

# How to be a Neurodiversity Ally!

## The definition of an Ally

**Noun:** a state of formally cooperating with another for a purpose.

**Verb:** combine or unite a resource or commodity with (another) for mutual benefit.

Allyship is one of the most important tools in the human toolkit, it brings us together across all societal borders. It is a life-long learning process, teaching us the importance of building supportive connections that can dismantle prejudice, bias, and discrimination. We have collected the tips below from our very own (ISC)<sup>2</sup> neurodiverse community as a guide to help us develop our allyship strengths.

### 1. Understand what neurodiversity means.

There are three aspects:

- Neurodiversity refers to the fact that people experience and interact with the world differently from each other.
- The Neurodiversity Movement is a social justice movement that aims to increase acceptance of, and to destigmatize neurodivergence. It seeks civil rights, equality, and full social inclusion for the neurodivergent.
- The Neurodiversity Paradigm is a form of human diversity that is subject to the same social dynamics as other forms of diversity.

### 2. Learn the types of neurodivergence and understand what they mean.

Neurodiversity covers a very wide spectrum. From dyslexia and dyspraxia to autism and ADHD, OCD to PTSD, down's syndrome, Tourette's, bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia and more. The more we all know the more we support we can provide!

### 3. Remember that neurodiversity is often invisible.

Unlike some physical disabilities, you will not always be able to tell by looking that a person is neurodiverse. In the US and UK, the Sunflower is used as a symbol for a hidden disability, often in the form of a lanyard and can give a good indication. Otherwise, your best tool is kindness, patience, and grace for everyone you meet.

### 4. Understand that we all stand on different experiences.

The way our brains process information is built upon the ways in which we have experienced the world, the ways we have been taught and the societies we come from. You may not be neurodiverse, but do you process stress and joy in the same ways as your neighbor?

### 5. Be careful of stereotyping.

Not every person with Asperger's is the next Rain Man and being non-verbal does not mean unintelligent. As with any other form of diversity, all humans have differences and similarities and an umbrella term – such as neurodiverse – does not mean that all neurodiverse people are the same.

### 6. Speak-up if you see something wrong!

It is the duty of those who have the position and ability to help when possible or necessary. Call out exclusive behaviors, make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak and equally, give people the opportunity to come to you in private to talk if they are uncomfortable in a large group. Not sure how to respectfully call out exclusive behaviors?

[Learn more.](#)

### 7. Be understanding and supportive.

Being neurodivergent means having to constantly adapt to a world that is not built for you, this causes stress, nervousness and discomfort. By being offered understanding and support, it is easier to feel at ease and know that a mistake will not unravel the universe.

If in doubt, approach people with support, kindness, patience, and grace.

When asked for help, listen to understand, and understand to provide or find support.

To learn more about our DEI Initiative and find more DEI resources, visit [www.isc2.org/dei](http://www.isc2.org/dei)

