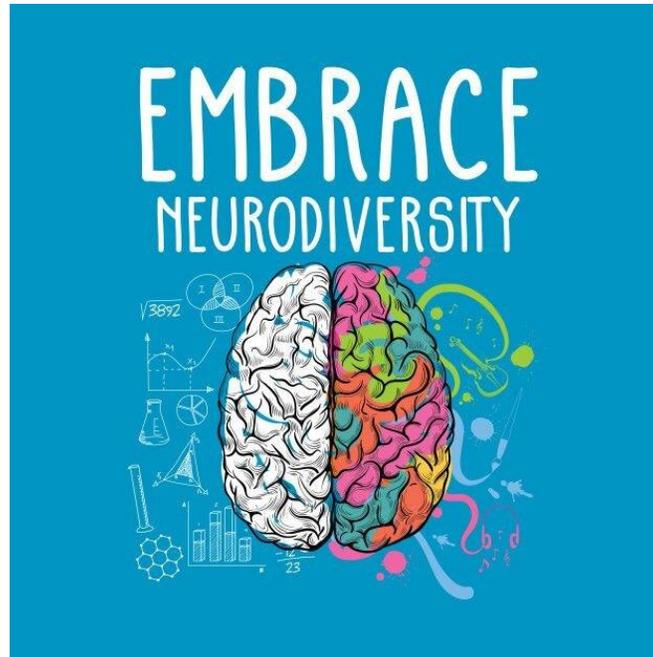


April is Neurodiversity Celebration Month

It Takes All Minds!



Not every brain is the same. We think differently. We experience life differently. We interact with the world differently. This is called neurodiversity. Neurodiversity covers a wide spectrum of categories such as autism, dyspraxia, dyslexia, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), social anxiety disorder, and other differences. Within each of these categories, there is a spectrum of affected behaviors.

- According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control), in the US, one in every 42 boys, and one in every 189 girls born are neurodiverse. Between 2000 and 2018, in the US, the percentage of 8-year-olds diagnosed with autism increased 150 percent.
- By the age of 25, many neurodiverse children age out of the system that provides them with the therapies they need to adjust to our neurotypical world.

At Providence, we want to not just create space for neurodiversity acceptance, but rather, create space for neurodiversity CELEBRATION! Studies show that having a neurodiverse staff benefits the organization and staff. According to Harvard Health Publishing, we can define neurodiversity as "the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one 'right' way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits."

“A neurodiverse employee might also be known as a- ‘sensitive striver.’ Typical characteristics can include a highly attuned central nervous system; people are often both highly sensitive and high achieving, with great potential. All they need is an employer who can see and embrace this potential and make the

necessary adjustments. Not only is this in the interest of inclusivity and diversity; hiring neurodiverse employees could bring significant benefits to your organization.” (More information [HERE](#))

When creating inclusivity for neurodiverse staff, consider these points:

1. Be mindful of tone policing, perceptions and phrasing
 - i. When coming across a potential difficulty with an employee or coworker, instead of thinking “why are they always so negative and low energy” or “I don’t want to work with, I just don’t have a good relationship with them,” be aware of differences and personalities. Neurodiverse people sometimes have a more neutral personality and monotone voice. In a neurotypical environment, this is often perceived as being standoffish, rude, or disinterested. Try not to make any assumptions, and focus more on what they are saying, rather than just how they are saying it.
2. Provide Quiet Spaces/Zen Dens within your work area
 - i. Have a place where all caregivers can reduce stress and decompress from overstimulation and feelings of being overwhelmed. Think of a place with dimmed lights, comfortable seating, calming music options, adult coloring books, etc. This is a space beyond a breakroom, which has bright lights and people eating.
3. Educate yourself and your team on neurodiversity
 - i. Neurodiversity is being more widely discussed and included in workplace DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) efforts, so more education is accessible to educate employers and employees alike. Some examples include:
 - a. Neurodiversity Hub: Resources for employers
 - b. EARN: Neurodiversity in the workplace
4. Remember ALL adults learn and absorb information differently.- Communicate information using multiple modalities
 - i. During staff meetings, training, 1:1 reviews, and other information sharing sessions, be sure to provide resources for different learners. Have handouts prepared to support spoken presentations, record virtual meetings for people who do better at reviewing information for comprehension, provide closed captioning on all videos, and allow time for questions and answers at the end of every meeting.

Here are more tips to use right away to celebrate and support our neurodiverse caregivers. Also look at April’s Multicultural Calendar for links to -events your department can participate in. Thank you for all you do and for your commitment to continuing to make Providence a place for all!

Tips:

1. When interviewing for open positions in your department, break interviews, virtual or in-person, up into sequential sessions or spread them out over a period of a few days to avoid overstimulation. No one is at their best when they’re depleted or overwhelmed.

2. Offer reasonable take-home interview assignments. Case studies, presentation, or test assignments offer an opportunity to assess a candidate's creativity and communication without the pressure of observation or fear of judgement.
3. As a leader, try to model a strong work/life balance where caregivers feel comfortable taking time off and pursuing goals outside of a work environment.
4. Create a no-tolerance environment for toxic employees who bully, belittle, or lead through coercion and fear.
5. Share with your team this Harvard Business Review article, which showcases how businesses are starting to view neurodiverse talent as an asset to their company:
<https://hbr.org/2017/05/neurodiversity-as-a-competitive-advantage>
6. Check out the linked Hiring Managers Toolkit for Neurodiversity:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a88ab00f43b552a84c3b7c9/t/5f4081b20502cb348f88df0a/1598063085626/managers_toolkit .pdf

Local resources for caregivers:

Autism Awareness Project on LiveWellLocal.org

Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT) on LiveWellLocal.org

Washington Autism Alliance and Advocacy (WAAA) on LiveWellLocal.org

Videos:

TED Talk: Elaine Halligan, Neurodiversity is a super power not a problem

TED Talk: Tom Edwards, Neurodiversity and leadership

TED Talk: Jay Pierce, Understanding neurodiversity

TED Talk: Linda Tong: The hidden strengths of neurodiversity

TED Talk: Elisabeth Wiklander, Neurodiversity: The key that unlocked my world

TED Talk: Layne Kertamus, Autism: Neurodiversity at Work Works Best

Thank you for the amazing work you do every day. The DEI committee is excited to share with you the events we have planned for 2022. The events wouldn't be possible without the hard work, commitment, and empathetic leadership you provide to our teams here at Providence. If there is anything we can do to aid in your DEI journey, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best regards,

Kaila, Brooke, and Jess

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