

connections in mind

The Neuroinclusive Workplace Playbook

Practical Steps to Remove the Need for Disclosure

A truly neurodiverse workplace doesn't wait for someone to raise their hand and say, "I need adjustments." Instead, it's designed so everyone has what they need to work well, from day one.

When we build **psychological safety** and design processes around **human variability**, we reduce the pressure on employees to disclose differences — protecting privacy while boosting performance.

Top 5 Environmental & Cultural Changes

1. **Universal design for communication** – Use multiple formats (written, verbal, visual) for all important information.
Why it matters: Reduces cognitive load and prevents missed details that can lead to unnecessary rework and stress.

2. **Predictable workflows** – Clear timelines, visible priorities, and consistent processes reduce uncertainty.
Why it matters: Helps people pace themselves, prevents last-minute scrambles, and avoids the burnout of working in constant crisis mode.

3. **Sensory-friendly spaces** – Quiet zones, adjustable lighting, and noise-reducing options.
Why it matters: Reduces sensory fatigue so people can sustain focus and energy throughout the day instead of crashing mid-week.

4. **Meeting inclusivity** – Share agendas in advance, allow time for processing, and normalise AI note-taking.
Why it matters: Prevents people from over-preparing out of anxiety and protects against the mental exhaustion of constant "on-the-spot" demands and cognitive demand of taking notes and focussing on meeting content.

5. **Outcome-focused with clarity** – Set clear, realistic expectations for both the end goal and the amount of time/effort expected. Provide regular check-ins to prevent overworking or getting stuck in perfectionism. Support the process as much as the outcome.
Why it matters: Without boundaries, "flexibility" can push high-commitment employees into unsustainable overdrive. Clarity about what is good enough protects wellbeing while maintaining quality.



Inclusive Language Guide

To normalise neurodiversity without labels or assumptions

Say: “Different people work in different ways.”

Instead of: “Some people have special needs.”

Say: “Let’s adjust the process to suit how your brain works.”

Instead of: “We can make exceptions for you.”

Say: “Everyone benefits from…”

Instead of: “This is just for people with…”

Say: “What would make this task work best for you?”

Instead of: “Do you have any problems with this?”

Say: “Let’s make sure the environment works for everyone.”

Instead of: “We can move you somewhere quieter if it’s a problem.”



Quick Wins for Leaders

Simple Actions That Make Inclusion Real

- **Start every 1:1 with open-ended questions** ("What would help you work at your best this week?").
- **Give advance notice of changes** - whether it's a schedule shift or a new project, flagging changes early reduces anxiety and supports flexibility.
- **Model vulnerability** — share your own productivity quirks or learning preferences.
- **Protect focus time** by setting meeting-free blocks.
- **Recognise effort, not just outcomes** to support sustainable performance.
- **Agree realistic boundaries for time and quality** – define together what "good enough" looks like, set limits on time investment, and schedule check-ins to prevent perfectionism and burnout.
- **Build in processing time** - after giving instructions or asking questions, allow silent thinking time before expecting responses.
- **Normalise breaks** - Encourage short pauses between tasks or transitions to help with regulation and sustained focus.
- **Check understanding collaboratively.** Ask "What's your next step?" instead of "Do you understand?" to surface gaps without judgment.
- **Offer choices** in how tasks are approached and delivered.



Everyday Adjustments Checklist

- [x] Flexible start/finish times **within agreed boundaries** to protect work–life balance
- [ ] **Option** to work in quiet spaces or remotely
- [ ] Written follow-ups **after** verbal briefings
- [ ] Clear, visual project **timelines with agreed "good enough"** criteria
- [ ] **Chunking** large tasks into smaller milestones to avoid overwhelm
- [ ] **Accessible** templates for common processes
- [ ] Regular check-ins **to support progress without micromanaging**
- [ ] Time limits and **"stop points"** built into complex tasks to prevent perfectionism and burnout
- [ ] **Model mistakes and recovery strategies** – show that errors are part of learning, how to handle them, and encourage a culture of reflection rather than blame

If it helps ***one*** *person*, it usually helps *everyone*.



Case Study

Removing Barriers
Without Waiting for Disclosure

High Staff Turnover at Creative Agency

A creative agency noticed high staff turnover in one of its busiest project teams.

While no one had formally disclosed a neurodivergent diagnosis, several employees quietly shared with trusted colleagues that they had traits of dyslexia, ADHD, and autism. They were reluctant to bring this up with management, fearing it might affect career progression.

Challenges:

- Written briefs were lengthy and jargon-heavy, making them hard to process quickly.
- Deadlines were communicated verbally in meetings but often changed without written confirmation.
- Open-plan office noise made it hard to focus, especially during high-pressure project phases.

Perfectionism and overworking were common — employees stayed late to "catch up" or to endlessly refine work to avoid criticism.



Safer, Smarter Spaces Without Disclosure Needed

Interventions

The leadership team decided to redesign workflows and culture using a **no-disclosure-needed** approach:

- All project briefs restructured into plain-language summaries with bullet points, deadlines, and clear “good enough” criteria.
- Deadlines documented in a shared project timeline visible to everyone.
- Quiet zones created with noise-reducing furniture and flexible work-from-home options.
- Managers trained to model mistakes and talk openly about learning from them.
- Regular check-ins focused on removing barriers, not just tracking progress.
- Time caps for certain deliverables agreed upfront to reduce perfectionism and prevent burnout.

Results

- On-time project delivery rose from **68% to 94%.**
- Staff satisfaction surveys showed a **38% increase** in “I feel supported to do my best work.”
- Average overtime hours dropped by **42%.**

What we heard

I never felt I had to ‘explain’ why I struggled with certain parts of the job — the changes just made it easier for everyone. I‘m starting to leave work now with energy to enjoy my evening.