

Module 2

Understanding Cognitive Differences

How attention, processing, memory, and sensory systems vary across brains.

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Step-by-step plan for delivering Module 2 to a group. Total time: 90 minutes.

Session overview

Time	Segment	Format
0:00–0:10	Welcome, norms, opening question	Plenary
0:10–0:30	Five cognitive systems — taught overview	Lecture + slides
0:30–0:50	Small-group case study (Marcus, Priya, or Eli)	Breakouts of 4
0:50–1:05	Myth-busting round	Plenary
1:05–1:20	Reflection + action planning	Individual + paired share
1:20–1:30	Close — commitments and next module	Plenary

Teaching notes by section

1. Attention — Spotlight, Floodlight, and Everything Between

Teach: Neurotypical attention is often described as a spotlight: narrow, sustained, directed. Many neurodivergent profiles run a floodlight instead — wider aperture, faster scanning, more parallel inputs. Neither is broken; they are tuned for different tasks.

Ask the room: Where have you seen this in the last 30 days?

Watch for: Resistance dressed as pragmatism ("that won't work here"). Honor it; do not argue with it.

2. Sensory Processing — More Data, Different Filter

Teach: Sensory profiles vary on two axes: sensitivity (how strong the signal feels) and seeking (how much input the system wants). A person can be highly sensitive to sound and highly seeking of movement at the same time.

Ask the room: Where have you seen this in the last 30 days?

Watch for: Resistance dressed as pragmatism ("that won't work here"). Honor it; do not argue with it.

3. Working Memory & Processing Speed

Teach: Working memory is the mental whiteboard where you hold information while you use it. Processing speed is how quickly you can move information across that board. They are independent — a person can have fast processing and a small whiteboard, or a large whiteboard and deliberate processing.

Ask the room: Where have you seen this in the last 30 days?

Watch for: Resistance dressed as pragmatism ("that won't work here"). Honor it; do not argue with it.

4. Cognitive Load & Regulation

Teach: Every cognitive system has a budget. Sensory overload, social masking, executive-function demands, and emotional regulation all draw from overlapping pools. When the budget runs out, the system that fails first is often the most visible — speech, patience, posture — even though the actual overload happened elsewhere.

Ask the room: Where have you seen this in the last 30 days?

Watch for: Resistance dressed as pragmatism ("that won't work here"). Honor it; do not argue with it.

5. Myths That Need to Die

Teach: Myth: "If they can focus on video games, they can focus on homework." Reality: interest-driven attention is a feature of the system, not a moral failure. The work needs interest hooks, not more discipline.

Ask the room: Where have you seen this in the last 30 days?

Watch for: Resistance dressed as pragmatism ("that won't work here"). Honor it; do not argue with it.

Facilitation principles

- Name yourself in the room — your own profile, the supports that help you facilitate.
- Move at the pace of the most-loaded participant, not the most-vocal one.
- Treat silence as processing, not absence.
- Hold the line on the strengths-and-supports posture, especially when the conversation drifts toward fixing people.
- End on commitment, not catharsis.