



TIPS FOR EXHIBITORS AT EMPLOYER EXPOS

MAKING THE SPACE MORE INCLUSIVE FOR NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS

According to the National Symposium on Neurodiversity (2011) held at Syracuse University, neurodiversity is:

"...a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation. These differences can include those labeled with Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, and others."

With at least 1 in 10 people being neurodivergent, it is essential exhibitors at employer expos take steps toward creating a more inclusive environment that allows ALL students an equal opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.

7 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE

1. Reduce sensory stimulation.

While it is a common approach to use bright colours or elements with loud noises or blinking lights at your booth, one concern for neurodiverse students at employer expos is sensory overload. From the fluorescent lights to the numerous concurrent conversations, it is often an overwhelming experience. The more you can help reduce this, the more productive the student conversations can be.

2. Ask about a student's interests!

Including questions for students about their studies, hobbies, and interests can be a successful way to get students to open up. Once they are excited about the conversation (e.g. if they are talking about what interests them) you will likely be able to learn more about them quickly.

With this being said, avoid open ended or vague questions as these are difficult for neurodiverse students to understand and respond to.

3. Don't worry about eye contact.

Maintaining eye contact can be very difficult for neurodiverse students. It is not that they are not trustworthy, but rather that looking someone in the eye often requires them to sacrifice energy they otherwise would be using to listen and pay attention to the conversation.

4. Speak clearly and concisely.

Above all, avoid using metaphors, idioms, or nuances as autistic people often take things very literally and will be confused by these types of phrase. Avoiding jargon will help ensure the student doesn't get lost in the conversation. Also, avoid phrases like "on the same page" because students won't understand that there is not a physical page to stand on!

5. Be patient.

Students may take several seconds before they respond. Avoid jumping in with another question, or clarifying comment, as this can interrupt their thought process.

6. Listen.

Try not to interrupt the student because it may cause them to start again in answering the original question. However, if a student has been talking for an extended period of time, it is okay to remind them that they have a limited amount of time and that there are numerous students at the event. The most important thing is to be respectful when doing this.

7. Be open.

This may be the most important tip. The more you avoid making quick assumptions and relying on unfounded expectations, the more successful the student interactions will be for you! Neurodiverse students have amazing capabilities and by making a few adjustments, you and your company will be able to access this untapped talent source.

For more information refer to the resources on the Neurodiversity Hub website [here](#).