

MODULE 1

Foundations of Neurodiversity

Action Planning Worksheet

Understanding Neurodiversity · An Educational Initiative of God's Diamonds
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PURPOSE

This Action Planning Worksheet is a tool for translating knowledge into practice. The Foundations of Neurodiversity module provides the essential language and frameworks for building more inclusive environments. This worksheet guides you in applying those concepts to your specific context—whether a team, a department, a family, or an entire organization. The goal is to move beyond passive learning to create a concrete, actionable plan for fostering a culture of belonging.

MY CONTEXT

Thoughtful planning begins with a clear understanding of your starting point. Use the prompts below to describe the environment you wish to influence. This will ground your goals and strategies in reality.

Describe your primary context (e.g., my 12-person marketing team, our multi-generational household, my elementary school classroom, the entire company).

What is your role and level of influence within this context (e.g., team manager, parent, individual contributor, senior executive)?

What are the current known strengths of your group? Consider skills, communication patterns, and cultural norms.

What are the current known challenges or friction points? Where do you see evidence of misunderstanding, burnout, or exclusion?

Reflecting on the module, what is one existing belief or practice in your context that defaults to a deficit-based view of human difference?

GOALS

Effective change is driven by clear, intentional goals. Use the SMART framework to define what you want to achieve. A SMART goal is Specific (clear and well-defined), Measurable (quantifiable), Achievable (realistic), Relevant (aligned with the broader mission of belonging), and Time-bound (linked to a deadline). Below, outline three goals for applying the principles from this module.

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

STRATEGIES AND ACCOMMODATIONS

The following strategies are derived from the module's core principles. They are designed to be

adaptable to any context. Review each strategy and use the "Implementation Notes" column to brainstorm how you could apply it to achieve your goals. You do not need to implement everything at once; select what is most relevant and achievable for you now.

****Strategy: Adopt a Strengths-and-Supports Lens****

Description: This involves intentionally shifting away from a deficit-focused model ("What is wrong with this person?") toward a more holistic and accurate one ("What are this person's strengths, and what supports do they need to thrive?"). This posture acknowledges that every individual has a unique cognitive profile with areas of high aptitude and areas that require support. This approach is consistent with developmental frameworks used by institutions like the CDC and NIMH.

Implementation Notes:

- * How can you reframe a conversation about performance or contribution (at work or home) to start with strengths?
- * In team meetings or family discussions, how can you explicitly ask, "What support does everyone need to participate fully in this project/activity?"
- * Draft an email or talking points to introduce this concept to your team or family, focusing on it as a universal tool for everyone's benefit.

****Strategy: Audit and Shift Environmental Factors****

Description: Many challenges associated with neurodivergence are not inherent to the individual but are exacerbated by environments designed for a narrow range of sensory, social, and executive functioning. The goal is to make the environment more flexible and accessible by default, a principle known as Universal Design. This reduces the need for individuals to seek special, reactive accommodations. As research from Harvard Business Review and others suggests, these environmental shifts often improve productivity and well-being for everyone, not just neurodivergent individuals.

Implementation Notes:

- * Identify three environmental factors you can influence:
 1. Sensory (e.g., lighting, noise levels, scents)
 2. Communication (e.g., meetings without agendas, reliance on unwritten rules)
 3. Structure (e.g., rigid work hours, inflexible processes)
- * For each factor, list one small change you could pilot (e.g., provide noise-canceling headphones, send agendas 24 hours in advance, experiment with "focus time" blocks).

****Strategy: Refine Language and Communication****

Description: Language shapes perception. Using precise, respectful, and non-pathologizing language is a foundational act of inclusion. This means distinguishing between neurodiversity (the spectrum of all human minds), a neurodivergent individual (someone whose mind functions differently from the societal norm), and a neurotypical individual (someone whose mind functions within the dominant societal norm). It also involves respecting individual preferences for identity-first language ("autistic person") or person-first language ("person with autism"), as

advised by an increasing number of advocacy groups and scholars like Nick Walker. The best practice is always to ask the person what they prefer.

Implementation Notes:

- * How will you and your team/family agree to talk about these concepts? What terms will you use, and which will you retire?
- * Practice asking, "How do you prefer to talk about this?" or "What language do you use?"
- * Identify one document (e.g., a job description, a team charter, a family chore chart) that could be revised with more inclusive and precise language.

****Strategy: Move from Accommodation to Belonging****

Description: Accommodation is the floor, not the ceiling. It is the legally or morally required minimum, often reactive and focused on a single individual. Belonging is the proactive, cultural goal of designing a community where the widest range of people can thrive without hiding or exhausting themselves to fit in. Compliance with the ADA and EEOC guidelines prevents lawsuits; fostering belonging attracts and retains talent and builds resilient relationships.

Implementation Notes:

- * Think of one recent accommodation made in your context. Now, how could you redesign the system so that accommodation would no longer be necessary? (e.g., Instead of approving a work-from-home exception for one person, create a flexible hybrid policy for all).
- * What is one team or family ritual that might inadvertently exclude someone? How could you redesign it to be more inclusive by default?

ALLIES AND SUPPORTS

Change is a team sport. No one can build a culture of belonging alone. Identify the people and resources that can support you in this work.

Who are the key people you need to involve to make this plan successful? (e.g., your manager, a direct report, your partner, an HR business partner).

Who is a potential ally in your context who has shown interest or energy for this kind of change?

What neurodivergent voices can you learn from directly? (e.g., authors, speakers, colleagues or community members who have openly shared their experiences and consented to be a resource).

What external resources will you consult? (e.g., books, articles, professional organizations, employee resource groups).

30 / 60 / 90 DAY PLAN

Break your goals into concrete, time-bound steps. A phased approach makes large goals feel manageable and allows you to learn and adapt as you go.

In the Next 30 Days, I will: (Focus on learning, planning, and small, low-risk pilots. Example:

Read one recommended article and share key insights with my team; pilot sending out meeting agendas 24 hours in advance.)

In the Next 60 Days, I will: (Focus on broader implementation and gathering feedback. Example: Host a team discussion about language; collect feedback on the meeting agenda pilot and adjust.)

In the Next 90 Days, I will: (Focus on analyzing results and planning next steps. Example: Review progress against my original goals; present the benefits of the pilot programs to leadership to advocate for wider adoption.)

ACCOUNTABILITY

An action plan without an accountability mechanism is just a wish list. Define how you will track your progress and ensure you follow through on your commitments.

How will you measure success for your goals? What does "done" look like?

Who will you share this plan with to hold you accountable? (This could be a manager, a mentor, a peer, or your entire team.)

When will you schedule time on your calendar to review this plan and check your progress? (e.g., a 15-minute review every Friday, a 30-minute review at the end of each month).