Sensory Series: Sound

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Let's talk about it

Sound affects people in completely different ways. For many neurodivergent individuals, everyday workplace noises aren't just distracting; they can be physically overwhelming. This is often due to sensory processing differences, where the brain can't easily filter out background noise.

An open-plan office can quickly become a wall of sound. Things like keyboards clicking, loud chats, or a humming air conditioner take up a huge amount of mental energy. Some people might experience 'misophonia', where specific sounds trigger a strong stress reaction. Others might have trouble understanding speech when there's background noise, which makes collaboration extra challenging.

Creating a workspace that's comfortable for everyone's sensory needs is essential for a productive team.

Colleagues can support each other by being mindful of volume in shared spaces. It's always best to move long conversations to a meeting room or a breakout area. Respecting when someone is wearing headphones is also important, as it's often their way of creating a quiet bubble so they can focus.

Useful Links

Autism and sensory processing

Misophonia

Auditory Sensitivity: Signs, Causes, Overload and How to Help