



Social Interactions and Connections



Feeling connection and a sense of belonging is an important part of the human experience. Some neurodivergent students may have methods, preferences and needs when it comes to making connections and engaging in social interactions. This can make neurodivergent students more vulnerable to being taken advantage of, bullied or excluded, and to experiencing loneliness.

Classrooms can be a safe space in which all students experience connection and belonging. You can support neurodivergent students in building meaningful friendships while embracing their unique identities and social styles.



Strategies to support social interactions and connections

Creating an inclusive environment

- ⚙️ Promote acceptance of diverse social styles—Emphasize that there is not one “right” way to socialize and that everyone has different communication preferences.
- ⚙️ Challenge neurotypical norms—Help students understand that neurotypical social interactions are not the only way to build meaningful connections.
- ⚙️ Celebrate neurodiversity—Highlight the strengths and unique perspectives that neurodivergent people bring to social situations.

Fostering understanding

- ⚙️ Educate students about neurodiversity—Talk about neurodiversity when teaching students about diversity and equity.
- ⚙️ Model empathy and understanding—Demonstrate how to be supportive to neurodivergent students.
- ⚙️ Address bullying and exclusion—Create a safe space where students feel comfortable reporting any instances of bullying or social exclusion.

Providing practical support

- ⚙ Offer structured social opportunities—Organize activities that allow neurodivergent students to connect with others who share their interests, such as clubs, groups or peer mentoring programs.
- ⚙ Provide choices and autonomy—Empower students to make decisions about their social interactions and activities.
- ⚙ Encourage self-advocacy—Teach students how to communicate their needs and preferences to others.

Address masking

- ⚙ Educate students about masking—Explain the concept of masking (See Resource 7: Masking) and its potential impact on mental health and well-being.
- ⚙ Normalize authenticity—Encourage students to be themselves and not feel pressured to hide their true identities.
- ⚙ Create a safe space for self-expression—Provide opportunities for students to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment.

