

Supporting Neurodivergence and Autism in the Workplace

Fostering Sensitivity, Inclusion, and Lived Experience in Professional Environments

Overview:

This professional development session offers a comprehensive and neuro-affirming introduction to supporting Autistic and otherwise neurodivergent individuals in the workplace. It is designed as a sensitivity and inclusion training grounded in the principle of 'Nothing About Us Without Us,' with a strong emphasis on the lived experiences of neurodivergent professionals.

Participants will learn how to create more inclusive, respectful, and accommodating environments that honour diverse communication, sensory, and social needs. The training explores how systemic barriers—such as ableism, misunderstanding, and inflexible workplace norms—can be dismantled through thoughtful policy, awareness, and intentional design.

Key Learning Themes:

Understanding Neurodivergence

Definitions, identities, and common workplace challenges (e.g., communication styles, sensory needs, executive functioning). Source: Armstrong, 2012; Walker, 2021.

Challenging Stereotypes

Dispelling harmful myths such as “autism only affects children” or “non-speaking equals non-understanding.” Source: Autism Education Trust, 2021.

Workplace Sensitivity

Awareness-building around masking, stimming, and the emotional toll of trying to “fit in.” Source: Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2019.

Human Rights and Equity

Overview of employer obligations under the BC Human Rights Code, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 15), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Accommodations & Accessibility

Practical strategies for inclusive hiring, onboarding, and retention—including sensory-friendly workspaces, communication supports, and clear policies. Source: BC Public Service, 2023.

The Power of Lived Experience

Testimonies and insights from neurodivergent professionals challenge deficit narratives and reinforce identity-affirming practices. Source: Pellicano et al., 2014; Gillespie-Lynch et al., 2017.

Leadership & Culture

The role of management in setting inclusive norms, offering neurodiversity training, and fostering cultures of belonging. Source: Deloitte, 2022.

Why It Matters:

Autistic adults in Canada face some of the lowest employment rates among all disability groups.

- Only 14.3% of Autistic adults are employed, compared to 92.7% of the general population
Source: Autism Speaks Canada, 2022
- 77% of Autistic adults are unemployed, despite a strong desire to work.

This training aims to shift this reality by equipping employers, co-workers, and leadership teams with actionable tools to meaningfully include and support neurodivergent employees—building workplaces where all minds can thrive.