

# Social Strategies at Work

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**Autism** ONTARIO  
*see the potential*    *voir le potentiel*



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





**Would you Ask this Colleague for a Favour?**





**How about this colleague?**



# Agenda:

- Being Social during COVID-19
- Social Strategies
- The Three C's to Being Social at Work
- Social Scenarios



# Building Soft Skills During COVID-19

- Consider what new soft skills or training may boost your resume and enroll online
- Continuous education options through local college or universities
- Udemy.com an alternative online option that is comparatively lower in cost
- Search workshops and training relating to communication, listening, and teamwork



# SOCIAL STRATEGIES





# Being Social While Working Remotely

- We are in the midst of a major crisis that may impede individual's desire/capacity around social – mental health comes first – avoid "happy hour" if you need to
- Structure regular time with supervisors
- Figure out what works best for you right now? (phone, email, video chat??)
- Remember that all electronic messages have a paper trail



# Being Social While Working Remotely

- Turn off the cameras if it's overwhelming
- Review accommodations if need be
- Test tech prior to reduce anxieties around technical issues



# Being Social While Working Remotely Continued

- The “mute” button is your friend
- Attire and appearance still needs to be somewhat professional
- Accept that there will be moments of dead air, awkward moments of people talking over one another, and everything in between
- Request and set agendas wherever possible



# 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 for water cooler chat
- Ask for help!



# Social Strategies Continued

- Schedule frequent and regular check-ins with your supervisor
- Pay it forward with kind gestures
- Use "cover stories" to opt out of some of the social
- Practice very good self care outside of work



# 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



# Exploring Scenarios

- A co-worker has the annoying habit of obsessively clicking pens and you can't stand it anymore.
- It may seem like a small harmless habit, but it becomes unnerving when you have to put up with it all for eight hours or more on a daily basis. If you keep it all in, you may just lose it. How do you deal????



# Scenario Two

- **A co-worker tries to engage you in a heated religious or political conversation.**
- Politics and religion are almost always a big no-no in the workplace. Controversial conversations can quickly turn into animosity. Someone may feel offended and can rightfully complain to management. How do you deal???



# Scenario Three

- **A co-worker invites you to participate in nasty office gossip.**
- Participating in gossip may be tempting, but it's almost always ill-advised. How do you deal???



# Scenario Four

- **Someone is stealing your food from the refrigerator.**
- The stealing becomes habitual. You decide to let it slide. You go hungry and resentment builds. How do you deal???



# Scenario Five

- **It's the company holiday party, and you don't think you want to go.**
- You decide it will be too loud and too social. How do you deal???



# 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
- <https://bringgratitude.com/16-difficult-office-situations/>





# 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.
- <https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources/role-play-videos>



# Suggested Reading Continued

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

