



URBAN *planters*®  
for a greener world

# SUPPORTING NEURODIVERSITY WITH **BIOPHILIA**

# What Exactly is Neurodiversity?

**Simply put, neurodiversity is the straight forward yet important idea that there is no one correct way for the human brain to function.**

Differences like **ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and dyscalculia** are not flaws; rather, they are important and normal differences in how we think. Instead of viewing these as shortcomings that must be fixed, we should instead accept them as unique viewpoints that offer new ideas and unique benefits to any group.

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**15-20%**

of the global population  
is neurodivergent\*

\*Lindenwood University

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# Why is Neuroinclusion Important in the Workplace?

**We reveal incredible potential when we create workplaces where everyone feels like they belong.**

Professionals who are neurodivergent often thrive in areas like creativity, invention, and tackling challenging issues. According to research, these coworkers can be up to **31% more skilled** than others in quickly developing skills when they feel supported. But currently, just **25% of neurodivergent individuals feel fully integrated**. We have a real opportunity to do better by offering genuine psychological safety and the simple, personalised adjustments people need to thrive.

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**Neurodiversity is an essential form of human diversity.**

The idea that there is one ‘**normal**’ or ‘**healthy**’ type of brain or mind or one ‘**right**’ style of neurocognitive functioning, is no more valid than the idea that there is one ‘**normal**’ or ‘**right**’ gender, race or culture.

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# Simple Strategies for Neuroinclusive Spaces

Transforming a space doesn't require a total architectural overhaul. Small, deliberate changes can make a massive difference in cognitive comfort:



## Visual and Sound Zoning with Greenery:

Create natural privacy screens. This **creates quiet, distinct zones** that reduce peripheral visual distractions.



## Restorative “Breathing Rooms”:

Incorporate plants with unique textures, providing safe, grounding tactile stimuli for self-regulation (stimming).



## Fractals and Patterns:

Nature is full of repeating geometric patterns (fractals), from ferns to pinecones. Human brains are hardwired to process these patterns effortlessly, which actively reduces visual stress and fatigue.



# Graham Flisher, Biophilic Design Specialist

**With 18 years of experience working with Biophilia, I help national businesses harness the power of nature to elevate workplace wellbeing and the human experience.**

I collaborate closely with clients, architects, and designers to deliver tailored green infrastructure strategies, seamlessly integrating planting in, on, and around buildings .

If you're working in design or architecture right now, you know that spaces have a profound impact on how we think, feel, and function.

In my world, biophilic design isn't just an aesthetic choice - it is a powerful tool for neuroinclusion. My focus is on turning buildings into restorative **"life support systems"** that actively support neurodivergent individuals, including those with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and sensory processing differences.

The industry is shifting toward creating spaces where every mind can thrive. By intentionally weaving nature into the built environment, we can design spaces that balance sensory input, reduce cognitive fatigue, and improve overall well-being.



I have always loved being in nature. I was lucky to grow up with a woodland as my childhood playground. Through the scouting movement, I developed a lifelong passion for outdoor adventure and connecting with nature. Through recent personal journeys, I've developed a stronger **'spiritual'** passion and connection to nature, which helps me be the best version of myself and increases my physical and mental well-being.

Graham Flisher



# The Power of Green

**Biophilia describes the human pull toward the natural world, reflecting a deep-seated need to connect with living things.**

Biophilic design brings nature into built structures, offering major advantages for neurodivergent people.

This approach taps into our innate environmental bonds to build spaces that aid sensory regulation, ease stress, and lower mental fatigue. These outcomes are vital for supporting neurodivergent well-being.

**Brian Vickery Senior Director, Design and Construction, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts said..creating biophilic, sustainable, and wellness-focused spaces isn't just a sound investment. It's doing the right thing.**

Workplace design now prioritises setups that accommodate conditions like ADHD, autism, and learning disabilities. Because neurodivergent individuals often experience heightened sensory sensitivities, standard office features pose risks. Harsh noises, flickering lights, or chaotic visual layouts can trigger fast sensory overload.





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By designing biophilic office spaces that prioritise multisensory and multimodal experiences, a more inclusive environment is created that supports the physical and mental health and well-being of the general population, especially neurodiverse individuals.\*

\*Requena, 2021

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# Benefits of Biophilic Design

**Biophilic design, the integration of nature into built spaces, offers benefits for neurodivergent individuals.**

Incorporating biophilic design and greenery into environments can be incredibly beneficial for neurodivergent individuals to help counteract sensory sensitivities. This approach helps create spaces that are more comfortable, predictable, and calming.



## **Calming Sensory Input:**

Unlike harsh urban stimuli, nature's gentle sounds, soft light, and varied textures calm and reduce sensory overload.



## **Reduced Stress and Anxiety:**

Biophilic design lowers cortisol to reduce stress. For neurodivergent individuals, this effectively regulates anxiety and balances emotions.



## **Enhanced Focus and Cognitive Function:**

Nature refreshes your brain to cut mental fatigue and boost sharp focus.



## **Predictable and Comfortable Atmosphere:**

Natural predictability reduces stress. It makes spaces feel safer than artificial designs.



## **Connection to Nature:**

Humans crave nature. Connecting with it grounds us, healing mind and body.



If environments are perceived by individuals as being stressful or chaotic, the sympathetic system is activated, eliciting a “fight-or-flight” response\*

\*Perry & Pollard, 1998



Simultaneously, the parasympathetic system is suppressed, disrupting the body’s natural equilibrium and leading to mental fatigue and energy depletion\*

\*Adams & Kirkby, 2001



# Implementing Biophilic Design

**Supporting neurodivergent employees through thoughtful workplace design is a win-win for businesses.**



## **Strategic Greenery:**

Mix diverse plant sizes across desks, common rooms, and windows.



## **Team Ownership:**

Invite staff to bring or choose desk plants to boost engagement.



## **Daylight Synergy:**

Position workspaces near windows to blend natural light with greenery.



## **Routine Care:**

Establish a clear maintenance schedule using staff rotations or professionals.



## **Sensory Sanctuaries:**

Build quiet, plant-filled zones for focused work and neurodivergent sensory breaks.



## **Using Planters:**

Planters dynamically guide traffic, use natural tones to create private shelter, and absorb ambient noise.



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Fostering our mental wellbeing is essential for us all, and those who are neurodiverse are no different. In fact, such conditions can make working life a challenge at times, so it is crucial to support those within the workplace and make any reasonable adjustments, practical or otherwise, to aid a supportive environment that nurtures both productivity and resilience. This will have huge benefits for the individual employee's sense of self-worth, inner confidence, and commitment to their work.\*

\*Bupa Supporting neurodiversity in the workplace report - June 2023

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### For your health plants can:



Reduce  
Stress



Boost Productivity  
and Creativity



Increase  
Happiness  
and Wellbeing



Clean the Air by  
Removing Harmful  
Toxins



Sharpen Cognitive  
Performance

### Around the workplace they can:



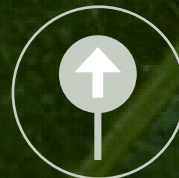
Direct  
Footfall



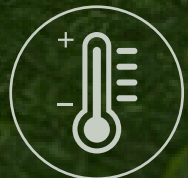
Absorb  
Noise



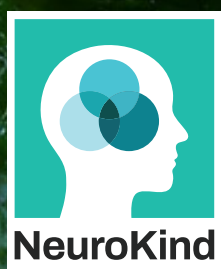
Create  
Barriers



House  
Signage



Control  
Temperatures



**np** neuroplaces



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