

Neurodiversity in Community, Work, and Leadership:
A Practical Guide for Neurodivergent Adults, Employees, and Supervisors

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Author Note

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Abstract

This guide synthesizes research on neurodevelopmental difference and applies it to three domains in which neurodivergent adults most often seek support: social connection and community, workplace effectiveness as an employee or team member, and the demands of managing, supervising, or administering the work of others. Rather than treating neurodivergent traits as deficits requiring correction, the guide adopts the neurodiversity paradigm, which frames these traits as natural variation whose functional impact depends heavily on environmental fit (Kapp et al., 2013). Three organizing premises run throughout: that nervous system regulation is the foundation beneath social, occupational, and leadership performance; that communication difficulty between neurodivergent and neurotypical people is mutual rather than one-sided (Milton, 2012); and that many workplace adjustments benefit an entire team rather than one person (Doyle, 2020). The guide concludes with reflection and writing prompts, adult social narratives, structured skill-building activities, and a directory of nationally recognized organizations supporting socialization, employment, and management effectiveness for neurodivergent people.

Keywords: neurodiversity, autism, ADHD, auditory processing, sensory processing, high sensitivity, workplace accommodation, leadership, social connection

Neurodiversity in Community, Work, and Leadership

Neurodivergent adults are frequently told that their difficulties are matters of effort. Pay closer attention. Be more organized. Make more eye contact. Care more about the team. This framing locates the problem inside the person and, in doing so, obscures a more useful question: what is this environment asking of this nervous system, and what does meeting that demand cost?

The neurodiversity paradigm proposes that variation in neurocognitive functioning is a natural and expected feature of human populations rather than a set of defects to be corrected (Kapp et al., 2013). Adopting this frame does not require denying that neurodivergent adults experience real impairment or real distress. It requires recognizing that impairment is produced jointly by the person and the setting. Doyle (2020) described neurominorities as characterized by a "spiky profile," in which areas of substantial strength sit alongside areas of substantial difficulty within the same individual. Performance therefore depends less on overall capability than on whether a given role, relationship, or environment draws primarily on the peaks or primarily on the troughs.

This guide addresses adults living with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism, auditory processing disorder, sensory processing differences, high sensory-processing sensitivity, and specific learning differences, including those whose profiles combine several of these. It is organized around the three domains in which adults most consistently request practical support: being social in community and relationship, functioning effectively as an employee and team member, and managing or supervising the work of others.

Regulation as the Shared Foundation

Social skill, occupational performance, and leadership capacity rest on a common substrate: an autonomic nervous system with sufficient remaining capacity to support flexible thinking. Porges (2011) described how physiological state governs access to social engagement, with defensive states progressively narrowing the behavioral repertoire available to a person. Skills that are genuinely present become inaccessible under sufficient load. They are not absent; they are unavailable.

For neurodivergent adults, load accumulates from sources that are often invisible to observers. Dunn (1997) framed sensory processing as a function of neurological threshold and behavioral response, meaning that identical environments impose markedly different costs on different nervous systems. Aron and Aron (1997) identified sensory-processing sensitivity as a temperament trait characterized by deeper processing of stimuli and earlier onset of overarousal. A conference room that is unremarkable to one employee may, for another, constitute several hours of sustained physiological demand before any work has been attempted.

A second and substantial source of load is camouflaging, also described as masking: the deliberate suppression of natural responses and the performance of more typical ones. Hull et al. (2017) documented a three-stage model in which motivations for camouflaging include connection and belonging, the behavior itself combines masking and compensation, and consequences include exhaustion and threats to self-perception. Cage and Troxell-Whitman (2019) found that camouflaging carried measurable costs, including exhaustion and anxiety, and

that these costs varied with context and motivation. Raymaker et al. (2020) subsequently defined autistic burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic life stress and a mismatch between expectations and abilities in the absence of adequate support, characterized by pervasive exhaustion, loss of skills, and reduced tolerance to stimulus.

The practical implication is consistent across all three domains addressed in this guide. Interventions that target behavior while leaving load unchanged tend to produce short-lived gains at high cost. Interventions that reduce load tend to release capability that was already present.

Domain One: Being Social in Community and Relationship

Reframing the Source of Social Difficulty

Conventional social skills instruction assumes that difficulty in cross-neurotype interaction originates in the neurodivergent participant. Milton (2012) challenged this assumption with the double empathy problem, arguing that breakdowns between autistic and non-autistic people reflect a mutual failure of understanding between people with different experiential frameworks rather than a unilateral deficit. Empirical work has supported the claim. Crompton et al. (2020) found that information transferred through chains of autistic participants was retained as effectively as in chains of non-autistic participants, with degradation appearing specifically in mixed chains. Sasson et al. (2017) found that non-autistic observers formed less favorable impressions of autistic individuals within seconds of exposure, and that these judgments reduced willingness to interact.

This body of evidence supports a reallocation of effort. A neurodivergent adult who has been working to become universally socially fluent may achieve more by identifying the settings and relationships in which mutual understanding is already more attainable, and by developing explicit communication practices that reduce the inferential burden in the remainder.

Selecting Environments Before Rehearsing Skills

Group conversation in acoustically live settings represents one of the most demanding social environments available. For adults with auditory processing disorder, whose difficulty lies in central interpretation of sound rather than in peripheral hearing (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2005), competing speech signals can render conversation largely unintelligible. Struggle in such a setting is diagnostic of the setting, not of social capacity.

Environments that tend to support connection for neurodivergent adults share identifiable features:

- Shared activity rather than open-ended conversation, so that structure is supplied by the task
- Two or three participants rather than large groups, which reduces simultaneous tracking demands
- Defined start and end times, which permit deliberate pacing of energy
- Interest-based groups, in which a shared subject substitutes for social improvisation
- Written and asynchronous channels, treated as legitimate rather than lesser forms of relationship
- Lower sensory intensity, particularly with respect to competing sound and overhead lighting

Explicit Communication Practices

Much social fatigue arises from real-time inference: interpreting tone, tracking implication, estimating intent, and monitoring one's own presentation simultaneously. Practices that convert inference into explicit statement reduce this load for every participant.

- Ask rather than decode. "I cannot tell whether you are upset with me or simply tired. Which is it?" resolves in one exchange what silent analysis may not resolve at all.
- State needs in advance. "I plan to stay about an hour" prevents an abrupt departure from being read as rejection.
- Name processing latency directly. "Give me a moment, I am still catching up on what you said" is a complete and reasonable request, particularly relevant in auditory processing disorder.
- Repair briefly and specifically. An effective repair states what was intended, acknowledges what was received, and identifies what will be done differently. Extended apology tends to shift attention toward the repairing party's distress.

Disclosure in Personal Relationships

Whether to disclose a neurodivergent identity to friends, partners, or community members is a strategic decision rather than a moral obligation. Disclosure decisions are appropriately evaluated case by case against what the discloser wants the other person to understand and to do differently. In many personal contexts, a functional description accomplishes more than a diagnostic label. "I lose access to speech when a room becomes loud" provides an actionable instruction; a clinical term may not.

Partnership and Family Relationships

Sustained close relationships place recurring demand on precisely the systems that neurodivergence taxes: sustained attention, emotional regulation, task initiation, follow-through, and flexibility under stress (Barkley, 2015; Diamond, 2013). Recurring friction points are predictable and therefore addressable in advance. Forgotten commitments are frequently interpreted as indifference; direct speech as coldness; sensory withdrawal as rejection; shutdown as the withdrawal of affection. Naming the mechanism aloud converts a perceived verdict on the relationship into a solvable logistical problem.

Domain Two: Being an Effective Employee and Team Member

The Case for Environmental Adjustment

Austin and Pisano (2017) documented the reform of hiring and management practices at a range of large employers to access neurodivergent talent, reporting gains in productivity, quality, innovation, and engagement. Their analysis located the barrier not in neurodivergent workers but in processes that define talent narrowly, particularly conventional interviews that reward social improvisation over demonstrable capability. Doyle (2020) similarly argued for a shift away from diagnosis-centered framing toward functional, occupational accommodation.

Externalizing Executive Function

Executive functions comprise inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility, which together support planning, sequencing, initiation, and completion (Diamond, 2013).

Difficulty in these domains is among the most common functional consequences of ADHD and is frequently present in autism and specific learning differences as well (Barkley, 2015; Doyle, 2020). The general principle for intervention is to relocate as much of the load as possible from working memory into visible external structure.

- Maintain a single capture point. Every task, request, and idea is recorded in one location immediately. Multiple partial systems function as no system.
- Confirm verbal assignments in writing. A brief written summary of what was understood protects against processing gaps and later disagreement, and is read as conscientiousness rather than as accommodation.
- Make time visible. External timers, calendar blocks, and alarms compensate for impaired time estimation more reliably than intention does (Barkley, 2015).
- Use implementation intentions. Gollwitzer (1999) demonstrated that specifying when, where, and how an action will occur substantially increases follow-through relative to goal intentions alone. "I will draft the report Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at my desk" outperforms "I will get to the report."
- Reduce tasks at the point of resistance. A task that will not start is generally either too large or has an undefined first step.
- Protect one uninterrupted block daily. Neurodivergent attention is frequently exceptional once engaged and costly to re-engage after interruption.

Managing Sensory and Auditory Load

Common workplace adjustments impose minimal cost on employers and substantially reduce load:

- Noise-reducing equipment, or workspace assignment away from high-traffic and high-noise areas
- Agendas circulated in advance and written summaries afterward
- Camera-optional video meetings, which remove the demand of self-monitoring on screen
- Instructions provided in writing in addition to verbally, which is essential in auditory processing disorder
- Adjusted or task-specific lighting in place of overhead fluorescent lighting
- Flexible scheduling aligned to periods of reliable attention
- Recovery intervals following high-demand social or sensory blocks

In the United States, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act provides for reasonable accommodation in employment, and the Job Accommodation Network (n.d.) offers free, confidential technical assistance to both employees and employers on specific accommodation solutions. Many adjustments can be requested informally as working preferences without invoking a formal process. Questions regarding legal rights in a particular situation should be directed to a qualified employment attorney.

Functioning Within a Team

- State working style early. Communicating preferences regarding written follow-up, direct feedback, and advance notice of change is ordinary professional behavior and prevents extended periods of mutual misreading.

- Anticipate the interpretation gap. Given the evidence on rapid negative impression formation (Sasson et al., 2017) and mutual misattribution (Milton, 2012), a brief framing phrase such as "I want to be sure I understand your reasoning" supplies intent that tone alone may not convey.
- Request feedback in a usable format. Specific and concrete feedback is more actionable than cushioned generality, and may be requested explicitly.
- Document contributions. Neurodivergent employees frequently underestimate their own output; a contemporaneous record supports both performance review and accurate self-appraisal.

Recognizing Burnout

Sustained camouflaging is effective in the short term and expensive across years (Cage & Troxell-Whitman, 2019; Hull et al., 2017). Raymaker et al. (2020) characterized the resulting syndrome by pervasive exhaustion, loss of previously reliable skills, and reduced tolerance to stimulus, typically persisting three months or longer. Early indicators include fatigue unrelieved by rest, loss of speech or executive capacity after work hours, increasing irritability, and progressive contraction of life outside employment. This pattern is a signal about cumulative load. It responds to clinical support and tends to worsen when unaddressed.

Domain Three: Managing, Supervising, and Administering

Neurodivergent Leadership

Pattern recognition, systems thinking, subject-matter depth, willingness to name unstated problems, and strong commitments to fairness are leadership assets, and each appears with some frequency in neurodivergent profiles (Austin & Pisano, 2017; Doyle, 2020). What is generally absent is not capability but a model of the supervisory role constructed for the

way the individual actually processes information. Leadership roles as conventionally designed assume continuous social availability, rapid context switching, real-time verbal decision-making, and high administrative follow-through. Each of these can be restructured.

Locating and Redistributing Load

Continuous social demand.

Consecutive interpersonal interaction constitutes genuine sensory and cognitive expense (Aron & Aron, 1997; Dunn, 1997). Clustering meetings and protecting substantive recovery intervals between clusters preserves capacity for the remainder of the day.

Context switching.

Supervision fragments attention by design. Batching similar decisions and establishing a protected block that direct reports understand to be uninterruptible reduces the cumulative cost of re-engagement.

Administrative follow-through.

Documentation, approvals, and tracking are common points of quiet failure for otherwise capable leaders. These functions should be systematized or delegated rather than held in memory.

Emotional labor.

Leaders with high sensory-processing sensitivity may register team distress with unusual intensity (Aron & Aron, 1997). Structural boundaries are not indifference; they are the condition under which such a leader remains available over years rather than months.

Meeting Design

Practices that protect a neurodivergent leader generally improve meeting quality for the entire group:

- Written agenda distributed in advance, eliminating real-time processing under time pressure
- A named decision recorded at the close of each agenda item while participants remain present
- A firm end time, which protects the leader's regulation and the team's schedule alike
- Written channels for input, so that contribution does not depend on speed of verbal response
- Explicit permission for the chair to defer a decision pending consideration

Difficult Conversations and Performance Management

Supervision requires delivering information that recipients do not want. For leaders who experience conflict with physiological intensity, or who anticipate that directness will be received as harshness, this is often the most demanding element of the role. Reliability here is best achieved structurally rather than dispositionally. A repeatable sequence, prepared in advance, removes dependence on the leader's regulatory state at the moment of the conversation:

1. Draft the core message in writing before the meeting, in two or three sentences.
2. Open with the specific observable behavior rather than an inference about character.
3. State the required change concretely, including what success will look like.
4. Invite the other person's account and listen without immediate resolution.
5. Confirm agreements in writing within the same business day.

Disclosure as a Leader

Disclosure carries different implications for supervisors than for individual contributors. Some leaders find that open disclosure alters organizational culture and provides cover for staff who have been concealing their own differences. Others prefer to communicate functional implications without diagnostic language, as in "I process most accurately in writing; send the summary before we meet." Both approaches are defensible, and the appropriate choice depends on organizational context, position security, and the specific change the leader intends to produce.

Supervising Neurodivergent Staff

Approximately one in seven to one in five people may be neurodivergent by broad estimates (Doyle, 2020), which means that most supervisors manage neurodivergent employees whether or not disclosure has occurred. The following practices improve output across mixed teams:

- Provide instructions in writing as well as verbally, and confirm understanding without condescension
- State expectations, priorities, and deadlines explicitly rather than assuming they are evident
- Give advance notice of change wherever operationally possible
- Evaluate work product separately from presentation style, including eye contact, tone, and meeting demeanor
- Offer flexibility in method while maintaining firm standards for outcome
- Treat an accommodation request as information about how to obtain better work rather than as a grievance

Employers seeking structured guidance may consult the Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion and the Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable hosted by Disability:IN, both listed in the resource directory below.

Skills Section: Prompts, Narratives, and Activities

The material in this section is designed for individual reflection, clinical use, supervision, peer support groups, and workplace training. Clinicians and educators may reproduce these items for direct client or student use with attribution to Orchard Human Services, Inc.

Discussion and Writing Prompts

Community and relationship.

6. Describe a social setting in which you felt genuinely at ease. What specific features of that environment made ease possible?
7. Describe a social setting that consistently exhausts you. Separate the sensory demands from the interpersonal demands. Which contributed more?
8. Write about a time you were misunderstood. What did you intend? What appears to have been received? What information would have closed the gap?
9. What have you been told about your social behavior that you now believe was inaccurate?
10. Identify one relationship in which you mask least. What conditions make that possible, and can any of them be reproduced elsewhere?
11. Write a two-sentence functional disclosure you could offer a new friend, using no diagnostic terms.
12. What does rest actually look like for your nervous system, as distinct from what you have been told rest should look like?
13. Describe a friendship you value. What maintains it? What would it take to sustain that pattern with one additional person?

Work and team membership.

14. Track one full workday and record where your energy went, separating task effort from sensory load and social performance. What proportion went to the work itself?
15. Identify the single environmental change that would most reduce your daily cost at work. Estimate what it would cost your employer.
16. Write out how you would request that change, framed in terms of the outcome your employer values.
17. Describe a task you consistently postpone. Is it too large, or is the first step undefined? Rewrite the first step as a single concrete action.
18. Draft a one-page "how I work best" document for a new colleague. What are the three most useful things for them to know?
19. Recall feedback that was difficult to receive. What made it difficult: the content, the format, the setting, or the delivery?
20. List three contributions you made this quarter that no one else on your team could have made.
21. What early indicators tell you that your load is becoming unsustainable? Who would notice before you did?

Management and supervision.

22. Which portion of your supervisory role is most costly to you? Is that cost structural, and can the structure be changed?
23. Review your calendar from last week. Where did continuous social demand accumulate without recovery?
24. Which administrative functions do you rely on memory to complete? Which of these could be systematized or delegated this month?
25. Write the opening two sentences of a difficult conversation you have been postponing. Begin with observable behavior.
26. What have you assumed your team already understands about your priorities? How would you verify that assumption?
27. Describe a staff member whose working style differs sharply from yours. What might they need from you that you have not been providing?
28. If you disclosed your own neurodivergence to your team, what would you want to change as a result? Is there another route to that same change?
29. Which of your meeting practices exist because they serve the work, and which exist because they are conventional?

Social Narratives for Adults

Social narratives are short, structured descriptions of a situation, the perspectives involved, and a set of available responses. The method originates in the social story approach developed by Gray (2015) for use with children and adolescents; the narratives below adapt the structure for adult readers by removing directive language and adding explicit acknowledgment that the surrounding environment, not solely the reader, contributes to the difficulty. Each narrative follows the same four-part structure: what happens, what it means, what I can do, and what remains true about me.

Narrative 1: The Meeting I Could Not Follow

What happens. The meeting has eleven people. Several speak at once. The ventilation system is loud. Twenty minutes in, I realize I have understood almost nothing, and I am now also managing the fear that someone will ask me a question.

What it means. My hearing is intact. The difficulty is that my brain is working to separate speech from competing sound, and that work consumes the capacity I would otherwise use to follow content. This is a known feature of auditory processing difference. It is not inattention, and it is not disinterest.

What I can do. I can ask for the agenda in advance so I know the structure before the sound begins. I can ask for written notes or a recording. I can say, during the meeting, "I want to be sure I have this correctly. Can you send me that in writing?" I can request a seat away from the ventilation and closer to the primary speaker.

What remains true about me. I understand this material. What I need is a channel that delivers it intact.

Narrative 2: When the Room Became Too Much

What happens. I am at a gathering I wanted to attend, with people I like. After ninety minutes the lights seem brighter, voices seem sharper, and I notice I have stopped being able to construct sentences. Part of me wants to leave immediately, and part of me is calculating how rude that would be.

What it means. My nervous system has reached the limit of what it can process in this environment. The loss of fluent speech is a physiological consequence of accumulated load, not a judgment about the people present or a measure of how much I value them.

What I can do. I can step outside for ten minutes before I reach this point rather than after. I can tell one person in advance, "I usually last about an hour and a half, and then I need to go." I can leave without a full explanation and follow up warmly the next day.

What remains true about me. Leaving when I have reached my limit protects my ability to come back. Staying past it does not make me a better friend.

Narrative 3: The Feedback That Landed Hard

What happens. My supervisor told me my updates are too detailed and that I need to be more concise. I felt the criticism physically. For the rest of the day I could think about very little else, and I began reconsidering whether I belong in this role.

What it means. Two separate things happened. My supervisor gave me one piece of specific, limited, workable information. My nervous system responded to it as though the whole relationship were at stake. The intensity of my reaction is real and does not indicate that the feedback was actually catastrophic.

What I can do. I can wait until my physiological state has settled before drawing conclusions. I can ask a clarifying question: "Would you like the headline first with detail available on request,

or shorter updates overall?" I can ask, going forward, to receive feedback in writing so I can process it without also managing my expression in real time.

What remains true about me. Receiving correction intensely is a feature of how I am built. It does not mean I cannot use the correction.

Narrative 4: Asking for What I Need

What happens. I want to ask for noise-reducing headphones and permission to work with my camera off. I keep postponing the conversation because I expect to be seen as difficult, or as someone who requires special handling.

What it means. What I am requesting is a small change in the conditions of the work. Requests like this are ordinary, and they are commonly granted informally. My anticipation of a negative response is based partly on prior experience and partly on prediction, and prediction is not evidence.

What I can do. I can frame the request around output: "I would produce cleaner work if I could reduce background noise. Would headphones be acceptable?" I can start with the single adjustment that would help most rather than presenting a list. I can consult the Job Accommodation Network beforehand to find out what is typically provided for my situation.

What remains true about me. Asking for a workable environment is part of doing the job well, not an admission that I cannot do it.

Narrative 5: The Conversation I Have to Lead

What happens. I supervise someone whose work has slipped, and I have to say so. I have rewritten the opening line in my head fourteen times. I am worried that I will be too blunt, or that I will soften it so much that nothing is communicated.

What it means. The difficulty is not that I lack the judgment to know what needs to be said. The difficulty is that I am trying to compose, regulate, and deliver simultaneously, in real time, while managing my own physiological response to conflict.

What I can do. I can write the core message down in two sentences before the meeting so composition is already finished. I can open with the observable fact rather than the interpretation. I can state the required change concretely, ask for their account, and confirm the agreement in writing afterward. I can schedule the conversation at a time of day when I am reliably regulated.

What remains true about me. Preparation is a legitimate leadership method. Depending on it does not make me a less capable supervisor.

Narrative 6: When I Interrupted Again

What happens. In a discussion I cared about, I spoke over a colleague twice. I saw them react. Afterward I replayed it repeatedly and considered avoiding that person for a while.

What it means. Interrupting in this context reflected difficulty with response inhibition combined with genuine engagement in the topic. My colleague experienced being cut off, which is a real effect regardless of my intention. Both facts are true at once, and neither cancels the other.

What I can do. I can repair briefly and specifically: "I cut you off twice yesterday. I was engaged, not dismissive, but that is on me. Please flag it if I do it again." I can write down what I want to say during meetings rather than holding it. I can ask a trusted colleague for a discreet signal.

What remains true about me. A short, specific repair restores the relationship more effectively than avoidance or extended apology.

Skill-Building Activities

Activity 1: The Capacity Audit

Purpose. To distinguish task effort from environmental and social load.

Method. For five consecutive days, record three numbers at midday and at the end of the workday: energy spent on the work itself, energy spent managing sensory input, and energy spent managing social presentation. Use a simple ten-point scale. At the end of the week, total each column.

Expected outcome. Most participants find that a substantial share of daily energy is consumed by load unrelated to the actual work. This identifies the highest-yield target for change and produces concrete language for an accommodation request.

Activity 2: The Environment Inventory

Purpose. To make sensory and social demands explicit rather than diffuse.

Method. List the five settings in which you spend the most time. For each, note sound, light, temperature, movement, predictability, and social density. Mark each factor as neutral, costly, or supportive. Identify the single factor with the highest total cost across settings.

Expected outcome. A ranked, specific list replaces a general sense of being overwhelmed, which makes negotiation and redesign possible.

Activity 3: The Working-With-Me Page

Purpose. To reduce the interpretation gap in new relationships and new teams.

Method. Write a single page covering: how I communicate best, how I prefer to receive feedback, what I need advance notice about, what I am reliably good at, and what I will ask for help with. Keep it to one page and free of diagnostic language. Share it with a new colleague, supervisor, or partner.

Expected outcome. Explicit statement of working style prevents months of mutual misreading and, in most workplaces, is received as professionalism.

Activity 4: Implementation Intention Practice

Purpose. To increase follow-through on tasks that reliably stall.

Method. Select three tasks you have postponed. For each, write a single sentence in the form: "When it is [specific time] on [specific day], I will [specific first action] at [specific location]." Post the three sentences where you will see them. Review after one week.

Expected outcome. Gollwitzer (1999) demonstrated that specifying situational cues and actions in advance substantially outperforms general goal-setting. The effect is often noticeable within days.

Activity 5: The Repair Script

Purpose. To make relational repair available under stress, when composition is hardest.

Method. Write a three-part template you can reuse: what I did, what I understand it caused, what I will do differently. Practice it aloud on a low-stakes past example. Keep it accessible on your phone.

Expected outcome. Having a prepared structure removes the need to generate language during physiological activation, which is when repair is most often avoided entirely.

Activity 6: Meeting Protocol Design

Purpose. For supervisors, to reduce leadership load while improving group function.

Method. Take one recurring meeting you run. Add three elements: a written agenda circulated at least a day ahead, a named decision recorded at the close of each item, and a written channel for input from those who did not speak. Run it four times, then survey participants.

Expected outcome. Adjustments that protect a neurodivergent chair generally raise meeting quality for the whole group, which makes them defensible on operational grounds alone.

Activity 7: The Delegation Map

Purpose. To move administrative follow-through out of memory.

Method. List every recurring administrative task attached to your role. Sort each into one of three categories: systematize, delegate, or retain. For anything retained, specify the external structure that will trigger it. Nothing remains in memory alone.

Expected outcome. Administrative slippage is the most common quiet failure point for capable neurodivergent leaders, and it is highly responsive to structural remedy.

Activity 8: The Early Warning List

Purpose. To identify burnout before functional loss occurs.

Method. Working from past experience, list the first five signs that your load has become unsustainable, in the order they typically appear. Identify one person who is likely to notice each sign before you do, and share the list with at least one of them. Define in advance the specific action you will take when the third sign appears.

Expected outcome. Autistic burnout and comparable states in other neurodivergent profiles develop gradually and are often recognized only in retrospect (Raymaker et al., 2020). A prepared threshold and a prepared action shorten the interval between onset and intervention.

Nationally Recognized Organizations and Resources

The organizations below operate at national scale in the United States and provide information, advocacy, community, or technical assistance relevant to socialization, employment, and management effectiveness for neurodivergent people. Inclusion is descriptive and does not constitute endorsement of any organization's positions. Perspectives within neurodivergent communities differ substantially regarding several of these organizations, and readers are encouraged to evaluate each against their own values.

Condition-Specific and Community Organizations

Autism Society of America. autismsociety.org. Affiliate network providing local connection, information, and advocacy.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). autisticadvocacy.org. Advocacy organization run by and for autistic people; policy and self-advocacy resources.

Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE). aane.org. Adult-focused programming including social groups, employment services, and coaching.

CHADD. chadd.org. National resource on ADHD; support groups, professional directory, and the National Resource Center on ADHD.

Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA). add.org. Adult-focused ADHD organization; virtual peer support groups and workplace resources.

Learning Disabilities Association of America. ldaamerica.org. State affiliate network; adult services and advocacy.

National Center for Learning Disabilities. ncld.org. Policy and research on learning and attention differences.

International Dyslexia Association. dyslexiaida.org. Branch network, provider referral, and evidence-based information.

STAR Institute for Sensory Processing. sensoryhealth.org. Education, treatment, and research on sensory processing differences across the lifespan.

The Arc of the United States. thearc.org. Chapter network supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. asha.org. Professional body; consumer information and provider search for auditory processing evaluation.

American Occupational Therapy Association. aota.org. Professional body; referral information for sensory and functional intervention.

Employment, Accommodation, and Career Development

Creative Spirit. creativespirit-us.org. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit creating integrated, fair-wage employment for neurodivergent people; works directly with employers through its HireDifferent Academy.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN). askjan.org. Free, confidential technical assistance on workplace accommodation and the Americans with Disabilities Act; searchable accommodation guidance by condition, including auditory processing disorder, ADHD, and autism. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. dol.gov/agencies/odep. Federal policy office; employment resources for workers and employers.

Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion (EARN). askearn.org. Practical employer guidance on recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing neurodivergent workers.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. eeoc.gov. Federal enforcement agency; guidance on disability discrimination and the accommodation process.

Disability:IN. disabilityin.org. Business-to-business disability inclusion network; hosts the Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable and publishes the Neurodiversity at Work Playbook series.

Neurodiversity Career Connector. neurodiversitycareerconnector.com. Job and internship marketplace connecting neurodivergent candidates with employers running neurodiversity hiring programs.

Specialisterne USA. specialisterneusa.com. Employment services connecting neurodivergent candidates with employers through non-interview assessment.

American Association of People with Disabilities. aapd.com. National cross-disability advocacy organization; internship and leadership pipeline programs.

National Organization on Disability. nod.org. Employer-facing consulting and benchmarking on disability employment.

Best Buddies International. bestbuddies.org. Programs in friendship, integrated employment, and leadership development.

Management, Supervision, and Organizational Practice

Society for Human Resource Management. shrm.org. Professional body for human resources practice; guidance on inclusive management and accommodation administration.

State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies. Located through the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Every state operates a vocational rehabilitation agency providing assessment, training, job placement, and on-the-job support at no cost to eligible individuals.

Social Security Administration Ticket to Work. choosework.ssa.gov. Employment support program for adults receiving Social Security disability benefits who wish to work.

Further Reading for Supervisors and Leaders

The three resources below were reviewed against the same standards applied to the peer-reviewed literature in this guide: identifiable authorship, transparent sourcing, and absence of commercial gating. Each is freely available.

Creating a Neuro-Inclusive Supervisory Style. Association for Autism and Neurodiversity. Co-authored by a licensed clinical social worker and an autistic self-advocate. Covers building trust in the supervisory relationship, providing written instructions, checking one's own interpretation of an employee's communication, and normalizing decompression time. See Barbieri and Walsh (n.d.).

Supporting Neurodiversity for Leaders. Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. The most detailed practical resource located for supervisors, with a numbered reference list and a documented review date. Extends beyond autism and ADHD into dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, and dyspraxia at work, including specific interview and meeting preparation practices. Two cautions apply: the resource is written for a Canadian legal context, in which accommodation obligations differ from those under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and one passage attributes neurodivergence to historical figures who were never diagnosed. See Workplace Strategies for Mental Health (2025).

Who Supports the Manager? Neurodiversity and Leadership in the Workplace. The Brain Charity. A registered United Kingdom charity addressing a question most workplace neurodiversity content omits: what occurs when the person responsible for supporting others

has support needs of their own. Written for a United Kingdom context. See The Brain Charity (2026).

Clinical Services From Orchard Human Services, Inc.

Orchard Human Services, Inc. provides telehealth counseling and consultation in Florida, Georgia, and Virginia for neurodivergent adults, couples, and families, and offers workplace and leadership consultation as well as continuing education for clinicians. Orchard Human Services, Inc. is NBCC Approved ACEP #7260. Inquiries may be directed to customerservice@orchardhumanservices.org.



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