

FOR NEURODIVERGENT PROFESSIONALS · AND LEADERS

The Neurodivergent Professional's Toolkit

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

You are not the problem to be managed. This toolkit treats your cognition as a professional asset with specific operating conditions — and gives you language and systems to secure those conditions.

In this toolkit: 1 Operating manual · 2 Disclosure decision guide · 3 Self-advocacy scripts · 4 Battery audit · 5 Leading while ND · 6 Burnout guardrails

START HERE · 15 MINUTES

1. Fill in your operating manual (section 1). That is your ask list.
2. Run the disclosure guide once — decide nothing yet, just notice which column you're in.
3. Use one script this month. Start with the no-label adjustment request.

1 Know Your Operating Manual

Before advocating to others, get precise with yourself. Complete these prompts:

- **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:

Your answers become your ask list — specific, work-focused, and framed around output.

2 The Disclosure Decision Guide

Disclosure is a personal, strategic choice — not an obligation. There is no morally correct answer, only what serves you. Consider:

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

Question	Points toward disclosing	Points toward waiting
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. **Partial disclosure — needs without labels — is a fully legitimate strategy.**

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? I think you'll see the difference in my output."

DISCLOSING TO YOUR MANAGER

"I want to share something that helps explain how I work best. I'm [autistic / I have ADHD / dyslexic]. It comes with real strengths — [yours here] — and a few conditions where I need a different setup: [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 — and 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 — that's where my highest-value output comes from. I'll be fully responsive outside those blocks."

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

- **Disclose strategically from strength.** A leader saying “I have ADHD, here's my system” gives the whole organization permission to be human.
- **Build complementary support.** Delegate or systematize your friction points (admin, minute-taking) without shame — neurotypical leaders delegate weaknesses constantly.
- **Turn your accommodations into team norms.** Your need for agendas, written decisions, and focus time is simply good practice — institutionalize it.
- **Beware the double empathy trap.** Communication breakdowns are mutual, not your sole responsibility. Build feedback loops in both directions.
- **Mentor visibly.** Neurodivergent juniors watching a neurodivergent leader thrive changes their entire career calculus.

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 three 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.