# **How Mind Mapping Can Help You Connect with Neurodivergent Employees**

## Oh! and all your other employees, too!

Neurodivergent employees approach work a little differently than their neurotypical colleagues. Depending on their specific challenge, whether they’re on the autism spectrum, have ADHD, or have another learning disability, certain aspects of what others would consider a “normal” workday are very challenging for them. For some, it’s a sensory issue; for others, being distracted or having their schedule changed may zero out their productivity for the day.

Managing neurodivergent employees is a challenge, but it’s also an opportunity to use some of the most important skills that a manager can develop: the ability to listen, empathize, and drive positive change for employees.

For managers who have a neurodivergent worker reporting to them, learning and implementing mind mapping techniques with a worker could help to put that employee on the path to better productivity.

***As a visual person, this was perfect for me.***

Suzanne, a neurodivergent worker on the autism spectrum, described to the [Adjust blog](https://www.adjustservices.co.uk/autism/managing-neurodiversity-in-the-workplace/) how mapping out key issues with one of her managers helped her immensely, both personally and professionally.

“As I began struggling to cope with aspects of the job (mostly due to sensory issues), the two managers tried implementing strategies which (although well-intentioned!) did nothing to empower me and only made me feel even more of a problem and a failure,” she explained. “The assistant manager intervened and one day suggested going to the canteen with a sheet of flip chart paper and some coloured pens. We spent an afternoon creating a mind-map of the things I was finding difficult and shared ideas around solutions. As a visual person, this was perfect for me.”

By working with Suzanne and mapping out problems and solutions, the assistant manager and her other managers were made aware of things that were creating stumbling blocks for her, and they worked with her to adapt her schedule and work environment so that she could be much more effective at her job.

That assistant manager, Suzanne noted, “treated me like the highly-skilled, intelligent, professional person I am. He trusted me to get on with my job without micromanaging me by being positive, creative, and pragmatic. This was a perfect example of good management.”

***…no problem expressing themselves in writing***

Mind mapping can help neurodivergent employees express themselves clearly to managers. For example, a person on the autism spectrum may have trouble verbalizing how they feel, yet have no problem expressing themselves in writing. A collaborative mapping session where the employee can express their thoughts on a whiteboard can create a communication bridge. The ROI is a greater understanding of their needs so that adjustments made allow them to perform at their best.

***…spur creative solutions***

For employees with dyslexia, a whiteboard mind-mapping session [that utilizes distinct colors and shapes](https://diversityq.com/how-to-use-mind-mapping-to-empower-employees-with-dyslexia-1508410/) can help managers communicate concepts and spur creative solutions.

***…mind mapping mimics how the brain works***

Managers can also use mind mapping to help employees — both neurodivergent and neurotypical — set goals and outline the achievable steps to reach those goals. Mind mapping enables leaders “to align a team around key objectives, to delegate tasks and to define timelines,” according to a Training Industry [post](https://trainingindustry.com/blog/leadership/increase-productivity-and-team-engagement-with-mind-mapping/). “Since mind mapping mimics how the brain works in organizing and understanding information, it is effective in cultivating individual accountability and collective understanding.”

This [post at Venngage](https://venngage.com/blog/mind-map-examples/) has examples of several types of mind maps. It includes more formal business planning maps as well as informal brainstorming sessions and time management plots. And last but not least, [**watch how my husband used mind-mapping to respond to a job interview requirement**](https://youtu.be/YcaDB-rk2tw)**.** Try this innovative management method out today and experience the magic of this strategy.

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