

What autistic employees would like you to know

1. Not every autistic person is the same. Some traits will be present in some individuals but not in others .
2. We prefer written communication/ instruction because we can process the information at our own speed and having it in writing minimises the risk of interpreting it incorrectly.
3. Say exactly/literally what you mean. Don't expect understanding of unspoken social cues.
4. Make me feel welcome while also understanding that if I seem rude it is not intentional.
5. Unforeseen things can be disruptive so explain changes in planning clearly and transparently.
6. Have an awareness that my raised anxiety levels can cause me difficulty in tasks I should otherwise be able to do.
7. Utilise tact when providing me with feedback, try to avoid framing it in a personal way.



Myths and misconceptions

Autistic people don't want friends!

Social communication and understanding the social world can be difficult for individuals on the spectrum. Some employees may want to be part of the social world of work, others may prefer not to – just ask!

Autistic people can't learn!

All individuals have the ability to learn and grow – we all do it at different rates and with different styles and preferences. Autism is a highly individualised condition, and how one person grows and adapts differs from one person to the next.

All autistic people are savant or have extraordinary abilities (the “autistic super power”).

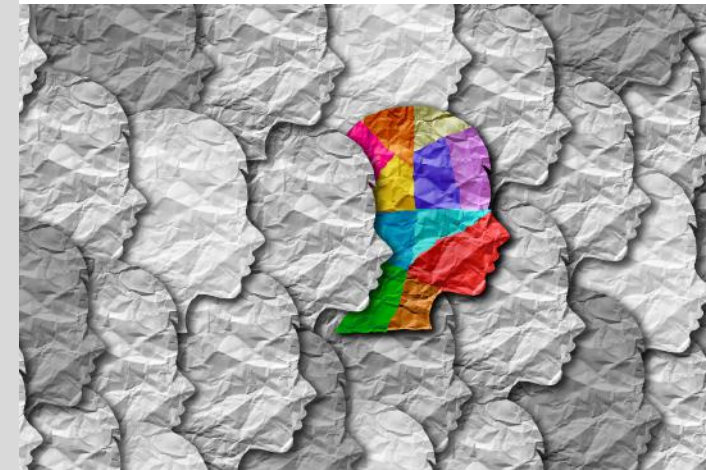
Some autistic individuals have incredible knowledge in their areas of special interest, not all do.

Autistic people don't have empathy or emotions.

They do – sometimes they are expressed differently, not at all or misinterpreted. For some, the desire to help others and share another person's feelings can be overwhelming.



Understanding autism for employers



“ The world needs different kinds of minds to work together ”

Temple Grandin

What is autism?

Autism is a neurobiological condition that affects the way people communicate and interact with the world.

It is a **SPECTRUM**. Every individual on the autism spectrum is different!

Each individual has unique strengths and challenges.

Autistic people may have:

- Different styles in communicating and interacting with others
- Repetitive or different behaviours – moving their bodies in different ways
- Strong interest in one topic or subject
- Unusual reactions to what they see, hear, smell, feel or taste
- Preferences for routines; intolerance of change.

“Autism is not a disability, it's a different ability”

Stuart Duncan

Setting up for success

All on board! Getting “buy in” from employees in your business to create an inclusive culture. **How?**

Education: Learn about autism.

Use the resources included on the Neurodiversity Hub website:

<https://www.neurodiversityhub.org/>

Identify a sponsor or champion for inclusion at your workplace.

Be ready to adapt. A workplace that can make reasonable adaptations is one where each employee will have the best chance to do their job to the best of their ability. Get to know your employee -find out if there are any changes that they need (within reason) to do their job more effectively.

Engage with the autism organisation in your state. Refer to the Neurodiversity Hub website – we don't expect you to become an autism expert! There is help out there.

Make workplace adjustments. The Neurodiversity Hub website has some common suggestions.

Provide your employee with additional support. Provide an understanding mentor/buddy if a job coach is not available. Provide concrete, timely feedback. Be understanding of difference.

Why employ an autistic person?

Individuals on the spectrum bring a unique and diverse set of strengths to the workplace. They see the world differently, and as such can bring a unique perspective and skill set that can drive innovation and create an inclusive, positive workplace culture.

Potential strengths, skills and abilities of an autistic employee are:

- Reliability and dependability
- Honest and non-judgmental
- High levels of concentration and focus
- Attention to detail and accuracy
- Factual knowledge, excellent memory for facts
- See things “outside the square” – innovative thinkers
- Thrive in a structured, well organised environment
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Creative and imaginative
- Ability to recognise patterns

