

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

What Is Neurodiversity?

People are different, and at work we all have to make allowances for our co-workers, just as our co-workers do for us. However, for the one in seven people who are classed as neurodivergent, it's not just about making allowances; it's about understanding a person's differences and making sure that they are able and encouraged to use their skills and attributes for the benefit of their team and the larger organization.

Neurological differences

Someone may be considered **neurodivergent** if their brain learns, functions, or processes information differently than the majority of people. (Those whose brain functions as society expects are described as **neurotypical**.) Neurodiversity encompasses a range of conditions such as autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, and Tourette's syndrome.

However, not every person who has a neurodivergent condition, such as autism, will present in the same way. This is because it's possible that individuals may experience different characteristics or mannerisms, which is sometimes referred to as being along a "spectrum." It is also possible to have more than one neurodivergent condition. It's important to remember this to avoid stereotypes both in and out of the workplace.

Supporting neurodivergence

There are clear benefits to having members of staff who are neurodivergent that go well beyond any legal obligations for fair treatment in the workplace. Those who are neurodivergent may be particularly strong in:

- creativity and innovation
- lateral thinking; imaginative, creative ways to solve problems
- strategic analysis
- bringing a "different perspective" to projects
- development of highly-specialized skills
- high levels of consistency in repetitive tasks

Promoting and supporting neurodiversity within your workplace can also help enhance the performance of existing team members while helping your organization recruit a higher calibre of new employee.

There are many ways that neurotypical managers and employees can support their neurodivergent colleagues. You can read more about this in the article "**Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace**."

If you are a neurodivergent person, you may find it helpful to read the article "**Working When Neurodivergent**" for help understanding how best to communicate your needs.

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