

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NEURODIVERSITY AND TEAM CULTURE

Jenn Grindeland - Founder & CEO



Hi everyone! I'm Jenn Grindeland, founder and CEO of The Working Well. I'm excited to be here. Thank you for inviting me to come speak with you all today.

### AGENDA

- General guidelines for today's workshop
- Centering meditation
- Introductions
- The top challenges managers and employees experience
- The missing link
- Jenn's story
- The 5 pillars to create productive and collaborative cultures
- Questions & Answers



I'll be reading directing from the slides and I'll explain why when we get to the neurodiversity piece.

THIS PRESENTATION IS FOR YOU.



I'm here to share my knowledge and answer questions. We'll have opportunities to discuss out loud, or you may write thoughts/questions in the chat or take notes. Throughout any of the interactive parts of today's workshop, you're invited to participate by adding to the discussion out loud or by silently reflecting. Your choice. That means camera on or off. It makes me happy to see your faces and helps me to connect with you, but if that's not serving you today, I want you to know that's okay and there's no expectation. I'm happy you're here either way. If you need to step away at any point throughout the talk, please do so.

CENTERING MEDITATION



Research shows that 40% of the time during meetings we are distracted, so let's intentionally set aside all distractions and take a moment to take a few deep breaths together so we can presence ourselves.

Participation is optional. If you'd like to, I invite you to get into a comfortable position with your feet firmly pressed into the floor, and close your eyes or soften your gaze. Pick up all ten toes, spread them out, and press each one back down into the bottom of your shoe. Move

your attention to your hips, resting on your chair. Feel the chair fully holding and supporting you. Move up your spine, feeling your back broaden and hold you upright. Continue to move up your spine until you reach your throat. Notice how the inside of your throat is feeling. Is there any constriction or tightness? Can you allow it to open just 5% more to give you freedom to use your voice openly throughout the next hour? Let's take 3 deep breaths together, and on each exhale, allow your throat to open just a percentage more. Inhale, slowly release. Inhale, slowly release. Inhale, slowly release. Gently return your breath to normal and slowly open your eyes. Let's use our newfound openness in our throat to invite an open, engaging conversation.



helps mission-driven organizations improve their team cohesiveness through teaching leadership skills that support neurodiversity & invisible disabilities.



#### ABOUT JENN:

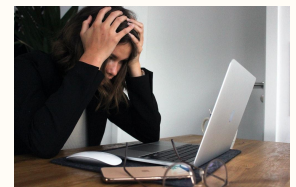
- Bachelors in Psychology
- Masters in Organizational Leadership
  - Thesis: A study of health and wellness and its effect on leadership ability
- Yoga and mindfulness teacher
- Survivor of multiple brain injuries



I tell you this last one because overcoming my brain injuries is what brought me here to do this work.

So, I'll tell you more my journey around this in a bit but essentially, the challenges I had to overcome with my brain injuries, combined with my education and training, has made me uniquely qualified to support leaders and their employees in creating inclusive, collaborative, and productive team cultures.

The top 5 challenges **managers** experience that impact team cohesiveness, productivity, and employee longevity.



I'd like to start by talking about some of the specific challenges I see managers having that I know I can help with...

Raise your hand if you're a manager - and this might mean in your job title, it might mean in a project or group, or another way that you feel like you're in a managerial role.

1. The unnerving feeling that micromanaging is the only way to get stuff done



Do you find yourself stuck in management that your big mission and big projects get pushed further down on the to-do list?

1. The unnerving feeling that micromanaging is the only way to get stuff done
2. Having disengaged or defensive employees



Are you disappointed that some employees don't seem on board with the team's mission? That you might even regret hiring them or wonder why they haven't moved on?

1. The unnerving feeling that micromanaging is the only way to get stuff done
2. Having disengaged or defensive employees
3. Employees expressing that their needs aren't being prioritized



Do you find yourself so busy focusing on your clients that your employees might complain their needs aren't being met?

1. The unnerving feeling that micromanaging is the only way to get stuff done
2. Having disengaged or defensive employees
3. Employees expressing that their needs aren't being prioritized
4. Employees performing at lower productivity levels than expected or "quiet quitting"



How about this one? Does this frustrate you? Do you ever feel resentful or exhausted picking up the slack?

1. The unnerving feeling that micromanaging is the only way to get stuff done
2. Having disengaged or defensive employees
3. Employees expressing that their needs aren't being prioritized
4. Employees performing at lower productivity levels than expected or "quiet quitting"
5. Constant cycle of surprise resignations, followed by replacement hiring & onboarding



Who can relate? Anyone feel this one? Do you spend excess time and money rehiring and onboarding employees and then worry if you made the right choice?

## EMPLOYEE TURNOVER COST

A study by Jha (2014) found that turnover cost is estimated to be around **90 to 100%** of the employee's yearly salary.

The cost of replacing higher-level executives in organizations can go **up to 250%** of the employee salary. (Phillips & Edwards, 2009)



In addition to the morale and productivity challenges, it's just plain ol expensive to have people leave.

How have these issues affected you and your team?

Would anyone like to share?



The top 4 challenges **employees** experience that impact team cohesiveness, productivity, and employee longevity.



Raise your hand if you're an employee (everyone!).

1. Feeling misunderstood or undervalued.



Are you frustrated that, sometimes, it feels like your supervisor or coworkers don't seem to understand you, yet you're not comfortable to say anything?

When I was working with a company called Pivot Energy a couple months ago, one employee said, "I felt like you were speaking directly to me and speaking my language."

1. Feeling misunderstood or undervalued.
2. Not knowing how to advocate for yourself or express your needs.



Have you been wondering how you can advocate for yourself and your team without feeling like you're stepping out of line?

1. Feeling misunderstood or undervalued.
2. Not knowing how to advocate for yourself or express your needs.
3. Disconnection or tension amongst team members.



Do you feel that there's a disconnect somewhere in your team, causing tension, and that you're not all on the same page?

1. Feeling misunderstood or undervalued.
2. Not knowing how to advocate for yourself or express your needs.
3. Disconnection or tension amongst team members.
4. Feeling overwhelmed by your to-do list and might be resentful of work.



Do you feel overwhelmed by your to-do list and find yourself resentful about tasks and other nuances of the day even when you're not at work?

These things are happening even with well meaning, big hearted managers who value employee wellbeing.

So, what is **missing**?



Leadership skills designed to support **equity** for and **inclusion** of the

NEURODIVERGENT  
and  
INVISIBLY DISABLED



I'm sorry to start the presentation on such a low note, but I want to recognize that these things are normal. This is happening in a lot of places. If you felt shame or embarrassment or even guilt from me naming these things, you have permission to let that go. You are amazing at the work that you do.

Any guesses?

Team-wide. Not just managers need these skills, but non-managerial employees do too.

According to Accenture and Disability:IN, disability inclusion champions achieve **28% higher** revenue, **double** the net income, and **30% higher** economic profit margins.

They also achieve **90% higher** retention rates and a **72% increase** in employee productivity.



Let's take a moment to pause and reflect.

What stood out or surprised you the most so far?



These are just a couple of statistics to support the need for inclusion and equity for the neurodivergent, invisibly disabled, and chronically ill.

Study resource:

[https://www.accenture.com/\\_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf](https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf)

HOW DO YOU DEFINE:  
Neurodiversity  
Invisible Disability



**Neurodiversity** explains the difference of ways in which humans think, learn, and relate to others and the world.

An estimated 15-20% of the U.S. population is neurodivergent.

Examples of neurodivergent ways of being:  
ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, Tourette's Syndrome



Is anyone familiar with these terms?

An **invisible disability** is an ongoing physical or mental challenge that is not visible to an external party.

An estimated 10% of the U.S. population has an invisible disability.

Examples of invisible disabilities:  
Migraines, brain injuries, depression



Do you experience any of these ways of being or know someone who does?



Maybe a coworker, friend, or family member.

According to a 2017 study by the Center for Talent Innovation, among white-collar, college-educated employees, **30% have a disability.**

But only **3.2% self-identify** as having a disability to their employers.

Of all employees with a disability, **62% of them are invisible.**



I'm willing to bet that of the 3.2% that self-identify, the majority of them have visible disabilities and disclosure is inevitable. This leaves those with invisible disabilities to have an even lower disclosure rate.

Study source:  
[https://www.talentinnovation.org/\\_private/assets/DisabilitiesInclusion\\_KeyFindings-CTI.pdf](https://www.talentinnovation.org/_private/assets/DisabilitiesInclusion_KeyFindings-CTI.pdf)

Think back to someone you know who might experience these ways of being.

What challenges might you or they experience in the workplace?



Any parents wonder what the future holds for their neurodivergent or invisibly disabled child?

Okay, so by now, you all might be wondering what my experience is like. Let me tell you my story of becoming neurodivergent and invisibly disabled.

## FREE SUPPORT GROUP

For navigating hidden differences in the workplace

The 4th Wednesday of every month  
12-1pm MST  
Held on Zoom  
Scan QR code for registration →



The support group is facilitated by myself and a therapist who is neurodivergent and has experience with neurodivergent clients.

Okay, so by now, you all might be wondering what my experience is like... (next slide)

## JENN'S STORY

I had my first traumatic brain injury (TBI) at age 15.

I acquired Convergence Insufficiency Disorder and Post-Concussion Syndrome.

I experienced constant headaches, nausea, light and noise sensitivity, memory, attention, and anger issues.





## JENN'S STORY

I failed out of high school English class because I couldn't read without symptoms.

I was told I wouldn't go to college or graduate in four years if I did.

I managed to finish both undergraduate and graduate school earlier than my peers.



INFORMAL CASE STUDY  
Comparing my way of being to that of my identical twin sister, who has not experienced a TBI.



It was easy to compare what my life was actually like to what it could have been had I not had a brain injury.

What skills did my TBI teach me?



Any guesses?

**Complex Problem Solving**  
**Critical Thinking**  
**Creativity**

Time & Energy Management  
Communication  
Self-Advocacy  
Resiliency  
Mindfulness  
Mind-body Connection  
Self-Awareness



These are all skills that you can imagine to be really beneficial in business. In fact... (next slide)

In 2016, the World Economic Forum flagged key skills that would define success in the fourth industrial revolution. It listed the top three skills as **complex problem solving**, **critical thinking** and **creativity** — all of which align strongly with neurodiversity.



## JENN'S STORY IN THE WORKPLACE

I utilized my new skill set to solve complex problems, think critically, and have positive relationships with my coworkers and team.

Then, I experienced 2 more TBIs. I witnessed how confused my supervisors were with how to handle my re-emerging needs that I was able to hide before.

I felt misunderstood and underappreciated for the effort I was putting in while experiencing difficult symptoms.

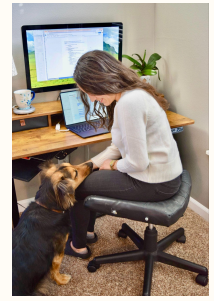


## JENN'S STORY IN THE WORKPLACE

I needed regular breaks, a split-shift schedule, to work from home, and to have Ziggy with me for proprioceptive pressure and behavior interruption.

I felt that I needed to justify my needs since what I was going through was invisible, even though ADA didn't require me to.

The lack of emotional safety for me to share openly ultimately affected our team's cohesiveness and culture.



Have you ever felt confused about a coworker and not know how to help them?

What kind of team dynamic did this create?



This is prevalent in virtually every industry and organization.



Did you experience tension, disconnect, or frustration?

After 5 years in the workplace witnessing the confusion and frustration my TBIs caused in my team, I began conducting interviews with other disabled professionals through my network and the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado.

There are neurodiversity recruitment efforts in some companies, but organizations are lacking in creating a **culture** that embraces neurodiversity and support for invisible disabilities for employees once they're there, so many of them struggle or end up leaving.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, **the unemployment rate for disabled and chronically ill people is more than double that of non-disabled individuals.**

A report to Harvard Business Review from the Return on Disability Group shared that although 90% of companies claim to prioritize diversity, only **4%** **consider disability** in those initiatives.

Therefore, working professionals who have disabilities have a **96% chance** that they are not in a culture that celebrates and capitalizes on their unique differences.



I began to see how my unique experience and education could illuminate a new pathway for companies to create more **inclusion, equity,** and better **communication** in their teams.

I created a system with **five pillars** to creating collaborative and productive work teams.



After spending a considerable amount of time researching this topic, I began to see how my unique experience and education could illuminate a new pathway for companies to create more understanding, communication, and acceptance in their teams.

1. Leadership across the entire organization



1. Leadership across the entire organization
2. Strategic and kind communication



Do you find yourself stuck in management that your big mission and big projects get pushed further down on the to-do list?

Are you disappointed that some employees don't seem on board with the team's mission? That you might even regret hiring them or wonder why they haven't moved on?

1. Leadership across the entire organization
2. Strategic and kind communication
3. The role hidden differences play in team culture



Do you find yourself so busy focusing on your clients that your employees might complain their needs aren't being met?

1. Leadership across the entire organization
2. Strategic and kind communication
3. The role hidden differences play in team culture
4. Self-advocacy skills



How about this one? Does this frustrate you? Do you ever feel resentful or exhausted picking up the slack?

1. Leadership across the entire organization
2. Strategic and kind communication
3. The role hidden differences play in team culture
4. Self-advocacy skills
5. Time & energy management skills



Who can relate? Anyone feel this one? Do you spend excess time and money rehiring and onboarding employees and then worry if you made the right choice?

### JOURNALING EXERCISE

If everyone in your team learned and embraced these five pillars, what kind of culture could you imagine your team would have?

**Leadership**  
**Strategic Communication**  
**Hidden Differences**  
**Self-Advocacy**  
**Time Management and Organization**



60-90 seconds to journal.  
Would anyone like to share one thing they wrote?

## WHAT KIND OF CULTURE WOULD YOU HAVE?

- A **psychologically safe and thriving environment!**
- **More retention. Happier employees. More trust.**
- Open, free of judgment, ability to focus and collaborate on the task at hand.
- **Where unique is normal** and people do not feel like they have to 'explain' themselves.
- Where you are **celebrated for your contributions** and not your process.
- Where **work feels like community** and not a place where you have to change who you are to fit in.
- **Patience, understanding, accepting.**



## LEVERAGING HIDDEN DIFFERENCES

### 5-Part Workshop Series

- Five 60-minute training sessions:
  - Leadership, communication, hidden differences, self-advocacy, and energy management
- Private online community

### Optional Add-ons:

- Five discussion groups
- Five one-on-one coaching sessions



Great. Some of you may have gotten all you need out of today's presentation, and I'm so glad. Some of you may be interested to in learning more. Is anyone interested to hear how you can learn the skills within these five pillars with me?

## FREE RESOURCES

Inclusive communication checklist: [theworkingwell.us](http://theworkingwell.us)

For accommodation ideas, options, and ADA support, visit: [askjan.org](http://askjan.org)

Free monthly support group for employees who identify as neurodistinct, invisibly disabled, or chronically ill: [theworkingwell.us](http://theworkingwell.us)



## QUESTION AND ANSWER

To email your question, reach out at: [jenn@theworkingwell.us](mailto:jenn@theworkingwell.us)

To schedule a chat or complimentary consultation, please go to: [calendly.com/theworkingwell](https://calendly.com/theworkingwell) or scan the QR code →

To learn more, visit [theworkingwell.us](http://theworkingwell.us)



To start off the extra 30 minutes we have together, I'd love to get into breakout rooms, go through the inclusive communication checklist together, and talk about ways you can implement these into your work. Then, we'll come back together, share a few things, and answer questions. If there is time, we can dig deeper into the 5 pillars.