

Working with Functional Neurological Disorder

Working with Functional Neurological Disorder can involve navigating job demands, expectations, and communication while managing symptoms that may fluctuate over time. Capacity may vary from day to day, and work participation may look different than it did before diagnosis.

This guide focuses on understanding work participation with FND and the factors that can influence sustainability in employment settings. It does not provide medical, legal, or employment advice.

Understanding FND in the Workplace

Functional Neurological Disorder involves real, involuntary neurological symptoms that affect how the nervous system functions. These symptoms can influence physical ability, concentration, communication, or stamina.

In work environments, this may appear as:

- variable endurance across the workday
- changes in speed, coordination, or clarity during symptom increases
- increased fatigue following cognitive or sensory demands

Fluctuation is a recognized feature of FND and does not reflect effort, motivation, or reliability.

Capacity and Work Participation

Capacity with FND may not be consistent.

Some days may allow:

- sustained focus or physical activity

Other days may involve:

- reduced stamina
- slower processing
- increased need for breaks or pacing

Understanding capacity as variable rather than fixed can support more realistic work participation.

The Role of Work Structure

Work structure can significantly influence how manageable work feels.

Helpful factors may include:

- predictable schedules where possible
- clarity around priorities and expectations

- flexibility in pacing or task order
- reduced unnecessary sensory or cognitive load

Structure supports regulation and reduces strain.

Communication at Work

Clear communication can help reduce misunderstanding and stress.

Communication may involve:

- deciding what to share about FND and with whom
- focusing on functional impact rather than medical detail
- clarifying needs related to tasks, timing, or environment

Communication does not require full disclosure. It should align with comfort, relevance, and context.

Navigating Changes in Work Ability

Work ability may change over time with FND.

It can help to:

- notice patterns in capacity
- adjust expectations when symptoms increase

- revisit work arrangements if demands shift

Change does not mean failure. It reflects responsiveness to current capacity.

Balancing Work and Wellbeing

Sustaining work participation often involves balancing effort and recovery.

This may include:

- pacing tasks across the day
- planning rest or recovery outside work hours
- avoiding prolonged overexertion when possible

Wellbeing supports sustainability in employment.

Reviewing and Adjusting Over Time

Work participation with FND is often an ongoing process.

It may be helpful to:

- review what is working and what is not
- adjust strategies as job demands change
- communicate updates when necessary

Regular review supports long-term participation.

Supporting Sustainable Work Participation

Working with Functional Neurological Disorder involves understanding variability, communicating clearly, and adapting to changing capacity. When work participation is approached with realism and flexibility, it can support both performance and sustainability over time.

This guide is intended to support thoughtful, respectful navigation of employment contexts while living with FND.