

Educating Colleagues (Without Emotional Labour Burnout)

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- You're never obligated to educate others about neurodivergence, even your own.
- Pointing people to good external resources can reduce the burden on you.
- It's okay to set limits on how much explaining you take on, and when.
- Sharing the load with HR, allies or written resources can help.

A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

Why This Matters

Many neurodivergent people end up as the default “explainer” for colleagues, which can become exhausting on top of an already demanding job. Protecting your energy here matters.

What This Might Look Like

- Being asked the same explanatory questions repeatedly by different colleagues.
- Feeling drained after a well-meaning but long conversation about your neurodivergence.
- Wanting colleagues to understand, without becoming an unpaid trainer.

Ways to Reduce the Load

- Point people to external resources (charity websites, articles) instead of explaining everything yourself.
- Ask HR or your manager to organise formal training, rather than relying on informal, personal explanations.
- Prepare a short, reusable explanation for repeat questions, so you're not starting from scratch each time.
- Let allies or supportive colleagues help field questions on your behalf, if they're willing.

Setting Limits

- It's fine to say "I don't have the energy to get into this right now."
- You can answer briefly and redirect: "Great question. [charity] has a good explainer on this."
- You're allowed to decline being the office's unofficial neurodiversity spokesperson.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

"That's a great question, but I don't have the energy to go into it fully right now; [resource] explains it well if you're curious."

"I'm happy to share a bit about my own experience, but I can't speak for all neurodivergent people."

"Would it be worth organising some general training for the team, rather than me explaining one-to-one each time?"

Quick Tips

- You're one person's experience, not a spokesperson for all ND people.
- External resources exist so you don't have to do all the explaining yourself.

- It's okay to answer briefly, or not at all, depending on your energy that day.
- Suggesting formal training shifts the load from you to the organisation.
- Notice if educating others is becoming a recurring energy drain; that's worth addressing.
- Allies who understand can help share the explaining load.

Want to Know More?

- See our companion guide: "Helpful Websites" for resources you can point colleagues toward.
- See our companion guide: "Managing Boundaries: Scripts & Frameworks."

Before You Go

Wanting colleagues to understand doesn't mean you have to be the one who exhausts yourself teaching them.

Protecting your energy here is not unkind; it's sustainable.