

# heartbeat

## April 2021 Newsletter



## Embracing Diversity

Diversity makes our schools, communities, workplaces — and our world — more rich and vibrant. Check out our many resources on how to build culturally diverse workplaces, teach tolerance to children, and increase diversity awareness in all areas of your life.

## 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.

# Thriving in an Inclusive Workplace



## Diversity at work empowers everyone to perform at their best!

Differences of gender, sexuality, race, age, social background, and physical and mental ability are championed by all in an inclusive workplace, and are proven to improve the performance of teams and, ultimately, business results.



**Be open-minded and flexible**, paying attention to and respecting people's values and beliefs.

**Avoid stereotypes** and be respectful in all of your communications with co-workers.



Keep in mind that people's talents, skills, and personalities **are unique**.

**Recognize** that each individual's experience, background, and perspective **is a resource**.

**Everyone** has the right to be treated with **respect**.

It's up to everyone to help create a safe and inclusive workplace, to help foster an environment where everyone feels safe to come to work and where employees respect one another's differences, and to bring their best to work.



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## Effective Communication in a Culturally Diverse Workplace

At its core, cultural diversity is about accepting and respecting people's differences and understanding that everyone is unique. The same can be said for communication. To do it well, you need to understand your audience and craft your message in a way that will make the most sense to them.

When that audience is culturally diverse, the challenge is to understand their differences and be sensitive to how your message will be received.

Four ways to communicate better in today's diverse workplace

1. Use clear language. When you are communicating with a culturally diverse audience, keep your language clear, concise, and straightforward. Avoid jargon, slang terms, euphemisms, and colloquial expressions. For example, you could say: "That sales report was fantastic!" Instead of: "That sales report was a slam dunk!"
2. Understand differences in body language. You may be surprised to learn that different cultures have very different practices when it comes to non-verbal forms of communication. For instance, in most countries, people do not greet each other by shaking hands, and some cultures find it disrespectful to engage in direct eye contact. Additionally, some cultures have different comfort levels when it comes to personal space and touching. When in doubt, leave at least one arm's length between you and your colleagues, and keep your hands to yourself.
3. Practise reflective listening or paraphrasing. When in conversation, paraphrasing or repeating the message back is a good habit to get into. This will help clarify meaning and eliminate issues that may surface as a result of a misunderstanding. The same is true of written communication—paraphrase to clarify any doubts you may have.
4. Be open and inclusive of other cultures. Although it is natural to gravitate towards others who share our preferences and traditions, getting to know your fellow co-workers from culturally diverse backgrounds can help build relations, and open up your world to new experiences. Bear in mind that they may be new to this country and have challenges of their own, as they try to navigate a different language, customs and way of life.

Communicating effectively in a culturally diverse environment requires tact and sensitivity—valuable life skills to have. Find out more about communicating effectively in a diverse workplace through your assistance program.