



Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

BE4ALL Toolbox Talk

Neurodiversity in the Workplace

The sheet metal industry is built on a wide range of skills, perspectives, and experiences. One important part of that diversity is neurodiversity, the natural variation in how people think, process information, learn, and communicate.

Neurodivergent individuals may include those with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, or other cognitive differences. These are not weaknesses; they are different ways of thinking that can bring valuable strengths to the jobsite.

Creating an environment where neurodivergent workers feel supported helps everyone perform at their best and contributes to safer, more productive jobsites.

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity recognizes that there is no single "right" way for a brain to work. People process information, solve problems, and communicate in different ways. Some neurodivergent individuals may:

- Excel at pattern recognition, detail-oriented work, or problem solving
- Prefer clear instructions and structured communication
- Experience challenges with distractions, fast-paced verbal communication, or sudden changes

Just like with invisible disabilities, these differences may not be immediately visible, but they can significantly affect how someone experiences the workplace.

Common Challenges

Some neurodivergent workers may face:

- Difficulty with unclear or verbal-only instructions
- Sensitivity to distractions, or crowded environments
- Trouble adapting quickly to last-minute changes
- Hesitation to ask questions or speak up
- Misunderstandings in communication styles

These challenges do not reflect a lack of skill or commitment; they reflect differences in how people process their environment.

Why This Matters on the Jobsite:

A supportive and inclusive environment improves:

- **Safety:** Clear communication and understanding reduce mistakes
- **Productivity:** Workers perform better when set up for success
- **Teamwork:** Respect and understanding build stronger crews
- **Retention:** People stay where they feel valued and supported

Like stress or burnout, challenges in the workplace often aren't about effort, they're about conditions and support.



What Does Support Look Like?

A supportive environment doesn't lower expectations, it ensures everyone has a fair opportunity to meet them.

For Crews and Coworkers

- Be clear and direct when giving instructions
- Check for understanding, don't assume
- Be patient with different communication styles
- Avoid jokes, comments, or labels that could isolate someone
- Focus on strengths and contributions

For Leaders

- Provide clear expectations, steps, and priorities
- Minimize unnecessary distractions when possible
- Give feedback in a constructive and respectful way
- Allow for questions and clarification without judgment
- Be consistent with routines and communication

For Everyone

- Practice active listening
- Offer support if someone is struggling
- Speak up respectfully if something isn't working
- Create a culture where it's safe to ask for help

Your Role on the Jobsite

Every member of the crew contributes to the job site culture. A respectful and inclusive environment is built through daily actions, not policies alone. When we take the time to understand and support each other:

- Communication improves
- Jobsite climate improves
- Mistakes are reduced
- People feel more confident and engaged
- Teams perform at a higher level

Just like safety, inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

Key Takeaway

There is no one "right" way to think, learn, or communicate. When we recognize and respect different ways of working, we build stronger crews, safer jobsites, and a more successful industry.

Supporting neurodiversity isn't about changing the work, it's about making sure every worker has the opportunity to succeed.

Staff Conversation & Notes:

What helps you understand instructions best on the jobsite?

How can we improve communication, so everyone is set up for success?

What are some strengths you've seen in coworkers who think or work differently?

What is one action you can take to make the jobsite more inclusive?





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BE4ALL Toolbox Talk Participation Sheet

Employer: _____

Location: _____

Presenter: _____

Date Presented: _____

Participant	Initials

Participant	Initials



Use the link below or scan the QR code to fill out a survey to win a BE4ALL Tool Pouch!

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