neurodivergent colleagues. Being on camera can be distracting and increase anxiety due to heightened self-awareness, so always **provide a camera-off option and don't interpret it as disengagement**.
- For many neurodiverse people, **fidgiting or doodling is a strategy to maintain focus** and should be recognized as such, not mistaken for inattention.

- The growing range of adaptive tools makes it easier for neurodiverse employees to work effectively. Applications like **Google voice-to-text and text-to-speech software** are especially useful - for example, by helping people with dyslexia better understand and proofread written work.
- Be aware of the hidden curriculum - the **unwritten rules and workplace norms** many take for granted. For autistic employees, these may not be obvious and should be made explicit, such as seating arrangements in a meeting (e.g., higher-level colleagues typically sit closer to senior leaders).
- Expecting neurodivergent colleagues to pick up on innuendos, unspoken dynamics, or hidden meanings can create confusion, anxiety, and alienation. Clear, explicit communication helps them **navigate the complexities of workplace dynamics**.
- Excessive honesty, sometimes seen in autistic employees, may initially cause friction. With **awareness training** and clear communication guidelines, this directness can be reframed as a strength.

"In my team, I once had a process engineer whose talent was undeniable. She was sharp and argued her points in a very smart and logical way. At the same time, her communication style often led to friction - her directness could come across as confrontational, and her high need for structure made her seem inflexible. I had several conversations with her about adjusting her communication style and being more adaptable. She genuinely tried, but it was clear how difficult this was for her.

In a one-on-one conversation, she once shared that her psychologist suspected she was on the autism spectrum. That changed how I saw the whole situation. Instead of expecting her to bend herself into something she was not, I began to adjust my own leadership approach. I stopped insisting on small talk and "politeness rituals," and I made an effort to build in more structure and clear rules in how we organized work. The shift gave her visible relief and allowed her to focus on her strengths without the pressure of masking."

Anna, 39, Project Lead

3.7. Fostering growth through feedback

Traditional performance reviews often rely on broad generalizations and one-size-fits-all metrics, which can overlook the unique profiles of neurodivergent employees. Providing clear, specific feedback and tailoring evaluations to spiky profiles also ensures fairness.

- **Perfectionist tendencies** in some neurodiverse employees can cause uncertainty around task priorities or escalation. Clear guidelines, regular feedback, and supportive coaching help turn these traits into high-quality work without inefficiencies.
- When giving feedback to neurodivergent employees, **focus on specifics**. Replace vague praise like “you did well” with concrete contributions. For growth areas, be clear about what to improve and why, so employees leave with a solid understanding of expectations and next steps.
- Recognizing **spiky profiles** (an uneven distribution of skills, with exceptional strengths in some areas and challenges in others) helps organizations move beyond one-dimensional performance evaluations and instead **create roles, support systems, and career paths that leverage employees’ unique strengths while accommodating challenges**.

3.8. Promoting psychological safety

Psychological safety, as defined by Amy Edmondson, is the freedom to show up authentically at work, speak up, make mistakes, ask questions, and voice concerns without fear of judgment or punishment³⁴. For neurodivergent employees, this is especially critical, as many feel compelled to **mask their natural ways of thinking or behaving to fit conventional workplace norms**³⁵. By masking, they carry extra tension and anxiety, which makes it harder for them to bring their full strengths to the workplace.

- **Senior leadership plays a crucial role in shaping culture** by making inclusion a core part of the company’s identity. Leaders at all levels must model inclusive behavior, remain mindful of their words and actions, and recognize the influence they hold as role models.
- A number of business leaders have spoken openly about being neurodivergent, though much more could be done. John Chambers, former CEO of Cisco, points out that “25% of CEOs are dyslexic, but many choose not to share it.” When **leaders self-identify as neurodivergent**, it helps create an environment where others across the workforce also feel safe to do the same³⁶.
- **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** are voluntary, employee-led groups that can be organized either bottom-up or top-down, helping to build a safer, more inclusive work environment while positively impacting a wide range of HR metrics³⁷.

³⁴ [Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams, Administrative Science Quarterly, 1999](#)

³⁵ [Masking, National Autistic Society](#)

³⁶ [Neurodiversity in the workplace, Deloitte Insights, January, 2022](#)

³⁷ [ERG Toolkit, WeAreOpen](#)

- **Training sessions** prepare employees for working with neurodiverse colleagues, while managers receive deeper guidance on needed accommodations and available support. A UK study found that around 60% of autistic, 55% of dyspraxic, and 53% of dyscalculic colleagues feel **excluded by workplace behaviours** - yet only 29% of neurotypical peers recognize this, suggesting that **unconscious bias and subtle microaggressions often go unnoticed**. Such gaps often stem from lack of awareness, which is why education plays a crucial role in reducing them.

At **MSCI**, **knowledge-sharing takes multiple forms**: global webinars on wellbeing topics delivered by external specialists, training on neurodivergence available both in-person and online for employees and managers, and thematic newsletters and awareness campaigns such as Mental Health Awareness Month and Autism Awareness Month.

- Accommodations for sensory sensitivities, such as providing a quieter workspace, **may be seen as unfair by others**. Address this proactively through clear communication about why such adjustments are made, helping to set expectations and build a culture of empathy and understanding.
- Be aware of **specific mental health needs**. While neurodiverse employees bring unique strengths, they also face higher rates of mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, particularly among those with autism spectrum disorder or ADHD³⁸.

Offering **Employee Assistance Programs** (EAP) that include mental health specialists knowledgeable about neurodiversity can provide effective support for these colleagues. In addition to its EAP supporting mental health, MSCI also provides private health clinic access in Hungary, **including psychiatric consultation**.

³⁸ [Heightened Anxiety and Depression Among Autistic Adolescents with ADHD: Findings From the National Survey of Children's Health 2016-2019 - PMC, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, November 2022](#)

- Partner with **neurodivergent experts**. Their lived experience, combined with professional insight, ensures programs and trainings are genuinely designed to meet the needs of neurodivergent talent.

MSCI promotes **cross-industry collaboration** and best practice sharing (e.g., with BlackRock and EY), builds **partnerships with non-profit organizations such as the Autistic Art Foundation³⁹**, supports regional and global conference participation (e.g., Neurodiversity Conference in Mexico), and hosts global guest speakers on neurodivergence as well as book reading events highlighting neurodiversity.

³⁹ <https://autisticart.hu/>



Zsófi Metykó speaking at the All Abilities Event, MSCI Budapest Office



Exhibition in collaboration with the Autistic Art Foundation, hosted at the Rainbow Room, MSCI Budapest Office

Summary

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Workplace accommodations matter, but they alone do not create a truly neuroinclusive culture. True inclusion happens when organizations move beyond compliance and embrace genuine curiosity about different ways of thinking.

Human diversity naturally extends to how we think and process the world. Just as left-handedness moved from stigma to normalization⁴⁰, neurodiversity too can be recognized as a natural and valuable variation. This cultural shift is at the heart of neuroinclusive workplaces: evolving from seeing differences as deficits to embracing them as sources of strength, innovation, and belonging.

⁴⁰ [The genetic relationship between handedness and neurodevelopmental disorders, Trends in Molecular Medicine, 2014](#)

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WeAreOpen is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting companies in building open and psychologically safe workplace cultures. Partnering with us gives your organization access to industry-leading solutions that drive real, measurable results. As a partner, you'll position your company as a leader in inclusive practices, enhancing talent retention, innovation, and business success. Companies with advanced inclusion strategies see up to a 30% increase in innovation and performance⁴¹.

WeAreOpen Membership

- Brand visibility: Participate in our annual Open Campaign on TV, in print and online, promoting workplace inclusivity across Hungary. Feature your logo on our website and white papers, boosting reputation and employer branding.
- Exclusive events: Network with leaders at our invitation-only events and white paper kick-offs, where the latest trends are shared.
- Expert guidance: Leverage our best practices and strategies tailored to your needs.

WeAreOpen Services

- Inclusivity Audit: Evaluate your current inclusivity efforts with our comprehensive audit and receive an actionable roadmap.
- Employee Survey: Measure employee perceptions of diversity and adjust strategies based on data-driven insights.
- Employee Resource Group facilitation: Support your inclusivity champions with expert facilitation to boost engagement, enhance employee satisfaction, and ultimately improve business performance.
- Workshops & Talks: Strengthen your company culture through expert-led workshops and talks, including our highly sought-after Unconscious Bias Workshop.

Let's build an inclusive future together.
Contact us and learn more at www.weareopen.hu

⁴¹ [Insights | Russell Reynolds Associates](#)

