

Keeping Neurodiversity in Mind



Understanding neurodiversity and neurodivergence

Neurodiversity is a term used to describe differences in how people's brains work. While no two brains are developed the same, "neurotypical" brains function and process in ways considered typical. "Neurodivergent" brain types process information in a way that is not typical of most individuals, and their strengths and weaknesses differ from those of a neurotypical brain.

Common types of neurodivergence include autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and sensory processing disorder.

Neurodivergence at Work

There is ample research about the advantages of neurodivergent brains in the workplace. For example:

- ❑ People with **Asperger's** gravitate toward thorough and mindful work, exhibiting strong routines, steady focus and repetitive behaviors.
- ❑ People with **dyslexia** tend to exhibit out-of-the-box thinking. They're visual processors and can easily find connections, making them excellent at discovering patterns and trends in data.
- ❑ People with **ADHD** are highly creative and work well under pressure. They are generally more proactive and adjust to change more easily than their neurotypical colleagues.

Why Inclusivity Matters in Planning

Inclusive meetings and events help ensure that all participants, regardless of background, perspective, strengths or weaknesses feel welcomed and valued. Events that prioritize the accommodation and engagement of diverse individuals also usually benefit from increased attendee productivity, heightened creativity and enhanced problem-solving.

Did You Know?

- 15-20% of the world's population is neurodivergent.
- Many celebrities are neurodiverse including Jennifer Aniston (dyslexia), David Beckham (OCD), Simone Biles (ADHD), Elon Musk (autism) and Bill Gates (ADHD and dyslexia).

10 Tips for Planning Inclusive Meetings & Events for All Brain Types

Hilton is continually evaluating, refining and expanding our offerings to ensure the best possible stay experience for guests with neurodivergence and other differing abilities. We are proud to partner with planners to help create meeting environments inclusive of, and accessible to, all individuals regardless of nuance or need.

Use this checklist as inspiration to make your meetings and events more thoughtful and inclusive of neurodivergent individuals:

① **Encourage guests to take advantage of Confirmed Connecting Rooms.** For guests traveling with a personal care attendant, Confirmed Connecting Rooms help ensure privacy and proximity.

② **Consider the needs of sensory-seeking or avoidant individuals.** Give attendees the opportunity to request sensory accommodations such as noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, printed agendas/venue maps and dietary requirements.

PRO TIP: Provide branded fidget kits to aid in anxiety and stress relief while boosting inclusivity and brand awareness.

③ **Offer a thoughtful space that provides an escape from crowds and excess noise.** Encourage contactless check-in/check-out. Hilton's award-winning Digital Key allows guests to enjoy a "straight-to-room" experience to reduce wait times and minimize crowd and social anxiety.

PRO TIP: Offer seating for guests who "need a minute." Identify spaces such as a quiet room with low lighting, removed from high-traffic areas.

④ **Curate menus to accommodate any dietary or sensory requirements.** Share menus with attendees in advance, enabling guests to make any necessary adjustments to suit individual tastes.

⑤ **Inform guests of any high-impact moments.** Strobe lights, fog machines, air horns, DJs and celebrity guests can overwhelm sensory-sensitive individuals.

- Give participants advanced notice and note these moments in agendas and schedules.

PRO TIP: Post signage showcasing quiet rooms, sensory overload relief areas and other onsite accommodations.

⑥ **Help guests know what to expect by outlining event expectations clearly and consistently.** Provide a comprehensive event itinerary that clearly outlines each day's schedule, including any/all planned breaks and social activities.

⑦ **Offer navigational support upon arrival.** For guests who struggle with wayfinding, consider offering a guided tour at the event's outset or using a third-party wayfinding app to help ensure attendees can easily navigate the event space.

⑧ **Hybrid event streaming.** Our on-property meeting spaces are equipped to stream any event—complete with closed captioning, audiovisual recording and written transcript.

⑨ **Provide presentations that accommodate a wide range of needs.** Many individuals may not effectively capture all content from spoken presentations.

- Consider auto-enabling video captioning for all presenters to aid visual learners.
- Whenever possible, send the presentation deck in advance so attendees can digest the information more thoughtfully before it is presented.

PRO TIP: Avoid bold, bright colors when possible. Studies show that high-intensity hues, such as bright red, bright yellow and neon shades, can more easily overwhelm individuals and trigger sensory concerns. Encourage presenters to use less-stimulating colors like blues, greens, pinks, browns and pastels to create a more neuroinclusive space.

⑩ **Brief event staff of non-apparent disabilities.** To help ensure the best possible experience for your event participants and staff, consider hosting a short briefing with the event team prior to your guests' arrival to review all sensory accommodations.

PRO TIP: You can learn more about non-apparent disabilities and access helpful training materials and other resources through the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower project.