

A FREE WORKBOOK

Creating Low Sensory, High Performance Work Environments

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Neurotalks



WELCOME

I'm Jodie Steele — a neurodivergent workplace consultant specialising in sensory-aware leadership and high-performance environments. I help organisations understand how sensory needs and communication differences shape focus, wellbeing, and productivity.

My goal is simple: to support managers in creating workplaces where people can think clearly, work comfortably, and perform at their best.

Jodie Steele



How to use this workbook

This workbook is designed to support your understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. Each section includes practical insights, reflective prompts, and strategies you can apply immediately in your role or team.

You're encouraged to move through the pages at your own pace. Use the reflection spaces to note ideas, challenges, and actions relevant to your working environment. The more you personalise your answers, the more valuable this resource becomes. Whether you're a leader, manager, or team member, this guide will help you build awareness, strengthen communication, and contribute to a more inclusive, sensory-aware workplace culture.

Questions?

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

An overview of neurodiversity in the workplace and why creating inclusive, sensory-aware environments benefits both employees and organisations.



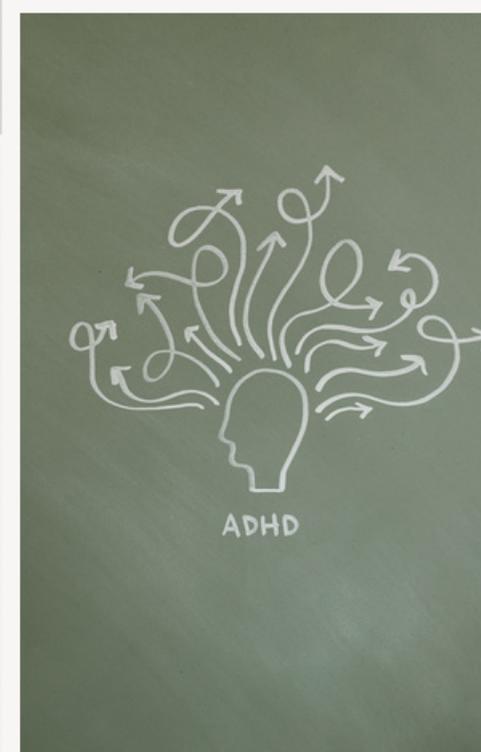
Introduction

Understanding neurodiversity begins with recognising the wide range of ways people think, process information, and experience the world. In every organisation, neurodivergent employees contribute unique strengths, perspectives, and problem-solving approaches that can significantly enhance creativity, innovation, and overall performance.

Yet performance is strongly influenced by the environment people work in. Sensory factors such as lighting, noise, workload flow, and interruptions can either support focus or create barriers that lead to fatigue and reduced productivity. For many neurodivergent individuals, these elements have a heightened impact but thoughtful adjustments benefit all employees.

This chapter introduces the core principles of neurodiversity and explores why low-sensory, well-designed work environments are essential for enabling people to do their best work. When managers understand sensory needs and create spaces that minimise distraction and cognitive load, teams become more engaged, more consistent, and more effective.

Example: A team member moved from a noisy open-plan area to a quieter desk and their accuracy improved noticeably.



Why Sensory Aware Workplaces Improve Performance

High performance relies on clarity, focus, and the ability to work without unnecessary cognitive strain. Sensory overload from noise, bright lighting, interruptions, or unclear communication reduces these capacities, particularly for neurodivergent employees but often for the whole team. When sensory load increases, accuracy drops, fatigue rises, and productivity becomes harder to sustain. Low-sensory environments help employees think more clearly and work more efficiently. By minimising distractions and creating predictable, comfortable spaces, managers enable deeper concentration, smoother task completion, and fewer stress related performance dips. These improvements translate directly into stronger output, better consistency, and reduced burnout.

Creating a high performance environment isn't about major redesigns, it's about removing barriers. When managers understand how sensory factors affect the brain, decision making, and emotional regulation, they can build teams that are more focused, more resilient, and better equipped to do their best work.



CHAPTER ONE

Reflection for Managers

What aspects of your current workplace environment support focus, and which create interruptions or stress?

Where do sensory barriers show up most often for your team?

How confident do you feel recognising signs of sensory overload?

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CHAPTER TWO

CREATING SENSORY SAFE WORKSPACES



Practical guidance on reducing overwhelm,
supporting focus, and designing
environments where all employees can
thrive.

Creating Sensory-Safe Workspaces

Low-sensory, high performance environments help employees stay focused, reduce cognitive load, and work more comfortably. For neurodivergent individuals, everyday elements such as lighting, noise, workload flow, and interruptions can have a significant impact on performance. Managers who understand these factors are better equipped to prevent overwhelm and support sustained productivity.

Effective sensory aware management doesn't require major office redesigns. Simple adjustments reducing unnecessary noise, offering quieter spaces, enabling flexible working, or allowing employees to personalise their environment can dramatically improve focus and wellbeing. When individuals have greater control over sensory input, they are better able to produce high quality work.

Managers play a central role in shaping these conditions. By observing environmental pressures, adapting expectations, and inviting open conversations about sensory needs, leaders can create a culture where employees feel safe, understood, and empowered. Sensory safe workplaces not only reduce burnout they unlock higher engagement, consistency, and performance.



STEP 1

Environment

Begin by scanning your team's working environment through a sensory lens. Notice sources of constant noise, harsh lighting, busy movement, or frequent interruptions. Identify which tasks require deep focus and whether the environment supports or disrupts that focus. Managers who proactively assess sensory load can prevent issues before they impact performance.

Example: A manager noticed constant walk-through traffic disrupted focus, so tasks requiring concentration were moved to a quieter zone.

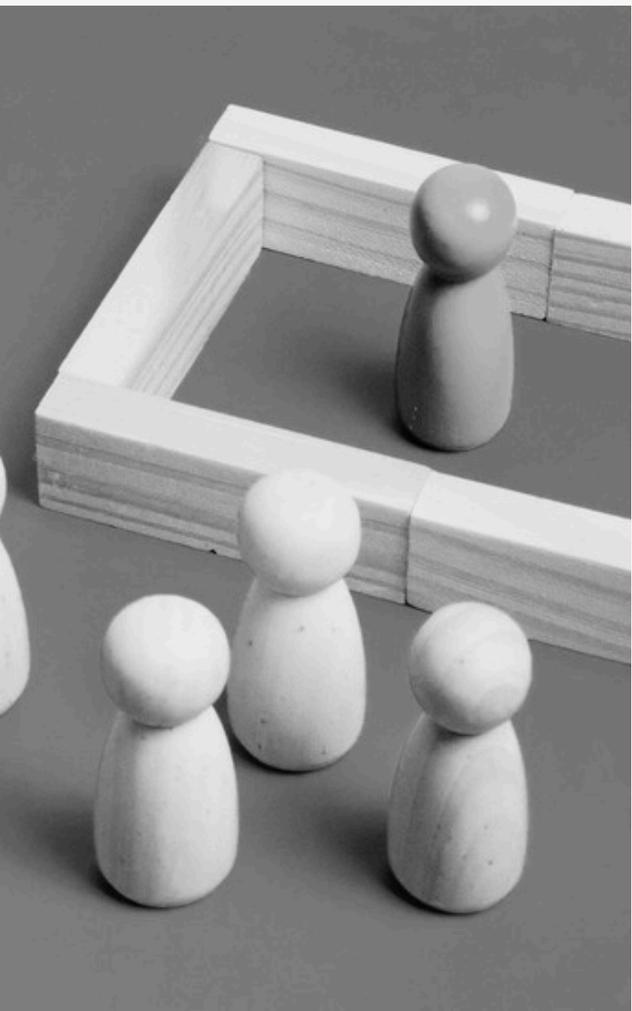


STEP 2

Barriers

Use your assessment to implement practical adjustments. This may include offering quiet areas, providing task-appropriate lighting, minimising drop-ins, reducing unnecessary meetings, or allowing noise management tools. These changes require minimal effort yet significantly improve concentration, efficiency, and comfort benefiting the entire team, not only neurodivergent staff.

Example: Changing a daily morning meeting to mid-day reduced stress for employees who struggled with early sensory load.



STEP 3

Support

High performance depends on balanced sensory input. Encourage short breaks after intense focus periods, allow hybrid working when suitable, and give team members options to step into calmer environments when needed. Supporting regulation prevents cognitive fatigue, enhances problem-solving, and helps maintain consistent quality of work.

Example: Regular check-ins helped an employee share a sensory barrier they had been masking for months



STEP 4

Adjustments

Invite employees to share what helps them work best. Normalise conversations about sensory needs, clarify that adjustments are standard practice, and respond quickly when an employee highlights a barrier. When managers build a culture of openness, employees feel safe to request what they need to stay productive, engaged, and confident.

Example: Allowing hybrid working days reduced sensory fatigue and led to more consistent performance.



CHAPTER TWO

Reflection for Managers

Which small environmental adjustments could immediately reduce sensory load in your workspace?

What types of tasks in your team require deep focus, and how well does the environment support them?

What interruptions are within your control to remove or reduce?

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CHAPTER THREE



SUPPORTING NEURODIVERGENT EMPLOYEES

Supporting neurodivergent employees begins with understanding that individuals may think, communicate, and process information differently and these differences can be powerful strengths when supported effectively. Managers who take time to learn how their team members work best can reduce misunderstandings, prevent overwhelm, and create conditions for consistent high performance.

This chapter outlines practical ways managers can offer support, from establishing clear communication preferences to encouraging wellbeing routines and providing reasonable adjustments. When employees feel safe to express their needs and are met with understanding rather than judgement, they are more engaged, more confident, and far better positioned to contribute their full potential.

STEP 1

Communication Preferences

Take time to understand how each person prefers to receive information. Some employees benefit from written clarity; others from verbal discussion; some prefer advance notice for tasks or meetings. Aligning communication styles with individual needs reduces stress, increases accuracy, and builds trust.

Example: Providing written follow-ups reduced task confusion for one team member.



STEP 2

Clarify Expectations

Ensure workloads, deadlines, and responsibilities are clearly defined. Work with employees to create structure that supports focus — such as breaking tasks into stages or agreeing priority levels. When expectations are transparent and manageable, performance naturally improves.

Example: Clarified priorities boosted one employee's confidence instantly.



STEP 3

Flexible Problem Solving

Neurodivergent employees may approach tasks differently. Encourage alternative methods, varied work styles, or the use of supportive tools. Flexibility enables individuals to leverage their strengths without pressure to conform to one “right” way of working.

Example: Allowing a different workflow helped an employee complete tasks faster.



STEP 4

Safe Space

Create space for regular check-ins about what is working and what isn't. Reinforce that adjustments are a normal part of workplace practice, not a favour. When employees feel safe to raise sensory or cognitive barriers, managers can respond quickly — preventing overwhelm and reinforcing high performance.

Example: Monthly check-ins helped identify a small adjustment that significantly improved focus.



CHAPTER THREE

Reflection for Managers

What communication preferences exist within your team, and how well are they currently met?

Where could expectations be clarified to reduce confusion or cognitive load?

Which adjustments could support stronger, more consistent performance?

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Conclusion

Creating low-sensory, high-performance work environments is not about eliminating challenges entirely it is about understanding how people experience their surroundings and making thoughtful adjustments that support focus, wellbeing, and productivity. When managers lead with awareness and curiosity, small changes can remove significant barriers.

By applying the principles in this workbook, you are taking meaningful steps toward building a workplace where every employee can contribute confidently and consistently. Sensory aware leadership strengthens communication, reduces overwhelm, and helps teams deliver their best work.

Thank you for investing the time to build more inclusive, sustainable, and human-centred ways of working.

THANK YOU FOR
WORKING ON THIS GUIDE



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MANAGER CHECKLIST

Understand the Environment

- I know the main sensory pressures in our workspace (noise, lighting, movement, interruptions).
- I have identified where deep-focus work is most disrupted.
- I regularly check whether the environment supports or hinders performance.

Reduce Sensory Barriers

- I minimise unnecessary interruptions and drop-ins.
- I provide quieter areas or noise-management options.
- I adjust lighting where possible to reduce glare and fatigue.
- I structure meetings and communication to reduce cognitive load.

Support Individual Working Styles

- I know each team member's communication preferences (written, verbal, advance notice).
- I clarify priorities and deadlines so expectations are transparent.
- I allow flexibility in how tasks are approached or completed.
- I encourage employees to use tools that help regulate focus.

Maintain a Safe Space for Ongoing Conversations

- I hold regular check-ins to discuss what's working and what isn't.
- I treat adjustments as standard practice, not exceptions.
- I respond quickly when an employee raises a barrier.
- I ensure psychological safety so employees feel comfortable sharing needs.

Link Adjustments to High Performance

- I understand how sensory load affects accuracy, focus, and wellbeing.
- I apply adjustments that reduce cognitive strain and support sustained performance.
- I measure improvements where possible (quality, consistency, efficiency).
- I recognise that sensory-aware leadership benefits the entire team not just neurodivergent staff.

NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?

Book Jodie for Workplace Training & Consultancy



If your organisation would benefit from deeper guidance on creating low-sensory, high performance work environments, Jodie offers tailored training sessions, leadership briefings, and consultancy support through Neurotalks.

These sessions provide practical strategies, real world insights, and actionable steps that help managers strengthen inclusion, reduce sensory barriers, and support neurodivergent employees to thrive.