Workplace Inclusion:
Neurodiversity

NEUROINCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Train the trainer program for adult educators

DIVERSITY HUB and Partners

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FOREWORD

This toolkit is designed for professional educators working in the field of adult education, providing the train-the-trainer methodology to be fully implemented by neurodiversity educators. It comprises the set of practical scenarios, lesson frameworks, and workshop tools designed to train all practitioners of adult education. It serves as a comprehensive guide, offering a set of recommendations to help adapt daily educational practices to the specific learning needs of diverse participants. Its primary aim is to tailor educational formats and training programs for neurodivergent individuals. However, in accordance with the principles of universal design outlined in this toolkit, its content can be applied more broadly, extending beyond neurodivergent groups.

Accordingly, the toolkit is tailored to three distinct audiences:

Direct recipients: trainers and educators active in the neurodiversity movement, for whom the handbook serves as a compendium of guidelines, tools and ready-to-use scenarios to deliver specialized training for all professionals involved in adult education.

Secondary recipients: all adult-education practitioners (trainers, teachers, and coaches), who seek to deepen their expertise and skills in working with neurodivergent learners. The module-based materials constitute a complementary training curriculum, enabling these professionals to master the ability for adapting their educational activities and design training tools that honor neurological diversity and the unique learning needs of neurodivergent individuals.

Ultimate beneficiaries: neurodivergent learners themselves, who ultimately gain from the initiatives guided by this toolkit. While not intended as a direct instructional manual for working one-on-one with neurodivergent individuals, the toolkit strengthens the capacity of every education professional to create inclusive, supportive training experiences that accommodate specific cognitive and sensory profiles.

The toolkit is structured as a five-module, complete with detailed facilitator guidelines and participant materials. It is designed to be fully implemented by neurodiversity educators as a comprehensive, step-by-step training program for all adult-education professionals. Beyond

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specialist trainers, educators and trainers without prior neurodiversity expertise can also use the toolkit as a reference or set of practical recommendations for designing courses that address specific educational needs.

The concept of neurodiversity can be interpreted in many ways, depending on methodology, cultural context, or an expert's paradigm. Due to differences in understanding neurodiversity among experts and learners, the introduction of the toolkit covers all the key aspects of biological individual differences that affect learning, along with an overview of the functioning, challenges, and needs of neurodivergent individuals.

The entire toolkit is grounded in the principles of universal design. By using the extreme cognitive profiles of neurodivergent learners as a map for needs and accommodations, it ensures that educational practices both enhance each learner's neurological potential and reduce barriers to learning. The methodology presented provides a framework that addresses various specific educational needs. In this context, the experiences and challenges of neurodivergent individuals illustrate the full spectrum of learning and development requirements associated with non-traditional learning styles.

We encourage you to explore the key aspects of needs assessment, preparation, implementation, and evaluation of training sessions, workshops, and other educational formats. Incorporating the perspectives of individuals whose neurocognitive functioning, and, consequently, educational needs, differ from the most typical and commonly applied training methods offers valuable insights for creating more inclusive and effective learning environments.

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INTRODUCTION TO NEURODIVERSITY

Key terms and definitions

Neurodiversity is a concept that is defined in several ways across international literature. Below, you will find key terms and definitions that will help you navigate the content of this handbook more effectively.

Neurodiversity is an umbrella concept. In its broadest and most universal sense, it refers to the natural range of variations in brain structure and function. It represents an interdisciplinary framework that combines biological, psychological, and social approaches to understanding differences in the functioning of the human nervous system. This concept emphasizes that variability in information processing, emotional responses, and adaptive strategies is a natural part of human existence. A key aspect of this approach is the belief that neurological diversity should be viewed in the context of individual integrity, rather than solely as a criterion for medical classification. As a result, neurodiversity provides a framework for reinterpreting traditional diagnostic and intervention models, highlighting the importance of integrating scientific knowledge with social needs.

Central to understanding neurodiversity is **the biological model of individual differences**, which primarily relates to three aspects of human functioning:

1. **Temperament**, defined as an innate set of traits that determine an individual's responses to external stimuli. In psychological literature, temperament is considered an evolutionary mechanism enabling precise adaptation to changing environmental conditions. As a biological aspect, temperament influences the intensity of emotional experiences, response speed, and the ability to self-regulate. It can be described as the structure of an individual's nervous system, including the number of receptors and connections between body parts and the nervous system, as well as a specific hormonal secretion pattern shaped by genetic predisposition. Understanding temperament in the context of neurodiversity allows for a deeper analysis of how innate response patterns coexist with acquired adaptive strategies, creating a unique profile of each person's functioning.

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2. **Cognitive functions** encompass a range of neurological processes that enable processing of various information, thinking, memory, and attention span. Modern research highlights that traditional measures such as IQ do not fully reflect the dynamic nature of these abilities, as qualitative aspects are key - such as cognitive preferences, flexibility in thinking, problem-solving skills, and an individual's specific way of perceiving and processing information. Analyzing cognitive functions through the lens of neurodiversity makes it possible to identify individual paths of neurological development and describe cognitive potential, which supports the creation of personalized educational strategies.
3. **Executive functions** are a set of cognitive processes that regulate the conscious control of thoughts and behaviors to achieve designated goals, ensuring flexible adaptation to changing environmental demands. Core executive functions include attention (sustained, shifting, and selective), inhibitory control and cognitive inhibition, cognitive flexibility, and working memory. Together, these functions form a higher-order system that synchronizes various cognitive operations – enabling individuals to delay responses, deliberately focus or shift attention when necessary, and encode and retrieve information during learning. Moreover, executive functions encompass cognitive abilities that can be developed throughout life, such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and planning, which provide the capacity to actively select and monitor ongoing actions.
4. **Sensory sensitivity** is a complex neurological system that connects temperamental traits with cognitive processing, shaping how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to sensory stimuli. It reflects innate differences in reactivity, adaptability, and sensory thresholds, influencing emotional and behavioral responses to environmental input – manifesting as heightened or reduced responsiveness to sound, light, touch, or movement. Sensory integration is the process through which the brain organizes and filters sensory data to support regulation, attention, and learning. This includes the capacity for modulation (regulating the intensity of response to stimuli), discrimination (identifying and differentiating sensory input), and movement-based processing (coordinating balance, posture, and spatial awareness through vestibular and proprioceptive systems). When these processes are disrupted, individuals may experience hyperresponsiveness, hyporesponsiveness, or sensory-seeking behaviors, which feature as underlying traits among neurodivergent people. Environmental factors such as lighting, noise, spatial layout, and social expectations can either support or challenge sensory regulation, depending on their alignment with individual sensory profiles.

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The neurodiversity movement, initiated in the 1990s', aimed not only to raise social awareness but, more importantly, to fundamentally transform how neurological differences are perceived within cultural and educational systems. Its goal is to promote the philosophy of neurodiversity and drive social transformation that includes individuals diagnosed with so-called neurodevelopmental disorders. The movement is believed to have been launched by Judy Singer (1998), the originator of the term, who was the first to define the Autism Spectrum as an alternative pathway of neurological development - highlighting the importance to recognize the adaptive needs of autistic individuals. An important component of this movement though possibly originates earlier, from grassroot community discussions and advocacy groups, that have paved the road for an important paradigm shift in this topic (Botha et. al., 2024)[1]. These early studies and publications helped challenge the reductionist approach to brain function, which focused exclusively on deficits. Nowadays, the core message is the affirmation of diversity as a natural feature of human existence. This shift enabled a more constructive approach to diagnosis and intervention — one that considers both strengths and challenges associated with alternative neurological development.

The neurodiversity paradigm assumes that neurobiological differences should be interpreted as a valuable element of human variation, rather than merely indicators of pathology. Even conditions that have traditionally been considered pathological (e.g. autistic spectrum, ADHD), are now seen as part of a continuum, with natural variation existing among different people (Goldberg, 2023). This is a concept gaining increasing recognition within psychological communities, emphasizing the evolutionary importance of neurocognitive differences between individuals. It integrates biological, environmental, and cultural factors, enabling a multidimensional analysis of brain functioning. This approach enables the development of support models that not only recognize challenges but also emphasize an individual's strengths and foster an environment that nurtures their full potential.

Neurodivergence refers to individuals whose patterns of thinking, communicating, and overall of daily functioning significantly differ from established social and cultural norms. Rather than pathologizing these differences, the term defines alternative neurological developmental pathways and highlights specific adaptive mechanisms and educational needs of those considered as non-normative or atypical (McLennan et al., 2025). Neurodivergent individuals often demonstrate unique qualities, which can result in both challenges and advantages across

[1] https://neurodiversity.caltech.edu/resources/neurodiversity-a-brief-history

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various domains - from education to professional environments. Recognizing these diverse cognitive profiles allows for the development of inclusive approaches that support and maximize their potential (Dwyer, 2022).

Neurotypical refers to modes of functioning that align with the dominant patterns within a given culture or society. It is characterized by most typical cognitive and emotional mechanisms that conform to established norms. From a theoretical standpoint, neurotypicality serves as a reference framework, enabling the comparison of individual variations in functioning with statistically dominant traits - those most commonly observed, accepted, or valued within a given cultural context.

It is worth noting, that by shifting our way of thinking to accommodate for neurodiversity as one small area in a continuous of characteristics or traits, we don't only benefit people who are labeled or self-identify as neurodivergent; we also promote inclusion in the general population and acceptance for any type of individual variation. Similarly, in the context of education and training, design elements that target better accommodation of neuro-divergent needs, also benefit a large group of neurotypical learners as well.

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Clinical model vs social model

In the literature on neurodiversity, two principal models of interpreting neurological differences are distinguished:

1. **The clinical model of neurodiversity** – is based on strict diagnostic criteria contained in classifications such as the DSM-5 or ICD-11. This model focuses on identifying deficits, limitations, and functional difficulties, enabling the development of dedicated therapeutic interventions. While this approach is essential in a medical context, its limitation lies in the tendency to reduce diversity to a set of symptoms and to depict an individual's reality primarily in terms of impairments. A major risk associated with this model is its potentially negative impact on individuals' sense of helplessness, formation of a negative identity, or lowered self-esteem among neurodivergent people.

2. **The social model of neurodiversity** – is not so much an alternative as it is a complementary perspective that goes far beyond the realm of limitations, emphasizing the influence of environmental and cultural barriers on individual functioning. This framework stresses that individuals experience their neurological differences based on social, environmental, and individual factors, above and beyond their inherent traits. Within this approach, difficulties are understood as a result of structural misfit, rather than solely internal characteristics of the individual. This model draws attention to the neurological potential stemming from an alternative neurological development trajectory of a minority population. In other words, it does not deny the existence of difficulties or specific needs but explains them with respect to the limitations imposed by civilizational barriers that negatively affect the mental health of neurodivergent individuals. It enables the development of support strategies focused on adapting the environment and promotes the idea that human neurological differences are a natural part of human variability, enriching social resources.

The distinction between the two models allows for the development of inclusive attitudes and communication. Understanding the relationship between the medical and social models facilitates deeper analysis of different functioning profiles resulting from neurodivergence.

What lies behind the concept of neurodivergence from a diagnostic perspective?

1. **Neurodevelopmental disorders** – these constitute a medically defined category of specific clinical syndromes describing symptoms and developmental deficits associated with the genetic conditions of the nervous system. These represent relatively stable patterns

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of functioning and are not subject to developmental change. Diagnostic criteria form the foundation for developing therapies and other forms of support; however, such classification also limits the perception of an individual's functioning to areas of deficit.

This handbook uses the ICD-11 classification (International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems issued by the World Health Organization – WHO). Version 11, published in 2018, is the most current and therefore most reliable classification of mental disorders, including neurodevelopmental disorders, grouped into seven categories with specific symptom patterns:

1) Disorders of intellectual development.
2) Developmental speech and language disorders.
3) Autism spectrum disorder.
4) Developmental learning disorder.
5) Developmental motor coordination disorder.
6) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
7) Stereotyped movement disorder.

2. **Neurodevelopmental conditions** – in response to the limitations of the medical perspective on neurological differences, the concept of neurodevelopmental conditions has gained prominence. This term indicates that deviations from the "norm" are part of a natural continuum of neurocognitive development, where functional difficulties coexist with unique genetic predispositions and specific adaptive strengths. An example of this approach is the reconceptualization of the autism spectrum, where — aligned with the philosophy of the neurodiversity paradigm — the term 'condition' is used instead of 'disorder' (Autism Spectrum Condition). Alongside challenges, this perspective takes into account the most distinctive cognitive strengths and adaptive competences of the individual. In other words, deficits are just one part of a broader developmental profile in neurodivergent individuals. This model promotes a holistic assessment of functioning that gives equal weight to both medical and social aspects.

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Aligned with this approach, the present guide explores the educational perspectives of neurodivergent individuals whose profiles include, but are not limited to, Autism Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia (specific learning differences), and Dyspraxia (developmental coordination disorder), Tourette's syndrome, Executive Function disorders, and others. It is essential to recognize that, despite the distinct nature of each clinical diagnosis, these conditions frequently co-occur, shaping unique combinations of strengths, social challenges, and specific learning needs. Finally, more recent approaches suggest an even broader definition of neurodivergence, where individuals who identify themselves as neurodivergent, even with no formal diagnosis or with only subclinical traits that produce variation in functioning, should also be included in this concept (McLennan, 2025). For the needs of the present guide, we adhere to this definition of neurodiversity, taking into account the objections to an over-extension of the concept, and the idea that it should not include mental health conditions such as mood disorders (e.g. bipolar disorder), or intellectual deficiencies and disabilities. The educational approach suggested will be applicable to a broad range of neurodiversity, but not such populations of learners that require more nuanced approaches.

Intercultural context

When distinguishing between these terms, it is important to recognize the significance of socio-cultural norms and patterns, that establish the criteria by which we assess an individual's fit within their environment and highlight the barriers that may hinder the full realization of one's potential. The contemporary approach to neurodiversity assumes that a critical review of cultural norms and social frameworks is essential for developing support methods that genuinely address the needs of individuals with diverse neurological profiles. As a result, creating adaptable environments becomes a fundamental aspect of fostering more inclusive communities.

Neurodiversity can be understood as an aspect of individual differences primarily shaped by environmental demands - the ease or difficulty of adapting to various circumstances. Furthermore, neurodivergence significantly influences mental health, identity, and overall well-being, shaping how individuals perceive and engage with the world.

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Mental health vs neurodiversity

Neurodivergence often underlies both mental-health vulnerabilities and academic challenges. It can be a foundation for developing secondary mental-health disorders. Research shows that around 60 percent of the individuals with autism and ADHD experience co-occurring anxiety or depressive episodes. This overlap reflects both intrinsic neurocognitive features (for example, sensory hypersensitivity and executive-function strain), compounded by external pressures. Neurodivergent people encounter adaptive difficulties far more often than neurotypical peers – most notably in forging a stable sense of self. Repeated experiences of social exclusion, persistent feelings of divergence, and isolation can disrupt identity formation, erode self-esteem, and heighten vulnerability to anxiety and depression. In response to such feelings, many neurodivergent individuals unconsciously develop masking strategies.

Masking stems from a relentless effort to meet rigid social expectations, by suppressing innate tendencies or imitating neurotypical behaviors to blend in. While this mechanism can social adaptation, masking imposes a heavy cognitive and emotional toll. Sustained masking requires constant self-monitoring and regulation, often resulting in chronic exhaustion, diminished capacity for learning and problem-solving, a pervasive sense of inauthenticity, and heightened stress. Over time, this relentless self-suppression can deepen anxiety, undermine self-acceptance, and precipitate burnout, further impairing both mental health and learning capacity.

These difficulties stem from a mismatch between social and environmental demands and the way executive functions operate among neurodivergent individuals, adversely affecting both mental health and educational outcomes. Standardized teaching methods – designed for the majority's cognitive profile, often clash with the extremes of sensory and mental processing common among neurodivergent learners. Despite having adequate intellectual potential, neurodivergent individuals more frequently encounter educational difficulties arising from challenges in sustaining attention, sensory overload, or a tendency to fixate on selective elements that fuel their creativity.

Learning challenges

The main educational challenges associated with neurodivergence include:

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- Limited opportunities for movement during class activities, which create tension and amplify attention difficulties - particularly characteristic of people with ADHD.
- Imprecise or insufficient information in instructions, leading to frustration or an inability to fully understand the material - especially among those on the Autism Spectrum.
- A consistent bias in teachers' information delivery (for example, relying solely on text or solely on auditory explanations).
- Excessive exposure to noise, colors, or bright lights, which impair executive-function efficiency.
- Lack of clear, consistent structure and routine in lesson formats—which negatively affects autistic learners.
- Insufficient variety of activities, heightening the need for stimulation among individuals with ADHD.
- Overload of detailed, text-heavy information, which hinders learning for people with dyslexia.
- A uniform assessment and evaluation system that can undermine the sense of competence in learners whose strengths lie in specific disciplines or intellectual modalities.
- A work pace that fails to allow the extra time highly analytical or dyslexic learners need to process all the material.
- The socio-emotional learning context - heightened susceptibility to frustration or low cognitive flexibility in individuals with ADHD and those on the Autism Spectrum, which undermines motivation when the learning environment is not adapted to their needs and capacities. Such prolonged mismatch of expectations and capacities with limited learning opportunities often leads to burnout and emotional distribution among neurodivergent individuals, further increasing mental health issues.

Many of these challenges are in direct conflict. For instance, the strong need for movement and variety that often invigorates learners with ADHD can simultaneously disrupt autistic students' learning processes. Conversely, the deep need for detail exploration and solitary work common among autistic individuals may pose significant hurdles for learners who rely on a visual thinking style, as is typical in dyslexia. Given the wide range of neurodivergent needs, it is crucial to tailor educational methods so they incorporate alternatives throughout each

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lesson. By addressing these divergent requirements during the preparation of materials and lesson plans, educators can more effectively create truly inclusive teaching formats - such as by developing multiple types of instructions or balancing textual and graphical content.

The universal methods of supporting various learning needs related to the executive functions efficacy, can be implemented on any type of training:

- **Multisensory instruction** - use visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic channels.
- **Small steps** - break content into short, digestible segments (e.g., 5–7-minute blocks with summaries and questions) to support attention and information retention.
- **Structured active methods** - engage learners with clear, predictable formats (e.g., paired Q&A, timed brainstorms, speaking rounds) to reduce anxiety and increase participation**.**
- **Visual supports** - incorporate icons, pictograms, visual schedules, and mind maps to aid processing for those with language or reading challenges.
- **Reflection pauses** - build in 30–60 seconds of silence after introducing new material so learners have time to process and prepare responses.
- **Predictable routines and control** - use daily agendas, explicit instructions, and transition signals to lower stress and improve group functioning.
- **Choice of work mode** - allow learners to opt for individual or small-group tasks, respecting those who find social interaction draining.

Beyond mitigating obstacles, educators should adopt a strengths-based framework that promotes neurodivergent learners' unique capacities – whether it's rapid pattern recognition, intense focus on passion projects, or out-of-the-box creativity. Embedding Universal Design for Learning principles ensures every challenge (sensory overload, fixed instruction modes, rigid pacing) is matched with a proactive strategy – such as multimodal materials, flexible timing, and reflection breaks. By combining tools like noise-cancelling headphones or

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digital graphic organizers with ongoing learner feedback, accommodations become a team effort – helping instructors and neurodivergent learners work together to create inclusive and effective learning experiences that builds positive self-esteem and sense of growth.

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BEFORE YOU START. WHAT EVERY TRAINER SHOULD KNOW

The role of the trainer

Fulfilling the role of a trainer is not easy. The main challenge trainers face is to initiate change. The change resulting from training can occur at the individual, team, or organizational level. Of course, it is difficult to expect change at the team or organizational level immediately after the training. Most often, this requires time, courage from decision-makers, and favorable circumstances. Nevertheless, already during the training and after it ends, we can expect changes at the individual level of the participants.

The goal of training is to develop the competencies of its participants. By competencies, we mean knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge is the easiest to develop (acquiring knowledge). If the participant has already learned something during the training, they must learn how to apply it (acquiring skills). For change to occur at the level of attitude, more time is needed, as the person must learn to apply the acquired solutions automatically (shaping attitude).

The trainer is responsible for identifying and analyzing training needs, designing the content and format of the training, preparing all necessary materials and teaching aids, conducting the training, and evaluating it. Proper design and implementation of each stage of the training cycle is particularly important when the participants are neurodivergent individuals.

Trainer's work hygiene

Trainer's work hygiene is not a luxury but the foundation of effective, ethical, and empathetic training. Especially when working with groups that include neurodivergent participants, it requires heightened awareness, internal balance, and openness to diversity. Only a well-rested, prepared, and empathetic trainer can create an environment where every participant has the chance to grow.

Before leading a session, trainers should prioritize their physical and mental well-being to ensure they can conduct the training comfortably and confidently.

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- **Emotional regulation and resilience**. Be aware of your own emotions and practice techniques to stay calm and open during unpredictable group dynamics. It can be helpful to practice mindfulness, controlled breathing, and keeping a reflection journal to process emotions after each session.
- **Cultivating an inclusive mindset**. Recognize neurodiversity as a different way of experiencing the world, not a deficit. You can use those diversities as the strength for your workshops.
- **Self-awareness and overload signals**. Know your personal energy and emotional limits. Identify when you are most productive during the day and schedule breaks or rest periods accordingly.
- **Sleep and recovery**. Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep before training days. Limit caffeine and other stimulants that disrupt sleep patterns and focus.
- **Physical activity**. Do brief stretching exercises to wake up your body before the session. Take a short walk or engage in light aerobic activity to oxygenate your brain and boost alertness.

The Principle of *Nothing about them without them*. Involving people with lived experience of neurodiversity in training.

One of the most powerful ways to ensure the relevance, inclusiveness, and ethical integrity of any training program on neurodiversity is to actively involve individuals who are themselves neurodivergent in the development and delivery of the training. This principle is succinctly captured in the widely recognized phrase: *Nothing about them without them*.

Involving people with lived experience in adult education initiatives reflects a broader movement towards participatory and inclusive practices in education, social work, and policy development. Research and international good practices consistently show that when people from marginalized or underrepresented groups are given a voice, the quality, authenticity, and impact of interventions significantly improve. For adult education providers, involving neurodivergent individuals as co-educators or contributors helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensure the content is grounded in real-world experiences, challenge stereotypes and misconceptions, foster empathy, and

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highlight overlooked strengths and adaptive strategies. In addition, it empowers neurodivergent individuals by shifting the power dynamic from passive recipients of support to active agents of change. This involvement transforms neurodivergent individuals from subjects of discussion to experts in their own experience—a key principle of ethical and inclusive adult education.

Several national and international programs have successfully integrated lived-experience contributors in neurodiversity education. In the UK, for instance, "Ambitious about Autism" employs autistic adults as trainers and peer educators. The "Neurodiversity Hub" in Australia and "Neurodiversity in Business" in the UK also involve neurodivergent professionals in employer training and organizational transformation. These examples show that authentic narratives, when delivered with support and structure, have a transformative effect on both learning outcomes and participant attitudes. Moreover, such involvement increases the credibility, engagement, and ethical consistency of the training.

The involvement of neurodivergent individuals in the training process can take various forms, depending on the context and goals. Trainers may invite individuals with lived experience as guest speakers or co-facilitators to share personal stories and strategies. These contributions should be well-prepared and clearly defined to ensure the speaker feels safe, respected, and empowered. Others may participate as co-designers of training materials, providing feedback on accuracy, tone, and relevance, or as reviewers and advisors during the development of the content. Their insights ensure greater alignment with the lived reality of neurodivergent individuals and reduce the risk of misrepresentation. In moderated discussions or Q&A sessions, participants can ask respectful questions, deepening their understanding. Peer mentors or learning ambassadors can also serve as examples of lived inclusion, especially in vocational or workplace training.

Preparation is essential. Those involved should receive appropriate guidance on their role, expectations, and boundaries. They should also be offered emotional and logistical support and—critically—compensated fairly for their time and expertise. Psychological safety must be ensured: contributors should never feel pressured to disclose more than they wish, and their autonomy must be respected at all times.

Involving people with lived experience of neurodivergence in the training process is not only ethically sound but also pedagogically effective. Their voices offer nuanced insight, increase learner engagement, and demonstrate the value of inclusive education. When adult learners encounter authentic perspectives grounded in personal experience, they are more likely to reflect, relate, and retain knowledge. Training

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programs rooted in the principle "Nothing about them without them" reflect a culture of co-creation, dignity, and genuine inclusion. This does not only enrich the content—it models the values we aim to teach.

Universal design in the context of neurodiversity

Universal design, also referred to as an inclusive approach, constitutes the foundation for creating environments, products, and services that meet the needs of diverse users—regardless of their individual neurological, sensory, or cognitive characteristics. The implementation of universal design principles in architecture, education, technology, or communication allows for the elimination of barriers and the creation of spaces where everyone can function on equal terms.

In the context of neurodiversity, it is essential to account for the variability in sensory processing—from reducing excessive stimulation for sensory-sensitive individuals, to employing dynamic and interactive teaching methods that support creative thinking. The practical application of these principles is reflected, among other things, in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which proposes the development of flexible learning pathways and work environments that enable the full use of each individual's potential. As a result, both physical spaces and educational and professional processes become more accessible and responsive to diverse needs.

An integrated approach to neurodiversity enables a modern interpretation of neurological differences as a valuable aspect of human variability. By combining definitions of temperament, cognitive functions, and clinical and social models, we obtain a comprehensive picture in which these differences are understood both as challenges and developmental potential. Contemporary interdisciplinary research provides evidence that developing flexible support strategies may foster better social integration and fuller use of the unique abilities of individuals with diverse neurological profiles. This approach becomes the foundation for developing educational, therapeutic, and organizational models that respond to the real needs of modern society, while promoting a culture of inclusion and acceptance.

In this handbook, we propose an approach to workshop development based on the method of universal design. The perspective of a detailed description of neurocognitive tendencies and adaptive challenges of neurodivergent individuals becomes a model for social transformation, particularly in the areas of education and professional development. When we take into account the needs that reflect extreme individual differences and then implement them into systemic solutions, we create spaces and methods of social integration that serve everyone. In

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this way, it can be said that individuals with ADHD, on the Autism Spectrum, or with a diagnosis of dyslexia become personas that set the direction for necessary socio-cultural changes.

Language and communication

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping the perception and acceptance of neurological differences. Precise and inclusive terminology supports building understanding while minimizing the risk of perpetuating stereotypes or prejudice. In the literature on neurodiversity, approaches such as the "person-first" and "identity-first" models are distinguished. In the first case, the emphasis is placed on the personhood regardless of specific traits—for example, we say "a person with autism," whereas the "identity-first" model emphasizes core identity, using the term "autistic person." The choice of communication strategy depends on the context and the individual preferences of the given community.

It is worth noting here that neurodiversity, alongside the social approach based on the individual's adaptation to the environment, is also a concept that shapes personal identity. Hence, for some people, both approaches may be appropriate—for some neurodivergent individuals, their diagnosis is part of their self-identification, i.e., they identify as autistic or ADHDers. For others, it is merely one of the factors influencing their coping abilities, i.e., they refer to themselves as a person with ADHD or a person on the autism spectrum.

Effective communication in the context of neurodiversity requires flexibility and tailoring the message to the specific needs of the recipients. Clarity, avoiding negatively charged terminology, and the ability to actively listen support the development of relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. In this way, language becomes not only a descriptive tool but also a catalyst for positive social change, enabling greater integration and appreciation of the unique talents arising from differences in how the brain processes information.

When working with neurodivergent individuals, it is therefore worth considering the individual perspective of a specific person regarding their diagnosis or, more broadly, their diversity.

Here are some general tips and hints for trainers on neuro-inclusive communication and responding to non-verbal communication:

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- Trainers should use clear, direct language and avoid allegories, sarcasm, culturally specific references or overly complex instructions that can be confusing. Simple, step-by-step guidance helps ensure that all participants can follow and engage fully. For example, replacing unclear phrases like "Do the task" with "Write your name at the top and choose one answer" improves clarity and reduces confusion.
- Communication preferences should always be respected. Trainers should ask learners how they prefer to communicate, whether verbally, in writing, or through digital or visual means. Alternative communication styles, including assistive technologies, should be normalized and supported. Likewise, trainers should ask whether individuals prefer identity-first language ("autistic person") or person-first language ("person with autism") and use what the learner is comfortable with.
- Time and space for processing information are critical. Trainers should speak slowly, pause after giving instructions, and allow extra time for responses. For example, to check understanding, it is more effective to ask, "What's your next step?" "Can you explain how you'll start?" or "What will you do next?" than "Do you understand?".
- Responding to non-verbal communication is equally essential. Many neurodivergent learners rely heavily on non-verbal ways to express needs, preferences, discomfort, or engagement. Trainers should be observant and aware that behaviors like avoiding eye contact, nervous movements, withdrawing from interaction, or changes in posture may indicate sensory overload, anxiety, confusion, or emotional distress. Also, trainers should learn to recognize these signs and respond calmly. For example, saying "Would you like to take a short break?" can provide support without pressure or even better to take the initiative and suggest as a trainer "Let's take a short break" as there is the possibility for example a learner to be overstimulated and not admit or realize it. It is important to respond without drawing unnecessary attention or judgment. Trainers should also avoid forcing eye contact or pressuring learners to participate verbally if they are clearly communicating non-verbally.
- Trainers should also offer non-verbal ways for learners to participate, such as visual hints, color or emoji cards, or written responses. Creating a safe, flexible learning space, where silence, movement, and alternative expressions are accepted, helps ensure that everyone can engage in the way that works best for them.

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Technologies that address diverse learning needs

Trainers should make it part of their professional practice to stay informed about technological tools that can support diverse learning needs, as this enables them to guide learners toward effective solutions when challenges arise. Since many applications are language-specific or quickly outdated, it is more important to know the categories of tools available, such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, reading supports, or organizational aids, and to keep track of reliable sources of information, like accessibility sections of major software providers, open educational technology hubs, or professional networks. Here are some **durable, well-established tools** available across languages:

- **NVDA (NonVisual Desktop Access)**, a free, open-source screen reader for Windows, widely used and regularly updated;
- **Microsoft Immersive Reader**, built into Microsoft tools (Word, OneNote, Teams, Edge), supports text-to-speech, line focus, and reading comprehension aids;
- **VoiceOver** (macOS & iOS) and **TalkBack** (Android), built-in screen readers on Apple and Android devices.

In addition, educators should be aware of the growing role of **AI-based tools**, which can assist with simplifying texts, generating practice materials, or offering personalized support. By maintaining an up-to-date understanding of these resources, trainers are better prepared to recommend appropriate options and foster more inclusive learning environments.

European legal frameworks

At the European level, several key legal instruments and policy frameworks protect the rights of neurodivergent learners and ensure equal treatment in education and training. These provide a baseline of rights across all EU member states, although specific implementation depends on each national legal system.

- **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** (Articles 21 and 26) prohibits discrimination on grounds including disability, and guarantees the right of people with disabilities to benefit from measures ensuring independence, social and occupational integration, and participation in community life.

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- **Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC)** establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, including vocational training. It requires reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.
- **European Pillar of Social Rights** (Principle 17) reinforces inclusion of people with disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities in education, training, and lifelong learning.
- **The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, ratified by the EU, obliges member states to guarantee inclusive education systems and access to vocational training without discrimination.

While these frameworks apply across the EU, **learners and educators must also remain informed about specific national laws and policies**, which may provide additional rights, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms. The combination of EU-wide standards and national implementation ensures that neurodivergent learners are legally protected and can demand adaptations where necessary.

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MODULE 1 – INTRODUCTION TO NEURODIVERSITY FOR EDUCATORS

4 hours / 240 minutes

Objectives and learning outcomes:

Participants will be equipped with basic theoretical knowledge and the historical context of the neurodiversity movement, enabling them to understand and appreciate neurological differences as the natural range of human variation. They will also begin to reflect on their own attitudes, stereotypes, and biases to develop an inclusive approach in education.

Knowledge:

- The participant knows and understands the concepts of neurodiversity and key terms.
- Knows and understands theoretical models of individual differences.
- Understands the basic types of neurodiversity (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia, Tourette's) and their impact on the learning process.
- Understands the variability of functioning within a single diagnosis (e.g., autism spectrum).
- Has knowledge about the brain and information processing.

Skills

- Can identify potential training needs arising from specific cognitive and social characteristics of neurodiverse participants.
- Is able to reflect on their own attitudes: Conduct self-reflection on their own stereotypes and prejudices regarding people with ADHD, dyslexia, and the autism spectrum.
- Can cooperate and establish rules: Actively participate in establishing a shared agreement (contract) regarding the rules and cooperation during the training.
- Maintains an inclusive attitude in communication.
- Can analyze automatic processes.

Attitudes

- Openness to cognitive diversity.
- Self-awareness: Reflection on own stereotypes and prejudices and developing a readiness to work on them.

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- Drawing conclusions for professional practice: Attitudes are shaped through a summarizing process where the trainer moderates a discussion, guiding participants to reflect on their own observations during the learning process and draw conclusions for application to their professional reality.

Detailed scenario of the module:

Training module and its general description	***Course flow and content (detailed agenda with exercises, and tasks)***	***Training methods*** ***---*** ***Resources and tools used***	***Time*** ***(min)***
Introduction to the program; Getting to know participants' individual goals.	Welcome, discussion of the training objectives and purpose (why are we here?). Introductory round, each participant introduces themselves and shares their expectations for the training. Presentation of the agenda. Training contract – establishing a mutual agreement regarding rules and collaboration during the training. **Remark for the trainer:** the contract will be used during next sessions - please keep the work for the further usage.	Contract --- Flipchart, markers, materials of one's choice: paper materials, stickers etc., own multimedia presentation	30 min.
Definition of neurodiversity Key concepts related to the neurodiversity movement	Presentation of the concept of neurodiversity, the interdisciplinary model, and key terms (neurodivergence, neurotypicality, neurodiversity paradigm). Historical and theoretical foundations of the neurodiversity movement. Highlighting the importance of neurological differences in individual functioning.	Interactive lecture --- Multimedia presentation	30 min.

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Biological model of individual differences Universal design	Discussion of the concept of neurodiversity as a range of natural variations in brain structure and function. Definitions of temperament, cognitive functions, and adaptive mechanisms. The importance of environmental factors in the context of human adaptation and development. Environmental barriers affecting difficulties faced by neurodivergent individuals. Participants are asked reflective questions regarding neurodiversity.	Interactive lecture --- Multimedia presentation	20 min.
BREAK			**15 min.**
Neuro-divergence in the context of the social and medical model	Definition of neurodevelopmental disorders – medical model. Neurodivergence in the social model – an alternative path of neurocognitive development. From challenges to potential and educational needs illustrated by ADHD, ASD, Dyslexia, and Dyspraxia (DCD): Exercise. Work in groups. Each group works with one chosen persona: 1. *Read persona chart. Familiarise yourselves with the persona.* 2. *Reflect and try to put yourselves in persona's shoes.* 3. *Identify their educational needs and challenges.* 4. *Identify their talents and abilities.* 5. *Using any method or technique (text description, drawing, table, mind map etc.) present these challenges and abilities in a way that is most appropriate for the person, consistent with their learning capabilities and needs.* Groups present results of their work. Discussion moderated by a trainer.	Work in groups Moderated discussion supported by a trainer's lecture --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Persona charts Flipchart & markers / interactive board	60 min.

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	Remark for the trainer: Results of work will be used during session nr 2 - please keep the work for the further usage.		
BREAK			**15 min.**
From universality to diversity of the nervous system	Evolution of the human brain. Overview of basic structures: the cerebral cortex (higher functions: thinking and decision-making), the limbic system (regulating emotions), and the brainstem and cerebellum (controlling motor coordination). How neurons, neurotransmitters, and synaptic connections influence brain function. Comparison of brain structure to a complex network system – emphasizing that diversity in the structure and function of neurons translates into varied cognitive and adaptive abilities.	Lecture --- Multimedia presentation	15 min.
Automatic brain activity vs. reflective processes	Automated brain function – discussion of how the brain processes information without conscious cognitive involvement. Overview of cognitive schemas – biases and stereotypes. Interactive exercises on perception: how the brain recognizes and categorizes data Pair exercise: which automatic processes help you, and which hinder your daily functioning	Lecture Work in groups and pairs --- Multimedia presentation containing various perceptual illusions	20 min.
Awareness of one's own attitudes towards neuro-divergent individuals	Exercise focused on reflecting on one's own stereotypes and prejudices: Participants work in small groups; their task is to discuss and reflect on their own beliefs about people with ADHD, dyslexia, and Autism Spectrum. Groups prepare a list of points trainers should pay attention to in communication with neurodivergent individuals to maintain an inclusive attitude.	Self-reflection, Work in groups, discussion --- Handout: Persona charts Flipchart, markers	20 min.

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Session summary	Participants return to working in the large group. The trainer moderates the discussion, guiding participants from summarizing the processes that took place in the group to reflecting on their own observations during the learning process. *In which professional areas do you place this workshop?* *How has it helped you?* Conclusions with application to participants' reality. Trainer's feedback.	Self-reflection, Trainer-led moderated group discussion --- Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	15 min.

Additional tips and hints for the trainer

Examples of questions to ask to engage participants in discussion:

- What is neurodiversity – how do you understand the concept?
- What elements of individual differences fall under the umbrella of neurodiversity?
- What is the difference between neurodivergence and neurodiversity?
- Which neurological types are considered neuroatypical (or neurodivergent)?
- What is the evolutionary significance of neurodiversity?
- What kinds of cognitive abilities can people have?
- Is any specific cognitive style better than others?
- How does cognitive diversity affect professional and social functioning?
- How does it affect human functioning in the learning process?
- How do temperament and cognitive differences affect development?

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MODULE 2 - IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF TRAINING NEEDS

2 hours / 120 minutes

Objectives and learning outcomes:

Participants will increase their awareness of the specific functioning of neurodivergent individuals in the context of learning, be equipped to identify training needs tailored to this group, and develop an empathetic and flexible approach to educational planning.

Knowledge:

- Participant knows basic types of neurodiversity (e.g., autism, ADHD, dyslexia, Tourette's) and their impact on the learning process.
- Understands variability within a single diagnosis (e.g., autism spectrum).
- Participant knows methods for assessing training needs (including interviews, observation, questionnaires, projective techniques).
- Understands limitations of traditional methods regarding neurodiverse individuals.
- Participant knows a catalog of deepening questions tailored to neurodiverse training needs analysis.

Skills:

- Can identify potential training needs arising from specific cognitive and social traits of neurodiverse participants.
- Can plan initial actions to prepare the learning environment.
- Can adapt communication style and questioning style to participants' communication preferences.
- Can collect information without compromising the neurodiverse person's sense of safety.
- Can formulate a set of diagnostic questions in areas such as content, format, communication, and sensory comfort.

Attitudes:

- Attentiveness to communication style and pace of the person being assessed.
- Willingness to adapt training methods and communication styles.
- Openness to flexible and creative input gathering.
- Commitment to understanding the participant's perspective beyond mere data collection.
- Appreciation of the importance of individualization.
- Research-oriented and reflective attitude towards one's own trainer assumptions.

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Detailed scenario of the module:

Training module and its general description	*Course flow and content (detailed agenda with exercises, and tasks)*	*Training methods* --- *Resources and tools used*	*Time* *(min)*
Introduction to the topic of the module	Welcome, overview of the objectives and subject of the session, presentation of the meeting agenda.	Trainer introduction --- Multimedia presentation	10 min.
Target group identification	Exercise "Personas" – pair work with descriptions of fictional neurodivergent individuals, identifying their educational needs. Exercise: *List educational needs the person might have.* Individual reflection: *What do I know and what do I fear when working with neurodivergent people?* Conclusions: *How can knowledge of neurodiversity be used to diagnose the educational needs of all training participants?*	Lecture Work in pairs --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Persona charts Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	35 min.
BREAK			**10 min.**
Methods of needs assessment	Systematics of methods for identifying and analyzing training needs. Exercise: Step 1: Individual work. Participants receive Handout / worksheet: Sample questions for training needs assessment. *Choose one preferred template and fill the it with your own needs (personal perspective).*	Lecture Individual work Work in small groups --- Multimedia presentation	50 min.

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	Step 2: Work in small groups. Each group work with one neurodiverse profile. Grous receive once again Handout / worksheet: Sample questions for training needs assessment. *Come back to Personas and results of group work from Module 1 and previous exercise (before break). Choose neurodiverse profile you want to work on.* *Fill in the template for training needs assessment with needs and challenges of the person of certain neuro-profile.* *If needed, how would you reformulate the questions in the template taking into account the specifics of this neurodiverse profile?* Step 3: Groups share the results. Discussion: *What questions are worth asking to identify learning barriers?* *How to ask questions in neutral way?* Step 4: Individual or in small groups. Transfer from individual needs to group needs map. *Collect all results of individual needs. Using any technique or method create a visual representation of key points you need to address at the level of the whole group.* Participants present results of their work. Discussion moderated by a trainer.	Handout / worksheet: Sample questions for training needs assessment. Handout: Persona charts Results of group work from Module 1 Handout: Tips and hints. How to ask questions in a neutral way? Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	
Session summary	Trainer moderates discussion: *In which professional areas do you place this workshop? / How did it help you?*	Self-reflection	15 min.

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	Self-reflection – Moderated discussion: *How far does our role as a trainer extend?* Conclusions with application to participants' real-life contexts Trainer feedback **Homework:** prepare and bring for the next session a ready-made workshop / training module - an example / the latest / the most popular one from your repertoire.	Trainer-led moderated group discussion --- Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	

Additional tips and hints for the recipients of the training

Psychological safety within the group:

When working with a training group that includes neurodivergent participants, the trainer's relationship with each individual is crucial for their sense of safety, engagement, and learning effectiveness. The trainer must demonstrate empathy, flexibility, and constant awareness of the varied communication styles and information-processing needs within a heterogeneous group.

What should be avoided when training neurodivergent participants?

- Irony, sarcasm, and vague hints.
- Rigid judgments ("normal/abnormal," "typical/atypical").
- Framing neurologically driven behaviors as signs of poor manners or 'uncultured' conduct.
- Forcing group work, verbal contributions, or sustained eye contact.
- Surprises without prior warning.

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Key principles for building relationships with neurodivergent participants:

- **Authenticity and respect for differences.** Trainers should cultivate genuine interactions by avoiding assumptions and stereotypes - recognizing that no two autistic or ADHD individuals share identical needs. By demonstrating authentic respect, you validate diverse ways of being and learning, laying a foundation of trust. Instead of speaking about participants in abstract terms, engage with them directly, use inclusive language and steer clear of labels. Honor each person's unique pace for absorbing information, expressing emotions, and communicating preferences.
- **Clear, literal, and polite communication**. Ambiguity can be a barrier: metaphors, irony, or vague instructions often prove confusing - especially for autistic learners. Provide step-by-step directions in plain language (for example, "Please open your notebook, write today's title, then wait for my next prompt" instead of "Get ready to work"). Courteous, literal phrasing reduces misunderstandings and helps participants focus on content rather than decoding hidden meanings.
- **Space for autonomy.** Neurodivergent participants may need to withdraw periodically, take sensory breaks, or limit eye contact (behaviors that don't indicate disengagement). Offer multiple ways to participate: silent reflection, chat functions in online settings, camera-off options, or small-group and solo tasks. Granting this autonomy shows respect for individual comfort levels and encourages genuine engagement on each learner's terms.
- **Creating a safe environment**. Forced interactions like demanding someone speak in front of the entire group can trigger intense stress. Emphasize voluntariness by announcing in advance who will contribute and for how long, and by maintaining a predictable agenda. When participants know what to expect and can choose their level of involvement, social safety increases, paving the way for more effective learning.
- **Positive reinforcement and non-judgmental feedback.** Focus praise on specific behaviors or accomplishments ("Your summary of that case study was clear and well-organized") rather than general traits ("You're so smart"). When corrective feedback is needed, offer it privately and with sensitivity. This approach strengthens confidence, maintains dignity, and encourages a growth mindset without the fear of public criticism.

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How to ask questions in a 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. Questions 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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MODULE 3 – DESIGNING THE TRAINING

4 hours / 240 minutes

Objectives and learning outcomes:

Participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to design training tailored to the needs of neurodivergent individuals – taking into account the specifics of the group, educational goals, teaching methods, space, and condition.

Knowledge:

- Knows the methods of group selection and the principles of formulating didactic goals
- Knows the structure of a training script and the typology of methods
- Knows the principles of designing cognitively accessible materials and safe and effective learning environment
- Knows the factors influencing comfort and concentration
- Understands the risks of overload and coping strategies

Skills:

- Can match the participant profile to the training program and set realistic goals
- Creates an outline, selects appropriate forms of work
- Creates clear, adapted materials
- Can arrange a sensory-friendly space
- Can take care of their well-being and manage energy

Attitudes:

- Sensitivity to diversity and willingness to adapt goals
- Willingness to test and evaluate different forms of work
- Recognizes the importance of equal access to content
- Recognizes the impact of the environment on the quality of learning
- Cultivates an attitude of caring for oneself and others

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In this module, participants are encouraged to reflect on how their own training designs support or hinder learners with diverse cognitive needs. A proactive, learner-centered approach begins with intentional, accessible design.

Detailed scenario of the module

Training module and its general description	***Course flow and content (detailed agenda with exercises, and tasks)***	***Training methods*** ***---*** ***Resources and tools used***	***Time*** ***(min)***
Introduction to the topic of the session	Welcome, overview of the objectives and subject of the session, presentation of the meeting agenda.	Trainer introduction --- Multimedia presentation	10 min.
Organization of the training space	Exercise - practical room setup and ensuring comfort (simulation of room arrangement according to sensory preferences): Trainer asks participants to arrange the room according to their preferences. *How do you feel in it?* *Does this arrangement promote learning / is it consistent with your individual preferences?* Recommendations regarding the arrangement of the workspace, inclusive for neurodivergent individuals. How to use this knowledge in planning online sessions? - discussion / brainstorming.	Trainer's presentation Discussion, brainstorming Individual activity Work in small groups --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Tips and hints. How to prepare space supporting diverse needs? Room equipment	40 min.

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Lesson plan and selection of training methods	What to remember when developing a lesson plan? Discussion of activating methods. Exercise: Participants prepare a lesson plan on a template (planning the content of their own training modules, time frames, breaks, necessary materials, etc., activating methods, tips).	Mini-lecture. Discussion, brainstorming Individual work --- Multimedia presentation Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	30 min.
BREAK			**10 min.**
Preparation of exercises	A short overview of Kolb's Cycle with active participation of the group. Individual reflection: *At which stage of Kolb's cycle do I feel best? At which worst?* Movement exercise: participants arrange themselves in the room (e.g. in four room corners) depending on their preferred stage of Kolb's cycle. Then trainer forms working groups providing representation of each stage of Kolb's cycle in each group – one person from each corner (if possible). Work in groups: First participants work individually on their own training module (of their own preference). They break it down according to the stages of Kolb's learning cycle. Peer learning: they provide feedback to each other – peer learning – helping each other develop the module based on the full Kolb cycle.	Mini -lecture Individual work Discussion, brainstorming --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Kolb's Cycle Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	50 min.
Instructions for participants	How to give neuro-friendly instructions? Exercise: Participants work in groups, they use Persona charts.	Mini-lecture. Discussion, brainstorming Work in groups	30 min.

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	1. *Remind yourselves the needs and challenges of person of certain neuro-profile* 2. *Rewrite the instruction to exemplary exercise to be adequate and responding to needs and challenges of this neuro-profile. Work on your own example or example given by the trainer.* Discussion: *How to implement gained knowledge in practice when you expect having participants with different needs?*	--- Multimedia presentation Handout: Persona charts Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	
BREAK			**10 min.**
Preparation of teaching materials.	Principles of preparing teaching materials for neurodivergent individuals.' Guidelines for preparing visual educational materials Individual exercise: *Rewrite a slide / several slides of your own PPT into a neuro-friendly version, according to the guidelines.* Checking your own presentation for weaknesses / critical points for improvement **Homework:** improve your presentation.	Mini lecture Individual work Discussion, brainstorming --- Multimedia presentation with guidelines and application examples Handout: Tips and hints for creating neuroinclusive teaching materials Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	40 min.
Trainer's work hygiene.	Physical and mental preparation. Supervision/intervision as a tool for taking care of trainer's mental well-being Individual exercise: *How do we usually do this?* Participants fill self-care test Trainer moderates discussion and group works on list of ideas and strategies for trainers' self-care.	Mini lecture Individual work Discussion, brainstorming --- Multimedia presentation. Handout/worksheet: Trainer's work hygiene – self-care test	20 min.

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	What time did I go to bed yesterday? *What did I eat for breakfast?* *Did I do anything pleasant for myself lately?* *How did I prepare for today to have more energy?* *Do I have any rituals which help me better spend the day?* *Did I practice them? Was it helpful, did it give me more energy?* [No judgements, no presumptions]	Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	
Session summary.	The trainer moderates the discussion: *In which professional areas do you place this workshop?* *How did it help you?* Conclusions with transfer to the participants' reality. Trainer feedback.	Self-reflection Trainer-led moderated group discussion --- Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	10 min.

Additional tips and hints for the recipients of the training

Designing inclusive training: considering executive functioning:

Effective training design is a critical step in ensuring that learning environments are accessible and supportive for all adult learners, including those with neurodivergent profiles. One of the key cognitive areas that often requires attention in this context is executive functioning. Executive functions refer to a range of mental processes that support planning, organizing, initiating and completing tasks, time management, and self-regulation.

When designing a training program, educators should be aware that difficulties in executive functioning can significantly affect how some learners engage with the material and structure. Neurodivergent adults—such as individuals with ADHD, autism, dyspraxia, or specific

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learning difficulties—may experience challenges in organizing their thoughts, following sequences, managing distractions, and sustaining attention.

An inclusive training design addresses these challenges from the outset by applying principles of universal design and reasonable accommodation. This means planning sessions with clear structure, using varied methods of content delivery, and offering multiple ways for learners to interact with materials.

Practical design strategies for executive functioning support:

To make the learning environment more accessible for learners with executive functioning differences, training designers can integrate the following strategies into their planning:

2. **Create a predictable session structure:**
    - Begin each session with a clear outline or agenda that is both verbal and visual.
    - Indicate the approximate timing of activities to support time orientation.
    - Include transitions in the agenda, so learners know what to expect next.
2. **Chunk information into manageable units:**
    - Divide content into smaller sections with frequent summaries or pauses.
    - Use bullet points or visual diagrams to represent sequences, steps, or concepts.
    - Provide a written handout or slide deck for learners to follow at their own pace.
3. **Provide multimodal access to content:**
    - Use a combination of written, spoken, visual, and interactive materials.

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- Offer content in digital and printable formats for flexible use.
- Use color coding or symbols to help learners navigate complex materials.

4. **Support task planning and organization:**
   - Offer templates, checklists, and guided worksheets to structure tasks.
   - Allow extra time for planning and completion, and explain expectations clearly.
   - Use worked examples to illustrate what a completed task looks like.
5. **Reduce cognitive load:**
   - Avoid unnecessary complexity in visual design or language.
   - Provide optional review materials or summaries at the end of sessions.
   - Integrate short reflective pauses to help learners consolidate understanding.
6. **Incorporate flexibility and autonomy:**
   - Allow learners to choose among activity formats (e.g., discussion, writing, drawing).
   - Include optional breaks or quiet tasks for learners who need downtime.
   - Encourage learners to self-monitor their needs and advocate for adjustments.
7. **Plan for emotional and cognitive safety:**
   - Set clear ground rules and expectations for group interaction.
   - Avoid unannounced changes to the schedule where possible.
   - Build in opportunities for one-on-one check-ins or support.

These strategies are beneficial not only for neurodivergent learners but for all adults—especially those returning to learning after a longer break, or those balancing multiple life demands. Designing with executive functioning in mind contributes to a more inclusive, flexible, and empowering educational experience.

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MODULE 4 – TRAINING DELIVERY

4 hours / 240 minutes

Objectives and learning outcomes:

Participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively conduct training sessions, taking into account the principles of contracting, the structure of workshop work, adapted training techniques, and relationships based on safety, inclusivity, and respect for neurodivergent individuals.

Knowledge:

- Knows the principles of building an educational contract – including the psychological contract.
- Knows the models and stages of a training session.
- Knows various teaching techniques, also for people with different cognitive profiles.
- Understands group dynamics and the importance of relationships in the learning process.

Skills:

- Can work with a group to develop and enforce rules of cooperation.
- Can plan and conduct a coherent training session.
- Selects techniques appropriate to the group, topic, and goal of the training.
- Builds a climate of trust and supports participants in various forms of engagement.

Attitudes:

- Appreciates the importance of a sense of security and agency.
- Recognizes the value of consistency and transparency for participants.
- Values flexibility and a readiness for diversity in work styles.
- Maintains an attitude of respect, patience, and empathy.

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In this module, trainers are encouraged to adopt a reflective and responsive mindset. Delivering training inclusively is not about perfect control—it is about observing learners' signals, adjusting in real-time, and facilitating with awareness and flexibility. This promotes both equity and excellence in adult education.

Detailed scenario of the module:

Training module and its general description	***Course flow and content (detailed agenda with exercises, and tasks)***	***Training methods*** ***---*** ***Resources and tools used***	***Time*** ***(min)***
Introduction to the topic of the session	Welcome, overview of the objectives and subject of the session, presentation of the meeting agenda.	Trainer introduction --- Multimedia presentation	10 min.
The role of the contract in the training process	*What is a contract?* *How can it help us?* *How to establish it from the bottom up?* *How to adhere to it? (will there be sanctions?)* *How to motivate neurodivergent participants?* *How to include different participation styles?* Discussion: ***Common or individual?*** *How to commonize the rules so that everyone agrees to them?*	Discussion, brainstorming Work in groups --- Multimedia presentation Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	40 min.

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	Exercise: Creating a joint training contract (taking neurodiversity into account) *Split into groups. Come back to your contract from Module 1.* *Analyze and rewrite/ reframe it to be more neurodivergent sensitive.* *Be mindful of language, clarity, structure and general frame in relation to the different needs of neuroprofiles.* *Write down the rules as simple and precise as possible.*		
Roles of the trainer and methods of work	Kolb's learning cycle and the trainer's role in the training room. The recency effect – mini lecture highlighting needs of summarizing each stage of the training especially in relation to the specific needs of neurodivergent participants. Group discussion: *What are the different roles of a trainer at each stage? (e.g. moderation, leading, facilitating - definition of different skills).* Brainstorming: *Generate examples of different techniques and practices used during your training. Group them according to Kolb's Cycle* *Which of the techniques are the most critical from the perspective of neuroatypical individuals?* Group exercise: Prepare a list of **Do's and Don'ts** for trainers referring to the previously listed techniques and practices: Top 5 rules for trainers to be mindful of at each stage of Kolb's cycle.	Mini-lecture Work in groups, brainstorming --- Handout: Kolb's Cycle Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	50 min.
BREAK			**20 min.**

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Training techniques	Lecture about specificity of cognitive processing and executive functions in relation to needs of neurodivergent students (use the guidelines marked below) Using training techniques based on the diversity of forms of communication, flexibility, and predictability. Individual exercise: 1. *Gather all materials from the previous session - all of your training methods that you already improved and integrate with the top rules of Kolb's cycle to design the consistent flow of all sessions.* 2. *Using an example of your own chosen training, analyze the range of exercises and training techniques you use in terms of considering the different needs of participants (e.g., sensory, cognitive, communication).* 3. *Summary and self-reflection: Create a list of the strengths and weaknesses of your own toolkit.*	Mini lecture Individual work --- Multimedia presentation Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	50 min.
Relationships with participants.	Principles of building relationships with neurodivergent participants. Discussion: *My experience and how I coped.* *What to avoid in training work with neurodivergent individuals?* *What conditions need to be provided to ensure they feel comfortable and safe?* *What obstacles may affect knowledge acquisition?* *How might participants respond to sensory stimuli?* *Which behaviors should be avoided?* Exercise in pairs: A do's and don'ts list created in pairs by the participants, moderated by the trainer.	Mini lecture Discussion Individual work, work in pairs --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Tips and hints. Psychological safety within the group. Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	50 min.

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Session summary.	The trainer moderates the discussion: *In which professional areas do you place this workshop?* *How did it help you?* Conclusions with transfer to the participants' reality. Trainer feedback.	Self-reflection Trainer-led moderated group discussion --- Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	20 min.

Additional tips and hints for the recipients of the training

Delivering Training with Executive Functioning in Mind

The delivery phase of training plays a vital role in how adult learners interact with content, the facilitator, and each other. For neurodivergent individuals, the trainer's delivery style can either mitigate or exacerbate challenges related to executive functioning. These include sustaining attention, switching between tasks, managing information load, initiating participation, or coping with transitions.

Executive functioning difficulties are often invisible and may be misinterpreted as lack of motivation or interest. However, they are rooted in cognitive processing differences that require sensitive and responsive approaches in facilitation. Trainers play a central role in creating environments where learners can feel regulated, safe, and able to engage at their own pace and capacity.

Practical Delivery Strategies to Support Executive Functioning:

Trainers can apply the following practices to better support learners during live training sessions:

1. **Signal structure and transitions clearly**
    - Verbally preview what's coming next (e.g., "We'll finish this discussion in 5 minutes, then move into group work").
    - Use visual timers, verbal countdowns, or written timelines to prepare learners for transitions.

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- Return to the session agenda at intervals to orient participants.

2. **Provide dual-format instructions**
   - Always combine verbal explanations with written or visual instructions.
   - When giving multi-step directions, number them or break them down visually.
   - Check for understanding with non-evaluative prompts (e.g., "What's the first thing we'll do here?").
3. **Support attention and focus**
   - Alternate between active and passive learning modes (e.g., presentation, discussion, reflective task).
   - Use varied stimuli (slides, visuals, objects) while keeping the design simple and not overstimulating.
   - Introduce focused attention exercises at the beginning of the session or after breaks.
4. **Build in opportunities for regulation**
   - Integrate short, predictable breaks every 45–60 minutes.
   - Allow movement options (e.g., standing, stretching, pacing at the back).
   - Make quiet spaces or off-camera time permissible where appropriate (especially online).
5. **Support memory and follow-through**
   - Summarize key points visually at the end of each section.
   - Record instructions or key information (e.g., whiteboard notes, shared slides).
   - Encourage note-taking in flexible formats (e.g., drawing, voice memos, apps).
6. **Use modelling and transparent facilitation**

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- Model planning steps aloud (e.g., "Let's think through what we need to do first...").
- Acknowledge when concentration is difficult and name strategies to re-engage.
- Narrate the session's flow to reduce ambiguity (e.g., "You might feel this is fast-paced; let's slow down.")

7. **Foster psychological safety and learner autonomy**
   - Normalize different working and processing styles (e.g., "Some people need more time to think – that's okay.")
   - Use inclusive language and avoid putting learners on the spot without consent.
   - Allow learners to choose how they contribute (e.g., spoken, written, non-verbal).

By applying these practices, trainers create an environment where neurodivergent learners can better access, process, and apply what they are learning. Importantly, these delivery strategies benefit all learners by reducing stress, increasing clarity, and offering multiple modes of participation. This reflects the universal design principle: what supports some supports all.

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MODULE 5 – TRAINING EVALUATION

3 hours / 180 minutes

Objectives and learning outcomes:

The participant understands the role and importance of evaluation in the training cycle, can select and apply appropriate feedback collection techniques tailored to the needs of neurodivergent individuals, and uses evaluation results to plan and improve their training work in an ethical, inclusive, and reflective manner.

Knowledge:

- Understands the concept of evaluation in the context of training.
- Knows the types of evaluation: initial, ongoing, final.
- Knows when and for what purpose each type of evaluation is used.
- Knows various evaluation techniques, including alternative forms adapted to neurodivergent individuals (e.g., visual, digital, narrative).
- Understands the impact of cognitive differences on how feedback is given.
- Knows good practices and ethical principles of conducting evaluations.
- Knows how to react to difficult feedback and how to use it constructively.

Skills:

- Can plan a basic evaluation cycle in their training.
- Knows how to choose the moment and form of evaluation appropriate to the training objectives.
- Can create and use various evaluation tools (visual, symbolic, narrative).
- Knows how to design a sensory-friendly evaluation form.
- Can conduct an evaluation in an atmosphere of trust and safety.
- Can interpret feedback, including non-verbal and indirect signals.

Attitudes:

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- Appreciates the value of feedback in professional development.
- Shows openness to continuous improvement of the training process.
- Shows sensitivity to the cognitive and communication needs of participants.
- Promotes the right of every participant to express their opinion in a way that is comfortable for them.
- Maintains humility and openness to feedback.
- Builds a relationship based on respect, where participants feel heard and valued

Detailed scenario of the module:

Training module and its general description	***Course flow and content (detailed agenda with exercises, and tasks).***	***Training methods*** ***---*** ***Resources and tools used***	***Time*** ***(min)***
Introduction to the topic of the session	Welcome, overview of the objectives and subject of the session, presentation of the meeting agenda	Trainer introduction --- Multimedia presentation	10 min.
Under-standing the evaluation of the training process	The role of evaluation in the trainer's work. Definition and types of training process evaluation. Evaluation vs. effectiveness assessment. Evaluation criteria. Exercise in groups: Choose 2-3 evaluation criteria and discuss: *Why you chose those specific ones. What will you achieve through this? How do you intend to examine them?* *What does training evaluation include?* Discussion in the whole group.	Mini lecture Work in groups Moderated discussion --- Multimedia presentation Handout: Evaluation criteria form Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	40 min.

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BREAK				**10 min.**
Feedback collection techniques adapted to neuro-divergent participants.	Demonstration of alternative feedback tools. Discussion: *What determines the choice of a particular technique?* Examples of neurotypically inclusive feedback methods: picture surveys, emoticon scales, colors, images, mood cards etc. written statements instead of oral ones. Differences in information processing and the choice of tool. Group exercise: *Create your own tool templates.*	Mini -lecture Work in groups Moderated discussion --- Multimedia presentation Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice		40 min.
BREAK				**10 min.**
Tips for the trainer regarding the evaluation of training sessions. Language of feedback.	List of useful suggestions for the trainer regarding conducting training evaluations adapted to neurodivergent individuals. Brainstorming: Neuroinclusive feedback session: *What to avoid when evaluating with neurodivergent individuals?* *How to ensure safe and comfortable conditions for giving feedback?* *How to encourage honesty without pressure?* *How to react to difficult or ambiguous feedback?* Exercise: *Translate the language of feedback:* Participants work individually or in group(s). They work with examples of unclear statements. Version 1 of the task: *Respond to unclear statements to receive precise feedback.* Version 2 of the task: *Identify possible emotions and needs that might have been behind the statement. Rewrite unclear statements into more constructive, empathetic feedback language following the scheme: When [situation], I feel [feeling], because [need].*	Mini -lecture Individual or group work Brainstorming and moderated discussion --- Multimedia presentation Handout /Worksheet: Language of feedback. Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice		40 min.

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	Reflection: *What did we discover when translating these comments?* *Which of them were hardest to decode? Why?* *What assumptions do we often make about tone or politeness?* *What practices could we change to receive clearer, safer, more accessible feedback from neurodivergent learners?*		
Summary of the session and the whole program	The trainer moderates the discussion: *In which professional areas do you place this training?* *How did it help you?* Conclusions with transfer to the participants' reality. Trainer's feedback.	Self-reflection Trainer-led moderated group discussion --- Flipchart & markers / interactive board, other materials of one's choice	30 min.

Additional tips and hints for the recipients of the training

Tips for Neuroinclusive Evaluation

- **Normalize directness** – Many neurodivergent people express themselves precisely and value honesty over social smoothing.
- **Avoid over-interpreting tone** – A "flat" or critical comment may reflect a very **valid insight**.
- **Use multiple feedback channels**: anonymous forms, visual tools, one-on-one conversations, sensory-friendly formats.
- **Validate feedback**: Show you are listening and willing to adapt.
- Consider **visual scales**, icons or emojis when collecting feedback (for participants with language processing differences).

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