



## **The Green Lanyard Project: Quick Guide for Businesses and Frontline Staff**

### **What Is the Green Lanyard Program?**

The Invisible Challenge Lanyard program is a community initiative designed to support people living with non-visible conditions like:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Sensory processing differences
- PTSD or trauma-related needs
- Anxiety or panic disorders
- Chronic illness

Wearing a lanyard lets someone discreetly signal they may need a bit more understanding or support in public places, without having to explain.

### **Why This Matters**

Invisible challenges can make everyday activities—like shopping, ordering food, or asking for help—more stressful.

By recognizing the lanyard, your business shows:

- Compassion for people of all abilities
- Commitment to accessibility
- Leadership in inclusive service

Even small acts of kindness can create a safe and welcoming space.



## Examples of Invisible Disabilities (And What They Might Look Like in Everyday Life)

### 1. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

What it is: A neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person communicates, processes sensory input, and relates to others.

What you might see:

- Someone needing quiet space
- Difficulty with small talk, eye contact, or social cues
- Overwhelmed by lights, sounds, or crowds

*"I need things to be predictable and might not respond the way you expect."*

### 2. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

What it is: A condition where unwanted thoughts (obsessions) lead to repetitive behaviors (compulsions) that relieve anxiety.

What you might see:

- Re-checking items multiple times
- Avoiding touching things
- Needing extra time to complete a task

*"I'm trying to manage strong internal anxiety by doing things in a specific way."*

### 3. Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)

What it is: The brain has trouble filtering and responding to sensory information like sound, light, or touch.

What you might see:

- Covering ears in noisy places
- Flinching at bright lights or certain textures



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- Needing physical space or movement

*“Everyday things can feel too loud, too bright, or too overwhelming.”*

#### 4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

What it is: A mental health condition that can develop after experiencing trauma, affecting emotions, memory, and sense of safety.

What you might see:

- Avoiding eye contact or certain topics
- Startling easily or seeming on edge
- Needing to sit with their back to a wall

*“My brain sometimes reacts like I’m still in danger, even when I’m not.”*

#### 5. Anxiety Disorders

What it is: Conditions that cause frequent, intense worry or fear—even in everyday situations.

What you might see:

- Trouble speaking in public or to strangers
- Panic if rushed or pressured
- Avoiding crowded or unfamiliar places

*“I may look fine, but inside I’m struggling to stay calm.”*

6. ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) What it is: A condition affecting focus, organization, and impulse control.

What you might see:

- Trouble following instructions or staying on task
- Seeming disorganized or distracted
- Speaking quickly or interrupting

*“My brain moves fast, but it’s not always easy to keep track of everything.”*



## 7. Learning Disabilities (e.g., Dyslexia, Dyscalculia)

What it is: Conditions that affect how people process certain types of information, like reading, writing, or math.

What you might see:

- Struggling with forms, instructions, or signs
- Taking longer to read or complete paperwork
- Asking for things to be repeated or explained differently

*“I may learn differently, but I’m just as capable with the right support.”*

## 8. Mental Health Conditions (e.g., Depression, Bipolar Disorder, Eating Disorders)

What it is: Conditions that affect mood, thoughts, and energy levels—often with invisible symptoms.

What you might see:

- Fatigue, flat affect, or seeming withdrawn
- Needing breaks or quiet time
- Struggling with motivation or interaction

*“Some days are harder than others, even if you can’t see why.”*

## How to Support Someone Wearing a Lanyard

You don’t need to be an expert. These five simple principles are enough:



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### 1. Be Patient

They might:

- Take longer to speak or respond
  - Move or act differently
  - Need extra time to count money, decide, or process information
- Your calm presence helps reduce pressure.

### 2. Use Calm and Clear Communication

- Speak clearly and respectfully
- Avoid rushing or interrupting
- Don't touch them or their belongings without consent

### 3. Offer Support Gently

Try:

"Would you like a hand with anything?"

Then follow their lead—some will say yes, others no.

Avoid:

**X** Over-helping

**X** Speaking to a support person *instead of* the person wearing the lanyard

### 4. Don't Ask Why They're Wearing It

The lanyard is a private signal. Never ask:

- "What's wrong with you?"
- "What condition do you have?"
- "Are you allowed to wear that?"



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Even well-meaning questions can feel intrusive or shaming. While we provided explanations of the various invisible disorders, it's not important for you to identify what your client/customer is managing.

### 5. Respect Their Pace and Boundaries

If the person:

- Seems overwhelmed
- Avoids eye contact
- Pauses or repeats themselves

... just slow down, give space, and stay kind. You're doing enough.

### **Quick FAQ**

Q: Do I have to make accommodations?

No special arrangements are required—just awareness and empathy.

Q: What if they ask for something I can't do?

Kindly let them know what you *can* do. It's okay to say:

"I'm not sure, but I'll check for you."

Q: Can staff wear lanyards too?

Yes. Staff can wear them if they have invisible challenges. This supports inclusion among your team as well.

Want to Do More?

- Display a "We Recognize the Lanyard" sticker in your window.
- Include this guide in onboarding packages for new staff.
- Ask your BIA about brief videos or printable cards.

Thank You!



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Your kindness makes our community more inclusive for everyone.

By supporting the Invisible Challenge Lanyard Program, you are:

- ✓ Empowering individuals
- ✓ Reducing stigma
- ✓ Creating safer spaces for all