The Neurodivergent Professional's Toolkit

Self-advocacy, energy management and leading on your own terms

FOR NEURODIVERGENT PROFESSIONALS · AND LEADERS

Use this toolkit to describe how you work best, think through disclosure, and prepare specific requests. Start with the parts that fit your situation.

Start here | 15 minutes

1. Fill in your operating manual (section 1). Use it to prepare specific requests.
2. Read the disclosure guide. You do not need to make a decision today.
3. Use one script this month. Start with the no-label adjustment request.

1 Know Your Operating Manual

- **Peak conditions:** I do my best work when… (time of day, environment, type of task)
- **Friction points:** My output drops when… (interruptions, vague briefs, sensory load, meeting-heavy days)
- **Early warning signs:** I know I'm heading toward overload when…
- **Recovery levers:** What restores me fastest… (solitude, movement, deep work, a special interest)
- **Non-negotiables:** The one or two conditions that most affect my performance are…

My operating manual:

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2 The Disclosure Decision Guide

Question	Points toward disclosing	Points toward waiting
Do I need formal accommodations?	Yes; legal protections usually require disclosure	Informal adjustments are working fine
Is my environment safe?	Leaders model inclusion; others are open about differences	Jokes about neurodivergence go unchallenged
What's my standing?	Track record established; trusted manager	New role; manager unknown or skeptical
What do I actually need?	Needs are specific and disclosure unlocks them	Needs can be framed as working-style preferences

Remember: you can request most adjustments without any label. “I focus best with written briefs” requires no diagnosis. **You can describe your needs without naming a diagnosis.**

3 Self-Advocacy Scripts

REQUESTING AN ADJUSTMENT (NO LABEL)

“I've noticed I deliver my best work when I get briefs in writing and have uninterrupted blocks in the morning. Can we build that into how we work? Could we try it and then review how it is working?”

DISCLOSING TO YOUR MANAGER

“I want to share something that helps explain how I work best. I'm [autistic / I have ADHD / dyslexic]. My strengths include [your strengths]. I would like a different setup for [specific tasks]: [specific asks]. I'd like to agree on how we make that work.”

PUSHING BACK ON A STYLE CRITIQUE

“I hear that my communication style reads as direct. I'd like us to focus the review on my results and how I can deliver more of them. I'm happy to agree on specific situations where you'd like me to adapt delivery.”

PROTECTING FOCUS TIME

“I'm blocking two deep-work windows a week because that's where my highest-value output comes from. I'll be fully responsive outside those blocks.”

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4 Energy Management: the Battery Audit

1. List a typical week's activities. Mark each: **charges me / neutral / drains me.**
2. Note hidden drains: masking, video calls with cameras, open-plan noise, context-switching, small talk.
3. Redesign what you control: batch draining tasks, schedule recovery after known drains, negotiate the rest.
4. Track your masking hours for one week. High masking loads predict burnout; treat reduction as a health goal, not a luxury.

5 Leading While Neurodivergent

- **Share only what you choose.** If you choose to share your experience, explain the working practices that help you.
- **Build complementary support.** Delegate or systematize your friction points (admin, minute-taking) where you can.
- **Turn your accommodations into team norms.** Consider making agendas, written decisions, and focus time available to the whole team.
- **Beware the double empathy trap.** Communication breakdowns are mutual, not your sole responsibility. Build feedback loops in both directions.
- **Mentor visibly.** If you want to mentor others, share practical experience without feeling obliged to disclose more than you choose.

6 Burnout Guardrails

☐ I have at least one weekly block that reliably restores me, and I protect it

☐ My masking load is trending down, not up

☐ I have one person at work I don't have to mask with

☐ I know my early overload signals and have a pre-agreed response (shorter meetings, WFH day, reduced load)

☐ I separate my worth from my productivity on bad brain days

Go further: the Behavior Translator, Manager Essentials training, and the other toolkits are free at **sharedlanguage.org**.

Shared Language provides management and educational guidance, not medical, psychological, or legal advice. Formal accommodations should follow local law and involve HR, occupational health, or disability services. Possibilities, not diagnoses.

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