



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH **DISABILITIES** **AND NEURODIVERGENT** **THINKING STYLES**

**OPENING DOORS:
BUILDING A
WORKPLACE
FOR EVERYONE**



Estimated Time:
15 minutes max



Audience:
**All team members – field,
office employees, supervisors,
teamleaders, HR teams, educators.**

This Toolbox Talk is provided as a voluntary workforce development resource in support of Construction Inclusion Week. It does not impose or endorse any directives, quotas, or identity-based exclusions or preferences. The content reflects voluntary best practices and is designed to promote safety, opportunity, and inclusive team culture benefiting everyone across the construction industry, to help support, attract, and retain top talent. Construction Inclusion Week does not control or endorse the content of third-party links. Activities should be adapted to align with your company's legal policies and job-related criteria.

**CONSTRUCTION
INCLUSION WEEK 2025**
TOOLBOX TALK



OCTOBER 13-17, 2025

TALK 10

CIW PILLAR
*Attract and Retain, Belonging
& Workforce Culture,
Commitment & Accountability*



SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH **DISABILITIES AND NEURODIVERGENT THINKING STYLES**



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This conversation empowers teams to understand and embrace differing abilities and thinking styles as vital dimensions of opportunity and innovation.

- Understand what disability and neurodivergence mean at work.
- Learn how diverse minds and abilities strengthen workplaces and teams.
- Practice small habits that support cognitive and physical differences.
- Identify barriers and suggest ways to improve accessibility for everyone.
- Build a team culture where everyone contributes in their own way.



DEFINITIONS

Disability:

A physical, mental, sensory, or cognitive condition that may affect how a person works, communicates, or performs tasks.

Universal Design:

Work environments and tools that are usable by everyone, regardless of ability.

Neurodivergence:

A non-medical description of diverse cognitive processing styles, such as those related to attention, learning or communication, ". It may include autism, ADHD, dyslexia, PTSD, and other cognitive differences.

Accessibility:

Making sure people can fully participate in work, physically, mentally, and socially.



KEY CONCEPTS

- Roughly 1 in 4 adults in the U.S. lives with a disability.
- Many disabilities are visible or shared but they still impact work experience.
- Disability and neurodivergence reflect natural variations in how people experience and contribute to work.

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KEY CONCEPTS

- Construction needs all types of thinkers, analytical people, planners, and hands-on learners.
- Simple supports: like flexible communication styles, visual aids or quiet spaces, can make a big difference.
- Everyone benefits when we remove physical, social, and procedural barriers to success.



CONTENT

Disability and neurodivergence are part of the workforce, jobsite and office, and workplaces should provide universally accessible practices consistent with the ADA and applicable law. Some workers live with physical disabilities. Others think or process information differently. Some share this openly; others don't. Either way, we all benefit from a workplace culture that supports full participation and contributions.

Inclusion means more than just access, it means support. That could be a visual checklist for someone with ADHD, a quieter break area for someone sensitive to noise, creating optional, confidential ways to share workstyle preferences or request reasonable accommodation, in line with privacy and applicable legal standards. Small, thoughtful changes can significantly improve inclusion and accessibility.





This also means rethinking how we give instructions, how meetings are run, or how we build tools and spaces. When we design for different learning styles and abilities, we make the job easier for everyone, not just a few.

Welcoming different minds and bodies makes our industry stronger. It helps us solve problems in new ways and ensure all qualified individuals have equal opportunity to contribute. Inclusion isn't just about being nice, it's about being smart and fair.

When we build workplaces for all kinds of people, we build better teams.





ACTIVITY OPTIONS

General Ask: Think about how your workplace could be more accessible; physically or socially. What is one small change that could help? Now ask: What would help someone with different needs succeed on our team?

Now think about how you show (or withhold) respect in your daily interactions.



**JOBSITE
ACTIVITIES**



**OFFICE
ACTIVITIES**



**SCHOOL/
COMMUNITY
ACTIVITIES**



**GROUP
ACTIVITY**



JOBSITE ACTIVITIES

- Post signs or color codes with visual instructions to help all learning styles.
- Create a quiet break area or low-distraction zone if possible.
- Use drawings, models, or step-by-step checklists for key tasks.
- Add a "How Do You Learn Best?" question to team onboarding.
- Share one thing each person wishes others understood about how they work.



OFFICE ACTIVITIES

- Review job postings and onboarding materials for inclusive language. Focus on essential job functions and qualifications; when physical, cognitive, or sensory requirements are truly essential, state them clearly and note that reasonable accommodations are available.
- Review how you give directions: Is it verbal-only, or backed up in writing and visuals? Ask: Do our meetings work for everyone?
- Share inclusive tools. Introduce items like color-coded plans, visual task lists, or noise-canceling options (earplugs, headsets).
- Use closed captions for virtual meetings.
- Host a lunch-and-learn with a neurodiversity advocate.



SCHOOL/COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Partner with schools that support students with disabilities or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).
- Co-host hands-on construction activities that meet different learning styles.
- Bring in tradespeople with disabilities to speak about their career path.
- Sponsor inclusive career day swag: visual guides, ear protection, QR code videos.
- Partner with disability-focused programs (e.g., Project SEARCH, DisabilityIN) for inclusive trade workshops.
- Invite students with disabilities to explore tools and safety gear with support.



GROUP ACTIVITY

- In pairs, ask: What is one thing that helps you do your best work?
- Each person shares a myth about disability they have heard, and the truth behind it.
- Build a list: "Small Changes, Big Impact," team practices that support all minds.
- Watch a short video about neurodiverse tradespeople or professionals.
- Brainstorm accommodations that could improve experiences for everyone, not just those who ask for them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. What does inclusion look like for people who think or move differently?
2. How can jobsite and office environments be more welcoming to neurodivergent individuals?
3. What barriers; physical or cultural; might we be overlooking?
4. How do we make space for different strengths, not just speed or volume?
5. What can we do this week to make the job more accessible for everyone?

*When we build workplaces for all bodies and brains,
we build stronger teams.*



This Week:

- Ask someone how they learn or work best and listen.
- Offer flexible communication options in meetings or training.
- Update a team process or tool to be more accessible.
- Offer support without judgment or assumptions.
- Thank someone who helped you see or think differently.



Post your impact

#ConstructionInclusionWeek
#CIWOpeningDoors
#NeurodiversityInTrades

***Not every strength looks the same.
But all of them help us build..***

Resources:

[DisabilityIN](#)
[Job Accommodation Network](#)

[Project SEARCH](#)
[Neurodiversity Hub – Resources for Students, Employers & More](#)