

CREATING THE BEST ENVIRONMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The physical environment often poses the greatest barrier to inclusion for neurodivergent participants. Traditional sports settings can trigger sensory overload, where sounds, lights, and crowded movements feel amplified to a "high volume," leading to discomfort and difficulty focusing. Thoughtfully adjusting the environment to be neuroinclusive reduces this stress, promotes fairness, and sends a powerful, welcoming signal that all participants are accepted and expected to be there.

2. KEY INFORMATION

You do not need a state of the art facility or a large budget to create a neuroinclusive environment. Making small, manageable adjustments to your existing space can significantly reduce the sensory load for participants. By proactively meeting participants' sensory needs, you improve their overall engagement, allowing them to focus on the activity and instructions rather than spending their energy managing overwhelming discomfort.



3. HIGH LEVEL HINTS AND TIPS



Manage Your Space:

Keep the main activity area uncluttered, spread equipment out so participants can move freely without feeling crowded, and create clear "transition" spaces for arrivals and breaks.



Provide a Quiet Area:

Designate a low stimulation zone away from the main activity for participants to safely self-regulate. This can be as simple as a quiet corner marked with cones and a few blankets.



Use Visual Supports:

Use coloured cones or markers to clearly show where activities take place, and provide a simple printed visual schedule so participants know the outline of the session in advance.



Adjust Lighting:

Where safe and possible, soften the lighting (for example, by turning off harsh fluorescent lights) to reduce visual stress.



Offer a Sensory Toolkit:

Introduce a freely accessible collection of items, such as ear defenders, sunglasses, and fidget toys, to help participants manage stress. Emphasise to the whole group that using the toolkit is normal and acceptable to remove any stigma.

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