

Neurodiversity and You

The Annotated Guide for Disability Service Professionals



Welcome!

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Credentials:

BS in Elementary and Special Education from
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11 Years as an Indiana Educator in Lake and
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Problems and Solutions

- Coming to Higher Ed from K12 made two things abundantly clear:
 1. Students with disabilities do not always connect with the DRC before they get to college or even during their freshman year.
 2. Faculty and staff do not always have experience supporting these individuals and heavily rely on our expertise.
- Ultimate Problem: Neurodivergent people in particular have been conditioned to meet the demands of the “normal world”, but society at large has not been expected to meet their needs without being told.
- This presentation aims to address one aspect of living as a disabled person: simply being understood without having to go into excruciating detail.

AUDIENCE INFORMATION

- This presentation is designed for anyone wanting to know more about working with neurodivergent individuals.
- This has been presented to Purdue Staff, student workers, and student leaders across Student Success Programs and University Residences.
- Adaptable to multiple learning styles and designed with UDL in mind

Activities: How were they chosen

- Movement based activities were chosen to establish that everyone has a comfort zone. Equal \neq Fair.
- Communication based activities allow for shared communication without forcing every individual to contribute.
- Writing activities are adaptable to allow use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), computers, or oral presentation
- Goal of activities is to model what access looks like, and how inaccessible some activities can be, even for a person without a diagnosed condition

Intentional Design

Use a photo of an institutional landmark and ask participants who is welcome in this space and who is excluded?



“

Disabled people are the world's largest minority, and the only minority group anyone can become a member of at any time.

Rick Hansen Foundation

Today's Focus

- **Model Expectations Throughout Presentation**
 - **Accessibility:**
 - Objectives are clearly stated at the beginning
 - Objectives are restated and reframed at the end
 - Flexibility in Participation
 - Sharing materials for self-pacing
 - **Communication:**
 - “Say what you mean, not what you don’t mean”
 - Use precise language whenever possible
 - Figurative language should be clarified



Disability Basics and Definitions

What to know before we dive in

- **Disability** is any condition of the body or mind that substantially limits or restricts a person's full participation in daily activities and experiences.
- Disability can be limiting not only because of the condition itself, but by the environmental barriers and social expectations
- Disability rates fluctuate and rise as populations grow and change
- As diagnosis expands, so too will people seeking accommodations



Apparent vs. Non-Apparent Disabilities

Explaining these differences to faculty/staff can help challenge bias around what disability “looks” like

Apparent Disabilities

- Physical disabilities
 - Mobility Aid Users
 - Limb differences
 - Amputees
- Vision Impairments
 - Glasses
 - Walking Sticks
 - Guide Dogs
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
 - Hearing Aids
 - Cochlear Implants
 - Interpreters

Non-Apparent Disabilities

- Chronic Illness
 - Crohn's, Lupus, Autoimmune Disorders
 - POTS, Ehler's Danlos
 - Diabetes
- Mental Health Disorders
 - Depression, Anxiety
 - Bi Polar Disorder
 - PTSD
- Developmental Disorders
 - ASD, ADHD, SPD
 - Learning Disabilities

Neurodiversity vs. Neurodivergent



- Neurodiversity refers to the differences that exist between ALL brains in a room.
- Neurodivergent is used to describe people with developmental or learning disabilities
- Commonly includes people diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyper/Hypoactivity Disorder, Dyslexia, or other Specific Learning Disabilities
- People with a neurodivergence may struggle with certain aspects of communication, processing, and impulse control
- **Neurodiversity is a feature, not a bug**

Disability Etiquette

How to talk ABOUT Disability and Neurodiversity

- Person First Language
 - Person *with* a disability
 - Promotes seeing a person first and their disability separate
 - Dated language, but still preferred by some people
- Identity First Language
 - Disabled Person
 - Promotes the idea that disability is an intrinsic trait
 - Preferred language in advocacy circles
- Mirror Language
 - Use whatever phrasing the person you are speaking with is using as much as possible



The Importance of Self-Disclosure

- Disability can still be seen as an undesirable trait
- Medical model of disability has had negative effects
- Individuals have a right to privacy
- Lack of access means not all disabled people are diagnosed
- Knowing someone's label does not change what they need
- When you accommodate, everyone benefits



Turn and Talk-2 Minutes

Housekeeping: This is a place of learning and correcting misunderstanding. What happens here stays here, and we respect basic privacy. If you are recording this section, please pause your recording to protect privacy of others.

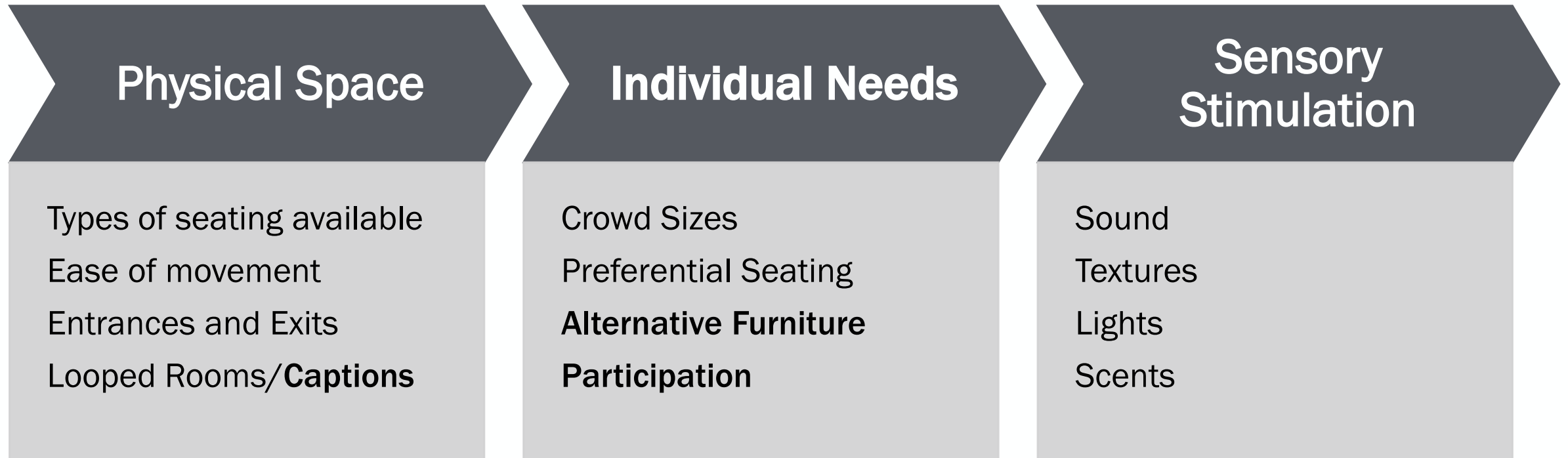
Talk to someone near you about your experience with disability. Consider the following points:

1. Did you know who the special ed kids were in elementary school? What about Jr. Sr. High?
2. How did that shape your perception of those students or disability?
3. What are some accommodations you know about?



Setting the Stage for Access

Universal Design invites everyone to the room.



Creating a Safe Space for All

This comes from Brene Brown's BRAVING Inventory

Boundaries, Reliability, Accountability

- Set firm boundaries for yourself
- Do what you say you're going to do or not do
- Hold yourself and others accountable when mistakes are made

Be a Vault, Have Integrity

- When someone comes to you in confidence, honor that
- Share when you have to disclose a discussion in a supportive way
- Do the right thing and practice your values, even when it's hard

Be Nonjudgemental and Generous

- Understand that people are doing the best they can
- Judgement leads to shame, which blocks progress and growth
- Assume positive intent

Activity Number 1: Personal Space and Safety (Movement Activity)

Everyone can feel awkward and out of place. Respect personal boundaries by knowing your own.

- Find a partner that you don't know particularly well
- Line up and face your partner as shown in the image on this slide, then take about 10 steps back.
- Listen carefully to directions and DO NOT MOVE until you are directed to do so.
- Accessibility Considerations:
 - Blind/Low Vision: Personal Space is still important to respect.
 - Directions posted
 - Visual and Auditory Timer to keep activity on track



Communication Basics

Communication is what we say with our voices, bodies, and technology to send clear messages to others.

Non-Verbal Communication

- Gestures
- Noises
- Facial Expression
- Body Language

Verbal Communication

- What we say
- How we say it
- When we say it
- Written communication

The Unknowns of Communication for ND People

Navigating new situations can cause stress for everyone, but especially for neurodivergent people.

- **Confusing Language**

- Figurative Language
- Sarcasm
- Jokes
- Private vs Public thoughts and feelings

- **Hidden Rules and Expectations**

- Meeting new people-multiple comfort levels
- Cultural differences
- Individual Preferences

Activity #2: Communication Style



Break into groups of 3-5 people

Make a list with your group of areas where you shine and where you struggle. How do you improve your struggles?

Feel free to move around the room and work where you're comfortable

Listening Nonjudgementally

Let people come to you with anything as long as you have the bandwidth

- Disabled people may be taught to feel ashamed of their disability/like a burden
 - Focus is always on other people's comfort and not their own
 - Stimming is a distraction to others
 - Sharing their special interests is disrespectful or off topic
 - Overly "sensitive" about things
 - Experiences are minimized because they aren't well understood
- Accommodations can mitigate these socially-driven barriers
 - Raise the floor, don't lower the ceiling
 - Start off conversations with a reminder of safety expectations for all
 - Build in breaks and activities during programs/presentations approximately every 15-20 minutes if there is otherwise no movement
 - Allow people to manage their needs within reason
 - Keep communication open, honest, and private as much as possible

Activity #3 How to Ride a Bike



BREAK INTO GROUPS OF
3-5



WRITE OUT THE STEPS
FOR HOW TO RIDE A
BIKE



PROVIDE AS MUCH
DETAIL AS YOU CAN IN 2
MINUTES



HAVE FUN AND GOOD
LUCK!

Barriers

- What got in the way of completing this task?
- What would you need in order to feel successful in completing this task?
- What information did you lack before you began?
- Purdue University students have the foundational elements to ride the bike...they just may need accommodations to take off!

TL;DR

If you remember nothing else, I hope you take this with you.

1. Disability is not a dirty word.
2. Neurodiverse People may have unique communication needs compared to their peers that can be mitigated with planning and accommodations that benefit all people.
3. Communication should be direct, clear, and nonjudgemental.
4. If you aren't sure if someone is disabled, don't ask or assume. Just provide them support whenever possible.

Resources for Further Support of ND Individuals

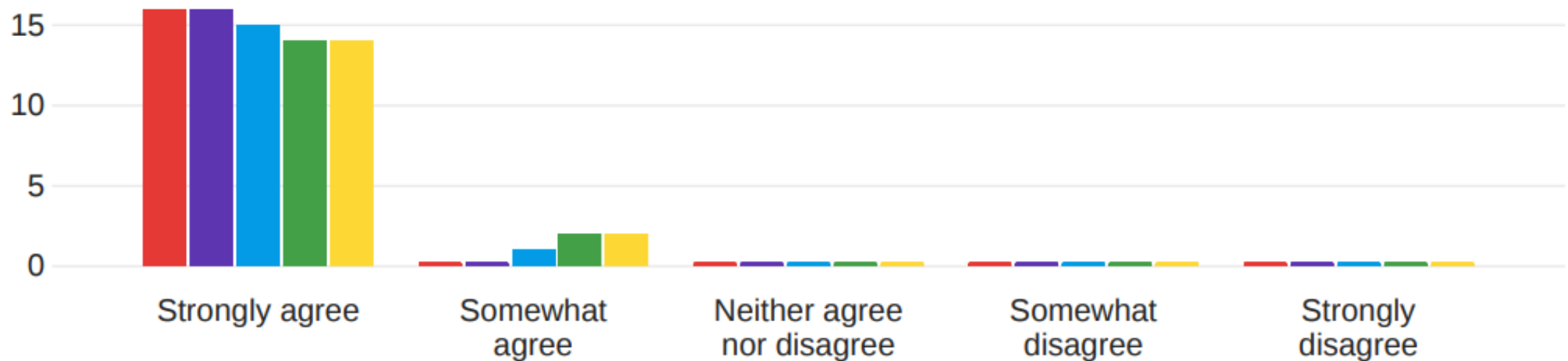
This is NOT an Exhaustive List

- Autism Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN): autisticadvocacy.org/
- Child Mind Institute: childmind.org
- How to ADHD (YouTube Channel): youtube.com/HowtoADHD
- Ask JAN: askjan.org

Feedback

Overwhelmingly positive

Q1 - Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements.



- The session was well-prepared.
- The session was engaging.
- The session was well-organized and easy to understand.
- The session provided valuable information.
- The session helped me grow professionally and /or personally.

What did the audience take away?

- “‘Disability is not a dirty word’ & that accommodating others is beneficial for everyone.”
- “I understand more about how to adapt my sessions to be more accommodating.”
- “Disability is something that we should be aware of and is more common than you would think...Being open and respectful is a good way to approach accommodating those with different needs.”
- “You can’t assume what people need, ask how you can support them.”
- “Neurodivergent people sometimes don’t understand idioms or indirect language. It is important to speak as directly as possible with them.”
- “Universal design for access is easier than retroactive accommodations.”
- “The eye contact activity was an important look into how people with disabilities experience the world.”

Thank You

Questions if there is time!

