



Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Common work-related challenges & possible solutions





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**If you've met one person with
ASD...**



**You've met one
person with
ASD**

Diagnostic Criteria

An individual must have persistent deficits in three areas of social communication/interaction:

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1. **Social-emotional reciprocity**
 2. **Nonverbal communicative behaviors (eye contact, body language, use of gestures, etc.)**
 3. **Developing, maintaining and understanding relationships**

AND



- **At least two of four types of restricted, repetitive behaviors:**
 - 1. Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech (lining up toys, echolalia, etc.)**
 - 2. Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routine, or ritualized patterns of behavior (i.e., difficulty with change/transition, eating the same foods every day, etc.)**
 - 3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are unusually intense or focused**
 - 4. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input (very uncomfortable in certain clothing textures, fascination with lights, indifference to pain/temperature)**

Let's start with possible strengths!



- **Can be reliable and dependable**
- **Can be good with following routine, repetitive procedures and tasks with accuracy and speed**
- **Can pick up on things that others might miss**
- **Can be engaging, charming, interesting, and fun to be with**
- **Can have a great sense of humor!**



Primary areas of challenge w/work:

- Social and communication difficulties
- Executive Functioning limitations (allows us to plan, set and meet goals, refer to prior experiences, complete tasks and manage our emotions)
- Sensory limitations (tactile, noise, light, smells, etc.)



Social and Communication Challenges

- **Restricted communication OR talking a lot but with superficial or repetitive content**
 - **May have difficulty with the work culture and social interactions; may seem to just not fit or be out of step with others**
 - **May be irritating/annoying (although they are not trying to be!), blunt or rude**
 - **May say inappropriate things****
 - **May like to focus on facts and exhibit poor conversational skills (difficulty with reciprocity)**
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Executive Functioning limitations can look like...

- **May exhibit rigid and restricted thinking and behavior**
- **May have difficulty organizing work and their time**



Rigid and Restrictive Thinking and Behavior

- **May have problems with figurative language and idioms (i.e., sarcasm)**
 - **May present with motor mannerisms/stereotypies/atypical voice tone**
 - **May have focal interests (i.e., intense interest in specific subject)**
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- **May have some “compulsive” traits and like to do things a certain way**
 - **May have difficulties with change or transitions**
 - **May be very rule governed; may “police” others and point out rule violations**
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- **As a result of many of the prior challenges, they may struggle with doing things in the way that someone else thinks they should because their way makes more sense to them**




Difficulty reading others' emotions and/or controlling their own

- **May have difficulty reading others' emotions and managing own emotions**
- **May say blunt or hurtful things without understanding why they were hurtful**
- **May become frustrated or anxious to the point of having “meltdowns” or outbursts**



Sensory issues

- **May not tolerate noisy, chaotic environments; can become overstimulated**
 - **May only tolerate very soft, loose clothing**
 - **May not be able to tolerate certain smells or sounds (both can be a challenge in the break/lunchroom)**
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Strategies and Resources for Working with Individuals on the Spectrum





Job Coaching

Purpose of Job Coaching



Job Coaching is used in an employment setting when an individual is employed and is in need of one of the following:

- **Skill Development**
- **Deficit Remediation**



Critical Components of Job Coaching

- **Preparing and Pre-teaching**
- **Communication among all parties i.e. employee, employer, job coach and family**
- **Observing and collecting data**
- **Teaching, checking for understanding and providing feedback**
- **Identifying strategies and tools**
- **Establishing natural support**
- **Fading Supports**



Know your Learner

- **Systematic-** Learn best through repetition
- **Visual-** Learn best when things are shown or modeled
- **Concrete/Literal-** Needs explicit instructions
- **Difficulty Generalizing-** Teach skills in environment and try to draw connections
- **Passive/Dependent-** Teach individual to use non social supports or cues. Avoid giving permission to move on to next task. Give the information so they can proceed.
- **Inflexible/Rigid-** Rule bound- Will need to learn exceptions to the rules and build upon structure.
- **Sensitivity/Sensory-** May need to avoid certain environments



Strategies in Job Coaching

Communication

- **Establishing a communication plan is critical**
 - **Employee**
 - **Employer**
 - **Counselor and other key players**

Observing and Collecting Data

- **Task Analysis: Find out what the job duties are and put them into a format that the employee best understands (e.g., a map of the area, a list of duties, a job description). Break down tasks as appropriate for individual**
- **Identify natural supports in the workplace that the individual can use for job support, and social connections**



Strategies

Self Regulation

- Teach strategies to self monitor
- Build in self monitoring to schedule
- Build in check ins with employer/supervisor
- Examples:
 - Check list and schedules
 - Clocks/timers
 - Reminders/Calendar alerts

Processing Job and Social Information

- Pre teach
- Feedback in the moment
- Role play “Do’s and don’ts to maintain a job”
- Scripts- “Networking” “Introductions”
- Situational Rules- Examples:
 - “Avoiding touchy subjects and Insults”
 - “Do’s and don’ts to maintain a job”

Strategies

Communication and Language for Supervisor/Instructors

- Concrete specific instructions
- Reminders about volume
- Check for understanding
- Clear expectations
- Be mindful of processing time
- “Read between the lines”- If supervisor uses a lot of figurative language- help employee decode.

Perspective Taking for Employee

- Looking beyond your own point of view
- Intention VS. Perception



Strategies

Problem Solving

- Size of Problem
- Reaction to Problem (“A five will get you fired”) – see next slide
- Identifying possible solutions
- Who to go to for certain problems

Maintaining Motivation

- Figure out what motivates individual
- Goal Setting- Gratification/Self Gratification





Where are you on the scale?

1	2	3	4	5
CALM	OK	ANNOYED	ANGRY	FURIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Control the anger. Don't let the anger control you!

Use your calming strategies...





Teaching/Coaching Strategies

- **Modeling-** Go slowly and show each step you are doing. Narrate steps as you are demonstrating.
 - **Visuals-** Pictures, lists, reminders embedded, maps, Assistive Tech
 - **Gestures-** Subtle prompting. May point at what is next, use touch, or use a watch/timer to indicate time to switch tasks.
 - **Rehearsing-** Rehearse steps. Review frequently.
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Teaching/Coaching Strategies

- **Verbal- Instruction-Explain how to perform the task**
 - **Avoid the use of subjective terms**
 - **Use concrete and concise language**
 - **Provide immediate feedback**
 - **Present one task at a time**
 - **Allow for practice of verbal instruction**
- **Be mindful about relying on verbal instruction too much. Hardest to fade**



Natural Support

- **A natural support approach refers to enhancing or linking individuals to existing social supports in the work environment that are available either informally (from co-workers and peers on the job) or formally (from supervisors and company sponsored employment programs)**
- **Natural Supports are everywhere!**
 - **Observe what works and possibility for modification of existing systems**
 - **Co-workers**



Fading Support

- **Important to have a plan on how support will be faded**



Level Up
providing
Pre-Employment Transition Services
to high school and transition
age students in Connecticut



What is Level Up?

Pre- Employment Transition Services and activities to help prepare students for their career or post-secondary education path.

- **Students, ages 16- 22, who have an IEP, 504 Plan, or documented disability and are potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services may participate.**
- **Supplemental to services and opportunities the student may already be receiving in school.**
- **Short term in nature.**

Through these services, students are better equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the 21st-century workforce.



Employer Perspective: Critical Skills

- **Soft Skills are critical in all industries and career pathways. Here are some of the skills employers rate most important for job success.**
 - **Professionalism and Work Ethic**
 - **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**
 - **Teamwork and Collaboration**
 - **Communication**
 - **Taking initiative and Growth Mindset**



Preparing for Success

- **Build Skills**
 - **Home, School and Community offer opportunities to teach, practice and reinforce essential work skills.**
 - **Little things can make a huge impact. Example: Instead of parent or teacher sending the email on behalf of the student. Student works with teacher or family to draft the email together .**
- **Gain Work Experience**
- **Get Involved**
 - **Becoming involved in volunteer, clubs or other activities provides additional opportunities to build ones network, gain experience and stand out to employers when applying to jobs.**



Level Up Service Areas:

**Instruction in Self
Advocacy**

Career Exploration

**Work Based Learning
Experiences**

**Workplace Readiness
Training**

**Post Secondary
Educational Counseling**



Employment Goals and Understanding Career Pathways





Career Pathways

Assessment & Exploration

Interest/Skills/Preferences

WOWI
Conover
Career Index Plus
Competency Models
SHL

Planning & Preparation

Personal Effectiveness & Occupational Competencies

Skills to Pay the Bills
ACT Work Keys
Conover
Allison
Metrix Learning
Khan Academy
Workforce Micro-training

Education & Training

Career Pathway Foundational Trainings

Workforce Training
Credit towards Academic degree
OJT or Internship
ISTPP
Metrix Learning
Pre-Apprenticeship
Industry Recognized Credential

Placement & Advancement

Entry Level through Advancement Opportunities

Job Placement (Entry Level Affiliation)
Alternative Placement (CPO, OJT, Paid Internship)
Apprenticeship
Career Advancement
• May Require Education & Training Resources



Example of a Career Pathway

Exploration	Graphic Design Intern	Junior Graphic Designer	Graphic Designer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess skills and interests• Participate in Informational Interviews and Job Shadowing• Volunteer• Begin a portfolio• Access industry specific training programs to build skill and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enrolled in Bachelor Degree Program• Proficiency in Microsoft, Adobe, etc.• Build a portfolio• Ability to provide design samples and multitask	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor's Degree• 2-3yrs experience in the industry• Proficiency in Microsoft, Adobe, Graphic Design software• Continue to build a portfolio• Ability to multitask, work under pressure and meet deadlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor's Degree• 3+yrs experience• Proficiency in various graphic related software• Provide a portfolio• Ability to multitask, work on a team, work under pressure and meet deadlines



Any questions?

