FOSTER AN EXTRAORDINARY WORKPLACE

NEURODIVERSITY
3-2-1 DISCUSSION GUIDE
Jen C. Brandt, MSW, LISW-S, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)

3 TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

Review these messages together.

Instead of viewing differences as deficits, recognize that neurodivergent individuals contribute unique talents and skills to the team.

Support neurodivergent team members by asking them what they want and need.

Regularly seek input, feedback, and perspectives from employees who are neurodivergent.

2 QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Question for **team discussion**
Share your thoughts with your team.

How can we create a more inclusive work environment for neurodivergent individuals?

Question for **self-reflection**
No need to share your answer or thoughts with anyone.

What are my preconceptions about neurodivergent individuals, and how can I challenge them?

1 ACTION TO TAKE AS A TEAM AND ONE TO TAKE AS A JOURNEYIST

Make a commitment together as a team to implement at least one of the suggestions below. This will be your team behavior change.

- [ ] Get a helpful checklist to foster neurodiversity inclusion in your workplace from the Employer Assistance and Resource Network: https://askearn.org/publication/neurodiversity-inclusion-checklist

- [ ] Learn seven easy ways to make your job descriptions more accessible for neurodivergent job seekers: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/global-and-cultural-effectiveness/pages/how-to-optimize-job-descriptions-for-neurodivergent-job-seekers.aspx

- [ ] Designate certain areas of the workplace as sensory-friendly—where lighting, sound, equipment settings, and privacy levels can be adjusted to meet individual needs. Check out the attached sheet about universal design for ways to implement changes that benefit everyone.

Make a commitment as an individual to follow through on at least one of these suggestions (this can be private).

- [ ] When you meet new people who may behave in a manner you don't expect, lead with curiosity instead of judgment. Judgment says, "My assumptions are true and are all the information I need." Curiosity says, "Let's ask questions, consider alternative viewpoints, and gather additional information."

- [ ] Read an article on neurodiversity and reflect on how individuals experience and interact with the world around them: https://hbr.org/2021/12/autism-doesnt-hold-people-back-at-work-discrimination-does

We hope that after the meeting, you will be inspired to explore neurodiversity in greater depth, either as a team or individually. We invite everyone to check out Dr. Brandt's recommended resources in the Topic Overview.

AVMA

VMAE VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES

Universal Design Strategies for the Workplace

Do you want to begin creating, promoting, and maintaining a neurodiverse-friendly workplace? Use this handout as a starting point! For an in-depth exploration of universal design strategies for your workplace, please see the Neurodiversity in the Workplace toolkit from the Employer Assistance and Resource Network: *https://askearn.org/page/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace.*

Preparing the workplace

- Regularly seek input, feedback, and perspectives from neurodivergent employees
- Design and implement training on neurodiversity
- Include neurodivergent individuals in the applicant review and interview process
- Ensure job descriptions and job performance standards are clear and explicit
- Identify local/regional sources who can assist with identifying a diverse range of applicants
- Train recruiters/hiring managers on inclusive interviewing practices
- Identify internal and community resources that can provide guidance and support
- Ensure onboarding/workplace orientation processes are inclusive of all employees

When we work

- Offer telework and work from home options
- Consider flexible working hours
- Support project-related work (emphasis is on task completion rather than the hours in which the work is performed)
- Offer compressed work weeks (e.g., four days of working 10 hours)

How we work

- Anticipate sensory sensitivities
- Provide adjustable chairs and workstations; walking meetings
- Implement flexible dress codes
- Conduct meetings with cameras on or off
- Be flexible in the order in which work is performed
- Offer speech-to-text software
- Provide the option of having a desktop or laptop computer
- Ensure there are volume controls on telecommunication equipment
- Offer various communication formats, e.g., large print, electronic, pictures, captions, audible formats
- Provide tools with textured grips and equipment that can be positioned for both right and left-handed users
- Recognize that there may be multiple ways to complete a task successfully

Where we work

- Have the ability to control lighting, e.g., full-spectrum or natural lighting, blinds, or curtains to minimize glare, low reflective surfaces; avoid fluorescent lighting
- Provide adequate space for maneuvering
- Set up workplaces where space and noise can be controlled and privacy respected, e.g., noise-canceling headphones, various room configurations for different kinds of work—individual, small, and large group

What information is needed, and how it is disseminated

- Distribute meeting agendas in advance and provide meeting notes afterward
- Grant employees enough time to read information, gather thoughts, and develop ideas independently
- Offer a variety of training options, e.g., group workshops, one-on-one instruction, and online courses
- Deliver material in a variety of formats, e.g., written summaries with action points, audio recordings, videos with captions
- Consistently provide information in a clear, descriptive manner
- Use the roundtable approach to offer equal opportunities to contribute ideas during meetings

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