

Being Social at Work

Presented by: Sarah Southey, MSW, RSW
Therapist and Employment Coach
Redpath Centre Affiliate

Sarah.Southey@redpathcentre.ca



AutismONTARIO
see the potential



The
Redpath
Centre

Redpath Centre

- The Redpath Centre is a private mental health organization specializing in ASD and other neurodevelopmental conditions across the lifespan. In addition to providing a range of clinical services, we carry out research, educate stakeholders, and advocate for systems change.
- We offer psychological assessments, occupational therapy, speech assessment/therapy, individual, couple, family and group therapy, vocational and educational coaching.
- Main office located downtown Toronto and affiliates throughout the province



About Sarah Southey

Undergraduate degree in Labour Studies and a Masters of Social Work

Over 12 years experience directly counselling individuals with challenges finding and keeping work

Provides counselling to youth and adults around employment, anxiety and social relationships

Mom to three young boys and a dog



Agenda:

- To Disclose or not Disclose?
- Tips on job searching
- Getting Social at Work!



Disclosure



Strengths

Uh oh! The boss used
"there" instead of "their"
in this memo.



I'll just correct
it before it
goes out.



Challenges Experienced

- Social Interactions with colleagues
- Work activity may not be meaningful
- Colleagues/bosses lack of understanding of behaviour
- Training may not meet learning style
- Lack of success finding suitable employment resources in the community



Disclosure – Questions to Consider

- Will your ASD impact you in an interview?
- What kind of sensory and/or organizational challenges do you have?
- How do you learn best?
- Do you have any challenges with fine or gross motor skills that would impact you on the job?
- How will your social and emotional differences impact you at work?



Disclosure Continued

- Think back to accommodations you had that were helpful in school (if any). Will you need them to be successful at work?
- Have you disclosed in past work places?
- Do you have any old reports that describe your strengths and needs?
- The more support you have on the job, the more likely you are to be successful



Disclosure Summary

- There is no right or wrong time to disclose
- Some may choose not to disclose at all
- Current research comparing those with ASD working in jobs where their employers were aware of their needs versus those where their employers did not know reported (Lorenz, Frischling, Cuadros, & Heinitz, 2016).



Disclosure Letter Sample

Dear XXXXX:

I am an ambitious, creative, dependable, hardworking individual who enjoys working with others. I am a goal-oriented person and I have a love of helping people.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can affect the way in which a person takes in, and expresses information. People with ASD are intelligent and have the skills to learn, despite potential difficulties in processing information.

I have ASD. I sometimes have difficulty processing information I hear. When I'm given a lot of information at one time, I cannot process all of it at the same time. Therefore, I have learned, when this happens, to write down a short note that I can refer to later. Also, it is helpful to be given written instructions to refer to.

Another simple accommodation is to use a desk calendar and a red pen to capture important information I need to remember. When I perform routine tasks, I may get distracted. When this happens I will jot down my thoughts, return to my task and revisit my note(s) when I have finished my task. Sometimes when there are a lot of distractions around me I will use ear buds to play music that helps me focus on my tasks and be more productive. By providing simple and appropriate accommodations in the workplace I will do my job efficiently and I believe that I will be a benefit to your organization.

Sincerely,

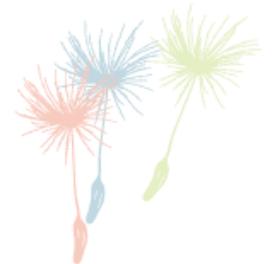


General Strategies in the Workplace

- Consistency
- Structure
- Visual supports
- Clear language
- Be proactive where possible
- Do not underestimate the power of your physical environment



Job Searching



The Cycle of Finding Employment

- Determine what you want to do/what you are qualified for
- Prepare your resume, cover letter and references
- Job search
- Secure and attend interview
- Accept the job and sign the contract
- Attend orientation or training
- Become familiar and comfortable in position



How to Job Search

- Treat it like a job
- Goal set
- Customize your resume - Remember quality, not quantity
- Let people know you are job searching
- Research and cold contact companies of interest



How to Job Search Continued

- Volunteer
- Set up a LinkedIn account and register for major job boards (ex. Indeed.com)
- Use supported employment programs – many are free
- Visit local employment resource centres
- Seek out employers who value diversity



Use a “Job Search Tracker”

Job Search Tracker Matt October – December

Place	Date Applied	Hiring	Follow-up
Tim Hortons (Yonge/St. Clair)	October 13 th	Yes	
Roots	October 13 th	Not hiring	
<u>Desserres</u>	October 13 th	Not sure	
EB Games (<u>Eatons</u> Centre)	October 25 th	Yes	Matt called already
The Source	November 1 st	Said Apply online	
HMV	November 1 st	Not hiring	
Hot Topics	November 1 st	Took resume but not hiring	
EB Games (outside of the mall)	November 1 st	Not hiring but took resume	



Being Social at Work



Social Strategies in the Workplace

- Stress management system (including environmental stress)
- Determine disclosure plan
- Establish a workplace mentor
- Identify 1-2 “work friends”
- Encourage your employer to schedule diversity events
- Script where possible
- Ask for help!



Approach to Handling the Social

- The Three 'C's
 - Context
 - Communication
 - Checking in



Context

- Who is involved?
- How serious of an issue is this?
- How soon does it need to be resolved?



Communication

- What is this person's communication style?
- What is the best form of communication for me? (ex. email or in person)
- Has there been a miscommunication?
- How can I prepare to communicate to work through this issue?



Checking In

- Does this situation require any follow-up?
- Is this a situation that I should debrief with someone about (ex. supervisor, mentor, family member?)



And One More “C”

- Steps to Conflict Resolution (Adapted from PEERS)
- Listen first to the other person’s perspective
- Empathize and if you think you did something wrong apologize
- Try to explain your side
- Suggest a resolution to the issue if you can
- Ask for more time and follow-up if you are unable to resolve the issue immediately



Strategies Continued

- Negotiate the social
- Use your accommodations to work for you
- Ensure regular meetings with your supervisor to check in on social and performance



References

- Lorenz, T. Frischling, C. Cuadros, R. & Heinitz, K. (2016) Autism and Overcoming Job Barriers: Comparing Job-Related Barriers and Possible Solutions in and outside of Autism-Specific Employment. *PLoS ONE*, 11(1): e0147040.doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0147040
- Hayward, S. McVilly, K.R., & Stokes, M. A., (2019). Autism and employment: What works. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 60, 48-58
- Laugeson, E.A. & Frankel, F. (2010). *Social Skills for Teenagers with Developmental and Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The PEERS Treatment Manual*. Routledge: California



References Continued

- <https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources/role-play-videos>
- Garcia Winner, M. & Crooke, P. (2011). *Social Thinking at Work*. Think Social Publishing and North River Press, California.
- The road to inclusion - Integrating people with disabilities into the workplace. (July 2010). Accessed at: http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Canada/Local%20Assets/Documents/About%20us/Diversity/ca_en_dialogue_on_diversity_v2_080710.pdf - This report debunks myths about disability in the workplace.
- <http://www.dudeimanaspie.com/2011/05/aspergers-advantages-in-workplace.html><http://www.ere.net/2011/02/21/at-this-chicago-employer-aspergers-syndrome-is-a-job-requirement/><http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/LUCASNetwork/message/8507>



Suggested Readings and Links

- Grandin, T. & Duffy, K. (2004). *Developing Talents*. Autism Asperger Publishing Company: Shawnee Mission KS
- Garcia Winner, M. & Crooke, P. (2011). *Social Thinking at Work*. Think Social Publishing and North River Press, California.
- Endow, J. & Smith Myles, B. (2012). *The Hidden Curriculum of Getting and Keeping a Job*. AAPC Publishing: USA.
- Bissonnette, . (2009) *The Employer's Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* accessed through: <http://www.antiochne.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ASDEmpGuide.pdf> explains how to utilize the talents of a capable, intelligent, well-educated work force: adults with Asperger's Syndrome.
- Gaus, V. (2011) *Living Well on The Spectrum*. The Guilford Press: New York.



Helpful Links

- www.sarahsouthey.com
- www.redpathcentre.ca
- Onetonline.org
- www.auticon.ca
- ca.specialisterne.com
- <http://readywillingable.ca>
- <https://canadastop100.com/diversity/>

