



# Creating Neuro-Inclusive Coaching with Personality Assessments

# Introduction

This guide is designed to help coaches facilitate personality assessment debriefs and subsequent coaching sessions. The coaching process focuses on increasing self-awareness, identifying strengths and areas for development, and creating actionable goals. Applicable to any personality assessment, this guide emphasises an open, non-judgemental approach to coaching, which is fundamental – especially when working with neurodivergent (ND) individuals. Research suggests that ND people often face more negative feedback than neurotypical people, particularly related to personality traits associated with neurotypes like Autism and ADHD. Therefore, adopting and communicating a non-judgemental stance is crucial to building trust and fostering positive development.



It's important to recognise that every neurodivergent person is unique, and we coach the person, not the neurotype or diagnosis. While examples of specific challenges and considerations for certain neurotypes may be provided, these are not indicative of experiences universal to all individuals with that neurotype. They serve as general trends and common challenges to be aware of during coaching.

## Setting the Scene

Creating the right environment for coaching is essential to building trust and openness. Below are key steps to follow:

### Step 1: Warm Welcome



Begin the session with a warm and friendly introduction to establish rapport. Recognise that some neurodivergent individuals may feel uncomfortable with small talk. To help them feel at ease, consider offering choices such as having cameras on or off during online sessions to reduce sensory overwhelm. Make it explicit that they are welcome to express any needs or request adjustments. Asking if there is anything they require to feel comfortable can be invaluable in building rapport and fostering a supportive environment.

## Step 2: Establish Goals and Expectations



Discuss the purpose of the coaching session and define clear goals. Ensure that both you and the coachee are aligned on the expected outcomes.

### Example question

“What do you hope to achieve from today’s session?”

## Step 3: Confidentiality and Trust



Confirm that everything discussed in the session remains confidential. Establishing trust is vital for open communication.

## Step 4: Discuss the Process



Explain how the session will be structured, as structure can be particularly helpful for some neurodivergent individuals. However, also communicate that there is flexibility to accommodate their needs. Discuss the expected flow, including any tools or assessment results that will be used, and set expectations regarding the time frame.

Explicitly discuss the availability of breaks, as some clients may be reluctant to ask for them when needed (e.g., not wanting to interrupt to request a restroom break). Time-keeping discussions can be valuable, and it may be helpful to agree on how to handle interruptions or staying on task. For clients with ADHD, gentle prompts like, “Can I check if this is still relevant to our focus for today?” can serve as helpful nudges to maintain focus.

## Step 5: Define Areas of Focus



Encourage the coachee to outline the key areas they want to explore or improve. When discussing challenges, consider the scope of the session and how much progress can reasonably be made, especially regarding neurodivergent-related challenges such as concentration, reliability, or emotional regulation. Acknowledge that some elements might be easier or harder to change, not due to a lack of effort but because of innate differences. Acceptance and Commitment Coaching can be valuable for neurodivergent clients in this regard.

### Example prompts

“Are there specific aspects of your work or personal life you want to develop?”

“What challenges are you currently facing that you’d like to address?”

## Interpreting Personality Insights

Once the coachee has completed their personality assessment, the next step is to help them interpret their results.

### Neutral Language for Feedback

When providing feedback, use non-judgemental, neutral phrasing. Remember that personality assessments reflect preferences and tendencies, not competencies.

#### Example phrases

“Your profile suggests you may prefer...”

“You indicated a tendency toward...”

### Coaching Questions for Self-Reflection

Use open-ended questions to encourage deeper reflection on the results.

#### Example questions

“How do you see this trait influencing your behaviour in the workplace?”

“What impact does this preference have on your relationships or interactions with others?”

# Exploring Patterns of Behaviour

Help the coachee identify patterns in their personality that influence their actions.

## Strengths and Areas for Development

Explore both strengths and areas that may benefit from development. Highlight how these patterns manifest in different situations (e.g., under stress or in daily routines).

### Example questions

“What do you consider your core strengths, based on these insights?”

“How might your development areas be impacting your current goals?”

## Balancing Opposite Traits

If the assessment reveals paradoxical or opposite traits (e.g., Introversion and Extraversion), explore how these traits coexist and impact the coachee’s flexibility. For neurodivergent individuals, such paradoxical traits may sometimes signal masking – consciously or unconsciously adjusting their behaviour to fit social expectations. Discussing this can provide insights into how much energy is expended in different roles and the potential impact on wellbeing.

### Example question

“Are there situations where you notice yourself switching between these traits? How does that affect you?”

## Providing Balanced Feedback

Use the results to give balanced feedback, focusing on both strengths and areas for growth, without implying judgement or competency. Avoid using terms like “test” or “high/low score,” which can suggest there is a right or wrong way to be. Instead, emphasise positive language and frame traits as preferences or tendencies. This approach can be particularly affirming for neurodivergent

individuals who may have been told that their way of doing things is wrong. Context is key, as any trait can be overused or underused depending on the situation.

## Strong Preferences

Describe strong preferences as indicators of natural inclinations rather than abilities.

### Example

**“You tend to prefer working independently and taking time to reflect before acting.”**

## Moderate Preferences

Offer balanced feedback for moderate preferences, acknowledging flexibility and potential for development.

### Example

**“You show a balance between leading teams and collaborating with others, which allows you to adapt to different project needs.”**

## Less Preferred Areas

Avoid negative connotations for less preferred areas. Focus on the coachee’s natural tendencies rather than limitations.

### Example

**“You might not gravitate toward high-energy environments, but this allows you to excel in structured, reflective work.”**

# Goal Setting with GROWS Model

The GROWS model is a simple framework to help coachees define their goals, explore options, and set actionable steps. However, it's important to recognise that this model may not be equally effective for all neurodivergent individuals. For example, setting realistic goals might be more challenging for those with ADHD, and imagining the future may be more difficult for autistic individuals. To address executive function challenges, it can be helpful to break down actions into smaller, manageable steps and assist in implementing them (e.g., setting reminders, adding tasks to a calendar), if appropriate.

## - Goal

Define a clear and specific goal for the session or ongoing development. Ensure the goal is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound). Be mindful that what is considered “attainable” may vary, and additional support may be needed to set realistic goals.

### Example

“What is one specific outcome you want to achieve over the next month?”

## - Reality

Help the coachee assess the current situation and any challenges they may face in reaching their goal. Be sensitive to potential executive function challenges and provide a non-judgemental space for discussing obstacles.

### Example

“What obstacles might you encounter?”

## - Options

Brainstorm possible actions or strategies that the coachee could take to achieve their goal. Consider incorporating tools and techniques to support executive functioning, such as reminders or scheduling aids.

### Example

“What are some potential ways to approach this?”

## W – Will

Establish concrete steps the coachee is willing to commit to. Encourage breaking larger goals into manageable tasks and assist in putting them into place to enable success (e.g., scheduling tasks in a calendar, setting up notifications).

### Example

“What specific actions will you take this week to move toward your goal?”

## S – Support

Identify resources or individuals who can provide support or accountability. This could include technology aids, accountability partners, or professional support.

### Example

“Who can help keep you motivated?”

## Building Rapport and Communication

Encourage the coachee to reflect on how their personality traits affect their communication style and relationships.

### Working with Different Communication Styles

Help the coachee identify differences in personality traits with colleagues or team members and explore how understanding these differences can improve communication. Instead of placing the

onus on the coachee to adapt, focus on building mutual understanding and finding effective ways to interact.

#### Example

“What differences in communication styles have you noticed among your colleagues? How might understanding these styles enhance your interactions?”

## Reflecting on Communication Preferences

Explore how the coachee prefers to communicate and receive feedback. Use this awareness to enhance their interactions with others while acknowledging and respecting their natural communication style.

#### Example

“How do you typically prefer to communicate during challenging situations?”

## Reflection and Next Steps

At the end of the session, guide the coachee through a reflection on their key takeaways and the next steps they want to pursue.

## Summarise Key Insights

Ask the coachee to summarise what they have learned and how they plan to apply these insights.

#### Example

“What is the most important thing you’ve learned about yourself today?”

## Action Plan

Develop an action plan that outlines the coachee’s next steps and any follow-up activities.

## Example

“What will be your first step in applying what you’ve learned today?”

## After the session

Offer to check in and follow up in case any questions arise after the session. Providing accountability and support can be especially helpful for neurodivergent individuals.

# Considering Neurodiversity

Research suggests that one in five people are neurodivergent, with many undiagnosed or unaware of their neurodivergence. As a result, it’s likely that you will be coaching neurodivergent clients and should consider the coaching experience through a neurodiversity-informed lens.

## The recommendations and considerations below fall into two main categories:

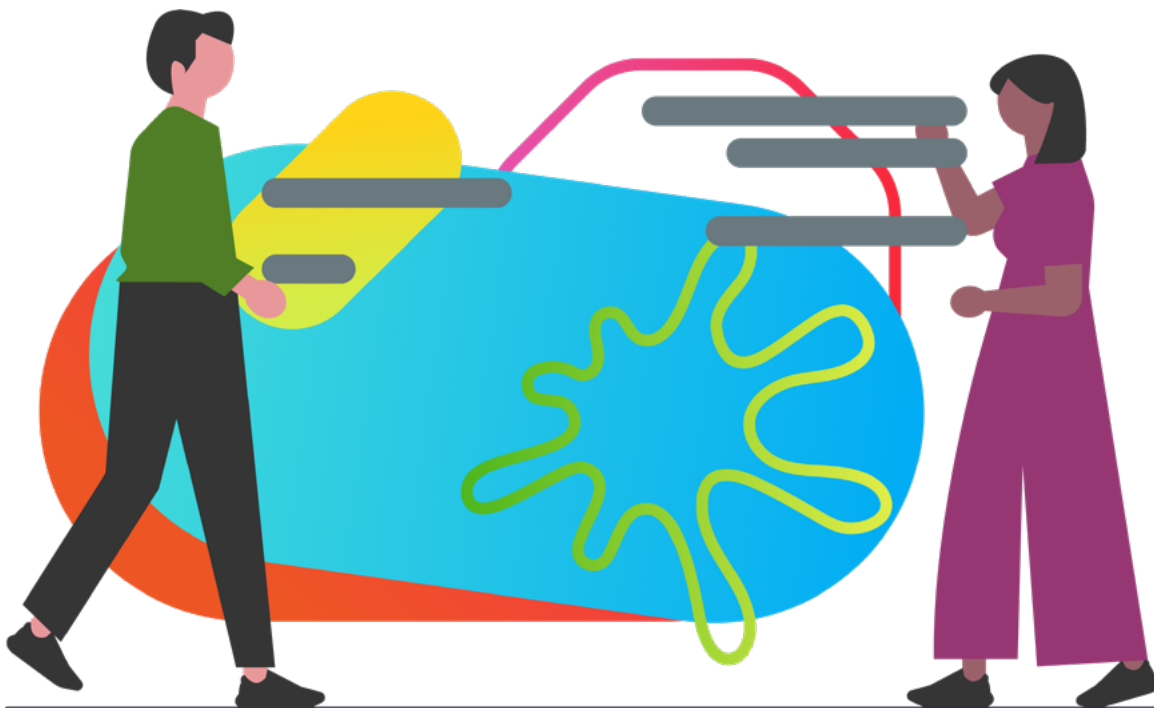
When providing specific considerations and adjustments, please note that they are examples of the kinds of challenges faced by some neurotypes and possible accommodations. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and this is not a prescriptive list of what should or should not be done for different neurotypes; all neurodivergent experiences are different and valid. The underlying principle when considering neuro-inclusion is to enable your client to advocate for what they want and need to make the experience as valuable and accessible as possible. We coach the person, not the label. Leave any preconceived ideas and biases at the door and be curious about the client in front of you.

**Inclusive Practice by Design:** Much of good coaching practice is inclusive by design and accessible to all, irrespective of neurodivergence, similar to how Universal Design promotes usability for everyone.

**Specific Considerations and Adjustments:** There are specific considerations and adjustments that can be made to accommodate the unique needs of neurodivergent individuals.

## A Note About Language

If clients disclose their neurodivergence, ask how they identify and notice what language they use to describe themselves. While the generally preferred standard is identity-first language (e.g., “I am autistic,” “I am an ADHDer”), some people prefer person-first language (e.g., “I am a person with autism,” “I have dyslexia”). Although the medical model is used for diagnosis, the neurodivergent community often avoids using medicalised language due to connotations of ‘disorder’, with the social model preferring a strengths-based approach. For example, while ASC stands for Autistic Spectrum Condition, many prefer simply “autism.” Additionally, some language is no longer used clinically (e.g., Asperger’s is not in the DSM-5), but some clients may still identify with these terms, particularly if that was the diagnosis they received.



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## Before the Session

- 1. Emphasise Open-Ended Responses:** Reinforce that there are no right or wrong answers and that the questionnaire should be completed honestly, without overthinking or second-guessing.
- 2. Highlight Key Areas:** Consider pointing out particular areas of their assessment to read before the session, especially if time is limited, to help focus the discussion.
- 3. Encourage Goal Setting:** Ask clients to consider the goals or objectives they have for the session beforehand.
- 4. Ask About Accommodations:** Invite clients to share if they require any accommodations or reasonable adjustments for the session in advance so they can be provided as needed.
- 5. Provide Session Outline:** Offer an outline of what the session will involve, including timings, to help clients prepare.
- 6. Send Reminders:** If appropriate, consider sending a reminder notification before the session.
- 7. Share Definitions:** It might be useful to share definitions of key terms, noting that the way the assessment defines qualities may differ from the client's own definitions.

## During the Session

- 1. Initial Setup and Contracting:** Use open-ended questions such as “*Is there anything else you'd like me to know?*” or “*How do you need me to be to help you get the most from the session?*” These questions invite clients to advocate for their needs without requiring disclosure of neurodivergence. Offering suggestions can also be helpful, such as considering cameras on/off, scheduling breaks, use of fidget toys, and eye contact preferences. This can build rapport and make the session more accessible.
- 2. Avoid Judgemental Language:** Avoid using words like “*test*” or “*high/low score,*” which suggest there is a right or wrong way to be. Instead, use positive and affirming language, emphasising that all traits are valuable and context-dependent. This is especially important for neurodivergent individuals who may have received excessive negative feedback in the past.

- 3. Be Mindful of Innate Differences:** Recognise that some areas of the assessment may reflect underlying neurodivergence. For example, autistic people and individuals with ADHD may have a more sensitive stress response, which can be reflected in their emotional profiles. When discussing areas for development, be aware that some aspects may be more challenging to change due to innate differences. Acceptance and Commitment Coaching can be a useful approach here, focusing on accepting certain challenges while working on areas that can be changed.

## After the Session

**Follow-Up and Accountability:** Check in with the client after the session to see if any questions have arisen. Providing accountability and ongoing support can be particularly beneficial.

### Other Considerations

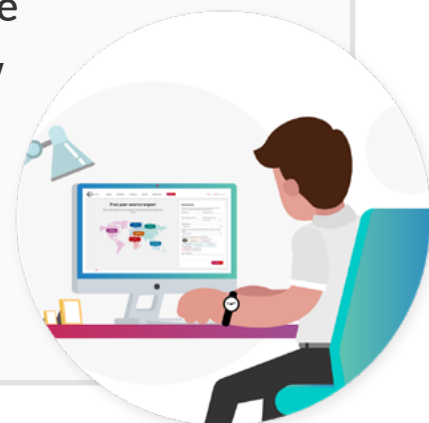
- ✓ Accessibility of Materials.
- ✓ Ensure documents are screen-reader friendly.
- ✓ Use dyslexia-friendly fonts.
- ✓ Pay attention to colour contrast and general accessibility options.
- ✓ Provide alt text for images.
- ✓ Use diagrams that are readable rather than complex pictures.
- ✓ Avoid overuse of emojis, as they can interfere with screen readers.

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