



## NEURODIVERSE ACCESSIBILITY

The term neurodivergent is an incredibly broad identifier that seeks to include a wide range of individuals and communities. There are a variety of helpful (and often intersectional) actions you can take to create safer, more affirming and accessible 2SLGBTQ+ events and spaces. Be sure to offer a variety of low-sensory events in addition to low-sensory spaces at high stimulation events.

### »» Preparing for In-Person Events

1. Ensure you have a separate, low sensory space available.
2. Use natural and non-florescent lighting where possible.
3. Avoid strobe lights and flashing lights. Advise in advance of flash photography.
4. Provide seating (even at dances and parties).
5. Have clear signage throughout the space.
6. Avoid whistles, sirens, sudden noises, and other noisemakers.
7. Provide clear signage in any areas that interaction is required, to facilitate non-verbal interaction (such as a list of food/item options available).
8. If food and beverages are offered at the event, consider providing the menu in advance and providing a variety of options (including varied textures).
9. Communicate details about the space in advance. Consider creating a Sensory Guide (example: [Smithsonian Folklife Festival Sensory Guide PDF](#)).

### »» Creating a Low Sensory Space

1. Ensure the space is removed from the main event, is relatively quiet, and has a door to separate it from outside noise.
2. Clearly mark the space and note that unnecessary interruptions are discouraged.
3. Consider having a quiet, active listener in the space that is ready to engage when prompted.
4. Avoid all florescent lighting and supplement with adjustable, less harsh lighting options.
5. Encourage a scent-free environment and avoid scented products.
6. Avoid having background music or televisions in the space.
7. Have a window (with curtains) if possible.

8. Use tennis balls or chair pads on the bottom of chair legs if the movement of chairs causes noise.
9. Advise staff and/or volunteers to give a verbal warning and waiting period before turning on lights or making changes to the room for any reason.
10. Opt for quiet snacks.
11. Stock the room with a variety of sensory items (see below).
12. Have air conditioning in summer months.

### »» **Items to Have Available**

1. Hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, paper towel
2. Cold water and snacks
3. Varied seating (including floor cushions/bean bags if possible)
4. Noise cancelling ear plugs and/or headphones
5. Sensory tools /Stim toys: Pop toys, stress balls, fidget toys of different textures, stretchy items, putty/slime, etc.
6. Alternative lighting: Bubble tubes, lava lamps, adjustable non-florescent lamps
7. Sensory regulating items: soft blankets, weighted blankets, items of varied textures (water beads, air clay, texture strips, etc.), heating pads and cooling items, etc.
8. Sensory-friendly activities: Colouring books with varied colouring tools, paper and writing instruments, simple building toys, puzzles, knitting/crochet supplies, clay, etc.

### »» **Preparing the Online Space**

1. Provide captions (see Deaf and Hard of Hearing Accessibility, page 9).
2. Consider recording the event (with consent) and making it available online after the event has ended. Communicate this plan accordingly.
3. Provide a verbal and visual overview/roadmap of the event and the order of speakers and/or activities at the beginning of the event.
4. Consider encouraging spectator attendees to turn their cameras off if they are not actively speaking or presenting to avoid unnecessary distraction. Alternatively, announce that attendees are welcome to leave their camera off.
5. Avoid requiring video or audio engagement and avoid callouts (putting an attendee on the spot to respond or engage).
6. Ensure attendees have an option to communicate non-verbally through chat or other means.
7. Build in breaks – and stick to them even if some attendees or speakers note they don't need a break.
8. Ask speakers to avoid visual presentations with an excess of written content and encourage them to speak slowly and pause between thoughts.