

Merging neuroinclusivity with universal design

Applying universal design principles can improve neuroinclusivity. Jayde talks about this relationship particularly with sensory processing and thinking beyond mobility disabilities.

As previously described in our Spotlight on Universal Design[Link], the principles are:

- Equitable use
- Flexibility in use
- Simple and intuitive use
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for error
- Low physical effort
- Size and space for approach and use

Jayde:

It's a really good question. I believe that universal design and its principles really do work to ensure that all diverse disabilities are considered in the design process. And this, of course, includes neuroinclusive design, or at least it does when it's done well. The senses come to mind when I'm thinking about the intersection between universal and neuroinclusive design, particularly the senses come to mind. And so for me, you know, sensory processing, it's a big topic in the neuroinclusive spaces. It's for a very good reason. Many of us are really sensitive to sensory overload. And so anything that we think as perceived by impacting or flooding our senses, I think is a way to explain that, tends to fall into the neuroinclusive category under universal design. And so examples of that may be lighting colors, textures, patterns, sound transmission, temperature, controls, smells, etc. And that also includes things like furniture, finishings, all of the things in common shared, and private spaces, but it also includes windows, walls, doors, floors, and ceilings, and more often than not, I think that the diverse disabilities are left out of the built environment, when they're having those planning conversations. And I think that it's primarily because it can be really challenging for people to understand accessibility beyond mobility without guidance. And I think building code is not helping us with that. And where there's some building code starting to kind of look at universal design, it's still very basic. Building code really should just be the jumping off point and never the end goal of any build. But to get builders and designers to think more inclusively, we have to push them past building code. We have to push them past wanting a checklist, right? The checklist comes up a lot. And it's about just thinking about the spaces differently, and there's a lot of misconceptions around it, so breaking those down, I think, is really important too.