



What is NeuroInclusion?

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The term *neuroinclusion* describes an intentional effort to design environments, expectations, and relationships that include and value all kinds of thinkers. It's rooted in the recognition that neurological differences—autism, ADHD, dyslexia, Tourette's, and beyond—are natural parts of human diversity, not deviations from it.

Historically, schools, workplaces, and public systems were built around a narrow concept of “normal.” People who thought, felt, or communicated differently were often seen as needing to be “fixed” or “managed.” Neuroinclusion turns that approach upside down: instead of asking people to change to fit the environment, it asks environments to adapt to fit people.

From Awareness to Action

Many organizations today talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion—but neurodiversity is still often left out of the conversation. Awareness campaigns and occasional accommodations are a start, but true neuroinclusion goes deeper. It's about embedding flexible design and equitable practices into the structure of daily life.

That might look like:

- Offering multiple modes of communication (verbal, written, visual) so everyone can express themselves effectively.
- Reducing sensory overload in physical spaces by controlling lighting, noise, and movement.
- Allowing flexible work or learning schedules to support different energy rhythms and attention patterns.
- Replacing rigid productivity measures or grading systems with outcome-based assessments that reflect strengths.

When inclusion is built into design, it benefits *everyone*. The quiet workspace that helps an autistic employee focus also supports a parent returning from leave or a team member recovering from illness. Universal design isn't "extra"; it's efficient and humane.

Rethinking "Accommodation"

Neuroinclusion requires us to challenge how we think about accommodation itself. Too often, supports are viewed as special favors or exceptions that require justification. That framing reinforces stigma and discourages people from asking for what they need.

In contrast, neuroinclusive systems treat variation as expected. The question shifts from *"Should we make this exception?"* to *"How can we make this more accessible for everyone?"* When flexibility becomes the default, people no longer have to "disclose" their difference to function.

For example, a school that provides visual schedules and sensory breaks for all students creates a predictable, supportive environment that reduces stress and fosters independence. A workplace that normalizes asynchronous communication allows employees with different processing or energy needs to contribute fully without pressure to mask or overextend.

Belonging and Psychological Safety

At its core, neuroinclusion is about belonging—feeling valued, respected, and safe to be oneself. Psychological safety, a concept first popularized in organizational research by Amy Edmondson, is crucial here. When individuals fear judgment or misunderstanding, they hide their differences, spend cognitive energy on "passing," and ultimately disengage.

In contrast, when neurodivergent people experience genuine inclusion, creativity, problem-solving, and innovation flourish. Studies repeatedly show that diverse cognitive styles enhance team performance, decision-making, and resilience. Inclusion isn't just an ethical imperative; it's a strategic advantage.

From Compliance to Culture

It's easy to think of neuroinclusion as a checklist—train staff, update policies, check the box. But meaningful inclusion requires cultural change. Leaders must model openness, curiosity, and adaptability. Educators and managers alike must learn to listen actively to neurodivergent voices and treat feedback as data for better design.

Small actions matter:

- Asking, “How can I make this easier for you to engage with?”
- Replacing assumptions with inquiry.
- Celebrating strengths as much as addressing challenges.

These everyday practices are the foundation of a neuroinclusive world.

The Bigger Picture

Ultimately, neuroinclusion invites us to redefine success—not as conformity, but as thriving through authenticity. When we stop trying to make everyone fit one mold, we open the door to innovation, empathy, and community.



Neuroinclusion isn't about fixing people—it's about fixing systems so all people can succeed.