

Mentor Position Description

A suggestion prior to being a mentor to an autistic mentee is to view our autism training available [here](#)

Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring is a “formalized process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, so as to facilitate that person’s career and development”.

- Andy Roberts, “Mentoring Revisited”, 2000

It is critical to provide an autistic employee with a work environment that allows them to succeed. Recruiting the right mentor to support an autistic employee can positively influence the employment outcomes for the individual.

The person taking on the role of mentor should be able to invest time into positively guiding the mentee. This may even require readjusting the mentor’s existing workload during the early phase of transition into the role. Ideally, the person will willingly volunteer to become a mentor and be committed to the ongoing support of the mentee.

Whenever possible, the person who takes on the role of a mentor should be a person who is likely to remain in that position for an extended period of time. Consistency and predictability will help the mentee feel more comfortable in their new workplace.

The Role of Mentor:

- Provides socialisation and on-the-job support
- Provides one-to-one individualised support for their mentee
- Promotes equity in the workplace, removing barriers for full participation
- Sets clear boundaries and clarifies mentor and mentee roles at the outset of the relationship. Is consistent in applying rules and boundaries
- Gets to know, understand, and respects their mentee. Autism presents differently for every individual. It is important to learn a mentee’s strengths, abilities, communication preferences and how their autism may impact them in the workplace and in their life, generally.

Attributes, Behaviours and Skills of a Successful Mentor.

An essential quality of a successful mentor is **patience**. A successful mentor demonstrates this through:

Respect:

- Respectful and non-judgemental interactions. Never condescending the mentee
- Providing a ‘safe space’ to chat, with confidentiality
- Self-reflection and awareness of their working and communication styles. May need to adapt their communication style to suit their mentee.

Support:

- Being accessible and approachable
- Providing honest, specific and consistent feedback to support development
- Listening *actively*: paraphrasing, empathizing, validating, keeping an open mind, being willing to hear a person's 'truth'.

A mentor **transfers skills and knowledge** to their mentee through being:

- Professional and a positive role model
- Sharing expertise
- Guiding mentees in the unwritten rules of the workplace and social expectations.

A successful mentor is **organised**.

- Able to help when needed
- Has a willingness to explore work options more suitable to their mentee's working preferences
- Helps establish goals (no matter how small) and helps to work towards those goals.

A good mentor is **trustworthy**.

- Maker of promises and commitments that can be kept. Follows through on commitments
- Committed to the mentoring relationship
- Committed to learning about autism and promoting inclusion in the workplace
- Committed to providing flexible support to their mentee. Understands the challenges that mentees may face, and that some days are harder than others.

A good mentor both **takes the lead**, empowering the mentee so that they can take the lead.

- Advocate on behalf of their mentee
- Builder of confidence and motivator of enthusiasm and initiative
- Encourages social participation
- Connects their mentee to other employees/networks
- Driven by the success and development of their mentee.

A mentor needs to provide a safe environment in which mentees can speak openly and confidentially, without judgement. Frequent and open communication is the key to successfully developing and maintaining these relationships.

“Having an understanding mentor within the workplace that intuitively gets you, can reduce anxiety and isolation significantly”

-- Barb Cook, “Autistic Women in the Workplace”, 2019
