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PREVENTING WORKPLACE BURNOUT

Embracing Neurodiversity in the Workplace



It is estimated that 15 to 20% of the world's population is neurodiverse

(National Cancer Institute [NIH], 2022)

History

The Neurodiversity Movement has its origin in the Autistic Rights Movement based in the 1990's. The term "Neurodiversity" was coined in 1998 by Judy Singer and quickly became widespread and extended beyond the autism community (Autistic UK CIC, 2023).

Neurodiversity/Neurodivergent

Neurodiversity describes the idea that no two people experience the world alike. We can all experience the world very differently; there is no one "true" right way of thinking, learning, and behaving (Harvard Health Publishing, 2023).

The term "Neurodivergent" describes how people's brains can develop or work differently from what is typically considered normal functioning (Cleveland Clinic, 2023).



Differences Are Not Deficits!

The terms "neurodivergence", "neurodivergent", or "neurodiversity" are not technical or medical terms, nor do persons need an official diagnosis to identify as neurodivergent or neurodiverse. However, there are several diagnoses that fall under the umbrella of neurodiversity or neurodiverse populations, including:

- Learning Disabilities (e.g. Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder, etc.)
- Intellectual Disabilities (e.g. ADHD, Autism, etc.)
- Mental Health Conditions (e.g. Depression, Schizophrenia, Bipolar Disorder, etc., Cleveland Clinic, 2023)

***Please note this is not an exhaustive list**

Focusing on a Person's Strengths Will Optimize Performance Outcomes

Persons who identify as neurodivergent may experience increased stimuli sensitivity (e.g. audio or visual) and may even have increased challenges in social situations. However, it is vital to note that everyone experiences challenges at times, and we all deserve and require grace (Cleveland Clinic, 2023).

More than half of Americans (59%) experienced workplace burnout in the past year

(PRNewswire, 2023)

Workplace Burnout

Warning signs of burnout include:

- Feeling tired and exhausted
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Feelings of negativity toward work
- Poor job performance or loss of skills (e.g. reduction in basic functioning, memory, planning, etc.)
- Overwhelmed (Reduced tolerance to stimuli) (WebMD, 2022)

Burnout Prevention

Workplace accommodations can be extremely helpful to all staff/employees, especially for persons who identify as neurodiverse.

Accommodations may include:

- Noise cancelling headphones
- Flexible work schedules
- Breaks throughout the day
- Acceptance and social support
- Encouragement of Self-advocacy
- Clear communication (NeurodiversityMedia, 2023)



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