

Sensory processing



What it is, and impact on recruitment and work

- Differences in how the brain, filters, process and responds to sensory input
- Can include hyper-sensitivity (sounds or lights feel painfully intense) and/or hypo-sensitivity (reduced awareness of sensations such as temperature)
- Sudden changes or competing inputs can lead up over time or quickly lead to sensory overload, fatigue or challenges with concentration.

Impact

For some, overstimulating environments (for example, noisy offices, bright or flickering lighting, strong perfumes) can drain energy, reduce focus, and cause discomfort. For others, under-stimulating settings without flexibility (for example, no desk lamps, music, or movement breaks) can have the same effect.

Strength-based strategies to support

Establish quiet zones and support focus

Provide low-stimulus spaces, promote focus tools (for example, the 'Rubber Duck' method), and encourage individual strategies like noise-reducing headphones.

Use adjustable or natural lighting

Where possible, utilise natural lighting. Replace brights fluorescent lights with softer, adjustable lighting options. Allow control over lighting at individual workstations (for example, desk lamps or dimmable lights)

Support remote or flexible work

Give options to work remote or outside of peak hours to reduce exposure to sensory stressors like traffic, crowded offices, or noisy environments

Reduce strong smells

Avoid scented cleaning products and perfumes and provide fragrance-free alternatives and ventilation in shared spaces



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Communication









What it is, and impact on recruitment and work

- Variations in verbal style (for example, precise, literal language, and differences in natural rate, tone and volume of speech) and non-verbal cues (for example, different eye-contact patterns, facial expressions)
- Direct honesty and a preference for clear expectations are common strengths
- Social-pragmatic rules (for example small talk, idioms, sarcasm can feel unclear or unnecessary).

Impact

Misinterpretations during interviews or team meetings, feedback or instructions may be taken at face value while hidden expectations go unnoticed.

Strength-based strategies to support

-  **Provide interview questions and agendas in advance**
This allows time for processing and preparation, leading to more accurate and confident responses from the candidate
-  **Use direct and unambiguous language**
Avoid idioms, metaphors, or sarcasm that can be misinterpreted.
For example,  "We wear many hats here," instead say  "We sometimes take on different tasks"
-  **Offer alternative communication formats**
Allow written responses, use visual supports (for example, diagrams or flowcharts), or real-time captioning tools. Communicate information, expectations and deadlines well in advance.
-  **Avoid judging based on social behaviours**
Don't interpret limited eye contact or differences in tone as disinterest or rudeness, rather focus on content and capability.



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Executive functioning



What it is, and impact on recruitment and work

- Brain processes that manage planning, organising, working memory, task-switching and impulse control can differ
- Many autistic people excel at detail-oriented or deep-focus tasks but may need support navigating shifting priorities or large, ambiguous projects
- Change-management can be more cognitively taxing, not a lack of capability.

Impact

Tight or changing deadlines, multi-tasking and unclear expectations can impact performance and stress.

Strength-based strategies to support

Break down tasks and provide structure

Clearly outline job responsibilities using checklists, templates, or visual task boards

Allow time for processing and transitions

Provide advance notice of changes to schedules, tasks, or expectations. Where possible, minimise last-minute changes

Use digital reminders and visual schedules

Encourage use of shared calendars, timers, and scheduling tools to support planning and time management

Provide clarity on priorities

Clearly explain which tasks are most important and what needs to be completed first, especially when workloads are high.



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Executive functioning







What it is, and impact on recruitment and work

- “Stimming” (repetitive movement or vocalisations) and other self-regulation techniques help manage sensory input, anxiety or focus
- Routines and predictable environments can reduce cognitive load
- Behaviour is communication; what may look “different” is often a coping strategy.

Impact

Stimming- repetitive movements or vocalisations—can be misinterpreted as distraction. Unfamiliar routines, sudden changes, or inflexible working environments can cause stress and dysregulation.

Strength-based strategies to support

-  **Normalise stimming and movement-based self-regulation**
Accept behaviours like fidgeting, pacing, or quiet vocalisations as part of individual regulation and are not distractions or signs of disengagement
-  **Co-create policies that support individual regulation needs**
Include short sensory breaks, flexible workstations, and access to calming spaces in wellbeing policies
-  **Maintain consistency and routines where possible**
Use regular meeting times, clearly outlined workflows, and predictable scheduling to reduce uncertainty and anxiety
-  **Educate teams to build understanding**
Offer neurodiversity training and encourage a workplace culture where difference is accepted and celebrated.



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