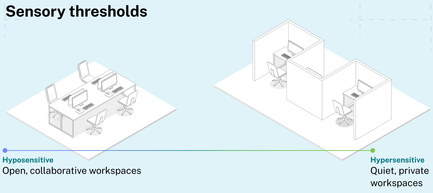
CAI® Neurodiverse Solutions

Blueprint for building inclusive workspaces through universal design

An accommodating and supportive workspace can fuel productivity and efficiency. Inclusive workspaces can be created based on the concept of universal design, which ensures the configuration of an environment can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent by all.

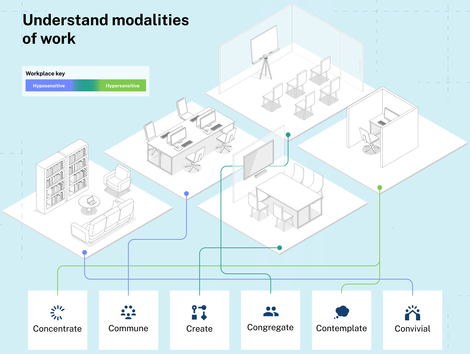
Consider the following important principles when building an inclusive physical workspace for a talent force that includes neurodivergent employees.

Sensory thresholds



Reactions to sounds, light, color, or patterns can vary from person to person. Neurodivergent individuals tend to experience more extreme reactions to these environmental factors, either being hypersensitive, hyposensitive, or a blend of both. Create environments where people can gravitate to the types of spaces that best meet their needs in the most seamless way possible.

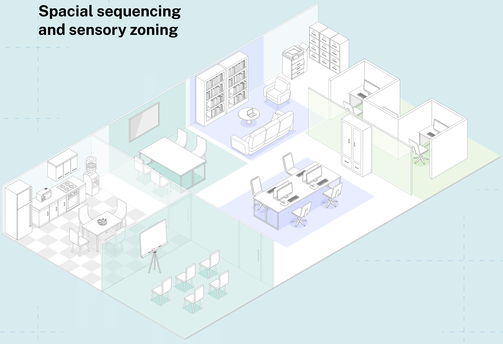
Understand modalities of work



Modalities of work are the different ways in which work can be performed. Architecture firm HOK categorizes each modality type with the 6 C's listed above. In an era of heightened sensitivity to our environments and the knowledge of how we are impacted by them, it's necessary to address how individuals process sensory stimulation in hyper and hypo settings for all 6 modalities of work where possible. Create spaces that accommodate all modalities.[1]

1. Architecture firm HOK's 6 C's of the primary modalities of work

Spacial sequencing and sensory zoning



Understand the elements of a space, how they are sequenced, and how they flow in and out of the space to ensure it all works together. Conduct a spatial sequencing/zoning assessment to confirm the workspace plan enables your team to find the right setting, in the right environment, with the appropriate level of acoustics, lighting, and energy to aid in their functional success. Consider including quiet spaces on one side with more neutral colors. Spaces in the middle could include more communal gathering spots that utilize a wider range of colors.

Color palettes for sensory stimulation

Color palettes can support hypersensitive and hyposenstive people by either reducing or strengthening a stimulus. More neutral, muted colors work best for those with hypersensitivity, whereas those with hyposensitivity work best with bright, invigorating colors. Build a space that can accommodate both.

Get started with universal design

An accommodating and supportive workspace can fuel productivity and efficiency. By designing your workplace with universal design principles, you can best tailor your environment to support all employees and foster your team's success.

The information included in this illustration was gathered from a CAI webinar, Neurodiversity, architecture, and universal design, featuring speakers from architecture firm HOK and paint and coating manufacturing company PPG.

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CAI is a global services firm with over 9,000 associates worldwide and a yearly revenue of $1.3 billion+. We have over 40 years of excellence in uniting talent and technology to power the possible for our clients, colleagues, and communities. As a privately held company, we have the freedom and focus to do what's right — whatever it takes. Our tailor-made solutions create lasting results across the public and commercial sectors, and we are trailblazers in bringing neurodiversity to the enterprise.

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