



## Unit 3: PREPARING TO WORK WITH AN EMPLOYEE WITH ASD, DEVELOPING EMPLOYEE SKILLS, MOTIVATING, SUPPORTING

Employing employees on the spectrum also means providing training to support their skills—and training for the organization to create an inclusive culture.

For managers and co-workers, awareness training can help them understand their colleagues and how to support them. Supervisors especially should receive training on effective communication strategies.

By making some simple adjustments in the workplace you could provide a person with autism with the environment and support they need to excel at their job. The type and level of support required will depend on the person's individual needs, but could include:

- appointing a colleague to act as a mentor to the employee with autism, through helping them with any issues that arise and advocating on their behalf if necessary
- bringing in help from external support organisations that offer job mentoring, coaching and general and specific job assistance to people with autism
- arranging general and specific autism awareness training for staff who work with employees with autism
- using a job coach to help both you and the employee to establish a successful employment partnership



## MENTORING

Mentoring is a partnership between two people in which the mentor (an experienced person doing the guiding) assists the mentee (the person being guided) to help them towards personal and/or work-related goals.

Mentoring involves listening and helping the mentee to identify and work towards their own goals

A good mentor can make a big difference for the employment of an autistic person. The most important attribute is the ability to listen and work in partnership with the individual. It is vital that a mentor be well-trained with an in-depth understanding of autism. That way, your autistic employee will be able to work with someone they can trust. If you are appointed as a mentor for an autistic person you must always:

**Be sensitive to the sensory environment** – Always ask what sensory sensitivities your mentee might have. Keep these sensitivities in mind when planning meetings.

**Be respectful** – It is important to treat everyone with respect and compassion. Keep the social model of autism in mind, and never view your mentee as someone who needs to change.

**Listen** – In addition to listening to someone's words, you can also consider their body language and the way that they communicate, verbally and nonverbally.

**Respond to the individual** – There is no one solution for everyone!

**Be positive** – Acknowledge the struggle the person is facing but focus on finding effective solutions.

**Build capability** – Act with and not for the individual so that they learn the skills that they need.



**Give plenty of time** – Autistic people may take longer to process social or sensory information, so use fewer words and allow time for what you say to be understood

**Meet frequently** – In addition to meeting at a consistent and routine time, it is important to meet often. The more frequently you meet, the quicker you can learn about your mentee’s concerns and work to collaboratively solve them.

## EXTERNAL SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

ODEP’s website provides a topic resource webpage on autism.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/autism>

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides free, expert, and confidential assistance on accommodations for work and the job search. Workers and job seekers with disabilities, employers, and others can connect with JAN specialists by email, online chat, Skype, and text. JAN’s website has a resource webpage on autism as well as a resource webpage on COVID-19.

<https://askjan.org/>

The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion, known as EARN, provides technical assistance to employers on hiring, recruiting, and advancing people with disabilities, including people on the autism spectrum. Employers can contact EARN directly, and find resources and information on supporting neurodiversity in the workplace at EARN’s website. EARN’s Mental Health Toolkit advises employers on creating a welcoming and supportive work environment for workers with mental health conditions.

<https://askearn.org/>



## **TRAINING FOR STAFF**

Training for employees helps managers and human resources (HR) departments and other peers to understand the needs of autistic employees and outlines simple adjustments to recruitment practices and workplace environments that will enable them to thrive.

### **Benefits of this training course:**

- Increase your understanding of autism and autistic employees' needs.
- Improve your knowledge of how to embed reasonable adjustments within an organisation.
- Ensure you are equipped to meet legal requirements regarding disabled employees.
- Give your business a competitive edge through drawing upon a wider talent pool.
- Make your business forward-looking and resilient to future changes.

## **SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES**

If the person with autism consents to their condition being disclosed, then providing colleagues with information and guidance on autism can benefit everyone. Sometimes the employee may find it helpful to write a document for other staff explaining what their colleagues can do to support them. Research illustrates that some people with autism felt their colleagues/employers needed training to help understand the condition and why they act in a certain way. Autism should also be included within the organisation's general disability awareness training. Employers can also avail of autism awareness training and materials that have been previously been funded by the Department of Justice and Equality.<sup>9</sup> Suggested actions



- Employers and colleagues may require information about autism and what supports are needed in the workplace.
- Ensure all staff have access to disability awareness training and that it includes a focus on autism as well as mental health.

## COACHING

Including people with ASC in your coaching sessions

- Use their name at the beginning of an instruction or question.
- Tell the participant what to do rather than what not to do.
- Use face-to-face interaction when possible.
- Use visual communication when possible.
- Help your participant to anticipate what will happen next (eg 'When the ball is passed to Bill, who will Bill pass to?').
- Give warnings of any changes that are about to happen (eg 'John, in a few minutes, we will be moving on to a game').
- Control the environment and don't overstimulate (eg face them away from any distractions).
- Teach them the rules and use prompts/reminders to reinforce them.
- Provide a definite beginning and end to activities.
- Reduce anxiety with a confident and positive approach; the participant will feel safer knowing that if they lose control, you won't.
- Provide a safe place and/or person the participant can go to when a situation becomes too much for them to cope with.



## **ON-THE-JOB TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES ON THE SPECTRUM**

For employees on the spectrum, on-the-job training for communication and other interpersonal skills is vital.

It is important that there is a reporting structure in the work-place or unit in which the person is going to be placed. It may be helpful if the person with autism can, where possible, report to one person only; instructions should be clear and in writing where necessary.

Aim to provide lists of written instruction as opposed to long, hard to interpret and maybe even rushed verbal instruction.

You can help by prioritising activities, organising tasks into a timetable for daily, weekly and monthly activities, and breaking larger tasks into small steps. Some people with autism will appreciate precise information about start and finish times, and help getting into a routine with breaks and lunches.

Some people with autism may benefit from regular performance meetings to provide feedback on an ongoing basis. It may help to find out what format works best for them.

If difficulties at work do occur, it will be important to understand their source. Issues of bullying and harassment at work may be more common for people with autism, as with other people with disabilities. Working together, line managers and the HR function must tackle this issue as soon as they become aware of it and promote a positive working environment through awareness training and other methods

Suggested actions

- Define work tasks clearly (complex tasks should be broken into smaller assignments and illustrated with diagrams, where required).



- Give an employee advance warning of any changes in routines, as well as an opportunity to practice new routines.
- Give an employee flexibility to develop their own way of organising their workspace and doing a task where possible.
- Consider providing a personal calendar, or appointment book and use technology like smart phones with scheduling software. • Try not to make assumptions about what your employee does or does not understand. Ensure that directions are clearly communicated and understood.

As with any employee, line managers should have regular one-to-one meetings to discuss and review performance and give overall comments and suggestions. For some people with autism, brief, frequent reviews may be more helpful than longer sessions at less frequent intervals. People with autism can sometimes find it difficult to notice social cues, so make sure your feedback is clear, constructive and consistent. If they complete a task incorrectly, don't allude to, or imply, any problems – instead, explain tactfully and clearly why it is wrong, check that they have understood, and set out exactly what they should do instead. Be aware that they may not be feeling especially confident so ensure that any criticism is sensitive; give positive feedback wherever appropriate.

#### Suggested actions

- Since some people with autism can be perfectionists it is advisable to explain what is seen as a successful achievement in order to avoid frustrations.
- Allow for the fact that there may be an issue affecting performance that is related to the employee's condition and how the work environment has been set up around them, or that it may relate to other issues.



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

OPPORTUNITIES 4  
**AUTISM**

- Where an issue is related to performance, be clear on what is expected and what standards performance is measured against, but also establish what supports the individual considers would be helpful to them.



Szczecińska  
Szkoła Wyższa



cesie  
the world is only one creature



FUNDACIÓN  
**Intras**