

An Employer's Guide to Autism

by TALK at TRACK

SENSORY AWARENESS

By autism we include Asperger's. Autistic people experience the environment differently to others. Maximising natural light in the workplace and keeping background noise levels down, along with the use of ear defenders or noise-cancelling headphones when needed, can make all the difference. Minimising disturbance helps a lot.

AUTISTIC MASKING

Autistic masking is where we try to hide our autism, this is mentally exhausting and takes a lot of effort. Due to masking we experience greater stress compared to others from things around work i.e. travelling, commuting and social stresses. By making your workplace aware and accepting of autism you can reduce this anxiety.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Many people with autism are concerned about their lack of control over the precise physical work environment, for example the relative locations of items on a desk, and the light, sound and noise in an environment. Keeping as much flexibility and consistency as possible within the work place can help greatly.



REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Many autistic adults are seeking re-entry into work after diagnosis later in life. Many if not most of us do **not** have any learning difficulties, and some of us have work histories doing a variety of jobs needing specific skills, focus and attention to detail. With reasonable adjustments the structure of a work environment can be made beneficial for everyone. Guidance for employers on the subject of reasonable adjustments is widely available.

MENTORING AND PHASING

We may benefit from having an advocate in the workplace and/or belonging to a mentoring scheme. We like collaborative learning and input into work processes. Allowances may need to be made for speed of work preferences: some of us think more, others can even work faster than average. At the beginning of a new job some period of gradual "phasing" back into work can help a great deal.

PERSONAL APPROACH

Autistic people may need flexibility over start and end times of the working day and options to work at home using the internet, where this is applicable. Examples could include being in the office 3 days a week, or working 30 hours over five days. Minimising the commute also has environmental benefits. The most important thing is to ask us about appropriate support as we are all different.

TALK AT TRACK is a group for autistic adults seeking employment, held at CAFE TRACK in Northampton. We actively want to engage with employers and are looking to show you the skills we have. TRACK is a social enterprise in Northamptonshire supporting autistic people into employment.