

Practical skills sharing session

Meeting the Needs of Neurodiverse clients

Barbra Carlisle



COMPETENCY	KEY POINTS		
1. Extensive Business Experience	1.1 Ability to empathise with their mentee due to their experience and enables the mentor to gain the trust of the mentee, as well as get under the surface of an issue quickly.	1.2 Acts as a sounding board and builds confidence, basing answers not just what seems right, but on someone who has walked a similar path before.	1.3 Create learning in the mentees, tells stories and can provide examples of both successes and mistakes, as well as using their experience to inform their intuition and ask incisive questions.
2. Strong Coaching and Mentoring skills			
2.1 Awareness of Self, Mentee and Environments	2.1.1 Creating a safe environment to establish trust, respecting cultural nuances and neurodiversity, and tailoring support to the unique challenges of each mentee.	2.1.2 Recognising the importance of confidentiality and discretion, and understanding their place within the mentoring relationship boundaries, with a high awareness of any breach	2.1.3 Committing to reflection and/or supervision practice, along with continuous self-development, working within a structure that invites frequent feedback.
2.2. Contracting, Relationship Building & Expectations	2.2.1 Understanding the appropriate reasons to mentor a mentee, including the contracting points and process.	2.2.2 Recognising the importance of a healthy rapport, what this means, and how it may differ and progress as the relationship matures within clearly articulated boundaries	2.2.3 Managing expectations with achievable goal setting to meet the individual needs of the mentee and their business or position.
2.3 Curious Questioning Enabling Insight	2.3.1 Asking the right questions at the right time. The mentor should be able to craft curious questions for an exploratory journey.	2.3.2 Reading between the lines where necessary, demonstrating a high level of emotional intelligence.	2.3.3 Understanding of the topic boundaries and gaining permission to explore.
2.4 Heightened Listening Enabling Learning	2.4.1 Understanding the different levels of listening.	2.4.2 Recognising the attention and intention within listening, which brings clarity, connection and rapport.	2.4.3 Acknowledging a mentee’s ability to listen and how they process what they have heard.
2.5 Concluding and Evaluating a Relationship	2.5.1 Mapping progress to goals and objectives.	2.5.2 Knowing when a relationship is of no further value to the mentee.	2.5.3 Understanding what to cover in a concluding session and determining next steps.
3. Practical knowledge of business theory and tools	3.1 Familiar with various tools and exercises with proven experience and insight into their use within a business.	3.2 A strong understanding of business theory in their field of expertise and constantly developing their industry knowledge.	3.3 Support the development of mentees by adding in the right theory and tools where appropriate to support them and allow them to be self-sufficient.

In this session, we will:

- Explore the value of understanding and empathy - and the risks around making assumptions
- Look at ways to tailor the environment and our approach to suit a client's needs and preferences
- Consider issues around flexibility, adaptability with the tools and methodologies we use
- Share experiences and insights with fellow ABM members

Neurodiversity is the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits that are part of normal variation in the human population

We are all neuro diverse

some are neuro typical thinkers (think linear)

some of us are neurodivergent

No two brains are the same

1 in 5 are neurodivergent (more in stem industry)

More young adults identify as neurodivergent

Forms of Neurodivergence	ADHD	Hyperactive / Inattentive / Combined/ Emotional dysregulation
	Autism	
	Dyscalculia	
	Dyslexia	
	DLD (Developmental Language Disorder)	
	Dysgraphia	
	DCD (Dyspraxia)	

Understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of neurotypes helps us coach with greater compassion, flexibility, and nuance.

Key Realities to consider |

People may not identify as neurodivergent, even if their experiences align with neurodivergent profiles

Diagnosis is hard to come by especially for adults

The client may mask to try to fit in and suppress traits (consciously or unconsciously)

Because masking becomes habitual and internalised, many individuals don't even realise they're doing it

People can have co-occurring and co existing neurodivergent conditions

The client may know they are neurodivergent but don't see its relevance to their current mentoring issues

Workplaces typically:	Have systems that were not designed with neurodivergence thinking, processing, or being in mind.
	Value speed
	Multitasking
	Constant availability
	Conformity
	Lack of flexibility, understanding, or accommodations lead to daily micro-stressors
	Ableism, bias, or being misunderstood

Impact can include:

- Daily **microstresses**
- Masking
- Feelings of **not being “enough”**,
- Trying to “fit in.”
- **Internalise messages** of being ‘too much/ too sensitive/disorganised’
- **Feeling of failing** at things that seem easy to others
- **Executive Function Exhaustion**

Executive functioning refers to the brain's ability to plan, organise, initiate, focus, regulate emotions, and manage time and tasks.

What others may see as "simple" (e.g. replying to an email, cooking a meal, making a phone call) can be mentally draining

Be aware:

- Cognitive exhaustion - The constant demand to self-manage and try to decipher the neurotypical world
- Overwhelm - Feeling chronically behind or ashamed
- It is often not just one thing but many working against their wellbeing

Before

Ask client if they have any preferences around how the session runs

Pre mentoring survey?
Challenge for some people to complete

Agree the structure – and stick to it

Work on understanding yourself

During

Question from a place of curiosity

Give the person space to think

Confirm mutual understanding regularly

Offer to make observations on what you are hearing/seeing

Check in

Pivot if needed

After

Write up the session (use Otter AI or Fathom)

Follow up agreed actions in writing

Signpost

Supervision

Strength Based Mentoring |

Identify and build on natural talents

Encourage self advocacy and
autonomy

Frame feedback positively and
constructively

Listen to their interpretation of their
strengths

Psychological
safety

Lights

Noise

Movement

Distractions

Physical
proximity

Textiles

Virtual

- Camera's on / off
- Virtual Background
- Sound quality

Coaching Approaches |

Positive Psychology

Strengths based

What is right with
a person

Coach genuinely
believes in
potential of client

Psychodynamic

Unconscious
processes of the
mind

Dynamic
relationship with
different parts of
the mind

Works on coachee
emotional
regulation

Person Centred

Follow the client
lead

Actualising
Tendency
(motivation)

Coach creates a
genuine
relationship (incl.
Mutual Positive
Regard)

Existential

Relatedness –
everything
connected

Uncertainty –a
constant feature of
living

Existential Anxiety
- Can put us in
touch with our
sense of being
alive

Gestalt

The here and now

Making sense of
our own
experiences

Coach is part of
the experience

3 good things

Values In Action

Strengths profile

Personality
Profile tools

Gratitude
Exercises

Savouring

Best possible
future self

Reflect on your
strengths

Silence

And what else??

1. "What ways of being or mentoring do I naturally lean toward - and how might these approaches feel to a client who is neurodivergent? Who might feel soothed, and who might feel overstimulated or unseen?"
2. "Whose nervous system is supported by my pace, structure, and style - and who might struggle to get any benefit from being mentored by me?"
3. "What beliefs, strategies, or rhythms am I ready to question - especially if they unintentionally add pressure or reinforce masking for neurodivergent clients?"
4. "What practices am I curious to bring in that could honour exhaustion, reduce overwhelm, or offer more spaciousness - and what might I need to let go of?"
5. "How might I invite the client to see their challenges through a lens of resilience, not deficiency?"
6. "What hidden standards might this client be holding themselves to - and where did those come from?"
7. "How might fear of rejection or criticism be shaping my client's choices, energy, or self-talk - and how can I hold space for that with compassion?"

(Huge thanks to Jane Morris- Balanceology)

In this session, we have covered

- At least **1 in 5** people are neurodivergent
- Most Neurodivergent people have **co-occurring neurodivergencies**
- Mentors have a brilliant opportunity to support personal growth for people with neurodivergent brains
- We **need to learn about ourselves**, and reflect on how we are showing up
- Be **led by client need**, client response and be ready to adapt and flex

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Access the
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