

# **NEurodiversity at work: Supporting young adults with ASD enter and succeed at the workplace”**

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## **IO1**

Joint curricula and training programme for soft skills development of young adults with ASD



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# INTRODUCTION

## *The development of the curriculum*

## INTRODUCTION. PURPOSE OF THE CURRICULUM

The purpose of the Joint curricula and training programme is to assist educators' practical application of the newly developed tutorials and put theory into practice. IO1 will take educators through a step-by-step process of planning, organizing and delivering an effective training course. It will offer concrete suggestions and guidelines to them for enhancing their knowledge and competencies while simultaneously engaging them in a substantive discussion on various concepts, theories, and issues related to training young adults with autism in soft skills required to prepare them to enter and succeed in their workplace.

It is there to assist educators to apply the activities in the correct manner and to avoid confusion. It will bring together all the interrelated aspects of the learning process, recognizing the importance of general situations that an educator has to handle in the delivery of their training course and identifying new situations and issues that call for action by them.

More precisely, IO1 aims to provide in-depth innovative methodological approaches to teach soft skills to young adults with ASD.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

This is the first output of the „**NEurodiversity at work: Supporting young adults with ASD enter and succeed at the workplace**” project, in the form of an Open Education Resource and reader-friendly Joint curricula addressed to people with invisible disabilities like autism. It contains the information necessary for enabling educators and other personnel who support adult learners to teach them basic skills and key competences useful for integration to the labour market.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a disorder that affects every individual to a different degree. It is a lifelong complex developmental disorder, characterized by impairments in social communication, social interaction and social imagination (Wing & Gould, 1979). Representing an estimated 7 million people, ASD is labelled as the fastest-growing disorder with an annual growth rate of 10-17%, according to the Autism Society. The condition impacts how a person perceives the world and interacts with others, making it difficult for them to pick up social cues

and interpret them. Therefore, social interactions can be difficult as they can have difficulty 'reading' other people and expressing their own emotions. However, people with ASD are often very thorough in their work, punctual and rule observant. Despite that, the current employment data for individuals with ASD are not encouraging, as they suggest that they are less likely to work than all other disability groups (Newman et al., 2009).

Work is a very important part of life with numerous benefits, including participating and contributing to one's community and the local economy. Many individuals with ASD, even those with the most severe challenges, express an interest in working (Targett & Wehman, 2009). In fact, young adults with ASD report that finding a job would improve their lives more than anything else (Barnard, Harvey, Potter, & Prior, 2001). When they have the dignity of gainful employment, they can contribute to essentials like housing, food, clothing and the supports and services needed in their lives.

Although the challenges of ASD are significant, it is possible for those individuals to be employed and to live a life of quality where they actively participate in decisions that affect their lives. In fact, research and experience has shown that, with the right preparation and support, individuals with ASD can learn the necessary skills and utilize talents that lead to meaningful employment in a variety of community-based businesses and industries (Hillier, et al, 2007)

It is therefore important to develop the potential for people with ASD to have meaningful employment and be contributing members of their society. As Grandin (2004) points out, "Work is more than just a livelihood or paycheck; it is the key to a satisfying and productive life. With appropriate preparation and support, even those most affected by ASD can have gainful employment, and become reliable, hardworking employees that meet or exceed expectations, hold a job independently or with proper support from qualified staff to retain a position.

Although it may seem obvious that those more severely affected by ASD need preparation for employment, it is not always as obvious for individuals with Asperger Syndrome or high functioning autism. Average to high IQ does not guarantee to obtain or maintaining employment for young people with ASD. In fact, without careful preparation and significant support, high functioning young adults typically have only marginally better employment outcomes than those who are more severely affected by ASD. Young adults with ASD need to make realistic career and employment decisions based on self-knowledge and awareness of career options. Instruction and practice in soft skills are imperative in being prepared for

employment, (Mazefsky et al.2008) over 80% of jobs lost by young adults with ASD are a result of poor “soft” skills, especially poor social and communication skills. Therefore, people with ASD need instruction in developing soft skills focusing on one hand on skills involving job search skills (i.e., CV preparation, job interview skills, dress code, etc.), and skills related to functional skills to survive and succeed in the labor sector (i.e., social and communication skills, building positive relationships and networking with colleagues, etc.).

All this work is made possible by the collaboration of a multiskilled partnership of European Organisations with a wide diversity of expertise:



### Scope of the curriculum

The Training Program for young adults with ASD aims to support individuals in acquiring and developing basic skills and key competences.

The program is presented in 4 modules.

**NEEDS ANALYSIS:** challenges, opportunities and needs for vet trainers regarding cultural literacy

1. PRESENTATION OF THE FIELD BASED RESEARCH
2. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## MODULES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

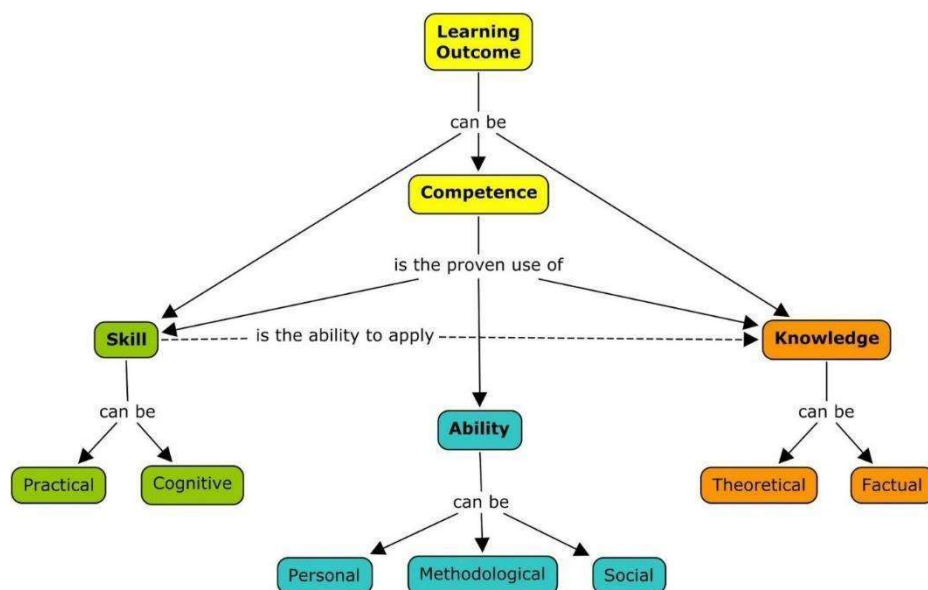
Based on the **need's analysis**, the structure of the training curriculum has been defined and explained in the table below (2). The scope, the aims, the methods of development, the format and the contents were also identified and are summarized in the same part. The Modules are developed in accordance with the online tutorials (IO2). The Modules include the aims, competences, and skills, learning outcomes, methods, implementation, and so on.

### LESSON PLAN AND LEARNING OUTCOMES STRUCTURE

The lesson plan of each Module described in the table below are structured according to the following logic.

- Aims
- Learning Objectives
- Activities
- Title and Short description
- Duration
- Techniques used
- Materials
- Competences developed

The learning outcomes to be developed rely on the diagram below (Mkhonza, 2018).





*Figure 12: Learning outcome definitions, 2063 Innovators Network Cooperative, 2018.*

### Methodology need analysis

The content was produced through a collaborative consortium work, and following a specific methodology:

1. **The Needs Analysis:** this step aimed at identifying **the needs, differences, and particularities** on Supporting individuals in acquiring and developing basic skills and key competences. The needs analysis took the form of a questionnaire destined to the target group of partners each country.
2. **The Design of the structure of the Training Curriculum:** the structure of the training curriculum helped to define: its scope, the aims, the methods of development, the format and the learning outcomes. The design and structure of the curriculum are based on the analysis of the needs.
3. **The development of the content of the Training Curriculum:** The Modules of the training curriculum were developed during this step. The Modules match with the content of the online tutorials (IO2). The Modules include the objectives, competencies and skills, learning outcomes, methodology, implementation, and so on.
4. **The Feedback and evaluation phase** are the final activity where the curriculum has been revised, corrected, completed to be finalized. This activity has been carried out by all partners including the revision of final edition. The final evaluation has been made by Latvia University, which is responsible for the Evaluation and Quality Assurance of the project.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

This curriculum includes the following parts:

1. The **Theory – Module 1 and Module 2.**
2. **Practical material with learning outcomes - Module 3 and Module 4.**
3. **Purpose of the Curriculum** including some data on our today's challenges, Cultural literacy in educational settings and a **Review of Literature.**
4. The **Needs analysis** including the research and its results that helped to clarify the Modules.

5. The **Modules** are organized in a table and including allocation of the 25 hours training curriculum as well as the presentation of the learning outcomes
6. The **Training methods** and their description that will be also introduced in the Handbook.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE MODULES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: 25 HOURS CURRICULUM

### EDUCATIONAL METHODS AND LEARNING TECHNIQUES FOR PROMOTING ACTIVE LEARNING

The learning techniques used in the Curriculum's handbook are explained and described below. They include the following list:

1. Cooperative Learning
2. Creative Arts (includes drama, art, dance& movement, music)
3. Case Studies
4. Stories
5. Experiential Learning
6. Workshops (Problem Solving activities & exercises etc.)
7. Self-Reflection
8. Practical Research
9. Entrepreneurial mindset

The advantages of these technics are that they can be implemented in the classroom, as well as, in distance learning as existing digital tools are now relevant and easy to access. The extra goal for the life-long learning element that builds upon Problem Solving and Self-Reflection is the student's growing mentality and finally competence in entrepreneurial participation. Besides its benefits for one's final job participation, the entrepreneurial mindset is also vital for learners' pro-active attitude in finding new knowledge and skills for his/her own further learning and studying. For trainers, coaches and mentors, this mindset becomes more and more indicative for success as enterprises themselves tend to outsource the methodology for curricular- and instructional design. The conclusion of ongoing research says that "It is not necessary to become an entrepreneur in order to benefit from an entrepreneurial mindset".

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning refers to establishing a “**positive interdependence among students goal attainments**” (Johnson & Johnson, 2017, p. 3). In this framework, researchers have identified 5 elements for a cooperative lesson to be well structured (Johnson & Johnson, 2017):

- **Positive interdependence:** learners to believe they are linked to other learners “in a way that one cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed” (pp. 3-4).
- **Face-to-Face promotive interaction:** learners help, support, and encourage each other (p. 4).
- **Individual Accountability:** assessment of each learner and results given back to the learner and the group (p. 4).
- **Social Skills** in the classroom to make the group function effectively (communication, trust building, conflict management skills, etc.) (p. 4).
- **Group Processing:** that “enables learning groups to focus on group maintenance, facilitates the learning of social skills” (p. 4).

## CREATIVE ARTS (INCLUDES DRAMA, ART, DANCE& MOVEMENT, MUSIC)

Using arts in education, refers to **learning through experiencing arts and by fostering creativity among learners**. It can include all kind of artistic activities such as, videomaking, painting, theatre, dance, and so on. Arts and creativity have numerous recognized benefits in education, especially regarding the improvement of cognitive development, but also, in overcoming inequalities, building confidence and expanding horizons, as well as increase social cohesion and appreciate diversity (Cooper, 2018).

## CASE STUDIES

Case studies are **teaching methods that promote an active form of learning that focuses on involving “students learning by doing”** (Columbia CTL, n/a). Cases and scenarios are real or invented, situations or stories, aiming at illustrating a problem or principle by including consistent and relevant background. Learners discuss, critique and analyze the case, the characters’ actions and suggest solutions and alternative outcomes (Gross, 2009). Educators

must adapt a no-wrong answers policy and encourage the discussion through involving everyone.

## STORIES

**Stories** as a learning method refers to **sharing experiences and stories to develop an understanding respect and appreciation for other cultures** (British Council, n/a)

Storytelling as a teaching method is a meaning full strategy when speaking about Cultural Literacy, cultural awareness, and intercultural dialogue. It encourages “the development of caring, empathy, compassion and to develop cultural competencies” (Michele, 2004, p. 188). Story telling is also a participatory method that enable learners to be fully engaged in the learning process, for instance, by sharing personalized stories and learning opportunities. Storytelling fosters interactions and discussions but requires a safe environment and group trust to respect of confidentiality and privacy (p. 188).

However, it requires a specific attention on the recognition of the learning outcomes acquired through this educational method (p. 188).

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

It is an active learning technique that refers to the **construction of knowledge, skills, and values from direct experience** (Association for Experiential Education, 1994). As quoted by Christian M. Itin (1999, p. 92), it can involve several steps (Stehno, 1986):

- Step 1: Learner’s action
- Step 2: Reflection
- Step 3: Abstraction
- Step 4: Application

	↗	Concrete Experience	↘	
Active Experimentation				Reflective Observation
	↖	Abstract Conceptualization	↗	

Figure 13: The Kolb Learning Cycle, retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiential\\_learning#cite\\_note-15](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiential_learning#cite_note-15)

## WORKSHOPS (PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES & EXERCISES)

Problem Solving activities and exercises workshops is the “process of **applying a method** – not known in advance – **to a problem that is subject to a specific set of conditions** and that the problem solver has not seen before, in order to obtain a satisfactory solution” (University of Waterloo, n/a). This technique helps developing critical thinking and conflict resolution skills, as well as, communication in group especially when taught through workshops.

## SELF-REFLECTION

Self-Reflection is the process giving learners to “**stop and be reflective about the learning that has taken place**” (Davies & Busick , 2013). It helps learners to empower, encourage, and to take “responsibility for their learning”, activating “further engagement with learning materials” and foster independent and critical thinking. This technique can take the form of writing activities, such as journal writing, or any other process that suggests a reflective attitude (Belobrov, 2018).

## PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Practical Research involves the **extraction and processing of information from diverse sources**, including internet sources. The aim is to involve students in investigating specific questions and issues under different means: texts, database, digital encyclopedias, dictionaries, websites, newspaper, etc. The educator provides a scenario and steps to follow by learners, to help them structure their presentation.

It has a positive impact on collaborative working skills by actively involving learners to use information to explore an issue (Abbitt & Ophus, 2008)

## ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

Built on top of the prior modalities of active learning, the newly recognized indication of prospect worker and life-long learner is the degree to which young employees ‘see’ new opportunities and develop the awareness of ‘looking via the eyes of the customer or the business partner’. Professor Bill Aulet’s world-renowned framework for disciplined entrepreneurship breaks down the steps for creating a successful startup in a way that any industrious person can learn and apply, from conducting primary market research, to identifying windows of opportunity, to developing a deeper understanding of timing and

triggers. Entrepreneurship education targets the acquisition of skills or attributes that helps a labour organisation to support the corporate hierarchy in order to acquire trust and reputation. In contrast to traditional educational paradigms, it is not optimal to scaffold learners from basic-up to ‘higher-order-learning’; all signs from best practices show that from the early beginning, apprentices need to be coached to ‘see’ the relevance of pro-active thinking and let the entrepreneurial attitude penetrate into all levels of ‘skills-‘ and ‘problem-solving capacities’. Both the pure learning and the developing communication awareness can become nurtured in youngsters who are partly deprived from extravert talents. More recently is the manifestation of entrepreneurship for creating charitable organizations (or portions of existing charities) which are designed to be self-supporting in addition to doing their good works. This is usually called social entrepreneurship or social venturing. Even a version of public sector entrepreneurship has come into being in governments, with an increased focus on innovation and customer service. Entrepreneurship is also being developed as a way of developing skills such as risk-taking and problem solving that facilitate achievement of life goals and in education.

Modules	Module Duration	General Objectives	Learning Outcomes	Material	Suggested techniques/methodologies
<b>Introduction to autism spectrum disorders</b> <b>1.1.</b> What is autism spectrum disorder?  <b>1.2.</b> How does autism impact a person's life?  <b>1.3.</b> Strengths of people with autism	3 hours (4x45 min)	<b>1. Knowledge:</b> Getting to know some medical and psychological aspects of autism spectrum disorders  <b>2. Skills:</b> Acquiring the ability to recognize people with ASD's strengths and weaknesses  <b>3. Social Competences:</b> Acceptance of the imperfections / lack of full efficiency (physical and mental) of people with ASD and the ability to believe in the effectiveness and success of their own behavior.	The learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common autism traits</li> <li>• Be able to give examples of how ASD can affect a person's life</li> <li>• Be able to name and give examples of common autism traits which can be considered a strength for an employee</li> <li>• Have the competencies to identify the most common barriers people with ASD encounter in the workplace</li> </ul>	Video  internet connection  PPT	Classroom teaching  Discussion  Role-Play  Video  Brainstorming
<b>Support to trainers</b>  <b>2.1.</b> Teaching strategies <b>2.2.</b> Workplace related inclusion for young adults with autism (high – functioning)	1.30 hour (2x45 min)	<b>1.Knowledge:</b> Getting to know the main prerequisites for inclusive work environment for young adults with ACD. Getting to know the main barriers in job seeking for young adults with ACD.	The learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give practical examples of existing barriers for young adults with ACD.</li> <li>• Give practical advice and recommendations how to make</li> </ul>	PPT Reading material	Brainstorming  Short lecture  Case study  Discussion

<b>2.3. Job finding barriers for young adults with ASD (autism spectrum disorders)</b>			<p>inclusive work environment for young adults for ACD.</p> <p>To be able to recognize the barriers and give recommendations for young adults with ACD and employers.</p>		
		<b>2.Skills</b> To recognize and explain personal related, employer related barriers in the job seeking and in the job situation for young adults for ACD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment expectations and ambitions of young people are built through the experiences they have early on, so having positive connections with employers is important for building ambition and networks for young people. The involved skills need to be tuned to the actual developmental status of a particular trainee.</li> <li>• Employers and young people recognize they need to change, but feel they lack the information and support to do so.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people often struggle with the unfamiliar processes of the world of work, which frustrates employers who see workplace culture as the norm.</li> <li>• Young people often need support to balance their home and community responsibilities.</li> </ul>
		<b>3. Competencies</b> To give practical input to make more inclusive working environment for young adults with ASD both during job seeking and during the work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of applying for jobs can be demotivating for young people who do not understand what employers are looking for. Employers get frustrated that young people present poorly and the recruitment process is costly for them. See recent scientific literature<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in expectations and how these are communicated can impede success once in the workplace. Young people don't understand progression opportunities which can demotivate</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Hedger, Indu Dubey, Bhismadev Chakrabarti, Social orienting and social seeking behaviors in ASD. A meta analytic investigation, Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, Volume 119, 2020, Pages 376-395, ISSN 0149-7634, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2020.10.003>. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149763420306023>)



					them, while employers are waiting to see motivation before they discuss progression and development.
<b>3. Support for jobseekers with ASD</b> <b>3.1.</b> What type of person am I? <b>3.2.</b> What job is right for me? <b>3.3.</b> Where do I look for a job? <b>3.4.</b> How do I apply for a job? <b>3.5.</b> Getting ready for a job interview <b>3.6.</b> Writing a CV and cover letter	5.30 hours  (7x45 min)	<b>1. Knowledge</b> Metacognitive skills can be developed by adding reflection and knowledge integration tools like mind-/concept mapping  <b>2. Skills</b> Through a large number of episodes and well-planned crises, the ASD person will develop the trust and skills for self-regulation that are needed for understanding employers' perspectives  <b>3. Competencies</b> The growing abilities to accept responsibilities in task settings.	The learners will: Be brought in simulated work settings where they co-design with the mentor/coach an increasing cascade of critical situations that need alertness for pro-active behavior. From a cartoon scenario, the ASD clients will exercise the potential of latent conflicts and discuss the rational-emotive mechanisms.  The skill ingredients like perspective taking and articulating attitudes for signaling colleagues uncertainty need to be trained and repeated until a satisfactory fluency and flexibility is achieved. Important is the clients' willingness to invent 'adjacent' complications so that the far transfer to become pro-active and find an optimal balance between impulsiveness and procrastination has been reached.  The learner will be confronted with a number of vignette situations (caricatures for real-life work situations) that	Worksheets Pencil PPT Internet connection	

		Both at rational-, operational- and emotional levels the ASD person needs to integrate skills, understanding and intuition to be alert to social cues from colleagues and principals	gradually transforms latent skills into a 'second nature'. The analogy between rigid task dedication (without the willingness to become interrupted) and the charm of enjoying social digression, needs to become experienced.		
<b>4. Support for employees with ASD</b>  <b>4.1.</b> Keeping a job skills <b>4.2.</b> Social skills	2,5 hours  (5x30 Minutes)	Through the modules they will gain ability to communicate effectively, being good collaborator, be safe is their job, credible sources but as well ways to be active.	How to keep your job How to not loose your current job What sources are credible? What information can you find out from the inside? How to become indispensable for the employer? Be proactive!	PPT Reading material  Internet Connection	Short lecture  Explanations  Discussion
<b>4.3.</b> Emotions recognition		Training the Recognition of Facial Expressions and Emotions can be supported by computer software <sup>2</sup>	The Cambridge Emotion Recognition Task. The outcome measures for ERT cover percentages and numbers correct or incorrect and overall response latencies, which can be looked at either across individual emotions or across all emotions at once. <sup>3</sup>	Web- and stand-alone computer applications	Role Playing/Discussion/ Video/Brainstorming/  Classroom teaching The modules are structured with a learning by doing methodology: after a brief introduction and an explanation about

<sup>2</sup> [https://imotions.com/biosensor/fea-facial-expression-analysis/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc](https://imotions.com/biosensor/fea-facial-expression-analysis/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cambridgecognition.com/cantab/cognitive-tests/emotion-and-social/emotion-recognition-task-ert/>

<p><b>4.4. Communication skills</b></p>	<p>2,5 hours (5x30 Minutes)</p>	<p>The module will offer concrete suggestions and guidelines to educators for enhancing their knowledge and competencies related to training young adults with autism in communicational skills required to prepare them to enter and succeed in their workplace.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effective &amp; Writing Communication</li> <li>2. Customer Communication</li> <li>3. Giving Feedback</li> <li>4. Comprehend the Body language</li> <li>5. Communicating in Teams</li> </ol>	<p>Pencil Paper</p> <p>Internet Connection</p>	<p>the selected skills, the participants are asked to practice their skills through icebreaking activities, games and hands-on exercises.</p> <p>Role Playing/Discussion/ Video/Brainstorming/ Classroom teaching</p> <p>The modules are structured with a learning by doing methodology: after a brief introduction and an explanation about the selected skills, the participants are asked to practice their skills through icebreaking activities, games and hands-on exercises.</p> <p>Each section should be taught within 25-35 minutes and extra time can be given for the relevant activities</p>
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<p><b>4.5. Problem solving skills</b></p>	<p>1,5 hours (3x30 minutes)</p>	<p>This module focuses on problem solving skills as individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) typically have significant social skills impairments and often require direct instruction in order to address these deficits.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conflict Management</li> <li>2. Way of thinking</li> <li>3. Considering a solution</li> </ol>	<p>Pencil Paper  Internet Connection</p>	<p>according to the learner's comprehensive level and participation.</p> <p>GENERAL TIPS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid sensory overload. Many unexpected things can be distracting to students with autism.</li> <li>2. Use visuals but do not overwhelm</li> <li>3. Be predictable and clear</li> <li>4. Keep language concrete and avoid use of sarcasm.</li> <li>5. Directly teach social and communicational skills for any circumstances</li> <li>6. Treat students as individuals</li> <li>7. Motivate them by rewarding &amp; acknowledgement of their achievements</li> </ol>
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<p><b>4.6. Anxiety management</b></p>		<p>Many autistic children adults experience anxiety. It can affect a person psychologically and physically. Constant anxiety can be extremely distressing for autistic people. It can lead to meltdowns, self-harm and depression. Common triggers include noisy environments and the difficulty of social interactions. It is important to identify what is causing a person's anxiety and then to take steps to reduce it.</p>			<p>Brain in Hand – a diary, notes and reminders of daily tasks, individual coping strategies, system to monitor anxiety levels and access to support from the National Autistic Society. <sup>4</sup></p> <p>Molehill Mountain – tracks mood, identifies triggers and gives evidence-based tips on how to self-manage anxiety levels.<sup>5</sup></p>
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Keeping a job skills for ASD students comprise a combination of subskills and especially the skills for self-regulation so that the mastered skills can become manifest and also help colleagues to survive in a so-called ‘melt-down’. The best instructional format is a range of progressively realistic situations where role-taking and post-conflict reflection sessions are arranged. Literature can be found as attached to the underlying references<sup>6</sup> and from the virtually endless list of skill trainings the next six ones have become prominent in the context of ASD-labelled learners/trainees/colleagues:

1. Communication skills

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/help-and-support/brain-in-hand>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.autistica.org.uk/molehill-mountain>

2. Social skills
3. Organisation skills
4. Dealing effectively with difficult people and bullying
5. Hygiene
6. Managing stress and anxiety at work

The envisaged teacher/mentor training can be found in the plethora of available providers like the ‘Teacch Autism Program’<sup>7</sup> and ‘Needs of Students with Autism Workshop’<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://teacch.com/trainings/five-day-classroom-training/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.workshopsexpress.com/needs-of-students-with-autism-workshop/>

# MODULE 1

## *Introduction to Autism*

## 1. Introduction to Autism

### 1.1: What is autism?

**Autism** is a complex neuro-developmental disorder, often diagnosed during early life (after 3 years of age) and can impact a person's language, perception and socialization (Autism Society of America). It can affect a person's communication and their experience of the world around them, in various levels. This means, people with autism may not only have difficulties in communication and social understanding, but also they might have unusual reactions to sensory input, and may demonstrate what appear to be inappropriate behaviors.

Although people with autism share some similar characteristics, they are also all different from each other, which is why autism is considered a spectrum condition, and is also known as



**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).** The autism spectrum isn't linear from high to low but varies, just as one person might vary from another. Some people with autism can live relatively independent lives while others may encounter additional challenges, including learning disabilities, which means they require extra support (Ambitious about Autism).

What is Asperger's Disorder?

In 1994, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), introduced Asperger's Disorder for the first time. It was back then considered different from ASD or classic autism, as it was often called, but according to the latest Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), a diagnosis of Asperger's no longer exists, and the signs and symptoms that were once part of an Asperger's diagnosis now fall under ASD (Autism Society of America).



What distinguishes Asperger's Disorder from classic autism are its less severe symptoms and the absence of language delays. Individuals with Asperger's Disorder may be only mildly affected, and they frequently have good language and cognitive skills. To the untrained observer, someone with Asperger's Disorder may just seem like a neurotypical<sup>9</sup> individual behaving differently. In other words, Asperger's syndrome was previously considered a "mild" or "high-functioning" form of autism. (Jewell, 2020 Healthline: <https://www.healthline.com/health/aspergers-vs-autism>)

### Most common autism traits

There are three distinctive behaviors that characterize autism, difficulties with social interaction, problems with verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors or narrow, obsessive interests. These behaviors can range in impact from mild to disabling. A lot of people with autism also have sensory problems.

Therefore, although the characteristics of autism vary from one person to another, there are **three** main areas of deficiencies.

1. Social interaction
2. Social communication
3. Social imagination

Other common characteristics of autism include:

4. Restricted interests/hobbies
5. Sensory differences
6. Extreme Anxiety
7. Meltdowns and shutdowns

## 1.2: How does autism impact on a person's life?

Autism is a hidden or invisible disability which means in most cases you can't really tell if someone is on the spectrum just by looking at them. Also, being a spectrum, autism incorporates a range of ability. Some people may have learning difficulties which can affect all aspects of life, from studying

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<sup>9</sup> A newer term that's used to describe individuals of typical developmental, intellectual, and cognitive abilities. In other words, it's not used to describe individuals who have autism or another developmental difference

in school, to learning how to wash or make a meal, thus requiring lifelong, specialist support, while others will be able to live independently. Therefore, because the ways in which deficiencies associated with autism are manifested vary widely from person to person, it is hard to say how autism can affect the individual. However, the most common autism traits could affect the individual in following ways:

## Social interaction

Individuals with autism often struggle with social interactions. Social interaction involves many



unwritten rules which can change according to the context. People on the spectrum can find these rules difficult to remember or confusing because they aren't always applied in the same way. Therefore, people with ASD often have difficulty 'reading' other people -

recognizing or understanding others' feelings and intentions - and expressing their own emotions. However, individuals with ASD don't lack the skills to interact with other people, they simply need more information and support to socialize with others. (Ambitious about autism)

As a result, people with ASD may:

- appear to be insensitive
- prefer alone-time when overloaded by other people and as a result, become isolated
- not seek comfort from other people
- act “socially awkward” or “socially inappropriate”
- find forming and keeping friendships a struggle. (National Autistic Society)

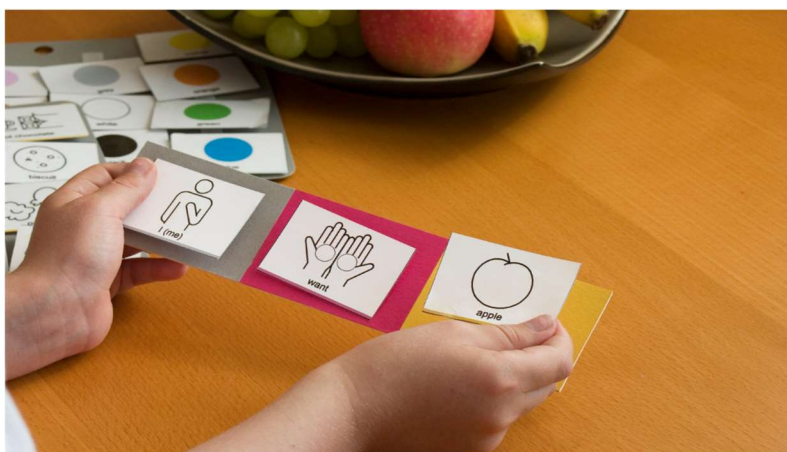
## Social communication

Interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like body language, gestures or tone of voice, can be a real challenge for people with autism. Even during a simple dialogue, there are so many aspects of communication to take in at once. We speak with the other person, we listen to them, look at their facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and think what to say in response, all at once. All that can be too much for an autistic person to process and also respond (Ambitious about autism), which is why people with autism often have difficulty in maintaining typical back-and-forth conversation.

Furthermore, their language skills can vary significantly. Some people with ASD have little or no speech while other autistic people have very good language skills but struggle to understand sarcasm or tone of voice. As a result, people with ASD may:

- take things literally and not understand abstract concepts
- need extra time to process information or answer questions
- repeat what others say to them (this is called echolalia)
- struggle with following instructions (National Autistic Society)
- find hard to interpret non-vocal communication (i.e. body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, sarcasm)
- prefer to see written instructions

Finally, people with severe vocal communication difficulties often communicate in a different way – such as, using pictures (i.e. PECS), sounds and gestures, or sign language. However, this doesn't mean that they don't understand what is being said. To the contrary, often a person with autism can take in more information than they give out, which can create a disparity between what they understand and what they communicate.



## Social imagination

People on the spectrum often find it difficult to understand abstract concepts, such as understanding another person's point of view.

They are also characterized by restricted and repetitive behaviors, patterns, activities and interests. As mentioned earlier, our world is full of unwritten rules which can change in different contexts, which makes this world a really unpredictable and confusing place for people with autism. This is the reason why, they often like to have set routines for the activities they do, so that they can predict what is happening, and even a small change in those routines can make them very anxious. (National autistic society)

Another characteristic of people with ASD is “stimming”. This means they may repeat movements such as hand flapping, rocking or the repetitively use an object such as twirling a pen or opening and closing a door. These behaviors usually help them calm themselves down, when they are stressed or anxious, but in many cases they do it because they simply find it enjoyable.

As a result, people with ASD may:

- prefer to stick to their routine
- avoid new places and people
- become anxious if something unexpected happens
- have intense and highly focused interests from an early age
- become experts in their special interests
- talk a lot about their special interests
- repeat themselves
- seem as socially awkward, because of their “stimming” behaviour
- struggle with transitions
- find it hard to understand and predict other people's behaviour
- struggle with time-management
- pay attention to details
- find it hard to tell what's important and what's not

## Sensory differences

The way individuals with autism process sensory information differs from that of neurotypical people. This can have a tremendous impact on the way they interact with their environment and other people.

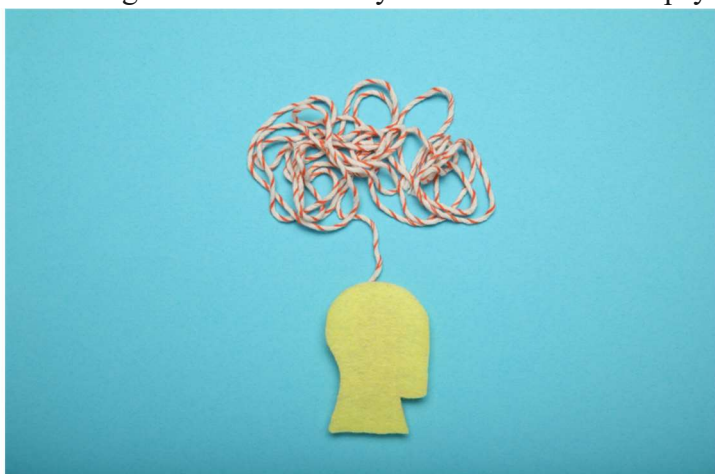
People with ASD can be ‘hypo or ‘hyper’ sensitive in any of the senses – including vestibular- the movement and balance sense. As a result, sounds, lights, touch and smells can be painful or very uncomfortable.

As a result, people with ASD may:

- wear sunglasses indoors
- wear ear defenders
- cover their ears in loud environments
- prefer not to be touched
- only eat specific foods
- find certain smells extremely aversive
- avoid crowded or loud places
- struggle with focus

## Extreme Anxiety

Many adults with autism suffer from stress and anxiety, especially in social situations or when dealing with change. This can not only affect the individual psychologically and physically but can also have



a huge impact on the quality of their and their family’s life (National Autistic Society).

As a result, people with ASD may:

- avoid social interaction
- avoid new situations
- become isolated

## Meltdowns and shutdowns

When a person with autism becomes overwhelmed, they can go into meltdown or shutdown. These are both very intense and exhausting experiences and they are both a result of being overwhelmed by the environment.

A meltdown happens when a situation becomes too much for someone and they temporarily lose control of their behaviour. This loss of control can be verbal (eg shouting, screaming, crying), physical (eg kicking, lashing out, biting) or both.

A shutdown appears less intense to the outside world but can be equally exhausting. Shutdowns are also a response to being overwhelmed, but manifest themselves as more passive - eg an autistic person going quiet or 'switching off' (National Autistic Society).

As a result, people with ASD may:

- Act aggressively (verbal and/or physical aggression)
- “Switch off”
- Suddenly go quiet
- Lose behavioural control
- Feel like they are not able to react or not know how to react

### 1.3: Strengths of people with autism



As mentioned before, being a spectrum, autism incorporates a range of abilities. These may include but are not limited to:

- Learning to read at a very early age (known as hyperlexia).
- Strong long-term memory skills. They may be able to memorize and learn information quickly. Some people may have “photographic memory” or “eidetic memory”.
- Thinking and learning in a visual way.
- Logical thinking ability that is helpful in decision-making process
- May excel (if able) in academic areas such as science, engineering and mathematics as they are technical and logical subjects that do not heavily rely on social interaction.
- May display excellent musical, and/or artistic skills
- Being precise and detail orientated.
- Exceptional honesty, direct communication and reliability.
- Thriving with schedules and routines.
- Having an excellent sense of direction.
- Being very punctual.
- Strong adherence to rules.
- Intensive focus when motivated
- A drive for perfection and order.
- A capability for alternate problem solving.
- A rare freshness and sense of wonderment.



- Extensive knowledge resulting from deep study in favorite topics
- Non-judgmental listening
- Independent thinking, which is being less concerned about what others may think of them
- Thinking outside the box

## 1.4: Barriers to employment

Although we know that ASD is a condition affecting the person throughout their life, a lot of research has focused on youngsters living with ASD, and we do have a good idea of how the condition can affect their daily lives and education. But very little is known about what happens next. What happens when youngsters on the spectrum leave education and enter into the world of employment?

Despite the fact that there are more adults than youngsters in the population, until recently very little attention has been paid to the adult end of this group. Most service provision resources and research funding for ASD focuses in some way or another on childhood.

Whilst this understanding and “treating” autism in childhood is important, it is also a massive oversight. We know that autism is a lifelong developmental disorder and, therefore, each of these youngsters will inevitably grow into adults, and it is at this point that our knowledge on how to best support these adults fails us.

For most adults, employment is a key concern. But families with member(s) on the spectrum, feel it even more. Furthermore, a lack of secure employment places ongoing financial demands not only on autistic adults and their parents, but also adds costs associated with additional care, such as the benefits system, thus providing a significant economic burden to governments.

Disproportionately high levels of unemployment are seen in autistic adults, with best estimates indicating that 80% of adults with Level 1 autism (former Asperger Syndrome) have been unable to secure long term employment. And this figure is even worse for those with a diagnosis of Level 2 or 3 of autism.

Autistic adults typically want to work but are condemned to a life of unemployment in most cases. Case studies suggest that unemployment is often associated with poor mental health consequences.

Access to employment is the focus of this module, but it is important to acknowledge that broader obstacles around social inclusion can also impact on work opportunities.



Some of the most common barriers to employment are:

### Qualifications

A CV which identifies attendance at a special school or pupil referral unit or considerable time out of school is likely to require some explaining to employers.

### Deciding whether to ‘come out’ as autistic

Martin (2017) discovered that reactions from employers are not necessarily positive and ‘telling’ does not necessarily open doors to seamless appropriate support.

### Advocacy and self-advocacy

Autistic people with a capacity for verbal language are probably in a better position than those who do not use their voice to communicate to counter negative stereotypes. If a person does not speak, even if they are very able to communicate in other ways, employers might well make unfavorable assumptions about their capabilities.

### Practical Considerations

Work experience is important. It is particularly difficult for someone on the spectrum to imagine a situation which they have not experienced, therefore exposure to job taster opportunities is essential in order to facilitate informed choice.

# MODULE 2

## *Support for trainers*

## 2. Support for trainers

### 2.1: Teaching strategies

In the Netherlands, quite a number of attempts have been made for specializing the didactics for the students with the autism spectrum. For instance, the training for teachers in the [visual arts](#). Quite pragmatically, the web site “ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorders” provides fifty practical hints for the teacher as found and translated from the Dutch web site <https://wij-leren.nl/autisme-ass-tips.php>. This web-site allows you to think about ‘what tips could be shared among teachers who want to help each other in avoiding negative side effects and want to ‘hit’ the right measures in order not to complicate the learning of students with ASD. The high number of recommendations prevents us to make a straightforward summary. It seems better to ask ourselves: “what course model would be effective for future teachers in the ASD context?”

Menno Both and Piet Kommers

April 30, Deventer, The Netherlands

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Study on the special cases of [autism in females](#) (in Dutch) in [English](#)

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#### Didactics for Autistic Learners

Youngsters with autism don't always have it easy at school. They have to walk on their toes to meet the complex and invisible expectations of school life. This takes a lot of effort and can easily lead to overstimulation. Youngsters with autism spectrum disorder have difficulty understanding, with "seeing" the context. Briefly explained, the context is what gives meaning to a particular action. An example can clarify this: raising your hand can mean goodbye, stop! Hello! Quiet, etc. For example, many, if not all, actions and phenomena in daily life are contextual. They mean exactly what's going on around them. So, what a word means depends on the scene around it. So, a certain gesture, a certain word, never has one meaning. Many links are possible with one word or gesture. We perceive the context at less than a glance and thus give the word or gesture the right meaning. We don't do this consciously. Youngsters with autism don't use that context like we do. They also link words, gestures, etc. to one meaning. Where we implicitly learn that meanings are not fixed, but depend on the situation, these youngsters cannot. A red traffic light means stopping in front of them, even if you are in the middle of a busy road. The other meanings of red light (going back, going through, etc.) must be explicitly learned. Unfortunately, there are too many opportunities to teach them everything in this area, but by making the context as clear (unambiguous) as possible, you make it easier for them. So

be aware that some things seem logically explained for you or for other youngsters, but not yet for these youngsters. If you notice that, take another look at the context and talk to the child: Probably your explanation wasn't unambiguous enough. What did the person think needed to be done? And why, anyway? For example, "We walk to gym two by two." Seems concrete but can cause a lot of confusion. Turn this statement into concrete behavioral instructions. "If your name is mentioned, choose a person (or even better, name 2 names yourself). Grab each other's hands and line up one after the other. Hold hands until you get to the gym." Another point you must realize is that even in very smart youngsters with autistic disorder, their development is extremely slow and limited in some areas. This applies to the development of social insight and social contact. It is not exceptional that the development that an "ordinary" person goes through in the first 2 years takes many years in a person with autism. A 17-year-old person with the social development of an 8-year-old is not uncommon. Intellectual and social development can therefore vary for miles. You understand that as a teacher you can look at the possibilities of the child. A person who can remember the most difficult words is sometimes unable to forget his pencil. By the way, be careful to address the person in a "childlike" way, if the intellectual abilities are ordinary or even better than ordinary. That seems to the person as if you are treating it like a small person and will not work. So, the 17-year-old explains a topic that normally an 8-year-old person learns, and you do it at the (language) level of a 17-year-old. Youngsters with autism are sometimes very attached to rituals and obsessions. They can also be busy quite a bit. The rituals and obsessions are in fact intended to reduce fear and create peace, namely the peace and safety of the familiar. Exercise is also a good way to get rid of stress hormones. As a result, such a person seems hyperactive, but does stress reduction. So, if a person gets busier, there's probably something going on that's bothering the child.

1. As a teacher, you must observe several basic rules in your communication with these youngsters, which can facilitate contact.
2. Assume positive expectations. Show that you have faith in the child.
3. Take good care of the child. Youngsters with ASD / autism are at increased risk of being bullied.
4. Communicate positively: youngsters with autism have a hard time dealing with correction and criticism. They don't see it coming, because they can't make the link between the work made and your criticism. Moreover, with negative criticism you do not say what they should do.
5. Emphasize what the person can do well.
6. These youngsters find that they are "different", without understanding why. That is bad for their self-image, so try to

- give the positive things of the person a lot of attention.
7. If you get angry, it creates a deluge of extra stimuli for the child. This causes chaos in the child's head. Your message certainly won't arrive. So, talk calmly and give the message as briefly as possible. Lengthy stories create more chaos.
8. First, attract the child's attention if you want to say something. First mention his name and then say what you want.
9. So never start immediately with the message you want to give, but use an introductory sentence, so that the person has time to turn his attention to you.
10. Slow down your speaking speed and give reflection time, 5 to 10 seconds is not uncommon. A longer processing time also occurs.
11. If you give the message again, use the same words again, otherwise it seems like a completely new message (so don't paraphrase).
12. Keep it direct, simple, and short.
13. Talk calmly and clearly, try to make the message as unambiguous as possible.
14. Use concrete, unambiguous positive wording. These kids don't understand figurative language. They take this literally. That is not to say that you cannot explain/ learn figurative language.
15. In concrete terms, sometimes even more concrete than you think: "I'll be right with you," seems concrete to us, but is far too uncertain for a person with ASD / autism." I'll come to you when I've explained this to Monique" indicates better what's going to happen.
16. In general, avoid words like in a moment, later, maybe, about, etc.
17. Rule of thumb to check whether you are using concrete language: do you see a picture of what you want to say? Yes? Then you talk concretely.
18. Youngsters with autism are often image or pattern thinkers.
19. Don't refer to your own feelings. Youngsters with autism really can't do anything with this. However, you can explain the consequences of certain behaviors on the feelings of others at a quiet time.
20. Give orders according to the "Give me the five®" principle (de Bruin, 2005); What, when (start time and end time), with whom, where, how?
21. Always mention the purpose of the lesson. That helps the person focus on the main thing.
22. Give only 1 command at a time, discuss the execution, and give the next command when the first one is finished.

23. While giving help, sit next to the child.  
Your gaze can't be misunderstanding.
24. Use as few didactic working methods as possible. In these youngsters, one fixed didactic model is better.
25. Be a clear teacher with the same approach repeatedly. Always follow the same steps in your lesson and speak with a clear self-message (I want you now...).
26. Processing time is also required during the instruction. Especially if you explain something on the digital white board (many stimuli) a short puzzle break is needed between the different pieces.
27. Before you start the instruction, point out to the person that it is also for him/her. If necessary, mention the name of the person during the instruction. "Take care of this sum yourself. Rick, you're going to calculate this sum, too."
28. Please note that the person does not include a group or classroom instruction. Often you still must give separate instruction.
29. It may be that after the instruction the person needs time to process everything and therefore does not start immediately.
30. If you find that time pressure is counterproductive, give extra time or give less work.
31. Don't use vague open questions. To a question like "Why do you do that?", the person cannot answer. It often has no idea what information you want from him. Rather, ask "What happened, who was involved and when it happened."
32. Make communication visual as much as possible. Use pictures, photos, diagrams, objects, etc.
33. Do not use commands in question form. When asked "Do you want to come in front of the board?" there is a real chance that the person will say no. Use the command: "I want you to come in front of the board right now, please."
34. If you have asked for something and the person is not responding (properly), check if it understood you. Even if the assignment seems clear to you.
35. While working, take a regular tour of the class. Please indicate this in advance so that the person does not have to worry about whether you will come by.
36. Be aware that a facial expression (frowning eyebrows or looking angry, for example) is not understood by the child. The same goes for body language.
37. Don't demand eye contact. This can be very threatening to these youngsters. Eye contact also provides a lot of information that these youngsters can't do anything with, but which they do have to "puzzle about." Your message certainly won't come across.

38. If a person looks in a different direction during your instruction or is even turned away from you, it may well be that it does this correctly to be able to concentrate. Don't immediately think that the person "so" is not paying attention.
39. Try not to make too many gestures during your instruction. Gestures are an extra incentive, which can be just too much.
40. If you are standing at the child's table, do not hang over the child. Many youngsters with ASD / autism do not like proximity to others. See how the kid reacts or just ask.
41. Some youngsters don't like being in the circle for the same reason. Others are too close and can just touch you unexpectedly or say something to you.
42. Intervene immediately in case of undesirable behavior, otherwise it can become a habit that can even provide guidance. Always intervene in the same way. Use a message and a business argument. For example: "I want you to be quiet now, get different ... his work is not finished."
43. Always indicate concrete desired behavior. Indicate what behavior you expect, what the work should look like, etc.
44. Don't expect the person to come and ask for help, it probably has no idea how to do it. Pay attention to signals that are emitted and learn to interpret them.
45. Try to teach the person to ask for help. Maybe by putting an inconspicuous card on his table. Also explain to him who to come to for help and when he can/can't.
46. Consider changing skills. What the person seemed to be able to do yesterday, can't be done today. This can be due to (even minor) differences in the situation, the place, the page, the pen used, etc., which makes the event seem new to the child. Also, learned skills are not used spontaneously in another situation. Since the situation is almost never the same, this often causes problems.
47. Also keep in mind that many youngsters with autism have a disharmonic intelligence profile. So, they can excel in one profession and be very bad at another.
48. Youngsters with autism are black and white thinkers. Something is either very, very good or very wrong. Nuance requires overseeing the big picture. "It's not that bad right now, because of yesterday." So, they can't do that. They can also think about themselves in black and white.
49. These youngsters will often react dismissively to a change you have proposed. You may tend to go against that and exert more coercion. This will give

another counter-reaction, etc. It is best to let the change you mentioned sink in for a while and not pay attention to the child. After the "processing time" you have a chance that the person will still do what you asked.

50. Youngsters with ASD / autism also want to respond with "I don't want that, I think that's stupid." Often something is not clear in what they need to do. Make sure for yourself that you have made what, how, when, where and with whom (Give me the five®) clear. If necessary, let the person tell you this himself.



### What else can you do as a teacher:

1. You can explain social situations with a social script or a social story. An explanation of a social situation and the behaviour that is generally expected in this. You can use drawings and pictures. The more visual you make the situation, the better.
2. Keep in mind that the learned behavior does not spontaneously transfer to other situations. For these youngsters, each situation is new and not comparable to another.
3. You can pair the person with a buddy. A person who explains for a while how you could react or ensures that the person can play along. You need to change buddies regularly so as not to overload the buddy.
4. You can provide a place where the person can go if everything becomes too much for him. Of course, you also have to discuss with the person in advance when it is allowed to go there, how it lets you know, how long it can stay there and how it comes back.
5. In group assignments, give the person a task that he can complete alone, in another place. When the task is complete, the person brings it back to the group. For example, it more or less participates in the group work (Working-apart-together system).
6. Explain to classmates that everyone needs help with something.
7. If necessary, use a back-and-forth notebook between school and home. This way you can immediately make the link between the two for the child.

### Creating predictable environment over time:

In addition to adapting the social environment, as a teacher you also must make the rest of the environment as predictable as possible for the child. Here's how to do it:

1. Use a visible daily schedule.
2. Start the day by going through the day program. Has the person the program?
3. You can also record fixed routines that you expect in a schedule that you create together. For example, what to do when you arrive at the room, how to enter (hand giving etc.) what to do next (sit down, grab a book or the like).
4. For some youngsters, you need to go through the day program more often. Do this at fixed times, for example after the break. for some youngsters, you might want to go through the day program in parts. What are we going to do until gym, after gym, after break, etc.

5. Changing something that was "fixed" causes more stress than the uncertainty or something might not go ahead.
6. If something changes, first name what replaces it, then what doesn't go through.
7. See how you deal with time. There are youngsters who need to know when something needs to be ready. Use a time timer.
8. Some youngsters with autism have no sense of time at all. With these clocks you help to create a safer (more predictable) environment.
9. If the person is very rigid with time ("Ten o'clock is ten hours and not five past ten" ), you need to teach the person that a play of a few minutes is common and common at school.
10. If a person is very rushed from time to time, you can also omit the times in the day program. The designation for the next box will then simply be "When language is ready, we will start calculating."
11. Say what you do and do what you say.
12. When changing a lesson, indicate in advance that there will be a change. Preferably do this the same length in advance." In 5 minutes we will switch from language to arithmetic. In 2 minutes we will go..." If the person cannot watch a clock, use a time timer.
13. Also prepare the mentee as well as possible for projects, holidays, birthdays, etc. Preferably go through the day program a few times in advance. In any case, keep in mind that these events are stressful for these youngsters.

#### Creating predictable environment in space:

1. Give everything a permanent place in your situation.
2. Make sure that the person is in a place where lateral eye contact with you is possible.
3. Prefer not to give a spot at a narrow walking route, where the person is often touched. Most youngsters with ASD/autism don't like touches.
4. Make sure it's clear what's being done in which place. For example, create a work corner or a reading corner, etc. Indicate orally or with stickers or photos what the place is for.
5. Label the storage spaces. A drawer with calculators has a sticker on it, the cabinet with notebooks also has a label, etc.
6. If the person is easily distracted or over-stimulated, shield his workplace a little. Put his table against a closet or wall. You can even use bulkheads that are placed to the left and

- right of the table (or as a "wall" on the table). You can agree with the person that he can use it if he wants to.
7. Hang posters and chores in a place where they distract the least. That'll usually be in the back of the class. Signs with educational support material must be visible during work.
  8. Make sure a person with autism is as close as possible to where to pack things or provide a locker with him if necessary. That seems far-fetched, but because of all the stimuli in a classroom, this environment becomes so unpredictable and confusing that the person does not know the way and is distracted by all the stimuli.
  9. Keep your cabinet door closed as much as possible if there are a lot of people walking past your cabinet, or make sure the person is in a place where they don't see the hallway. This reduces the risk of distraction.
  10. Remember that it is not the change that causes stress, but its sudden nature.

#### Clarity in activities:

1. Don't let youngsters with autism choose from all kinds of options. Limit the choices.
2. Use a leisure sign to indicate what the person should do when it is ready. If necessary, you can also make sure that something is ready for the person in a fixed place.
3. You can also arrange the activity in advance.
4. If a person with autism has to stop an activity, you can already say that it is a pity, and that the person can continue tomorrow (or at any time).
5. A person who has not yet finished a task often does not want to stop that task until he is finished. If you agree on when the task can still be completed, you will remove some uncertainty for the youngster.
6. If a person always wants to do the same activity and is difficult to move to another, use the Premack Principle: In short, this is: if you first... (the less fun activity) then you can (the activity the person wants). Write or draw both activities on a card: this is how the person has his or her own.

#### To make the tasks for the person with ASD clearer:

1. Clearly indicate the start and end points of the task. "You start here. and ends there."
2. If necessary, divide the task into small steps.

3. If necessary, give the person a step-by-step plan to make his work. Please discuss this step-by-step plan together first to see if it is clear to the youngster. Example step-by-step plan work.
4. Remove unnecessary information from the worksheet.
5. If there are more tasks on a worksheet, make sure they can be shown one by one.
6. Only let the person put the material necessary for this task on the table.
7. For example, provide an in and out tray with the work in it.
8. Books and notebooks from the same box can be given the same color sticker.
9. Make sure the commands are numbered.
10. Visualize your explanation.
11. These learners can't listen and take notes at the same time. Give them the notes.

### Break:

One of the more confusing moments for youngsters with ASD/autism is probably the break. Everyone walks and talks, the situation changes per second and is not the same for a moment, let alone predictable. If necessary, you can delineate a piece of schoolyard for the child, where it is a bit quieter. You may also be able to provide an activity that the person likes. A good way is to go through what it will do with the person before the break. On [leraar24.nl](http://leraar24.nl) you can see how a school has solved this break problem. If that is still too busy and unpredictable, or simply cannot be realized in your school situation, you may be able to let the person do another activity during the break.

### Keys:

1. Give these youngsters extra time to make the questions.
2. It is possible that these youngsters do not see the connection between the introduction and the questions (difficulty with the context).
3. For other youngsters, understandable test questions can be unclear to them. An assignment such as "Explain" or "describe" is not concrete enough.
4. For an assignment like "Name...." the person may start talking out loud. That's not annoying behavior. That was your assignment. So it is better to put "Write" in its place.
5. If necessary, hear orally.

### Workpieces and speeches:

These youngsters do not have the overview to put together a paper or speech "just like that". In addition, the fear of having to talk about it in class won't do them much good. Maybe it is possible to make small pieces together. It is also good to draw up a step-by-step plan. By the way, all the other youngsters also benefit from this. You can make the work to be carried out clearer with the plan of action. See above. Speaking for the group I would advise against unless the person wants to.

### Punishment:

Youngsters with autism live in the here and now. They can't imagine the future. The person does not learn from punishment. The undesirable behaviour should therefore not be punished. Help the person to control and get a grip on the situation. You can do that by giving them rules to understand the world and feel safe. Try to explain the "logical consequences" of the behavior. In this way, the person may learn to understand the cause-and-effect relationship of his behavior.

### Rules:

Formulating positive rules works better for all youngsters than negative rules, but for youngsters with autism, a rule like "Don't run in the hallway" is pointless. Because of a negative rule, you think of what you want to avoid. What does the person have to do, that's what it's all about? "We walk quietly in the hallway" works better. For a person with autism, when you explain the "why" of the rules correctly, it helps.

### Conflicts with other youngsters

Youngsters with autism think on their own: they have no choice. They have a limited "I-other differentiation" (Delfos,2007) and a limited TOM (Theory of Mind). It is difficult for them to imagine that other people have different thoughts and feelings than they do. Nor can they imagine that the other person does not know what they think and feel. As a result, they often come into conflict with other youngsters. In addition, they often use different language, their motor skills are woody and their interest in the world is often different. Youngsters without autism experience this as "different." And what is different is quickly wrong at this (?) age. A person with autism is therefore at high risk of being rejected, excluded and bullied. Especially

as these youngsters get older, they notice that they are outside the group. Often, they will do their best to belong, without this giving results. That can of course become a source of enormous frustration: you notice that you do not belong, but you do not know what to do about it. This has a major influence on the self-image of these youngsters. Because a person with autism does not understand the motives of others, it sometimes seems as if it provokes bullying behavior. However, the person has absolutely no insight into what it is doing wrong! The person also has no idea how to ask other youngsters for help or the teacher should call in if they notice that they are being bullied and are therefore even more alone than other bullied youngsters.

### Overstimulation:

It has only recently been discovered that 40 % of youngsters with autism suffer from sensory overload. Imagine that you yourself are under a flickering fluorescent tube all the time or that you see a video recording of a busy class, where the sound is very loud; the video camera does not filter the sound, everything sounds equally loud. Just about a lot of students with autism experience the school environment. They can be very bothered by things that we do not experience like this. This nuisance ranges from mild annoyance to real pain in the eyes, ears and skin. These sensory discomforts are a great source of stress. The nervous system has a (too) high alertness level. This occurs because more stimuli have been received by the senses than can be processed by the nervous system. A 'traffic jam of unprocessed stimuli' has arisen. If a student becomes over-stimulated, the brain will do everything it can to eliminate the overload. The whole body is then focused on avoiding the stimuli. This can be seen in a number of phenomena:

1. Delayed stimulus processing, so that the student reacts later or only later realizes what he has observed.
2. Missed pieces in the perception, so that the student does not respond to (non)verbal communication, for example.
3. A reinforced perception, whereby every stimulus is experienced as very intense (read unpleasant).
4. A weakened perception, which, for example, does not make the student feel pain.
5. Problems with concentration and working memory.
6. Severe fatigue, because the processing of the stimuli now takes extra energy.

7. A paralyzing sensation; unable to do anything. This is once again seen as laziness or unwillingness to move.

If a student is over-stimulated, he may cry or get very angry. This has more to do with discharge of tension than with real emotions. The student has absolutely no influence on this! Comforting is unlikely to work but removing the incentives or taking the student to an incentive-free space does.

A student can become over-stimulated by cognitive, emotional and physical stimuli. Such as:

2. social stress, for example because the student has to work together or because he is bullied or teased.
3. communication stress, because having a conversation or trying to understand someone is not possible at that time.
4. environmental change: the class is decorated differently, or the lesson is suddenly in a different classroom.
5. there can also be sensory stress: noise or music, but also sounds that people without autism / ASD do not experience as annoying, such as the rustling of a leaf, the scratching of a pen or students walking and talking through the classroom.
6. cognitive overload due to too much work or too much learning information.
7. "Point head" this is accumulation of unfinished business and ambiguities in mind
8. too little structure, overview and tranquility.

Observe carefully if you see any problems in this area. See how you can reduce exposure to those stimuli. Sometimes simple solutions already work: turn the computer screens or the student's table in a different direction, do not give a diamond blade if the student is very bothered by it or let the student put on headphones against too much environmental noise.

## 2.2: Support strategies

Dr. paed. Dita Nīmante (University of Latvia)

### Workplace related inclusion for young adults with autism (high – functioning)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that everyone has the right to work and the right for protection against unemployment. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the right for everyone to engage in work (European Union, 2000,

Article 15). Despite those documents European countries, are in the continuation of the shift in focus toward a social and anti-discrimination approach of employment of people with disabilities, neither of the policies have assured complete inclusion of people with autism in the European labour market (Bunt et al., 2020).

Internationally there have been repeatedly highlighted high rates of unemployment among young adults with autism (Roux, et al., 2013, Scott, 2019). Adults with autism have more difficulties and disadvantages in searching for the job than others and experiencing problems even when they are employed. The young people with High Functioning Autism (HFA) are one of the groups who experience work-related discrimination. Unemployment and underemployment of persons with HFA poses both social, health and economic outcomes at individual level and for community (Hayward, McVilly & Stokes, 2018). In contrary employing them can promote economic benefits to the community and businesses (Knapp, Romeo, Beecham, 2009). There are many personal advantages for employed young adults with HFA, such as improves the physical abilities, cognitive abilities, and social skills (Stephens, Collins, & Dodder, 2005). Employability is considered to be one of the predictor of quality of life for autistic adults (Mason et al, 2018).

Although most adults with HFA have the necessary intellectual capacity to make a contribution to the workplace, they can still experience inequity and exclusion due to existing stereotypes in society and misinterpretation of their intellectual abilities. Employers view autism spectrum disorder through a deficit lens, with young adults on the autism spectrum positioned as low achievers (Pillay, Brownlow & March, 2020).

**High – functioning autism (HFA)** is one of several neurodevelopmental disorders. Young adults with such disorder can have both certain strengths and limitations due to their impairment. According to Richards (2015), young adults with HFA in work-related situations may struggle with several important issues:

- the idea of others having thoughts and feelings different from their own;
- executive functioning;
- information processing;
- overload by light, texture, tastes, smells, which can lead to temporary breakdown in the nervous system.

**The idea of others having thoughts and feelings different from their own.** It can lead to the situation when young adults with HFA can have problems with empathy in many different situations. For example, by understanding the actions of others (they think that other persons think and act the way they do), so, for example, they can express offending comments about



colleagues, or they can in other way misinterpret customer or colleague actions. They strengths however are their loyalty to employer and diligence.

**Executive functioning**, which refers to organisational and planning abilities, working memory, inhibition and impulse control, self-reflection and self-monitoring, time management and prioritizing, understanding complex or abstract concepts, as well as using new strategies. Problems in such area can make hard for young adults with HFA to focus on more than one thing at a time. Their strength is that they get immersed in their work and pays close attention to details. They can have a high ability to concentrate on long, repetitive tasks. At the same time, it can also lead being unable to focus on their main duties at the same time as having a "laugh" and "joke" with colleagues. Black and white thinking also can be present, which can lead to necessity to do all things perfectly, so if they are not done such way, it can make a young adults feel failed, which can raise the anxiety level of young adult with HFA.

**Information processing**, or general coherence. Young adults with HFA can process many facts by memorizing them, their strength is retention of large amounts of information, a knack for detecting patterns, or strong mathematics and coding skills, but there is a problem making sense of all the facts. There is a problem to understand "social" and "emotional" facts. So there could be a problem to see the "big picture". This can lead to the situation where young adult with HFA can understand their individual role, but he/she can have a problem to understand how it is connected with whole organization.

**Overload by light, texture, tastes, smells, which can lead to temporary breakdown in the nervous system.** There can be a problem with physical working environment, and over-sensitization as a result. Placing autistic workers in quiet corners with few distractions, away from printers or places with a lot of background noise, bright lighting can help to reduce negative impact. The most unpleasant noises for adults with HFA are: sudden and unexpected noises, high pitched continuous noises and complex or multiple sounds typical of social gatherings. Such situations can disturb and can lead to lateness.

Inclusive workplace – it means to avoid any form of discrimination and insure person's writes to work, participate and be included both socially and physically in the workplace by insuring necessary support to use their strengths and compensate the limitations.

The first prerequisite to reduce employment-related discrimination and to avoid the stereotypes for employer towards young adults with ASD and successfully employ young adults with HFA is **employer knowledge and understanding of ASD** (Dreaver, et al, 2020). Employees would benefit from **information on the syndrome and how best to support it** (Vincent et al., 2020). The second prerequisite is **positive work environment** (Dreaver, et al, 2020). Employers and

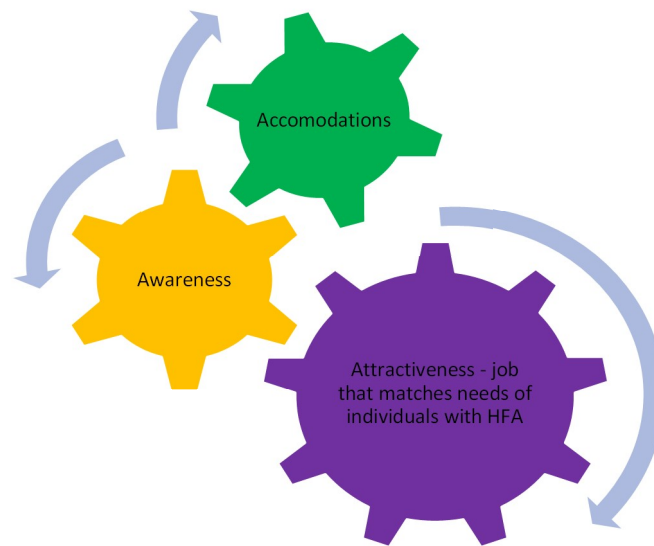
co-workers support is an important aspect that contributes to a positive **work environment** (Khalifa et al., 2020). It is important to make employees aware of the many positive professional traits that employees with HFA have; in such way foster an inclusive workplace environment that reflects a belief in the high competency of every employee. For that reason, there can be provided a **training** about the myths of ASD and major problems that can arise (Griffiths et al., 2020). Such training can have fostered successful workplace relationships, minimized misunderstandings, and increased communication.

The third important aspect is **to find a job that match needs of individuals with HFA** (Dreaver, et al., 2020). For that reason, interviewing process in the job hiring is important. There can be specific hiring and retention practices and policies related to ASD employees, along with training for hiring personnel.

As it is widely known, work nowadays in most cases is organized in a different way as it used to be 50 years ago. The main demand of contemporary work is team work. The selection process of new employees very often involves working in teams or unexpected interface between customers and employee. This can make a challenging situation for young adults with HFA. From the other side, it can be a good solution for young adults with HFA, as they can use their strengths to provide added value to the teamwork. This is potentially problematic for young people with HFA to take part and be competitive in labour market (Richards, 2015).

Finally, several job-related **accommodations** could be needed. The specific plan could be developed (Richards, 2015), by involving a special person (from either personal department or others), job coaching can be performed using different strategies. There can be organized some workplace adjustments. For example, minimizing distractions, reducing noise, and predictability of job duties. Environmental considerations related to using technology could play an important role in improving performance and work experience. Technology is another area that is emerging and requires further exploration.

To sum up, to make inclusive work environment for young adults with HFA (see Fig. 1) three prerequisites should be in place - employer awareness about HFA, job attractiveness – the right job which matches the needs of individual with HFA, and accommodations that are made in the job place for people with HFA to successfully deal with challenges.



**1.Fig.** Prerequisites for inclusive work environment

### 2.3: Inclusion and education

Mg. paed. Egija Laganovska (University of Latvia)

#### Job finding barriers for young adults with ASD (autism spectrum disorders)

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition involving social-communication deficits and restricted, repetitive behaviors, activities, and interests.

According to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder show repetitive behavioral patterns and impairment in communication skills from early childhood on (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 5th ed., 2013).

A scoping review was conducted to investigate environmental facilitators and barriers relevant to workplace participation for transition aged young adults aged 18 – 35 with brain-based disabilities. Out of 11,515 articles screened, 31 were retained. The majority of the studies (77%) highlighted factors in the services, systems and policies domain such as inclusive and flexible systems, and well-defined policies exercised at the organizational level. Social support

mainly from family, friends, employers and colleagues was reported as a facilitator (68%), followed by physical accessibility and finally, the availability of assistive technology (55%). Attitudes of colleagues and employers were mostly seen as a barrier to workplace participation (48%) (Shahin, Reitzel, Di Rezze, Ahmed, Anaby, 2020). Findings prove that there is a need to develop guidelines and reinforce policies, regulations and support at the organization level for people with ASD. Individuals with ASD have markedly different vocational needs than individuals with other developmental disabilities. Workplace participation of individuals with ASD continues to be a challenging. The wellbeing of young adults with ASD is a topic of global concern. Unemployment and underemployment are major issues facing people with ASD. It comes with costs at the societal as well as individual level, as unemployment decreases quality of life, reduces financial independence and impairs dignity and cognitive abilities (Hendricks, 2010). Successful employment increases an individual's social status and maintains a person's physical and psychological health, employment is a significant factor contributing to identity (Fleming et al., 2013).

In different studies around the world employment rates of adults with ASD remain unacceptably low. It appears that inclusive employment requires greater community and employer awareness, and a range of strategies and actions that foster employment opportunity. There is a limited research addressing employer experiences and perspectives relative to hiring, supporting and supervising persons with ASD. Further knowledge is needed to better understand employer perspectives, and guide employer capacity for engaging and supporting individuals with ASD in the workplace (Nicholas, et. al., 2019). A possible explanation for low employment rate could be barriers during job search, job application, or employment. Different types of barriers related to age, severity of disorder, level of education, gender, low income, geographic location, several socio-demographic can be named. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) places importance on the environment in explaining participation in different life domains, including work. Young adults with ASD face several barriers and discrimination in seeking paid employment. An important aspect that should be mentioned is **the job interview itself**. This could be a problem for young people with ASD due to the **social communication difficulties** that are most typical for people with ASD. The **lack of good nonverbal communication skills** contributes to that problem.

The researchers (Harmuth, et.al., 2018) distinguish three main barriers that hinder young adults with ASD employment success:

- Person related barriers.
- Environment related barriers.

- Work related barriers.

The unique features of employment increase the specific challenges for individuals with ASD, who are portrayed as experiencing lifelong difficulties in social interactions. Very important is to increase common understanding of the current employment situations, challenges to successful employment, and strategies for successful employment of individuals with ASD. It would be desirable to **provide autism awareness training for employers and colleagues** to help them understand who they are and why they behave in a certain way.

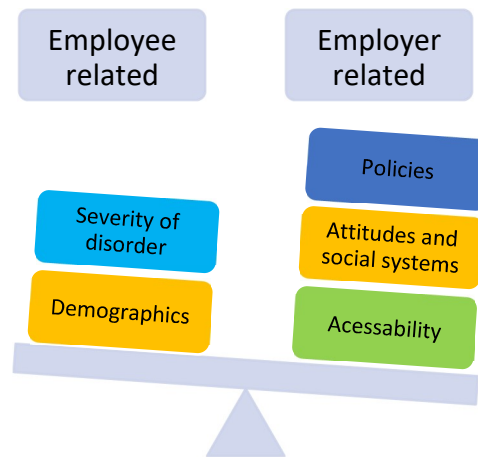
An International Society for Autism Research has developed certain **recommendations**:

- Utilize person centered, individualized approaches to identify needs, working to improve the quality of life of each autistic individual on their terms.
- Environmental supports in the workplace are essential, including modifying the task format and the work environment, such as lighting and sound.
- On-the-job experience is key to success. Expanding work experience programs is critical to improving employment outcomes.
- Employers require better metrics as to what strategies work and do not work, with ready access to resources.
- Employers have a unique opportunity to increase understanding of ASD in the workplace by offering educational tools to managers and those with direct contact with the employee.
- Programs helping people get jobs and stay employed should consider the strengths of those with ASD.
- The process needs to start early in adolescence to build “pathways” to employment. (International Society for Autism Research, 2018)

A strong multidisciplinary collaboration is widely emphasized as a key strategy for successful employment (Test et al., 2014). Successful workplace strategies for individuals with autism spectrum disorder are: **minimizing distractions, reducing noise, and predictable job duties**. Environmental factors related to using technology could play an important role in improving performance and work experience. Employers and co-workers support is an important aspect that contributes to a positive work environment. One of the most popular examples of support involved job teaching using different strategies (Khalifa, et.al., 2019).

In closing, there are barriers for young adults with ASD during the job finding which can be related both to employee and employer (See Fig. 2). The employee with ASD can encounter barriers in job seeking both due to disability (how severe disability is) and due to various

demographic aspects (for example, age, gender, etc.). On the employer side barriers for young adults with ASD during the job finding can arise due to insufficient equity policies, negative attitudes and insufficient social systems, as well as unsecured access.



**Fig.2.** Job finding barriers (employee and employer)

# MODULE 3

*Support for  
jobseekers with  
ASD*

### 3. Support for jobseekers with ASD

#### Searching for a job skills



Prepared by VsI Socialiniu inovaciju centras

The aim of this module is to help a young person with ASD to develop the following skills:

- to determine personality type
- to choose the most suitable job;
- to search for a job;
- to apply for a job;
- to prepare for a job interview;
- to write CV and cover letter;

You will be able to apply the acquired knowledge in practice together with the teacher during 7 practical activities.

#### 3.1. What type of person am I?

Self-knowledge is the first step in revealing personal reserves, directing yourself in the right career direction and the opportunity to work in a favourite job. It is the ability to evaluate talents, goals, values and find personal strengths and weaknesses.

The following table shows traits of the Big Five Model, also known as Big Five personality theory.

Big 5 Trait	Definition
<b>Openness</b>	The tendency to appreciate new art, ideas, values, feelings and behaviors.
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	The tendency to be careful, on-time for appointments, to follow rules and to be hardworking.
<b>Extraversion</b>	The tendency to be talkative, sociable and to enjoy others; the tendency to have a dominant style.



<b>Agreeableness</b>	The tendency to agree and go along with others rather than to assert one's own opinions and choices.
<b>Neuroticism</b>	The tendency to frequently experience negative emotions such as anger, worry and sadness as well as being interpersonally sensitive.

Each of the Big Five personality traits represents extremely broad categories. These categories are usually described as follows.

<b>Big 5 Trait</b>	<b>Example Behaviour of LOW scorers</b>	<b>Example Behaviour of HIGH scorers</b>
<b>Openness</b>	Prefers not to be exposed to alternative moral systems; narrow interests; inartistic; not analytical; down-to-earth	Enjoys seeing people with new types of haircuts and body piercing; curious; imaginative; untraditional
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	Prefers spur-of-the-moment action to planning; unreliable; hedonistic; careless, lax	Never late for a date; organized; hardworking, neat; persevering; punctual; self-disciplined
<b>Extraversion</b>	Preferring a quiet evening reading to a loud party; sober, aloof; unenthusiastic	Being the life of the party; active, optimistic; fun-loving; affectionate
<b>Agreeableness</b>	Quickly and confidently asserts own rights; irritable; manipulative; uncooperative; rude	Agrees with others about political opinions; good-natured, forgiving; gullible, helpful
<b>Neuroticism</b>	Not getting irritated by small annoyances; calm, unemotional; hardy; secure; self-satisfied	Constantly worrying about little things; insecure; hypochondriacal; feeling inadequate

The following table shows the facets of traits.

<b>Trait</b>	<b>Facets of Trait</b>
<b>Openness</b>	Fantasy prone Open to feelings Open to diverse behaviors Open to new and different ideas Open to various values and beliefs

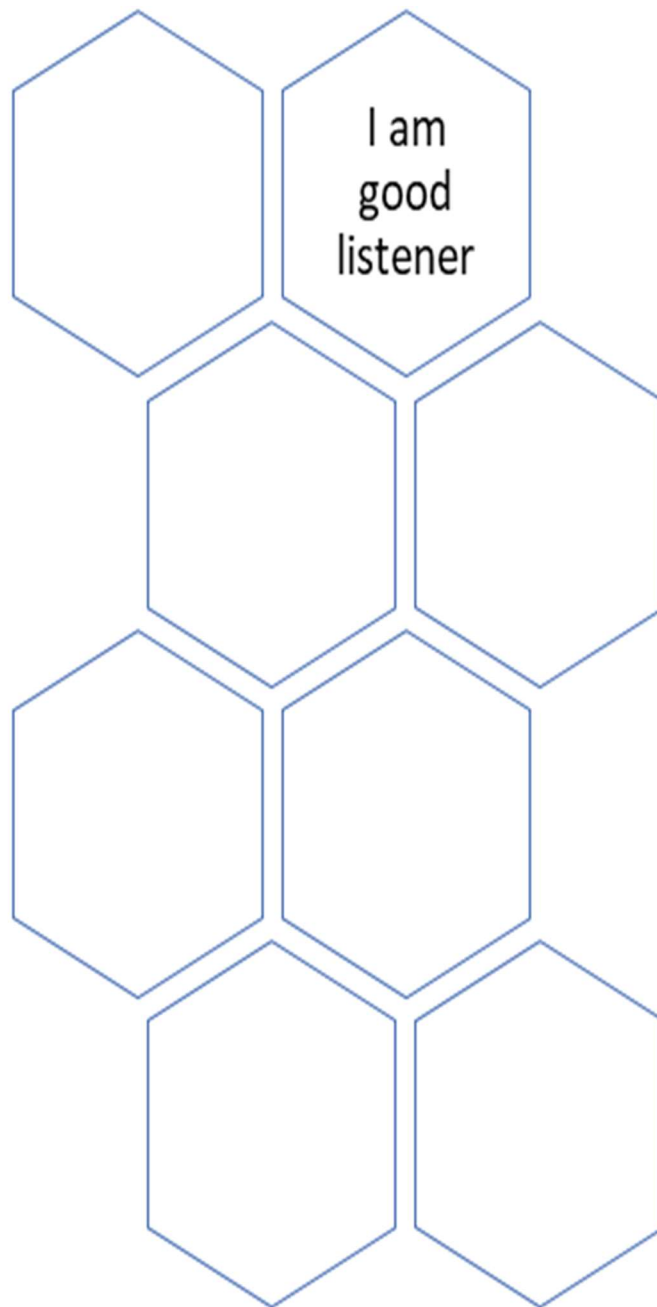
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	<b>Competent</b> <b>Orderly</b> <b>Dutiful</b> <b>Achievement oriented</b> <b>Self Disciplined</b> <b>Deliberate</b>
<b>Extraversion</b>	<b>Gregarious (sociable)</b> <b>Warm</b> <b>Assertive</b> <b>Active</b> <b>Excitement – seeking</b> <b>Positive emotionality</b>
<b>Agreeableness</b>	<b>Trusting</b> <b>Straightforward</b> <b>Altruistic</b> <b>Compliant</b> <b>Modest</b> <b>Tender - minded</b>
<b>Neuroticism</b>	<b>Anxious</b> <b>Angry</b> <b>Depressed</b> <b>Self-consciousness</b> <b>Impulsive</b> <b>Vulnerable</b>



### Activity 1: I am positive

Lesson title	I am positive!
Key words	Positive skills; positive thinking; happy;
Duration	45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Skills: Self-knowledge, discovery of one's positive qualities
Materials	Pencils, paper (worksheets)
Activity description:	
This session focuses on why it is important to believe in ourselves and to talk positively to ourselves. People need to recognize their skills and capabilities and the knowledge that they already have. Ask participants to write in the boxes below some of the positive skills or qualities that they have.	
Worksheets:	
Included	

## Activity 1 - Worksheet





## Activity 2: What I have inside

Lesson title	What I have inside
Key words	Abilities; skills; inner world;
Duration	45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>Self-knowledge, ability to evaluate yourself.</p> <p>Aim is to help people with ASD realize the areas in which he could benefit from further development.</p>
Materials	Pencils, paper (worksheets)
Activity description:	
This self-assessment tool aims to help young people with ASD to realize their strengths and weaknesses regarding this particular skill.	
Worksheets:	
Included	

## Activity 2 - Worksheet

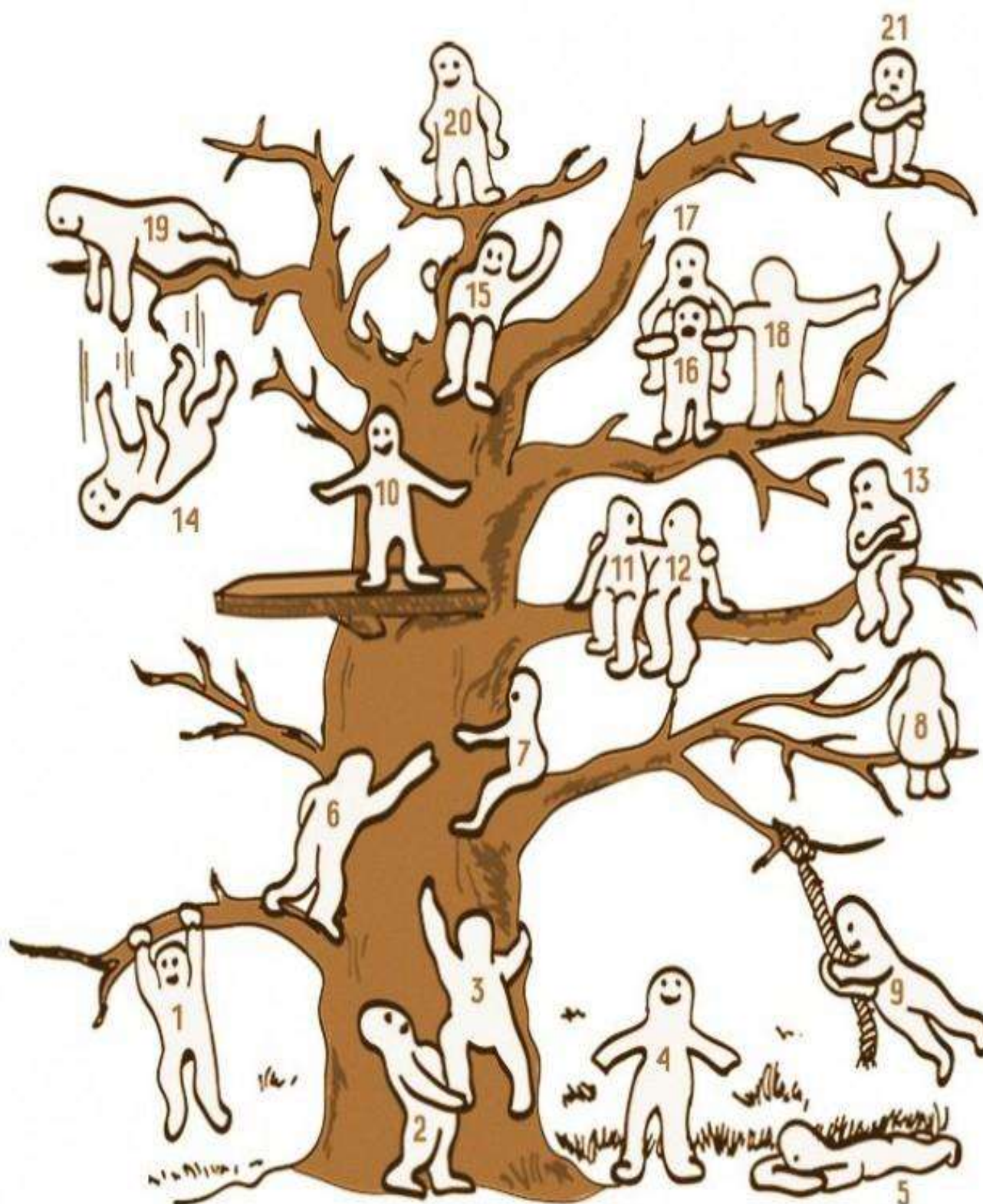
	I have it	I use it	Needs to be developed
Ability to start an activity or action or task			
Self-sufficiency			
Self-motivation			
Self-confidence			
Pro-activeness			
Persistency in overcoming problems/barriers			
Discover new means of achieving goals			
Continual search for improvements			



### Activity 3: Where I am in the tree

Ln title	Where am I in the tree
Key words	Mood; behaviour; position;
Duration	25 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>1. The choice of blob figure shows what the student's psychological state is and how he or she feels at the moment.</p> <p>2. The ability to choose a second blob figure in a tree that shows what the student is missing, what he or she would like to be.</p>
Materials	<a href="https://glennlimthots.wordpress.com/2016/03/11/the-blob-tree-psycho-emotional-test/">https://glennlimthots.wordpress.com/2016/03/11/the-blob-tree-psycho-emotional-test/</a>
Activity description:	
This test helps us to recognize and strengthen emotions, and to some extent, understand our social status in society too. Each blob figure in this picture is in a different mood and has a different position on the tree.	
Worksheets:	
Included	

### Activity 3 - Worksheet





### Activity 3 - Test results

- If you have chosen figures 1, 3, 6, or 7, then you're a resolute person, not afraid of difficulties or obstacles.
- If you feel that one of the figures 2, 11, 12, 18, or 19 resembles you, then you're an amiable person who is always there when your friends need you.
- The choice of figure 4 describes you as a steadfast person, who wants to achieve success without the hassle of overcoming hardships.
- Number 5 means you're often weary and feel weak, and you have little energy for life.
- If you've chosen figure 9, you're a merry and fun-loving person.
- Choosing numbers 13 or 21 means that you've got the tendency to keep to yourself, you're also frequently anxious and would normally avoid other people.
- Figure 8 says that you're a real daydreamer — you like being in your own world and away from this one.
- Choosing figures 10 and 15 describes you as a well-adapted person, content with the life you have.
- Picking number 14 signifies that you're emotionally drained or exhausted. There is a good chance you're facing inner emotional crisis or turmoil.
- Figure 20 is for people with a heightened sense of self-importance. You're a born leader, and you want to be the only one people listen to.
- If your choice is figure 16, then you're tired of supporting someone; however, you could have seen yourself as being hugged by figure 17, in that case you think of yourself as the one who is doted on.

### 3.2. What job is right for me?

Before you start looking for a job, you need to find out what skills you have. Skills can be broken down into two areas:

- **Hard skills** – these are skills that can be measured and learned, through education, work or life experiences. Examples include qualifications, the speed at which you type or the ability to speak another language. These skills will be described on a job description, so personal experience can be matched to the essential knowledge the employer is looking for. For example, if they want someone with some bookkeeping experience, this is very easy to show on your CV
- **Soft skills** – sometimes known as interpersonal skills. These are personal and social skills you need to be able to do most jobs. The best thing about soft skills is you don't need qualifications to get them. Soft skills are closely related to **transferable skills**.

For example, transferable and soft skills are:

- **Time management** - showing up for work and meetings on time, sticking to breaks, and getting your work done on time. Good time management is about doing the most important tasks first and then the rest
- **Personal presentation** - dressing in an appropriate way for work.
- **Attitude** - staying positive at work even when things get difficult. Great examples include helping others, admitting when something goes wrong and learning from your mistakes. Employers like people who are positive, upbeat and have a 'can do' attitude
- **Confidence** - believing in yourself, your skills and abilities. All of these will help you work with people better and take on new tasks
- **Communicating** - good communication means you are able to listen, understand instructions, and put your point across without being aggressive
- **Making decisions** - gathering all the important facts, seeking advice, looking at the big picture and considering alternatives are all things that go into making a good decision
- **Showing commitment** - employers want people who are dependable, reliable, enthusiastic, and enjoy hard work
- **Flexibility** - it's a great asset if you are able to step outside your comfort zone and try your hand at something you haven't done before.

The right job for you depends on your personal skillset and interests.

## Great jobs for individuals with High Functioning Autism



**Medical Laboratory Scientist** - also known as a medical technologist or clinical laboratory scientist, works to analyze a variety of biological specimens. They are responsible for performing scientific testing on samples and reporting results to physicians.



**Computer Programmer (Systems Programmer)** - writes code to help software applications operate more efficiently. Their duties include designing and updating software solutions, writing and updating source-code and managing various operating systems.



**Reference Librarian** is responsible for selecting new materials for a library's collection, replacing lost or damaged items, and weeding out old or outdated materials.



**Taxi Driver** - responsible for operating a vehicle and driving passengers to and from their destinations. Greets passengers, ascertains destination, watches for traffic signals, waits for passengers to take them to their next destination.



**Telemarketer** - is responsible for talking to potential customers on the phone to sell products or solicit donations. Their duties include tracking customer contact lists, explaining the benefits of their products and taking payment information.



#### Activity 4: Pick a job

Lesson title	Pick a job
Key words	Choice; job; employment;
Duration	30 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Ability to assess which profession is most attractive.
Materials	Pictures
Activity description:	
<p>This activity allows to choose the most suitable profession from the given pictures. Shows a person's propensity for a particular area of employment. Allows to use the visual material that makes selection easier. After selecting the pictures, you can start a discussion with the learners.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	

### 3.3. Where do I look for a job?

This section shows you the ways you can look for a job. You can take advantage of the methods that seem most acceptable to you. If you have difficulty deciding, you can always consult your teacher or job counselor.

#### **Lithuania:**

[www.uzt.lt](http://www.uzt.lt)

[www.cvbanks.lt](http://www.cvbanks.lt)

[www.cvonline.lt](http://www.cvonline.lt)

[www.cvmarket.lt](http://www.cvmarket.lt)

Job advertisement in the  
press

Recruitment agency

Employment Service

Social connections /  
acquaintances

#### **Greece:**

Linkedin

<https://www.kariera.gr/>

<https://www.jobfind.gr/>

<https://www.xe.gr/jobs/>

<https://www.skywalker.gr/>

<https://ergasia.gr/>

The newspaper adds &  
networking

#### **Cyprus:**

<https://www.ergodotisi.com/en/>

<https://www.carierista.com/>

<https://www.pescps.dl.mlsi.gov.cy/CPSWeb/f001w.jsp>

<https://www.jobscyprus.com/>

<https://kariera.com.cy/>

<https://www.cypusjobs.com/>

#### **Latvia:**

State Employment  
Agency Vacancy portal ;

Open vacancies on the  
relevant country  
authorities government  
/company internet sites;

Get work experience  
volunteer;

The State Employment  
Agency (SEA);

EURES European  
Employment Services  
network.

#### **Romania:**

ASD community advice

Facebook groups

NGOs proposals

Business incubators

Charities

<http://conexiuni.autismromania.ro/>

<https://autismromania.ro/donations/job-club/>

<https://www.ejobs.ro/company/asociatia-help-autism/243264>

<https://www.helpautism.ro/cariere>

#### **Netherlands:**

<https://www.pernu.nl/>

<https://www.autisme.nl/over-autisme/autisme-en-werk/op-zoek-naar-werk/>

<https://www.autitalent.nl>

### 3.4. How do I apply for a job?

Choosing a job can be a stressful process for you. Here's tips how you can apply for a job that helps you achieve your career goals. You can do this together with the teacher.



#### 1. Search for jobs in your field

- Create a list of your strengths – write down your skills, what you do best and what you enjoy doing.
- Write a list describing what you see yourself doing in the future. Feel free to list your dream job, but also write down other jobs that you would be willing to do and ones that you may be interested in trying. Make note of which ones match up with your strengths.
- Make a list of all of your contacts who could help you get a job. Your personal “network” is an important place to start – your family, friends, neighbors and other people who know you well.

#### 2. Research hiring companies

- Write down the names of businesses that are accessible to you via public transportation, walking distance, etc.
- Speak with your teacher about the supports that you can get – that may include help with writing a resume, job development and job coaching.
- Consider joining social networking and job search websites to help you expand your contact list – check out LinkedIn, Facebook and others.

#### 3. Ready your resume for submission

- Create/Update your resume. Make sure you include your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Then list your education and training experiences, work history and experience. Make sure you include any non-paid work experiences too, such as internships and volunteer activities.

#### 4. Decide if a cover letter is right for you

- This will be used to introduce yourself to the people you hope will hire you. It should be concise - simply identify who you are and why you are applying for the job. It also should invite the employer to contact you for an interview. Make sure to include a copy of your resume with your cover letter.

## 5. Submit your resume and online application

- Fill out several job applications! This is often how the employment process begins, and it may be the first impression an employer has of you. You can go to the actual job agency to ask for an application – if so, make sure you wear clothes that are clean and ironed. Be polite and bring a pen and a copy of your resume with you.

### 3.5. Getting ready for a job interview

Here are tips on how to prepare for a successful job interview:

1. **Be prepared and practice before the interview:** You will need to role-play an interview with someone, playing both the person being interviewed and the interviewer, to get a sense for how it works and to make you less nervous. Practice it from beginning to end, remembering to smile and shake the person's hand at the beginning. Having a list of your personal attributes and strengths and preparing how to relate these to job-related situations can also help you feel confident about yourself. An important part of being prepared means knowing where to go and how to get there so that you are on time for your interview. Aim to get there no more than 15 minutes before your interview. If you get there too early, you may unknowingly put pressure on the interviewer to rush what they were doing beforehand and cause them to be stressed;
2. **Pay attention how to talk.** Try to answer all questions in an even, calm tone of voice. If something flusters you, take a breath, wait a few seconds and then respond. Relax, and try to approach interviews as if they're just a conversation;
3. **Be mindful to your appearance.** Due to sensory issues, you may prefer to wear loose fitting, soft and comfortable clothing. Make sure your clothes are clean and not wrinkled. Men should at least wear a button-down shirt and tie with slacks (not jeans!) and dress shoes. For an office job, a suit jacket should be worn as well. For women, a pair of dress pants and a nice blouse will do, with the option of adding a blazer for a more formal environment. Hygiene is also an important factor in making a good first impression. Make sure you shower the morning of the interview, wear deodorant and brush your teeth. If in doubt, get a second opinion from a friend or family member about whether or not your outfit is interview appropriate;

4. **Learn about your company.** Find out as much as you can about it. Familiarize yourself with the structure of the company, with their products, etc. Learn what its values and history are. Researching the company can help make you stand out from the other interviewees because it shows you are taking the job possibility seriously and that you really care about the company;
5. **Be aware of how much you talk and what you say.** If you talk on and on without stopping you will be overwhelming to the other person. To avoid this, practice doing little sound bites. If you are someone who is very shy and doesn't like to talk much, the opposite applies. You need to be sure that you are not just answering with a yes or no, and that you are actually answering in full sentences to show you're interested;
6. **Visualize and use positive self – talk before the interview.** Visualize yourself being confident and doing well when you go into the interview. Know that it can take a few interviews before you get good at it, so look at your first few interviews as practice. Don't put too much pressure on yourself or else you'll just end up really stressed out;



7. **Disclose that you have Asperger's or ASD.** Although you have the right not to disclose if you do not need accommodations to do the job, in most cases honesty is the best policy. You are better to tell the person interviewing you because they can make allowances for your disorder and may be more open-minded if you typically exhibit “obvious” behaviors of Asperger's or ASD. For instance, if you have trouble maintaining eye contact they may assume you are rude or uninterested instead of attributing it to your communication difficulties and not taking it personally. If you decide not to disclose your Asperger's or ASD, you may end up standing out as different and still come to the attention of your employer.



### Activity 5: Get ready for a job interview



The activity is designed to practice a job interview. Together with the learner you will try to simulate the job interview.

Lesson title	Get ready for a job interview
Key words	Questions; conversation;
Duration	45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	The student will improve the following skills:  Self-presentation, communication, critical thinking, self-confidence, body language.
Materials	Pencil, paper
Activity description:	
<p>The activity helps to prepare for the job interview. Try to simulate an interview with the learner and answer the most common interview questions. The questions are given with decoding to learner with ASD.</p> <p><b>Advice for the learner:</b></p> <p>Think about the position you are applying for.</p> <p>Read the questions.</p> <p>Try to answer them.</p> <p>Relax and don't push yourself – there are no wrong answers.</p>	
Worksheets:	
Included	

## Activity 5 – Worksheet

### **1. The employer asks: Tell me about yourself.**

You have to: Summarize your relevant skills and experience.

### **2. The employer asks: Why did you choose this field?**

You have to answer: What excites you about this work or this industry?

### **3. The employer asks: What are your greatest strengths?**

You have to answer: What makes you good at this work?

### **4. The employer asks: What is your greatest weakness?**

You have to answer: Do you have insight into your limitations and have you learned from your mistakes?

## 4.6. Writing a CV and cover letter

A CV is a used for applying for a job, where you write about your: qualifications, experience, skills, qualities, references and personal details. Once it is completed you send it to a potential employer. They will quickly scan over it, to see if you're suitable. If you make the grade, they'll give you an interview. Although there are no particular formal rules to writing a CV, there is lots of information about good practice.

### Useful tips for writing a CV

- ✓ ***Fit the CV on a maximum of two pages.*** Use a font that is large enough to read, but not too large that it takes up vital room. I find a font size of about 12 is just right.
- ✓ ***Use headings for each block of information you're writing about.*** Such as a heading for your qualifications;
- ✓ ***Put qualifications and experience in the order of most recent first;***



Only include the most relevant information, as you are limited on room. You can leave out:

- Your photograph (unless they ask for it)
- Primary/elementary school
- Qualifications that you got bad grades in (unless these are the only ones you have)
- Unless your hobbies relate to the job.

Tailor or target the CV for each job you're applying for. Use a good CV template, for example the Europass CV.

### Activity 6: My resume



The activity is designed to create your own resume. Together with the teacher you will try to fill the Europass CV template.

Lesson title	Create your resume
Key words	CV; Europass;
Duration	45 minutes or more
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Learners will gain CV creation skills.
Materials	Internet connection, computer.
Activity description:	
The activity helps to create a CV. Step by step, you can fill out a CV according to the given example. This is a very useful practice for further job search.	
Worksheets:	
<a href="https://europa.eu/europass/en">https://europa.eu/europass/en</a>	

## 8 Essential Tips for Writing a Successful Cover Letter

*By Mary Walton, Simple Grad*

A cover letter is one of the most important elements of your job application, and it's only right that you spent a suitable amount of time in ensuring that yours is perfect for the vacancy that you're applying for.

### Address it to a Person

When you're writing your cover letter, it pays to do your research to make sure that you're researching the person who is going to be reading your letter, such as the HR manager or the name on the job description, to show that you've put effort into finding the right person. This also looks a lot more professional.

### Mentioning Your Disability

The majority of countries in the world have some kind of discrimination act, especially in Europe and the US, where an employer cannot discriminate you for a role based on the fact that you have a disability. This means you have no reason to mention this disability in your cover letter unless of course, you want to. You may mention in, for example, if you secure an interview and you're in a wheelchair and want to know the best entrance into the building.

### Start Strong

The first thing your employer is going to read is the first paragraph, so you'll want to make sure that you grab your reader's attention straight away. You can do this by writing a couple of sentences just to summarize who you are, what position you're applying for and a positive sentence that makes them want to read on.

### Not a Resume Rehash

One of the easiest traps to fall into is simply rewriting or highlighting parts of your resume that you think your recruiter will be interested in. However, your resume is enough, and your cover letter can do so much more. Instead, try to focus your cover letter on what kind of person you are and how you'll fit into the company you're applying to and what you can contribute.

### Writing an Accurate Letter

When it comes to actually writing the cover letter, many employers may be put off but certain elements, such as poor spelling or bad grammar.



### Activity 7: My Cover letter

The teacher will help you create a cover letter. If needed, you can use it along with your resume.

Lesson title	My Cover Letter
Key words	Cover letter; motivation;
Duration	45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Learners will gain cover letter writing skills.
Materials	Internet connection, computer.
Activity description:	
The activity helps to prepare a cover letter for a job position. The learner with ASD will be able to create a cover letter by using the link.	
Worksheets:	
<a href="https://europa.eu/europass/en">https://europa.eu/europass/en</a>	

# MODULE 4

## *Support for employees with ASD*

## 4. Support for employees with ASD. Keeping job skills

Prepared by SC PSICHOFORWORLD

### Skills, abilities and knowledge to keep a job



### How to keep your job

Hard-working people are often highly valued. But what are some of the skills and qualities that employers value in workers? The director of the human resources department of a company with 700 employees said: "What we appreciate about an employee is his ability to communicate effectively and collaborate."

In times of crisis, employees' risk being next on the list of those who leave the company. That's why they have to prove to their bosses that they are the best and are indispensable to the company.

Human resources experts say that employees must follow a list of tips in order not to thicken the ranks of the unemployed during the crisis. This is exactly what it takes to keep a job: to create added value for the employer

Recruiters and HR people advise employees and future employees to be as active as possible, to do extra things without asking for extra money, not to complain and to be more friendly.

### How to keep your job

- Communicates effectively - And when you want to say something, pay attention to the way you express yourself. If you speak clearly and loudly enough, it will certainly be understood what you say, and your words will carry more weight. Brian, the professional adviser mentioned in the previous article, says: "It's surprising how many people lose their jobs not because they lack technical skills, but because they lack the ability to communicate effectively."



- Be a good collaborator - Given that you spend most of your time with colleagues, you will definitely get to know them quite well. Therefore, you may be tempted to gossip about their mistakes and misdeeds. You will not waste time and you will not cause unnecessary frictions between colleagues.

When you are asked to accomplish a specific task, d fa thou shalt make the reputation of hard worker, you will boost your chances of keeping your job. Of course, you can comply with what your employer requires, but up to a certain limit. However, we must not allow those in positions of authority to meddle in more important matters.

- Be honest - Most employers "mentioned honesty and integrity among the qualities they most look for in candidates for a particular position." Obviously, if you're honest, you won't steal money or materials from your employer. But you won't steal any time. A study conducted by an employment agency indicated that an employee steals 4 hours and 15 minutes a week from work.

- Be realistic - The instability and political and social changes characteristic of these times would inevitably cause economic instability as well. So, even if you apply the above suggestions, you may still lose your job

## TIPS NOT TO LOSE YOUR CURRENT JOB



### **1. How to properly assess the financial situation of the company you work for? How safe is your job?**

The instability of the economic environment and the lack of predictability of the Romanian fiscal system represent a real threat for the existing jobs. We will explain you how to use the information you have to find out if your employer is strong and will get over the crisis.

The best indicator on the activity of a company is the profit registered in the previous fiscal year. If the company has incurred losses in recent years, you can certainly expect cost

reductions, including salary or lay-off expenses. Even if the employer's financial data is not accessible to you, it is good to know that all companies have the obligation to submit the balance sheet annually. And it can be accessed online by querying the database of the Ministry of Finance.

Another easy way to inform is represented by articles that appear in the press. Periodically read the news sites about the business environment and those specialized in the industry in which you work. Read from various sources about your employer, but also about the main competitors to form an objective and overall opinion. See what purchases they have made, what new products or projects they have announced, what financial results they have had in recent months.

If you work in a company with a small number of employees, informal discussions with colleagues from other departments are probably the best source of information.

One tool that may be useful to you is Google Alerts. The service sends free email notifications with the latest relevant search engine indexed results, based on keywords or an exact phrase. You can create an alert with the company name, field of activity or the name of the company director.

### **What sources are credible?**

However, there is always a fear about the validity of these sources of information. You can take for granted the announcements that came directly from the company through press releases, managers' statements or through internal channels (meetings, internal email lists, intranet). Rumors, information on sources or general statements about the state of the market (pompous statements such as "things are going well") are signs to be taken into account and investigated by correlating them with other facts or arguments.

### **What information can you find out from the inside?**

Follow closely the dynamics of the workload in your team and in other teams you collaborate with. If you haven't had projects for a few months or there have been no sales of products or new projects, you can expect layoffs. To find out, a discussion with a colleague in the sales or finance department can do as much as 1,000 hours of research. He can tell you what orders there are, how satisfied customers are with the company's products or services.

Set up an official meeting with your direct manager to better understand your role and that of the department. Ask him what the company's long-term plans are, how you can streamline the work you do to get better results.

### **How to become indispensable for the employer?**

Employment for life, as it was perceived in the past, is no longer valid today. Until recently, there was a chance to keep your first job until retirement. But in the context of today's flexible economy, things are completely different. Under the new conditions, the notion of job security apparently no longer has any validity. However, you can significantly increase your chances of keeping your job by becoming an indispensable employee for the company.

### **Take action!**

Restructuring, mergers, the economic crisis are just a few terms used today with the meaning of "you are fired". You can't avoid restructuring, but you can take steps to make sure you're not the one being fired. First of all, the position you hold must be perceived as necessary for the employer. Secondly, you have to be the ideal candidate to fill that position. Otherwise, although your job is indispensable for the employer, you will not be.

### **Above yourself!**

To avoid such a situation, you must be willing to do more than any other employee on the job. It is necessary to permanently exceed the responsibilities listed in your job description. It is about small things, from the daily professional activity.

The employer will perceive you as indispensable if you get involved in the projects you are working on at a higher level than required. For example, you can deliver projects before the deadline and, preferably, with unsolicited aspects included. Thus, you will pleasantly surprise and you will prove that you are a necessary element for the team.

### **Be proactive!**

If you occupy a position that is not unique in the company, comparisons between you and other people who have the same responsibilities are the main criteria that will guide the employer when restructuring becomes inevitable. Therefore, it is important to do more than fulfill your duties clearly defined by the employer and to adopt a proactive attitude.

For example, when you notice that a certain process is not working properly, try to signal this aspect to those involved in its development. The initiative to bring improvement solutions will be appreciated. Moreover, when they are faced with a decision to reduce staff, superiors will take into account the permanent concern you show for the smooth running of the company in which you work.

### **Differentiate yourself!**

But there are sometimes situations in which your unique contribution to the team needs to be explicitly expressed to the employer. In these cases, you must make sure that you have correctly identified the elements that make you indispensable and that you expose those qualities that benefit you in front of other people.

It is important to find an element of differentiation that is appreciated by the employer and the team you work for. Your goal is for the employer to perceive the benefits of keeping you in office, to the detriment of others. You need to be aware of the needs of the employer, your role within the company and at the level of the work team so that you become a solution to cover those needs. And to meet the necessary conditions and, at the same time, to outperform the others. It is a quality that only you have and you have to make sure that it will become irreplaceable.

#### **A. How to prepare for the performance appraisal meeting?**

Performance evaluation is an important moment in the activity you have at work, so it should receive all due attention and not be treated superficially.

First of all, it must be said that the performance evaluation is not limited to the annual discussion you have with the manager. It involves constant feedback throughout the year, a monthly analysis, or at least a quarterly analysis of the objectives, of what was achieved from what was planned and what remains to be achieved, of the problems that arose and of the corrective measures that were taken. It is therefore an ongoing process.

##### ***1. Schedule the meeting with the manager in the calendar and make sure it is available***

A good time is the beginning of the day, somewhere in the second half of the week. Go to the meeting prepared, know very well your goals, successes and mistakes.

What is very important is that for the things that do not work you have prepared alternative solutions that you can discuss with your manager.

## ***2. Adopt the right attitude***

Beyond preparing for the meeting, give a little time to the attitude you adopt. It is important that at this meeting, as at the rest, you go with the idea that you are talking about business objectives, to try to see the big picture and your role in this context. It is a peer-to-peer discussion in which the professional outfit must take precedence over emotions and possible misunderstandings that may occur.

If you go prepared and with the right attitude to the context, no obstacle is insurmountable.

## ***3. Be confident!***

Another equally important aspect is to go to the meeting without preconceived ideas and with an open mind. From there you have to leave satisfied with your achievements and appreciated, with tips and ideas for what you are going to improve and especially with a clear picture of what you have to do in the future.

### **4.1. Social skills**

Prepared by SC PSICHOFORWORLD

#### **1) What are social skills?**

Social skills, also called interpersonal skills, are how people communicate effectively with others. Social skills are more broadly categorized as a soft skill — a personality trait or habit.

Learning social skills helps you to develop the ability to sense people's feelings and understand motives. When you develop social skills, you navigate the relationships in your career more easily. With excellent social skills, you can cultivate, maintain and grow relationships that help you excel in your career.

#### **1. Written communication**

Written communication skills are the ability to express ideas and thoughts clearly in writing. Your resume and cover letter are opportunities for you to display your writing ability. Often, this is the first impression that a potential employer has of you.

During your career, you will likely send emails, create presentations and write reports. Improving your written communication helps you to convey your thoughts in understandable ways.

## 2. Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is how you communicate without using language. People constantly notice cues about your emotional state through your body language. For example, proper body language can give you the appearance of being respectable and attentive.

During professional interactions, keep an upright posture and face the person you are speaking with. You can keep your hands to your sides or on your lap to maintain an open style of body language. You want your body language to tell others that you are actively listening and being attentive.



## 3. Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution is the skill of finding a consensus among people with differing opinions, goals or methods. An important leadership skill, conflict resolution makes the workplace a more harmonious place. Effective strategies for conflict resolution maintain morale and build healthy relationships among co-workers.

You can practice this skill by considering the perspectives of different people or groups. See if your team can reach a consensus that satisfies everyone involved. You may need to consider the compromises both sides need to make to reach an agreement.

## 4. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to recognize a person's emotions or state of mind. In the workplace, empathy helps you to understand the mindsets of your co-workers and clients. Employers value empathetic people because they build a stimulating and healthy social environment.

One way you can practice empathy is by imagining what it would be like to be another person. Ask others for their viewpoints on how to approach problems. Even if your opinions differ, you can benefit from the new perspective. It is important to ask questions to expand your understanding of another person's way of thinking. Having empathy encourages others to share their ideas with you, leading to new insights.

## 5. Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage your own feelings. A key skill of emotional intelligence is being able to regulate your emotions. Managing emotions in healthy ways increases your ability to work effectively.

Emotional intelligence allows you to have more empathetic relationships. When you can recognize your own emotions, you have a better chance of knowing the emotions of others. One method of developing emotional intelligence is to learn how to name your emotions. You can increase your emotional intelligence by having an awareness of your feelings in the present moment.

## 6. Positivity

When you maintain a positive attitude, you cultivate a healthy workplace culture. People who spread a positive mood are excellent leaders and assets to any company. Employers want to hire people that are self-motivated, confident and eager to work.

You can develop a more positive perspective by finding ways to practice this skill. Using positive language is one way to improve. When a coworker has success, praise them for their work. If a team member helps you with a task, thank them for taking the time to work with you. Encouraging a positive dialogue helps teams feel more engaged and productive.

Another way to practice positivity is to set goals that make you feel motivated each day. Take time at the beginning of the day to set your objectives. Focusing on your goals will help your morale as the day progresses.

## 7. Active listening

Active listening is a practice of listening and responding that increases comprehension. Active listening techniques strengthen your communication and help you commit what others say to

memory. It involves focusing fully on another person, comprehending their words and responding thoughtfully.

Through nonverbal and verbal cues, active listeners show that they are interested in the conversation. When you practice keeping focus when another person is speaking, you improve your ability to comprehend what they are saying. To learn more, ask relevant questions.

If you need clarification during a conversation, repeat back to the speaker what you heard. This method is called paraphrasing. For example, you can use phrases such as "What I hear you saying is ..." "So you are saying that ..." With this method, you can prevent any misunderstandings.

## 8. Cooperation and teamwork

Cooperation allows for a productive and harmonious work environment. When people cooperate, they share ideas and develop innovative solutions to problems. Effective teamwork skills involve many other social skills such as empathy, active listening and conflict resolution.

People with excellent cooperation skills learn to acknowledge the contributions of others. They share responsibilities and empower others to reach common goals. You can practice cooperation by being open and receptive to the ideas of others.

Cooperation and teamwork are valuable skills to emphasize on your resume and in your interviews. Employers desire people that can motivate others to do their best work.

## 9. Leadership

Leadership skills are the ability to manage groups of people to accomplish shared goals. Being an effective leader requires excellent social skills.

## 2. What Are the Five Areas of Social Educational Learning Skills?

- 1) Self Awareness
- 2) Self Management
- 3) Social Awareness
- 4) Relationship Management
- 5) Responsible Decision Making



**Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

**Self-Management:** The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

### Suggested activities

In many cases, bringing individuals with ASD into employment requires a different approach than with neuro-typical people. Specific non-formal educational activities need to focus on challenging areas for NEWork target group on the spectrum, including communication issues, social skills difficulties, and fine motor challenges. Additionally, these activities need to match the person's developmental level and take full advantage of the persons' strengths and interests in order to be effective in the workplace.



#### Activity 8: Talking pictures

Lesson title	<b>Talking pictures</b>
Key words	Role playing, team building, emotional intelligence, arts and drama
Duration	30-45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>To establish social skill scripts related to interactions with co-workers. For adults with ASD, it can be very helpful to have a planned script to use during social interactions in the workplace. This helps adults compensate for difficulties they may experience in processing social or non-verbal information. You can target any important social skill in this type of lesson, although this lesson plan is designed to work on showing concern for a hurt playmate.</p> <p>Creating a comic book builds on many of the strengths typical of adults with autism, including visual processing. However, this type of activity also works well for auditory or kinesthetic learners, since the adult is creating the story by drawing the pictures and writing the words.</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three blank sheets of paper for each participant</li> <li>• Art supplies, including markers, pens, crayons, and paint</li> </ul>
Activity description:	

### Instructional strategy:

1. Begin by reading this story to a small group of participants: "You are standing with Ofelia who lifts some goods on the shelf. Ofelia slips from the ladder, and she falls down. She starts crying. There is no one else with you. What do you do?"
2. Discuss how Ofelia may be feeling in this situation.
3. Help participants brainstorm ideas for what they can say or do to help. Write down the ideas, and then discuss the merits of each one.
4. Instruct participants to make a comic strip about this interaction, showing Ofelia and themselves. Help them come up with appropriate social language for the situation and write this language in talking bubbles on their comics.

**Accommodations for nonverbal participants:** Help these participants communicate their concern using pictures and gestures.

### Worksheets:

N/A



## Activity 9: An avatar of mine

Lesson title	An avatar of mine
Key words	To practice pencil grasp, pre-writing skills, and fine motor control.
Duration	35 – 50 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Many adults with autism have difficulty learning to grasp a pen/pencil correctly even when employed, producing legible handwriting, and drawing representational pictures. A self-portrait can be a great way to practice these skills in a rewarding way, and it also helps adults learn some basic facial expressions. All you'll need is some art supplies. Adults will need varying amounts of help, depending on their age and developmental level. Younger adults or those with severe fine motor delays may need the assistance of a paraprofessional during this activity.
Materials	Paper, marker, photo of each participant
Activity description:	
<b>Instructional strategy:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give each participant a picture of her/himself. Talk about the aspects he should consider when drawing a self-portrait. Write a checklist on the board to help the participants make sure they include all body parts and facial features.</li> <li>2. Pass out the paper and art supplies and instruct the participants to draw themselves. As they work, move around the classroom correcting their pencil grasp. Some participants may require hand-over-hand assistance to create their portraits.</li> <li>3. Give each participant ideas for adding to his or her portrait.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accommodations for nonverbal participants:</b> This activity does not require verbal participation, but some participants may need extra assistance from a paraprofessional.</p>	
Worksheets:	

N/A



### Activity 10: Write a day

Lesson title	Write a day
Key words	To apply and improve handwriting skills and fine motor art skills regarding the employment demands.
Duration	30 - 40 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>Since fine motor skills can be a challenge for adults with autism, it's very important to engage them in a project they find interesting. To use this lesson plan, talk to each adult to determine his or her special area of interest. This may be trains, dinosaurs, classic literature, history, or any fun topic. Then work with the adult to create a fiction or non-fiction story based on this area of interest.</p> <p>The point of this lesson plan is to improve fine motor skills through writing and drawing to make the book. You can also combine this lesson plan with units in science, reading, or any other topic. Younger adults or those with significant delays may need assistance in creating this project.</p>
Materials	Paper, markers, pens
Activity description:	
<p><b>Instructional strategy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have each participant write a story about something he or she loves. They can choose a topic that represents a special interest, such as trains, musical instruments, etc.</li> <li>2. Next, have the participants divide the story into pages. For each page, they must clearly write the story at the bottom and draw an illustration for that page at the top.</li> <li>3. Finally, staple the pages together to create a book. Participants can share their books with the class if they feel comfortable.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accommodations for nonverbal participants:</b> Nonverbal participants may create a picture book to accompany a story written by an educator.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	



## Activity 11: Ask me something

Lesson title	Ask me something
Key words	To reinforce the skill of asking appropriate questions to the customers and colleagues.
Duration	30 – 45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>Wherever adults fall on the autism spectrum, it's likely that they have challenges with communication – both with work mates and customers. Specifically, one problem area may be asking questions for information. This challenge may be due to a lack of shared perspective or "Theory of Mind." An adult on the spectrum may believe that others do not have information that he or she does not already know, so there's no need to ask a question about anything. You can target question-asking by playing this game.</p> <p>This game sets up a situation where the adult must ask a question to find out what is inside the bag. This is a great choice if you're on a limited budget or have to demonstrate it during Erasmus+ TPM or LTT, since the materials are things you probably already have around your home or project's venue. To keep adults engaged, consider using only items that relate to their areas of intense interest.</p>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opaque fabric bag</li> <li>• 10 small, easily-identifiable objects, such as a block, a pencil, a paperclip, etc.</li> </ul>
Activity description:	
<p><b>Instructional strategy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start by discussing the reasons people ask questions, such as maintaining a conversation or gathering information.</li> <li>2. Explain that you are going to play a guessing game with the class.</li> <li>3. Place an object in the bag and tie it closed. Pass the bag around, allowing each participant to feel the object through the fabric.</li> <li>4. After everyone has had a turn, have the participants ask for information or guess the contents of the bag by asking questions.</li> <li>5. Repeat with another object.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accommodations for nonverbal participants:</b></p> <p>Have pictures of all the items in the bag and require the participant to tap you to gain your attention then give you the picture representing the object.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	



## Activity 12: Assistance in the workplace

Lesson title	Assistance in the workplace
Key words	To reinforce the concept of asking for assistance from other employees when needed.
Duration	35 - 50 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>Many adults on the spectrum struggle with the functional use of language; in other words, they may have a hard time using language to communicate their needs. This skill is very important for people with autism, but it can be difficult to teach. Often, these adults are very self-sufficient. It's essential to set up situations where the adult will only be able to get the desired object by asking for help. Eventually, adults will learn to translate this skill to other situations.</p> <p>This lesson plan engineers situations where the adult is missing an essential piece of a puzzle or game. In order to continue game play, the adult must ask somebody for help. Non-verbal adults can use a hand signal or picture card to practice this skill. Along with the lesson plan, you'll need a few games or puzzles.</p>
Materials	<p>Simple jigsaw puzzles with one piece missing</p> <p>Other games or toys with missing parts</p>
Activity description:	
<p><b>Instructional strategy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Begin by explaining the concept of asking for help. Model the appropriate language: "I'm having trouble with my tablet PC/at the kitchen/card terminal etc. Would you please help me?"</li> <li>2.Explain that you'll be playing games and putting together puzzles. Tell the participants that when they need help, they can ask for it.</li> <li>3.When a participant asks for help, present him or her with the missing piece of the game or puzzle.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accommodations for nonverbal participants:</b> Teach the participants to raise their hands for attention and then use a picture or gesture to ask for assistance.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	



### Activity 13: My Space

Lesson title	My Space
Key words	To reinforce the concept of appropriate personal space in working conditions (office, shop, café etc.).
Duration	30 – 45 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	<p>Social skills, such as the concept of personal space, may not be intuitive for adults with autism. Because personal space varies by the individual and the situation, this can be an area of particular challenge and confusion, especially in the workplace. Helping adults with autism become more aware of personal space can give them an advantage during social interactions with workmates and customers.</p> <p>The My Space Game is a great way to get adults up and moving. You can play it in the office or even on the playground outside. Simply print out this lesson plan, and create a red stoplight for each participant. If you're working with older adults, you can add a green stoplight to provide a little extra clarification. Because the game relies on visual processing of information, a strength for many adults on the spectrum, it's an ideal way to teach this important skill.</p>
Materials	<p><b>Materials needed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One red stoplight card for each participant</li> </ul>
Activity description:	
<p><b>Instructional strategy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the concept of personal space to the group. It may help to clearly define what is appropriate space, typically about two feet in any direction. Talk about how different people have different needs when it comes to personal space.</li> <li>2. Give each participant two cards, one representing a red stoplight and the other a green stoplight.</li> <li>3. Tell the participants that when you say "Go," they are to move about freely. Whenever anyone gets too close to them, they are to hold up their red stoplight. The other participant should then freeze.</li> <li>4. When you see a participant holding up his or her stoplight, go over and investigate. Talk about the amount of personal space needed by that participant.</li> </ol> <p><b>Accommodations for nonverbal participants:</b> This game does not rely on verbal abilities, but participants with lower functioning levels may require the assistance of a paraprofessional.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	

## **When did the word MISTAKE become a bad word?**

Think of a time your child experienced failure or a task they really struggled to do.

How did he or she react to the struggle (failure)?

[https://youtu.be/\\_TeV9op6Mp8](https://youtu.be/_TeV9op6Mp8)

### **Sara Blakely's story**

**Social Awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

**Relationship Skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

**Responsible Decision Making:** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

### **Success is Made (skills acquisition) Not Born**

Yale University clinical psychologist Dr. Daniel Goleman: 10%-20% of success is do to innate intelligence.

Harvard Psychologist David Perkins in “Outsmarting I.Q.”

Genetic intelligence accounts for only 25% of a person's school and work success

### **Active Listening**

Listen for both the content of the words and the emotions behind the words (e.g. frustration, anger, defeat, fear)

Use higher order questions to get the your child “think” and talk

### **Avoid judgment**

Listener should have “open” body language

<https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/raising-good-men-parents-talk-boys-relationships-51874952>

## 4.2. Emotion recognition

Prepared by Stitching Drawing to Health

### **Emotion Recognition by Persons with Autistic Spectrum Deficiency**

Emotions and its typical Development

Humans have six basic emotions – happiness, surprise, sadness, anger, fear and disgust. We also experience more complex feelings like embarrassment, shame, pride, guilt, envy, joy, trust, interest, contempt and anticipation. The ability to understand and express these emotions starts developing from birth. From around two months, most babies will laugh and show signs of fear. By 12 months, a typically developing baby can read your face to get an understanding of what you’re feeling. Most toddlers and young youngsters start to use words to express feelings – although you might see a tantrum or two when their feelings get too big for their words! Throughout childhood and adolescence, most youngsters continue building empathy. They also build skills to manage their emotions and recognize and respond to other people’s feelings. By adulthood, people are usually able to quickly recognize subtle emotional expressions. Autistic youngsters however often find it hard to: recognize emotions, facial expressions and other emotional cues like tone of voice and body language, show and manage their own emotions, understand and respond to other people’s emotions – they might lack, or seem to lack, empathy with others. Babies who are later diagnosed with autism can recognize feelings in a similar way to typically developing babies. But these youngsters are slower to develop emotional responses than typically developing youngsters. By 5-7 years, many autistic youngsters can recognize happy and sad, but they have a harder time with subtle expressions of fear and anger. By adolescence, autistic teenagers still aren’t as good at recognizing fear, anger, surprise and disgust as typically developing teenagers. As adults, many continue to have trouble recognizing some emotions.

Found evidence for impaired emotional sensitivity

In order to describe the typical sensitiveness to emotions of youngsters with ASD, it might be good to mention the main general lines of common understanding:

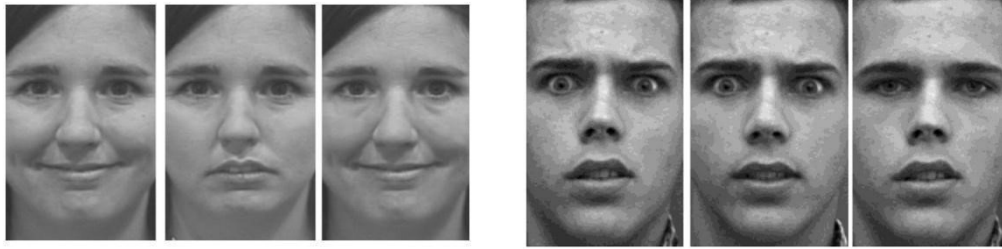


1. Autistic youngsters often find it hard to recognize and manage emotions.
2. Learning to recognize and manage emotions can help autistic youngsters understand and respond to other people.
3. You can use everyday interactions to work on emotions skills like emotional labels and shared attention.
4. Tools to help autistic youngsters with emotions skills include emotion cards and social stories.

However, there is not full unanimity on in how far youngsters with ASD are significantly less sensitive to emotional cues. First of all, there is the research that found evidence for impaired sadness recognition in autism, using tasks that relied on two quite different cues—facial expressions and movement patterns. Boraston et. al. 2007. Given the evidence that similar brain areas, in particular the STS, are activated by both images of faces and abstract animated stimuli, abnormal functioning of this brain region could lead to a deficit in emotion recognition of this type. Further experiments are needed to investigate this, according to Boraston.

### **Recognizing Facial Emotions**

Emotion recognition problems are frequently reported in individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). However, this research area is characterized by inconsistent findings, with atypical emotion processing strategies possibly contributing to existing contradictions. In addition, an attenuated saliency of the eyes region is often demonstrated in ASD during face identity processing; (See [Evers et. al. 2014](#)). Five different facial expressions were used: one neutral expression and four emotional faces, expressing happiness, sadness, anger, and fear. Based upon a pilot study (with six TD youngsters and eight TD adults), the three (out of four) best recognizable emotions were selected for every actor, in such a way that, in total, all emotional expressions were presented the same number of times (i.e., all four emotions were presented nine times). A group of six-to-eight-year-old boys with ASD and an age- and intelligence-matched typically developing (TD) group without intellectual disability performed an emotion labelling task with hybrid facial expressions. Five static expressions were used: one neutral expression and four emotional expressions, namely, anger, fear, happiness, and sadness.



Results showed no emotion recognition problem in ASD. Moreover, we provided evidence for the existence of top- and bottom-emotions in youngsters: correct identification of expressions mainly depends on information in the eyes (so-called top-emotions: happiness) or in the mouth region (so-called bottom-emotions: sadness, anger, and fear). No stronger reliance on mouth information was found in youngsters with ASD.

### Reading the Mind in the Voice

The study by Golan (2006) reports a revised version of the 'Reading the Mind in the Voice' (RMV) task. The original task (Rutherford et al., (2002), *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 32, 189–194) suffered from ceiling effects and limited sensitivity. To improve that, the task was shortened and two more foils were added to each of the remaining items. About 50 adults with Asperger Syndrome (AS) or High Functioning Autism (HFA) and 22 matched controls took the revised task. Results show the revised task has good reliability and validity, is harder, and more sensitive in distinguishing the AS/HFA group from controls. Verbal IQ was positively correlated with performance, and females performed worse than males in the AS/HFA group. Results are discussed with regard to multi modal empathizing deficits in autism spectrum conditions (ASC).

### Encouraging Emotional Development in Autistic Youngsters

Some of the tools that have been mentioned in the 'Raising Youngsters Web-site' may be felt as useful:

- Emotion cards have pictures of faces, either real or cartoon, which you can use to teach your person basic emotions.
- The Transporters is an animation series that uses transport characters to teach emotions to autistic youngsters aged 2-8 years.
- Social stories are a way of explaining social situations to autistic youngsters. An illustrated story or comic strip conversation that incorporates how your person feels and how others feel might be useful for you.

### 4.3. Communication skills

#### Prepared by Innovation Hive

##### Introduction:

This module starts by identifying the needs of adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders, the competencies that need to be developed to achieve an overall improvement of their communicational skills and which learning methods can be used for an effective approach. The module is providing valuable tips regarding the learning methods that must be used by the trainers and all the objectives that need to be reached.

##### Identifying the needs

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are often self-absorbed and seem to exist in a private world in which they have limited ability to successfully communicate and interact with others. They may have difficulty developing language skills and understanding what others say to them and often have difficulty communicating nonverbally, such as through hand gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions.

The ability of adults with ASD to communicate and use language depends on their intellectual and social development. Even if some of them may have rich vocabularies and be able to talk about specific subjects in detail, many have problems with the meaning and rhythm of words and sentences. They also may be unable to understand body language and the meanings of different vocal tones. Taken together, these difficulties affect the ability of individuals with ASD to interact with others, especially people their own age.

##### Learning methods

Recognizing that students have different learning styles leads to the discovery that most students with autism spectrum disorders are visual learners. That means they understand what they see, better than what they hear. Many other students with communication and/or behavior challenges also demonstrate strength in understanding what they see compared to what they hear. The significance of this observation has immeasurable implications for communication, social interactions, and teaching.

Considering the above, when working with adults with ASD you have to follow certain tips, always thinking that each person is different and some of them may not apply.

##### GENERAL TIPS:

- Avoid sensory overload. Many unexpected things can be distracting to students with autism.
- Use visuals but do not overwhelm
- Be predictable and clear
- Keep language concrete and avoid use of sarcasm.
- Directly teach social and communicational skills for any circumstances
- Treat students as individuals

- Motivate them by rewarding & acknowledgement of their achievements

Within this Module various educational methods are used including interactive games, role playing, journal and comics writing aiming to develop communicational skills for adults in ASD to empower their employability.

## Learning objectives

Many individuals with autism spectrum disorder may be less likely to communicate for social purposes and will need to practice their conversation skills. This may include talking about a topic that is not their special interest, staying on topic, turn taking, asking related/appropriate questions, checking for their conversation partner's understanding and predicting what information their partner may or may not know about a concept or situation.

Individuals with ASD often have difficulty generalizing skills from one setting to another. Hence, they may need to be taught skills across different settings, people, and activities. The aim of this module is the improvement of the following competencies:

- Effective & Writing Communication
- Customer Communication
- Giving Feedback
- Comprehend the Body language
- Communicating in Teams

## Methodology

This module is structured with a learning by doing methodology: after a brief introduction and an explanation about the selected skills, the participants are asked to practice their skills through icebreaking activities, games and hands-on excersises.

## Objectives overview

Communicational Skills	Need Analysis
<b>1. Effective Communication</b>	Effective communication requires the ability to rapidly establish and shift attention, take in and process information and formulate responses appropriate for the situation. Adults in ASD may experience difficulty accomplishing these skills at the speed necessary to participate effectively in communication interactions. They can have difficulty rapidly interpreting information, particularly auditory information.
<b>2. Writing Communication</b>	Writing means that information can be stored and transferred from individual to individual and group to group without relying on memory. Writing communication is essential within any working/ corporate environment as it helps you to keep abreast of development in whatever project you are involved in and provides an avenue not only for the sharing of ideas or opinions, but also for the presenting and defending of viewpoints

<b>3. Customer Communication</b>	Companies doing business online, especially those selling digital products and services, face many unique challenges. One of the most critical is effectively communicating with prospective and current customers.
<b>4. Comprehension of the body language</b>	Body language refers to the nonverbal signals that we use to communicate. According to experts, these nonverbal signals make up a huge part of daily communication. Adults on ASD are usually unable to understand body language and the meanings of different vocal tones
<b>5. Communicating in Teams</b>	Many students on the autism spectrum have difficulty working in a group. The reason relates to some of the characteristics of ASD as some students have difficulty processing oral information.

## 1. Effective Communication

Adults in ASD face difficulties in communicating effectively as their comprehension of the demands in their environment is frequently based more on piecing together visual cues and expected routines rather than understanding specific verbal messages. Their lack of cooperation or lack of independence may really be the result of not understanding fully what is expected of them or what is going to happen as they may be accurately interpreting only fragments of a communication message.

To start with, we need to define the communication, tips and guidelines for providing instructions will be given and an interactive game will be used to enhance the knowledge of the students in this part of the module.

### 1.1 Elements of Communication

Have you ever wondered why some people can communicate so well while others fail to get their message across? What are the elements that must be present in the communication process before it can be successful and effective?

Well, communication has been defined as the act of giving, receiving or exchanging information, ideas and opinions so that the message is completely understood by both parties.

This means that if you want to get your message across accurately, you need to consider these three things:

- The message;
- The audience or receiver; and
- How the message is likely to be received.

## 1.2.: 8 Tips for Improving the Communication Skills

### 1. Simplify and stay on message.

Use simple, straightforward language. Remember that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was 286 words, about two minutes long.

### 2. Engage your listeners or readers.

Draw your listeners and readers into the conversation. Ask questions and invite opinions. Solicit their feedback.

### 3. Take time to respond.

After you've listened (and understood) take time to "draft" in your head what you want to say.

### 4. Make sure you are understood.

Don't blame the other person for not understanding. Instead, look for ways to clarify or rephrase what you are trying to say so it can be understood.

### 5. Develop your listening skills, too.

The best communicators are almost always the best listeners. Listen without judgment and don't be distracted by thinking about what you want to say next. Then, respond, not react.

### 6. Maintain eye contact.

Whether speaking to a crowd or one-on-one, maintaining eye contact builds credibility and demonstrates you care about your listeners.

### 7. Respect your audience.

Recognize your message is not just about you or what you want. You should sincerely care about the needs and the unique perspectives of those to whom you are communicating. One of the best ways to show your respect is simply by paying attention to what they say.

### 8. Make communication a priority.

Take classes, read books, magazine articles or learn from successful communicators around you. Seek a mentor or executive coach.

## 1.3. Giving Instructions

Giving clear understandable instructions is one of those things that sounds easy to do but in real life can actually be more complex, especially in an office environment or within a business. Mixed messages, assumptions and multiple options mean that the message received might differ from what we actually meant. Here are 5 tips on how to give instructions that are clear and get the job done that you want

### 1. Don't assume they know what you mean

You know what they say, that assumption is the mother of all mistakes! Don't be the one that assumes people know what you mean. Whilst most people in an office or business will be intuitive and switched on, they are not mind readers. An imperative when delivering clear instructions is to not assume the recipient knows what you mean, and this can be for anything from industry acronyms to who to contact in different departments or organisations. It will only take you a few seconds more to explain the details.

### 2. Be clear and specific

Everyone loves a waffle (dripping in maple syrup please) but no one likes waffle in conversation and especially not in an email or when it is a set of instructions. Whilst you don't want to ramble on in your set of instructions (that would be a waste of your time and to be honest, they'd switch off after a while) you do want to ensure that your instructions are clear, specific and concise. For example, don't just instruct "send a selection of the briefings to a few key stakeholders", instead state how many stakeholders and to who, and what briefings! I often find it helps to bullet point as it reduces the temptation to waffle on and it helps your instructions and actions be more focused.

### 3. Give time frames

Do not confuse matters by not being specific with your time frames and deadlines. What you consider as "soon" might be very different from your colleagues. If you think "soon" is the next couple of hours, yet your colleagues who you have instructed considered it to be in a few days then this communication is going to have serious implications in any business or project!

#### 4. Give examples

Whenever possible, make sure you give examples. This will help to add clarity to your instructions and help form a clearer picture of what it is you mean and want.

#### 5. Give alternatives

When delivering your instructions it is worth considering giving some alternatives just in case your preferred option of instruction is not viable or available.

For example, it could be “I want you to set up a meeting on the 20th of this month for 2 hours with the customer. If they are not available on the 20th, then the afternoon of the 26th will be fine.”



#### Activity 14: Back-to-Back Drawing

Lesson title	Back-to-Back Drawing
Key words	Effective Communication – Role Playing
Duration	20 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Back-to-back drawing is an exciting and interactive game that will help you demonstrate the importance of communicating with other and creating a common ground.
Materials	Pencils, Paper
Activity description:	
This Activity helps participants to understand that the intended messages are not always interpreted as we meant them to be. Real-life dialogues can be challenging to get the right message! Participants are divided into pairs and, then, they sit back-to-back (or their cameras are deactivated on the online platform) with a paper and pencil each.	
Worksheets:	
Material available at: <a href="https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/drawing-communication-exercise.pdf">https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/drawing-communication-exercise.pdf</a>	



Participants are divided into pairs and, then, they sit back-to-back (or their cameras are deactivated on the online platform) with a paper and pencil each.

One member takes on the role of the speaker, and the other the role of the listener. Each pair is given 15-20 minutes and the speaker describes a geometric image from a prepared set, while the listener tries turn this description into a drawing without looking at the original image. After this is completed, each pair talks about the experience, using several of the following example questions:

#### Speaker questions

*What steps did you take to ensure your instructions were clear?*

*How could these be applied in real-life interactions?*

Our intended messages aren't always interpreted as we mean them to be. While speaking, what could you do to decrease the chance of miscommunication in real-life dialogue?

#### Listener questions

*What was constructive about your partner's instructions?*

*In what ways might your drawing have turned out differently if you could have communicated with your partner?*

Extra activity: Role play Game: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW7vVB3XdCY>

## 2. Writing Communication

Writing communication is essential within any working/ corporate environment as it helps you to keep abreast of development in whatever project you are involved in and provides an avenue not only for the sharing of ideas or opinions, but also for the presenting and defending of viewpoints. In professional procedures, it is also a vital requirement serving as a form of acknowledgement & proof that something has been done in case verification is needed later.

“We all use language to communicate, express ourselves, get our ideas across and connect with the person to whom we are speaking. When a relationship is working, the act of communication seems to flow relatively effortlessly. When a relationship is deteriorating, the act of communicating can be as frustrating as climbing a hill of sand.”

*Chip Rose*

Communication can be oral or in written form. What is the difference between these two main types of communication? Oral communication involves conveying ideas, thoughts or information via a spoken language. In written communication, however, information is

exchanged using written symbols, that is, via words and sentences. Written communication is the sharing and exchanging of written symbols between individuals or groups. It is also the presentation of ideas in a coherent manner in written form. Written communication can take place via:

- Letters & Faxes;
- Email;
- Reports;
- Memos; and
- Advertisements.

Writing skills acquired through extensive reading, note-taking and listening. In order to communicate effectively via writing, you need to have a sound grounding in grammar and vocabulary so that you can present ideas, together with supporting details, in a unified and coherent manner.

Successful written communication requires careful thought and planning. It should contain comprehensive information about a specific subject and yet be clear, correct and easy to read.

A well-written piece of work requires you to pay attention to the following three stages in the writing process:

- **Planning**

To write a good report, you need to plan what you want to say. After you have decided on what you want to say, list down all the points and arrange them in a logical and suitable sequence. This approach will ensure the clarity of your message and help you to avoid omitting relevant details.

- **Writing**

The writing stage requires careful planning. It includes a pre-writing stage where you gather all the information necessary to ensure that there is substance to your writing. Start writing in simple and plain English and move from something concrete to something more abstract and expressive. In order to improve your writing skills, you need to practise writing in the target language everyday until you are able to express yourself clearly and meet the needs of your

reader. Once you start writing, the words, sentences, paragraphs and lay-outs become writing tools which you can use to convey your message concisely, courteously, and confidently

- **Editing**

The third stage in the writing process is editing. It is crucial to check for grammatical errors and ensure that there is smooth language flow. The longer the report, the more editing is usually required. It can be useful to get someone else to read through the written piece for you.

## **2.1 Pitfalls to Avoid**

There are four types of errors that you must try to avoid in written communication.

- **Confusing Language**

Confusing language refers to words that mislead the reader and cause communication breakdown. It may also result in barriers being erected between the writer and the reader. Avoid words which are ambiguous, bombastic, vague, sexist, exaggerated, inflated and archaic. Remember to write in plain, in good language.

- **Verbosity**

The writing stage requires careful planning. It includes a pre-writing stage where you gather all the information necessary to ensure that there is substance to your writing. Start writing in simple and plain English and move from something concrete to something more abstract and expressive. In order to improve your writing skills, you need to practice writing in the target language everyday until you are able to express yourself clearly and meet the needs of your reader. Once you start writing, the words, sentences, paragraphs and lay-outs become writing tools which you can use to convey your message concisely, courteously, and confidently

- **Poor Sentence Structure**

Poor sentence structure often leads to fragmented writing and choppy sentences that impede understanding. Try to keep your sentence(s) short and concise to ensure that they are correct, logical and easy to understand. Word order is important for meaning. Remember that words should be structured in such a way that those which precede should be in accordance with those that follow

- **Information Overload**

Information overload means giving so much information till you feel overwhelmed and confused. This may cause frustration and cast doubts on the writer's credibility. Therefore, as a writer, you must decide on the type of information required and present this to produce a clear, concise and relevant piece of written work



### Activity 15: Story of my Life

Lesson title	Story of my Life
Key words	Writing Communication
Duration	15 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	We love talking about ourselves. Everyone does! That's why a large part of our daily conversations are about us. In this exercise, you learn how to speak about personal experience and describe something about yourself. It's also a good way to practice using correct verb tenses.
Materials	Pencils, Paper
Activity description:	
Think of something that you did in the past, like playing the piano or going to school. Write about your experience with this activity. Your writing should start in the past and end in the future. For example, you can write: "I started playing the piano when I was five, but I stopped only two years later. Right now I can't play anything, but I hope to start learning again in the future."	
Worksheets:	
N/A	



### Activity 16: The Silly job Interview

Lesson title	The Silly job Interview
Key words	Writing Communication- Role playing
Duration	15 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	If you've ever had a job interview, you know how scary it can be. Writing a silly scene like this might make you feel a little better the next time you do an interview. Then you can think, "Well, at least it wasn't as bad as in that dialogue I wrote!"
Materials	Pencils, Paper
Activity description:	

Imagine walking into a job interview with the boss of a company. You're very nervous and very polite, but the company boss is just having fun. You really want this job, but all he wants to do is make you even more nervous. It might look a little like this. (Since the accents and speaking speed in the video can make it difficult to understand, you can read what they say here.)

Write a similar dialogue for a job interview that's going terribly wrong. The job applicant is professional and serious, while the boss is using conversational English and even English slang. What might that conversation sound like?

Worksheets:

N/A

### 3. Communication with Customers

In a daily life overloaded with blogs, email, text and social network updates, gaining the attention of your customer is increasingly difficult. In addition, consumer and innovative companies are shifting towards advanced commerce models, such as subscription or consumption models, for their favorite products and services.

An effective communication strategy must address all stages of the customer lifecycle, from acquisition to retention to end-of-life to marketing to past customers (re-marketing), and define the types of communication that are relevant at each level.

#### Top 10 Communication Rules

Rule	Benefit
Define communication strategy prior to product/service launch.	Address process before other issues take priority.
Limit off-ramps in customer communications.	Increase retention rates by only requiring customers to take action when absolutely necessary.
	Reduce the number of refunds and chargeback by simplifying exit process.
Always include links to "opt out" or unsubscribe.	Higher customer satisfaction and less annoyance due to perceived spam.
Anticipate customer questions.	More effective messages provide higher customer click rates and customer satisfaction.
Help customers use your product.	Increased utilization and customer happiness.
Treat customers well, especially as they leave-and make it easy for them to come back.	Increase the chance that a customer will return after leaving.
Billing messages are marketing messages-use them to continue selling and highlight value provided.	Increase customer satisfaction by continuing to provide value.

Use HTML to send clean, attractively branded emails.	Increases customer satisfaction and easier to read messages.
Message content should always clearly state the purpose and parameters of the topic addressed.	Reduce customer confusion and set expectations which lead to happier customers.

### Top 10 Communication Errors

Common Error	Impact
Merchants are “silent” when they shouldn’t be	Lack of transparency in billing results and higher attrition rates
Retention offers are not implemented	Customers who are happy with the service but unhappy with the pricing plans are leaving-instead of paying a reduced rate for less functionality
No policy to retry bounced emails	Potentially valid customers may be turned away due to a temporary glitch with their email server
Confusing messaging sent to customers when billing fails	Customers do not understand what has happened and panic or even cancel their service
Making it difficult for unhappy customers to leave	Opportunities to remarket are greatly devalued
Not taking advantage of utilization data to tailor messages and offers	Lower trial conversions and missed revenue from potential upgrade opportunities
Lack of A/B testing to optimize messages	Failure to better understand customers and use the most effective marketing methods
Customer expectations are not correctly set	Customer confusion and lower conversion rates during trials. Conversely, higher chargeback rates if refund policies/communications are unclear
Communications require user to take action when not necessary	Any unnecessary actions result in higher customer attrition
Sending dull, “facts only” billing notifications and receipts	Missing opportunity to use billing messages to show value, cross- or up- sell, increase revenue and increase retention



### Activity 17: Role Play, Customer Service Role Play Scripts

Lesson title	Role Play, Customer Service Role Play Scripts
Key words	Customer Communication- Role playing
Duration	20 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	The participants are expected to meet some typical Communication Rules and build autonomy when trying to build effective communication channels in a work environment
Materials	Pencils, Paper
Activity description:	
The replies of the employee will not be given to the participants before the end of the activity. After the provision of their questions, the full script will be shared and feedback will be provided from the instructors and the rest of the attendants	
Worksheets:	
Script Included	

#### Script:

C: "Hello?"

S: "Hi, this is (your name) from (company name). Before we get started, who do I have the pleasure of working with today?"

C: "How do I install this product?"

S: "I'd be happy to help you install that product. But first, let me share this knowledge base article that can guide us through the installation process. I'll walk us through this doc step-by-step so you can ask me any questions that you have along the way."

C: "Your product is terrible. It's overpriced and it doesn't turn on every time I use it."

S: "Thank you for this feedback. I understand how frustrating it can be to spend a lot of money on a product that doesn't work consistently. The behavior you're describing does sound unusual for that product, so if it's okay with you, I'd like to walk us through some troubleshooting steps to see if we can diagnose the problem. My gut tells me it's something we can fix, but if not, I'd be happy to offer another long-term solution."

C: "What do you mean your product doesn't do this? Why did I buy a boat if I can't drive it on land?"

S: "I hear you. I think it would be great if our boats could be driven on land as well as water. While we could outfit your boat with customized features that would allow you to convert it to a land vehicle, this, however, would come with additional costs and could jeopardize the integrity of your boat's hull. In my experience, I'd recommend against this upgrade since our boats really perform their best in the water and this customization may end up costing you more in the future."

C: "I see. Well, what am I supposed to do now? I still need to move my boat out of the lake."

Support Rep: "Understood. Where are you moving your boat to? While it's not my expertise, I'd be happy to research some towing options in your area and can share what I find."

## 4. Comprehension of the body language

Body language refers to the nonverbal signals that we use to communicate. According to experts, these nonverbal signals make up a huge part of daily communication. From our facial expressions to our body movements, the things we don't say can still convey volumes of information. It has been suggested that body language may account for between 60 to 65% of all communication.



Understanding body language is important, but it is also essential to pay attention to other cues such as context. In many cases, you should look at signals as a group rather than focusing on a single action.

### 4.1. Facial Expressions

Think for a moment about how much a person is able to convey with just a facial expression. A smile can indicate approval or happiness. A frown can signal disapproval or unhappiness.

In some cases, our facial expressions may reveal our true feelings about a particular situation. While you say that you are feeling fine, the look on your face may tell people otherwise. Facial expressions are also among the most universal forms of body language. The expressions used to convey fear, anger, sadness, and happiness are similar throughout the world.





## 4.2. The Eyes



The eyes are frequently referred to as the "windows to the soul" since they are capable of revealing a great deal about what a person is feeling or thinking. As you engage in conversation with another person, taking note of eye movements is a natural and important part of the communication process.

Some common things you may notice include whether people are making direct eye contact or averting their gaze, how much they are blinking, or if their pupils are dilated. When evaluating body language, pay attention to the following eye signals.

## 4.3. The Mouth

Mouth expressions and movements can also be essential in reading body language. For example, chewing on the bottom lip may indicate that the individual is experiencing feelings of worry, fear, or insecurity.



Covering the mouth may be an effort to be polite if the person is yawning or coughing, but it may also be an attempt to cover up a frown of disapproval. Smiling is perhaps one of the greatest body language signals, but smiles can also be interpreted in many ways. A smile may be genuine, or it may be used to express false happiness, sarcasm, or even cynicism.

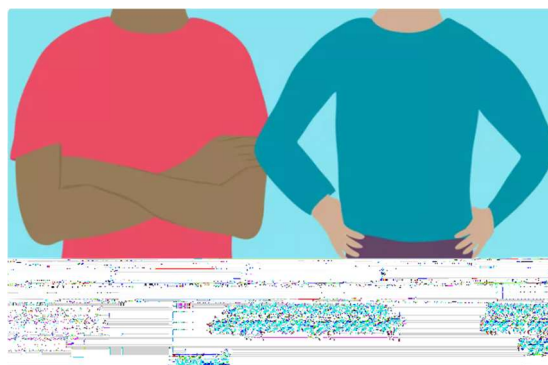
## 4.4. The Gestures



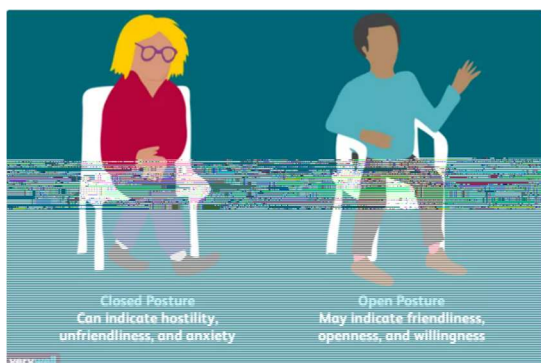
Gestures can be some of the most direct and obvious body language signals. Waving, pointing, and using the fingers to indicate numerical amounts are all very common and easy to understand gestures. Some gestures may be cultural, however, so giving a thumbs-up or a peace sign in another country might have a completely different meaning than it does in your country.

## 4.5. The Arms & Legs

The arms and legs can also be useful in conveying nonverbal information. Crossing the arms can indicate defensiveness. Crossing legs away from another person may indicate dislike or discomfort with that individual. Other subtle signals such as expanding the arms widely may be an attempt to seem larger or more commanding while keeping the arms close to the body may be an effort to minimize oneself or withdraw from attention. When you are evaluating body language, pay attention to some of the following signals that the arms and legs may convey.



## 4.6. Posture



How we hold our bodies can also serve as an important part of body language.

The term posture refers to how we hold our bodies as well as the overall physical form of an individual. Posture can convey a wealth of information about how a person is feeling as well as hints about personality characteristics, such as

whether a person is confident, open, or submissive.

Sitting up straight, for example, may indicate that a person is focused and paying attention to what's going on. Sitting with the body hunched forward, on the other hand, can imply that the person is bored or indifferent. When you are trying to read body language, try to notice some of the signals that a person's posture can send.

## 4.7. Social Distance

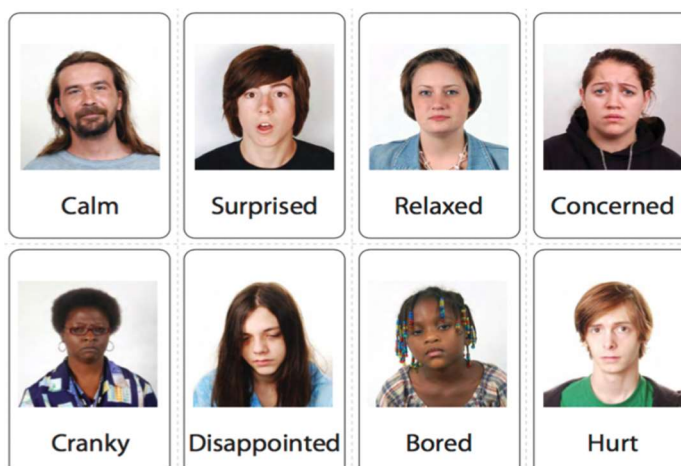
Have you ever heard someone refer to their need for personal space? Have you ever started to feel uncomfortable when someone stands just a little too close to you?

The term proxemics, coined by anthropologist Edward T. Hall, refers to the distance between people as they interact. Just as body movements and facial expressions can communicate a great deal of nonverbal information, so can the physical space between individuals.



### Activity 18: Emotion Cards

Lesson title	Activity 6: Emotion Cards
Key words	Comprehension of Body language
Duration	15 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	The participants are expected to understand the importance of the nonverbal signals that we use to communicate and particularly the face expressions
Materials	Pencils, Paper, Photos
Activity description:	
To start with this activity it is better to use images which have a simple and plain background, showing only the upper body and face of a person, and clearly showing a single emotion, in an exaggerated manner, so the children can start to learn how to recognize basic facial expression	
Worksheets:	
Photos Included	
Supplementary Activity: Qtrobot Video: <a href="https://youtu.be/jGHgnX1cAXE">https://youtu.be/jGHgnX1cAXE</a>	



## 5. Communicate in Teams

When multiple directions are given all at once to the class, the individuals with ASD may only hear the first or last word provided which leads to not knowing all of the expectations and perhaps making a mistake. Many adults on the autism spectrum have difficulty working in a group. The reason relates to some of the characteristics of ASD as some students have difficulty processing oral information.



Common barriers to effective communication may occur at any stage in the communication process leading to confusion and misunderstanding. Here are some effective team communication techniques for you to overcome the barriers and have effective communication when working in a team.

### 1. Give Your Whole Attention

Have you ever been in communication where someone was busy looking at their smartphone while talking or listening to you? That's called being absent-minded. It's a sign of poor communication. Therefore, be mindful of how you're communicating. Offering a full focus by maintaining eye contact during conversations and meetings will contribute greatly to effective communication. Nod your head affirmatively while in a conversation to convey your focus visually!

## 2. Practice Active Listening

Employees who listen well tend to work better. Listening is twice as important as talking and one big important part of effective communication skills in business. Listening should not be taken for granted. Do not just sit back, barely awake, letting the speakers words wash over you. The more you listen well, the better you receive the information.

## 3. Show appreciation

Tell your employees, coworkers and colleagues about how much you care and respect them. Showing appreciation is an effective way to deal with low employee morale and to make your team members feel like they matter. This a method to promote communication in team.

## 4. Be aware of your body

Your body tells a story about you.

Crossed or folded arms → Defensiveness
Hands held behind the body → Confidence
Mending clothes, accessories, watch → Nervousness
Clenched fists → Anger or anxiety
Squeezing hands → Self-soothing

## 5. Be honest

Have the ability to admit when you are wrong. This is an admirable trait in any team member. The inability to admit when you are wrong inhibits personal growth and impedes your team's ability to innovate. If you can't say, "I was wrong," then you'll never get the chance to say, "you were right."

## 6. Manage a conflict

When interpersonal conflicts arise (and they will) first try to talk out your concerns with the individual, privately. Make them aware that he/she is offending you. Give him/her the opportunity to correct the behavior before assuming it is intentional. If you cannot resolve the issue at this level, report the problem to your team leader or supervisor before it escalates any further.

## Don't Forget!

A sincere, friendly greeting goes a long way to promote positive relationships. If I show you I'm genuinely happy to meet you, you'll instantly start to like me! Be open to other opinions, don't always assume the worst. Treat people how "they" want to be treated, not necessarily how you want to be treated.



### Activity 19: Crazy Comics

Lesson title	Crazy Comics
Key words	Communication In Teams
Duration	15 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	The participants are expected to work on some effective team communication techniques to overcome the barriers and have effective communication when working in a team.
Materials	Pencils, Paper
Activity description:	
<p>Crazy Comic is from the book 104 Activities that Build by Alanna Jones and encourages teamwork, standardization and coordination. It works remotely and all you'll need is three or more people, pencils and paper. Depending on how many team members you have, divide them evenly into groups. Each group will create their own comic strip.</p> <p>Each person is responsible for drawing one frame of the strip, so the comic's length is based on how many people are in each group (for example, three people make a three-frame comic). Assign a set amount of time for each team to discuss what the comic will be about, what each person will draw, and so on.</p> <p>The team will begin drawing at the exact same time without any interaction, so everything must be discussed in detail beforehand. The team is also not allowed to see what the other members are drawing. When time is up, have the teams gather to look at and discuss their comics.</p>	
Worksheets:	
N/A	

## 4.4. Problem solving skills

Prepared by: Innovation Hive

### Introduction

This module starts by identifying the constraints of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) regarding the social skills and especially in problem solving situations. The module is providing valuable tips regarding the learning methods that must be used by the trainers and all the objectives that need to be reached.

After the completion of this module, the theoretical analysis of each objective and the activities provided, the participants are expected to have improved their ability to manage a conflict and use certain steps and techniques to solve a problem effectively.

### Identifying the needs

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is largely defined by deficits in social communication and interaction skills, so it is no surprise that many individuals with the disorder have trouble communicating and solving problems as well. This difficulty can come about in various ways and to greater and lesser extents depending on the severity of the individual's autism and the particular expressions of the disorder that affect them – in some, the communicational and problem solving skills come as easy as it does for any of us, for others it's their biggest challenge.

### Learning methods

Recognizing that students have different learning styles leads to the discovery that most students with autism spectrum disorders are visual learners. That means they understand what they see, better than what they hear. Many other students with communication and/or behavior challenges also demonstrate strength in understanding what they see compared to what they hear. The significance of this observation has immeasurable implications for communication, social interactions, and teaching.

Considering the above, when working with adults with ASD you have to follow certain tips, always thinking that each person is different and some of them may not apply.

### GENERAL TIPS:

- Avoid sensory overload. Many unexpected things can be distracting to students with autism.



- Use visuals but do not overwhelm
- Be predictable and clear
- Keep language concrete and avoid use of sarcasm.
- Directly teach social and communicational skills for any circumstances
- Treat students as individuals
- Motivate them by rewarding & acknowledgement of their achievements

Within this Module various educational methods are used including interactive games, role playing, journal and comics writing aiming to develop communicational skills for adults in ASD to empower their employability.

### Learning objectives

Deficits in social skills are one of the defining characteristics of individuals with ASD. These impairments manifest in making and keeping friends, communicating feelings appropriately, demonstrating self-control, controlling emotions, solving social problems, managing anger, and generalizing learned social skills across settings. Within this module the objectives to enhance the problem solving skills of the participants are the following: Conflict Management & Considering a solution.

### Methodology

This module is structured with a learning by doing methodology: after a brief introduction and an explanation about the selected skills, the participants are asked to practice their skills through icebreaking activities, games and hands-on exercises.

### Objectives overview

Problem Solving Skills	Need Analysis
<b>1. Definition of Problem Solving Skills</b>	When employers talk about problem-solving skills, they are often referring to the ability to handle difficult or unexpected situations in the workplace as well as complex business challenges. Organizations rely on people who can assess both kinds of situations and calmly identify solutions. Problem-solving skills are traits that enable you to do that. Methods that can be used to improve problem-solving skills will be analyzed.
<b>2. 2. Problem Management-POWER□ Model</b>	Rather than focusing on teaching a specific behavioral skill, the focus is on teaching a social problem solving model that the learner would be able to use as a “tool box.” The social problem solving approach offers the promise of helping a person with ASD to become a better problem solver, thereby promoting greater independence in social situations and throughout life.



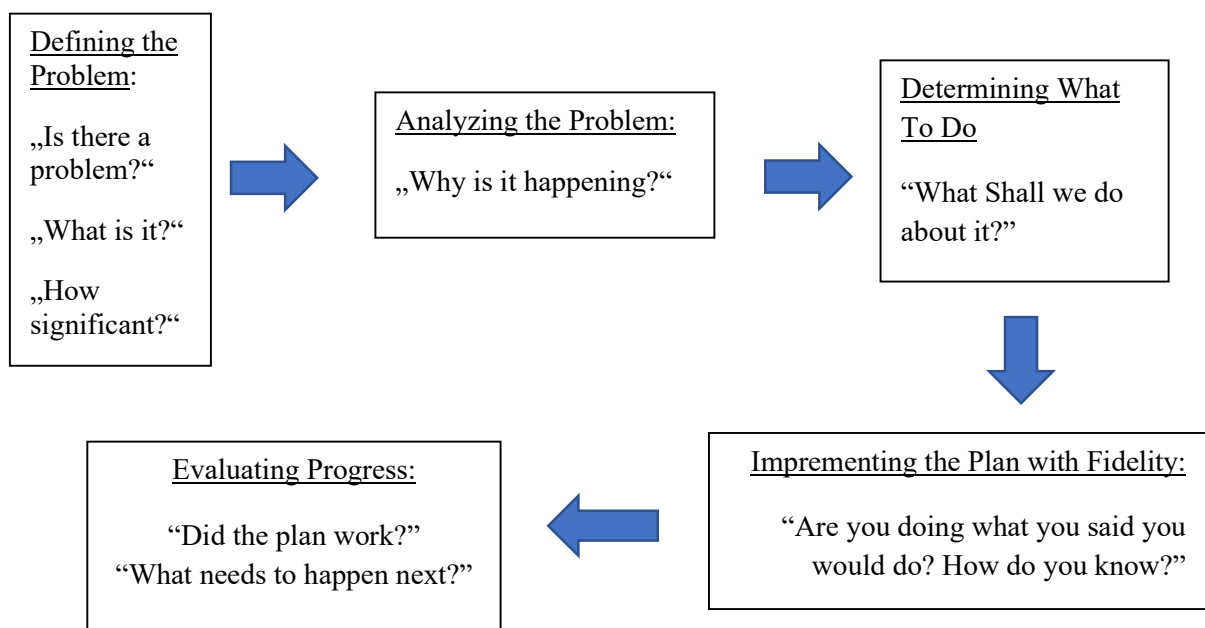
<b>3. Conflict Management</b>	Conflict management is a key skill, particularly if you are not involved in the actual dispute, but are managing one or more of the disputants. The ability to deal with conflict effectively is directly related to overall management success and is just one aspect of relationship management.
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## 1. Problem Solving Skills

Individuals with Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) typically have significant social skills impairments and often require direct instruction in order to address these deficits. They often have difficulty in many of the following areas: sharing, handling frustration, controlling their temper, ending arguments calmly, responding to teasing, making/keeping friends, complying with requests. Strong social skills contribute to the initiation and maintenance of positive relationships with others and as a result contribute to peer acceptance. Social skills impairments, on the other hand, contribute to peer rejection.\

### How to Deal with a Problem

#### Problem Solving Method



### 1.1 Which are problem-solving skills?

Problem-solving skills help you determine the source of a problem and find an effective solution. Although problem solving is often identified as its own separate skill, there are other related skills that contribute to this ability.

Problem-solving skills are important in every career at every level. As a result, effective problem solving may also require industry or job-specific technical skills. For example, a registered nurse will need active listening and communication skills when interacting with patients but will also need effective technical knowledge related to diseases and medications

Some key problem-solving skills include:

- Active listening
- Analysis
- Research
- Creativity
- Communication
- Dependability
- Team- Building
- Decision Ma

## 1.2 Problem-solving skills examples

To solve a problem effectively, you will likely use a few different skills. Here are a few examples of skills you may use when solving a problem.





## **Activity 20: Online Escape Room- See Me**

<b>Lesson title</b>	Online Escape Room- See Me
<b>Key words</b>	Problem Solving Skills
<b>Duration</b>	30 minutes
<b>Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy</b>	This is a great and collaborative way to help the participants work on problem solving situations with an interactive activity.
<b>Materials</b>	Internet Access and Computer
<b>Activity description:</b>	
See Me Escape Rooms has created the ultimate experience that will help you crack the codes to get out of that “room.” On top of the imaginative storyline, they have put their online escape room puzzle free of charge.	
<b>Worksheets:</b>	
<a href="https://www.seemeescape.com/online-escape">https://www.seemeescape.com/online-escape</a>	

## **2. Problem Management POWER® Model**

POWER is an alternative approach that focuses on teaching a problem solving model that the individual with ASD will apply independently. Rather than focusing on teaching a specific behavioral skill, the focus is on teaching a social problem solving model that the learner would be able to use as a “tool box.”

After many years of conducting social skills training using the specific skill approach, the authors have developed a model of social problem solving that uses the easily learned acronym of POWER. The steps of POWER-Solving® include:

**P**ut problem into words

**O**bserve feelings

**W**ork out your goal

**E**xplore solutions

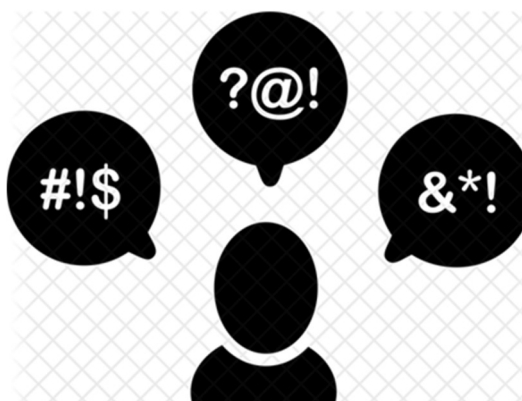
**R**eview plan.

## 2.1. Put Problem into words

The ability to “Put problem into words” is critical in order to start the problem solving process. People with ASD often have difficulties finding the words to identify a problem.

Thus, the first step in this approach involves direct training in the use of the rubric “I was... and then...”

For example: Upon entering a place or a room and finding a peer in his seat our student immediately pushed the peer in an attempt to get him out of his seat. Through the use of POWER-Solving® the student was taught to articulate “I was walking into the classroom and then I saw that someone was in my seat.”



## 2.2. Observe feelings

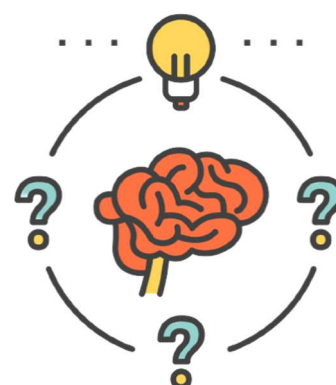
The second step of “Observe feelings” is addressed by helping the student develop a feelings vocabulary (e.g., angry, frustrated, scared, sad) as well as measuring the intensity of these emotions using a scale from one to ten, with a one being “very weak” and a ten being “very strong.”

Photographs and drawings are used extensively to capitalize on the strong visual skills.



## 2.3. Explore solutions

The fourth step of POWER-Solving® involves “Explore solutions.” Socially skilled individuals are able to generate a range of effective solutions but those with impairments are more limited and often apply the same rigid solution over and over again in spite of repeated ineffectiveness.



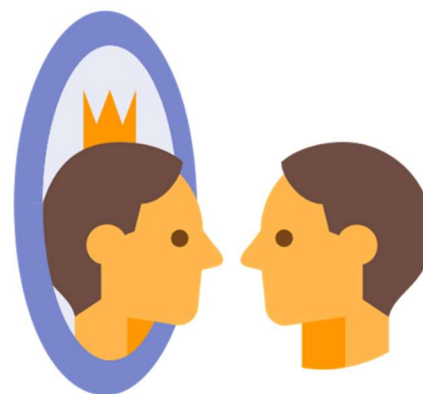
Students must be taught to “brainstorm,” which involves generating as many solutions as possible that might reach the stated goal, provided the solution is safe, fair, and effective.

Brainstorms typically have three steps: idea capture, discussion and critique, and selection.

## 2.4. Review Plan

The final step of POWER-Solving®, “Review plan” involves the participants reviewing their plan to use this skill the next time the situation presented and to reward themselves by saying “I am proud of myself for figuring this out.”

This final part is valuable for them to memorize their plan and reuse in case of a need but as a mean of enhancement of their self-esteem.



### Activity 21: Manage it!

Lesson title	Manage it!
Key words	Problem Management
Duration	15 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	Managing a daily problem is an essential skill that the participants are expected to work on this activity
Materials	Photos and Questions
Activity description:	
This is a short activity with real life situations that help the participants to put a problem into words and try to manage it in an effective way. They look at a picture and follow the questions to complete it.	
Worksheets:	
Included	

### You enter the bus and this happens!

- How would you put this problem into words ?
- How do you think that this woman feels at the moment?
- What is your goal?
- If your goal is met how will you feel?



### Your boss is shouting at you because you missed a deadline.

- How would you put this problem into words to describe it to your family?
- How do you think that this man feels and why?
- What is your goal?
- If your goal is met how will you feel?



## 3. Conflict Management

Conflict management, also known as conflict resolution, involves having a workplace that precludes conflict and a management team that successfully handles and resolves workplace issues. The aim for professionals in the workplace should not be to avoid conflict, but to resolve it in an effective manner. Employees with strong conflict resolution skills are able to effectively handle workplace issues.

Individuals who handle conflict in a respectful, optimistic way create the chance for growth and learning within an organization.

### 3.1. Types of Conflict Management Skills

- Communication

Much unnecessary conflict can be avoided simply with clear, accurate written and verbal communication. Assumptions about what other people already know, think, or intend can cause

resentment or worse. Some people argue just because they want to feel heard. Simply being a good listener can be enough to inspire trust and resolve hurt feelings.

- Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand your own feelings and those of others, and to handle those feelings well. People who have high emotional intelligence are good at identifying and meeting the needs of others while taking responsibility for their own needs and feelings.

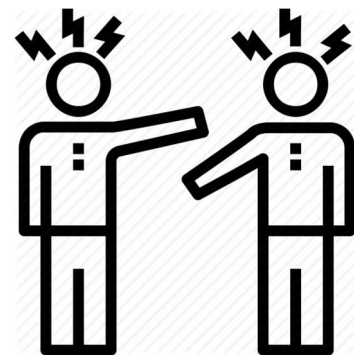
- Empathy

Empathy means feeling what others feel. The ability to see a situation from someone else's viewpoint, and to understand their needs, motivations, and possible misunderstandings, is critical to effective conflict management.

### 3.2. Understanding the conflict

Conflict management is a key skill, particularly if you are not involved in the actual dispute, but are managing one or more of the disputants. Before you can deal with the conflict you need to understand its scope:

- What is the conflict about?
- Who is involved in the conflict?
- What is the root cause<sup>2</sup> of the dispute?
- Why has it occurred?
- What is the actual or potential impact of the conflict?
- From this understanding you can determine the best way forward to resolve the conflict.



### 3.3. Ideas for a 'mindful' approach to conflict management

Being mindful allows you to focus on achieving the optimum outcomes from the task in hand, be aware of the feelings of others and be aware of how you are presenting to them. Some useful strategies to be mindful in a conflict (or potential conflict) include:



Give yourself a **cooling** off period!

Don't approach a difficult person when you're angry.

**Don't follow** when people try to bring you into a conversation that you don't want to have or you aren't ready to address. Simply say, "This isn't a good time to talk about that."



### Listen first!

Often people just want to know someone has considered their point of view. You lose nothing but a few minutes by listening to what someone has to say.

Immediately work to find **common ground**.  
What can you agree about? Once you articulate that, you will better be able to address the areas of contention.

Define how you'd both be better served by reaching **agreement**

Use silence effectively – take a break / go to the balcony – especially if you feel yourself descending into a shouting match. Silence breaks the cycle and allows more productive negotiations.



Watch your body language. Focus on your **body language**. Use slow hand movements. Use a passive voice. Maintain good eye contact. Listen carefully and watch their body language as well.



### Activity 22: Everything before BUT

Lesson title	Everything before BUT
Key words	Conflict Management
Duration	20 minutes
Learning outcomes (at least 1 of each): Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy	The objective of this activity is to get both parties focused in on what someone is saying rather than focusing on just "winning" an argument.
Materials	Guidelines and examples
Activity description:	

The participants will be splitted into pairs and will pick a controversial topic to discuss Using the same topic both parties will have 5 minutes again but this time neither of them is allowed to use the word “But”. .

### Worksheets:

#### Guidelines included

- Step 1: Split the team up into pairs and ask them to decide who is “A” and who is “B” for the purposes of this next exercise.
- Step 2: Pick a topic that is controversial in nature. For example here are a few for you:

Everyone should be able to work from home as many days as they like

Companies should offer unlimited holidays to everyone

Who will win the next election?

Think of some relevant topics at the time of you using this exercise.



- Step 5: Using the same topic both parties will have 5 minutes again but this time neither of them is allowed to use the word “But”

Each pair need to keep a tally of how many buts they used.

Have the same debrief as before. The comments will amuse you.

See who said the most buts.

- Step 6: Once again, both parties will have 5 minutes. Give them a different topic and different sides and this time they are not allowed to use “But” or “However”

#### Ask...

- ✓ Did you find that you listened harder?
- ✓ Did you find that you had to respond to what the other person was saying?
- ✓ Were you taking it in turns to talk or did you have a more constructive conversation?
- ✓ What learning can you take forward?

## 4.5. Anxiety management

Prepared by: SC PSICHOFORWORLD, Romania

### Understanding: Autism Anxiety and Anxiety Management

#### 1) Where does anxiety come from?

Constant anxiety can be extremely distressing for autistic people. It can lead to meltdowns, self-harm and depression. Common triggers include noisy environments and the difficulty of social interactions. It is important to identify what is causing a person's anxiety and then to take steps to reduce it.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For example, you may feel worried about sitting an exam, or having a medical test. During times like these, feeling anxious can be perfectly normal.

But some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.

#### 2) What causes anxiety?

Autistic people may experience anxiety for a range of reasons, including:

- differences in sensory processing for example, being over or under-sensitive to noises, lights and smells

- finding it hard to predict or adapt to certain sensory situations

- difficulties with communication and social interactions

- having alexithymia (difficulties identifying and describing your own and other people's emotions) - it is more difficult to regulate emotions if you cannot identify what you are feeling

- worrying about uncertainty and change or transitions, which comes with a fear of the unknown. Many autistic people like predictability and routines, and experience high levels of anxiety if things change

- people trying to 'fit in' or attempt to appear 'normal' by changing their behaviour and internalizing any stress/anxiety they feel in certain situations

- performance anxiety – at school or in work.

### **3) Identification and assessment of anxiety in autistic people**

It can be difficult to identify and measure anxiety in autistic people. It is often difficult to identify when the general level of anxiety associated with autism progresses to become clinical anxiety as a mental health disorder.

Autistic people are more likely to be experiencing higher levels of general anxiety daily as they must navigate a complicated and often confusing sensory and social world. Potentially this will make them more susceptible to a clinical diagnosis of anxiety disorder.

Assessing anxiety should include the use of standardized assessments combined with detailed information from the autistic person and a number of people who know them well.

#### **a) Counselling and therapy**

People can access counselling or therapy via their GP or privately. There are many types of talking therapy, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) that has been shown to be effective for some autistic people. All talking therapies should be adapted to be effective for autistic people.

There is limited research into the use of medications to treat anxiety in autistic people. Researchers suggest all medications, such as anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications, should be prescribed cautiously and be closely monitored. There is guidance about the use of medication for autistic people from NICE.

Mindfulness training for autistic young people and adults. Behavioural techniques such as exposure therapy (gradually exposing someone to the thing that makes them anxious).

Programmes such as social skills groups and vocational skills training which teach the individual how to deal with specific stressful situations.

There are a range of strategies you can try to manage your anxiety. What works is different for everyone, and it can take time to find the strategies that work best for you. But remember, if your anxiety is proving difficult to manage seek support from a professional. V

#### **b) Slow breathing.**

When you're anxious, your breathing becomes faster and shallower. Try deliberately slowing down your breathing. Count to three as you breathe in slowly – then count to three as you breathe out slowly.

Progressive muscle relaxation.

Find a quiet location. Close your eyes and slowly tense and then relax each of your muscle groups from your toes to your head. Hold the tension for three seconds and then release quickly. This can help reduce the feelings of muscle tension that often comes with anxiety.

**c) Stay in the present moment.**

Anxiety can make your thoughts live in a terrible future that hasn't happened yet. Try to bring yourself back to where you are. Practicing meditation can help.

**d) Healthy lifestyle.**

Keeping active, eating well, going out into nature, spending time with family and friends, reducing stress and doing the activities you enjoy are all effective in reducing anxiety and improving your wellbeing.

**e) Take small acts of bravery.**

Avoiding what makes you anxious provides some relief in the short term, but can make you more anxious in the long term. Try approaching something that makes you anxious – even in a small way. The way through anxiety is by learning that what you fear isn't likely to happen – and if it does, you'll be able to cope with it.

**f) Challenge your self-talk.**

How you think affects how you feel. Anxiety can make you overestimate the danger in a situation and underestimate your ability to handle it. Try to think of different interpretations to a situation that's making you anxious, rather than jumping to the worst-case scenario. Look at the facts for and against your thought being true.

**g) Plan worry time.**

It's hard to stop worrying entirely so set aside some time to indulge your worries. Even 10 minutes each evening to write them down or go over them in your head can help stop your worries from taking over at other times.

**h) Get to know your anxiety.**

Keep a diary of when it's at its best – and worst. Find the patterns and plan your week – or day – to proactively manage your anxiety.

**i) Learn from others.**

Talking with others who also experience anxiety – or are going through something similar – can help you feel less alone. Visit our Online Forums to connect with others.

Be kind to yourself.

Remember that you are not your anxiety. You are not weak. You are not inferior. You have a mental health condition. It's called anxiety.

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