checklist ACCESSIBILITY FOR NEURODIVERGENT SINGERS

A practical guide for choir leaders creating calmer, clearer, more inclusive rehearsals.
You don't have to do everything on this list - just picking a few of these ideas is a great start.

The Venue: Making the Space Work for Everyone

- ○ Avoid harsh fluorescent lighting; use warm, even light where possible.
- ○ Let singers know if lighting or layout will change.
- ○ Keep noise low - no background music during arrivals or breaks.
- ○ Keep walkways clear and predictable.
- ○ Provide a quiet or low-sensory space for decompression.
- ○ Let singers sit or stand where they feel comfortable.

Understanding Neurodivergent Singers

- ○ Expect and normalise stimming, fidgeting, or pacing.
- ○ Recognise that "tuning out" may mean overload or fatigue, not disinterest.
- ○ Allow quiet withdrawal or breaks without pressure to explain.
- ○ Accept verbal processing or repeated questions as part of learning.
- ○ Offer earplugs or allow noise-cancelling headphones when not singing.
- ○ Ask "What does this singer's nervous system need?" rather than "How can I make them focus?"

Making the Music more Accessible

- ○ Give short, step-by-step instructions (one at a time)
- ○ Support spoken directions with visuals, lyrics or physical cues
- ○ Keep conducting gestures consistent
- ○ Offer recordings for home learning - not just lyric sheets/sheet music
- ○ Share rehearsal plans in advance, including where breaks or changes will fall
- ○ Give notice of new seating plans, venues or performance formats
- ○ Celebrate learning by ear as an equally-valid method

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Grounding and Regulation Moments

- ○ Begin rehearsals with a grounding warm-up (breath, hum, or body check-in).
- ○ Build in short "reset" pauses - quiet, low light, no talking.
- ○ End with a calm close (e.g. slow exhale, shared hum, or reflection).
- ○ Encourage singers to take breaks when they need to regulate.
- ○ Remember: grounding benefits everyone, not just neurodivergent singers.
- ○ Follow up with a post-performance routine singers can use at home.

Communication and Feedback

- ○ Ask singers how they'd like to receive feedback (verbal, written, private, etc.).
- ○ Provide anonymous feedback options.
- ○ Use soft, invitational language — "Would it help if…" instead of "You need to…".
- ○ Be open about learning; inclusion is an ongoing process, not a finished project.

Reflection

Inclusion isn't about perfection - it's about presence, permission, and possibility. A rehearsal that feels better for your neurodivergent singers feels better for *everyone.*

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Explore more resources: Mentally Healthy Choirs Toolkit | Inclusion and MH Policy Template

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