

Managing Autism in the Workplace

Autism affects social communication, sensory processing, and behaviour. Everyone has unique strengths and challenges. Here are some strategies to help maximise your strengths and navigate challenges, so you can bring your skills and perspectives to the workplace with confidence.



Developing a Strength-Based Approach: Focusing on your strengths rather than challenges can enhance your confidence and job performance. Research shows that autistic employees often bring loyalty, reliability, integrity, attention to detail, and innovative thinking to their roles. Identifying your key skills and how they benefit your organisation can help you advocate for tasks and responsibilities that align with your strengths.

Onboarding: Starting a new job can be overwhelming due to the amount of new information and interactions involved. Asking your supervisor for an onboarding mentor can provide guidance and help you transition smoothly into your role.

Structured Work Environment: A structured and predictable work environment can support productivity. However, workplaces often involve sudden changes in schedules, deadlines, or workspaces. Discussing with your supervisor how much notice you need for changes can help you adapt more effectively.

Executive Functioning and Time Management: Planning, prioritising, and organising tasks are essential workplace skills. Using tools such as whiteboards, checklists, and digital planners can help you break tasks into manageable steps. Regular check-ins with your supervisor can also provide guidance and ensure you stay on track.

Clear Communication: Clarifying communication expectations with your supervisor can help you work more effectively. Consider discussing whether written instructions, visual aids, or pre-recorded presentations are more helpful for your learning and task management.

Sensory Sensitivities: Workplace environments can be challenging due to lighting, noise, or other sensory stimuli. Identifying what affects you and discussing accommodations—such as noise-cancelling headphones, changes in lighting, or flexible work arrangements—can improve your comfort and focus.

Job Matching: Your job should ideally align with your strengths and interests. If aspects of your role don't suit your skill set, consider discussing potential adjustments with your supervisor to better match your abilities.

Social Communication: Workplace social interactions can sometimes be difficult to navigate. If you struggle with small talk or interpreting non-verbal cues, a trusted colleague may help provide context. Alternatively, you may choose to set clear boundaries with your supervisor about your preferred level of social engagement.

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Supportive Relationships: Building strong workplace relationships can contribute to job satisfaction and wellbeing. Letting colleagues know where you may need support can foster understanding and encourage a more inclusive work environment.

Regular Breaks: Taking breaks throughout the day can help with focus and emotional regulation. If possible, discuss with your supervisor the option of using a quiet space for short breaks to reset and refocus.

Emotional Regulation Strategies: Self-regulation techniques such as stimming, using fidget tools, or taking mindful moments can help manage emotions. Letting your supervisor and colleagues know about these strategies can create a more understanding and supportive workplace culture.

Training and Awareness: Advocating for workplace neurodiversity training can help create a more inclusive environment. If additional support is needed, discussing mentorship or peer support options with your supervisor can be beneficial.

Physical Exercise: Regular exercise can improve focus, stress management, and overall wellbeing. Engaging in activities such as walking, yoga, or team sports outside of work can help maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Self-Care: Prioritising sleep, relaxation, and meaningful activities outside of work supports overall mental and emotional wellbeing. Engaging in hobbies and social activities can provide balance and prevent burnout.

Mental Health Support: Remember, you have access to free and confidential counselling through Access Wellbeing Services. Support is available face-to-face, online, or via telephone. Call 1300 66 77 00 to book an appointment.

References:

[10 Benefits of Employing Autistic People](#)

[Adults with autism in the workplace: Challenges, opportunities, and success stories](#)

[Autism accommodations at work: Ensuring Inclusivity and Success](#)

[Autistic stimming: A look past the stereotypes.](#)

[Autism workplace adjustment checklist \(U.K. Edition\)](#)

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