

Behavioural Indicators of Neurodivergence (Without Diagnosing)

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- You don't need to diagnose anyone — that's not your role, and you shouldn't try.
- Noticing certain patterns can help you respond with more flexibility and less judgement.
- This guide covers common behavioural indicators, framed as things to notice, not label.

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

Noticing a pattern isn't the same as diagnosing it — and it's not your job to do either. But when you notice things without judgement, you're more likely to respond with flexibility rather than frustration.

This helps you support someone well, whether or not they ever use the word "neurodivergent" themselves.

What This Might Look Like

- Someone who consistently asks for things in writing after a verbal briefing.
- A colleague who seems to need much longer than others to switch between tasks.
- Someone who finds open-plan noise visibly harder to manage than colleagues nearby.
- A team member whose communication style feels unusually direct or literal.
- Someone who performs brilliantly in some areas and unexpectedly struggles in others.

What You Can Do

1. Notice patterns, not moments.

- One off day tells you nothing — a consistent pattern over weeks might be worth gently checking in on.
- Avoid jumping to conclusions from a single meeting or interaction.

2. Keep your observations private and neutral.

- Never discuss what you've "noticed" about someone with other colleagues.
- Frame any check-in around support, not around a suspected label.

3. Focus on impact, not cause.

- You don't need to know why someone struggles with something to offer support.
- Ask what would help, rather than guessing at an underlying reason.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

Opening a general check-in (not diagnosis-focused):

"I've noticed meetings without an agenda seem to be harder for you to engage with — is there a format that would work better?"

If someone asks why you're checking in:

“No specific reason — I just want to make sure I’m supporting you in the way that actually helps.”

Quick Tips

- Noticing a pattern isn’t diagnosing it — keep the two separate in your own head.
- Never speculate about someone’s neurodivergence to them or to others.
- Focus check-ins on support and impact, not on a suspected cause.
- A single behaviour means little — consistent patterns are more informative.
- Confidentiality applies even to your own private observations.
- When in doubt, ask what helps rather than guessing why.

Want to Know More?

- See our companion guide: “Strength-Based Lens vs Deficit Lens” for how to frame what you notice.
- See “Avoiding Bias and Assumptions” to check your own reactions to these patterns.
- Speak with HR if a pattern is affecting someone’s wellbeing or performance significantly.

Before You Go

You’re not expected to have answers — just curiosity and a willingness to adapt. Noticing well, without labelling, is one of the most useful skills a manager can build.