HANDOUT:

How to ask questions in neutral way?

- When working with neurodivergent learners, asking questions in a neutral and inclusive manner is important to building trust and supporting effective communication. Trainers should avoid leading or judgmental questions that may imply there is a single correct answer or that a participant has made a mistake. Instead of asking "Why didn't you finish this?", which can feel critical a more neutral approach would be to say, "Was something unclear?" or "Would you like more time to work on this?"
- Open-ended questions are especially helpful, as they give learners the opportunity to express themselves in their own words and according to their own thinking style. Phrasing such as "What part of the task feels most clear to you?" or "How would you like to approach this activity?" allows for flexibility and avoids putting learners on the spot.
- Understanding checks should be framed carefully. Rather than asking "Do you understand?", which often leads to automatic responses and can increase anxiety, trainers can ask "What's your next step going to be?" or "Can you show me how you would begin?" This allows the trainer to assess understanding in a non-threatening way.
- To further support communication, it is helpful to offer multiple ways of responding. Trainers should encourage learners to respond in a format that suits them, whether spoken, written, visual, or expressive, and make it clear that all forms of communication are valid. For example, saying "You can write this down, say it aloud, or point to a choice" promotes autonomy and inclusion.
- Finally, giving suitable processing time is essential. After asking a question, the trainer should allow a pause and avoid rushing or repeating the question too quickly. Silence is not a sign of disconnection but often a necessary space for thought. Neutral, supportive questioning builds a respectful learning environment where all participants feel safe to express themselves in their own way.

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