

Supporting Autistic Employees



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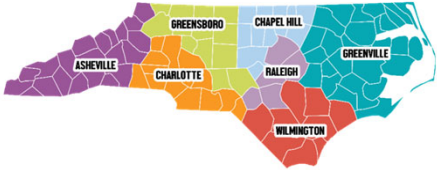
TEACCH: Serving Individuals on the Autism Spectrum in North Carolina

- ▶ Recognition and appreciation of unique needs of the population
- ▶ UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine and NC Area Health Education Centers
- ▶ Started in 1960's by Dr. Eric Schopler
- ▶ Continued to develop under the leadership of Dr. Gary Mesibov
- ▶ Current Director is Dr. Laura Klinger

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TEACCH: Direct Services Through Seven Regional Clinics



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Language Use During the presentation

- ▶ **Autism** - Autism is a condition that impacts how individuals experience the world. Many individuals prefer this term without the word "disorder" to describe autism to move away from negative images. Autism and ASD refer to the same developmental disability.
- ▶ **Autistic** - Using the word "autistic" to describe someone is using identity-first language. Many self-advocates prefer identity-first language that emphasizes that autism is a positive part of their identity.
- ▶ **Individual with Autism** - Person-first language. Many professionals who work with individuals with autism prefer to put the person before their disability. Parents of children sometimes prefer person-first to emphasize autism is not their child's sole identity.
- ▶ **ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder** is the label given by medical providers. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) terminology for the neurodevelopment disorder to emphasize that there is a "spectrum" in type and severity of individual experiences.
- ▶ **Asperger's** - While no longer an official diagnosis, some autistic individuals prefer using this term to describe their diagnosis of autism that is applicable to individuals with relatively unimpaired language and intelligence.
- ▶ **Individual on the autism spectrum**- A neutral way to describe someone on the autism spectrum.

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Identity and Language

- ▶ ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ▶ Asperger's Syndrome
- ▶ Individual with Autism
- ▶ Autistic Person
- ▶ Person on the Spectrum

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Neurodiversity

- ▶ The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits regarded as part of normal variation in the human population.
- ▶ Neurodiversity is the idea that neurological variations are known and valued as any other human variation.
- ▶ These variations can include:
 - ▶ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD or dyspraxia)
 - ▶ Dyslexia
 - ▶ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
 - ▶ Dyscalculia
 - ▶ Autistic Spectrum (ASD)
 - ▶ Tourette Syndrome (TS), and others

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Neurodiversity Language

- Neurodiversity refers to the virtually infinite neuro-cognitive variability within Earth's human population. It points to the fact that every human has a unique nervous system with a unique combination of abilities and needs. Judy Singer, Autistic Self-Advocate
- Neurodivergent refers to anyone whose neurological system differs from the "norm" and includes individuals who identify as having autism or Asperger's syndrome.
- Neurotypical refers to anyone whose neurological system is within the average range.
- Disability can have many different meanings and negative connotations associated with it. Differences is one way to think about neurodiverse individuals, and the focus of neurodiversity is to improve accessibility for all differences.

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Neurodiversity Language

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What is Neurodiversity?

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Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is an approach to learning and mental health that argues various neurological conditions are the result of normal variations in the human genome⁽¹⁾, with neurotypical development being the most prevalent. Some less common forms of neurological development include those labeled with dyslexia, ADHD, and ASD.

...⁽²⁾Jaarsma and Welin, Autism as a Natural Human Variation: Reflections on the Claims of the Neurodiversity Movement

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“Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment? Cybernetics and computer culture, for example, may favor a somewhat autistic cast of mind”.

---Harvey Blume, The Atlantic

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Neurotypical Syndrome?

“Neurotypical syndrome is a neurobiological disorder characterized by preoccupation with social concerns, delusions of superiority, and obsession with conformity.”

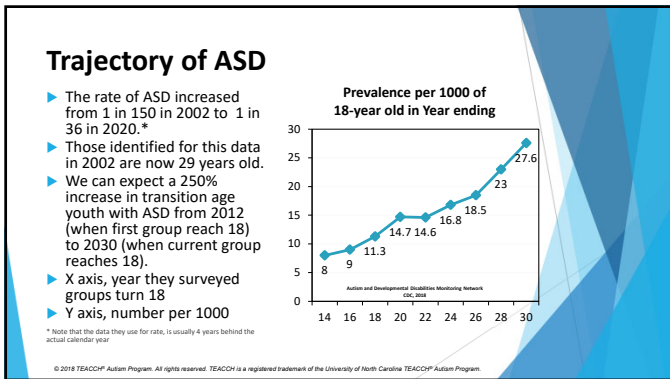
“In other words, NT is only one kind of brain wiring, and, when it comes to working with hi-tech, quite possibly an inferior one.”

“NTs have terrible difficulty adjusting to “the predictability and logic of computer technology, instead, expecting the machine to conform to their wishes.”

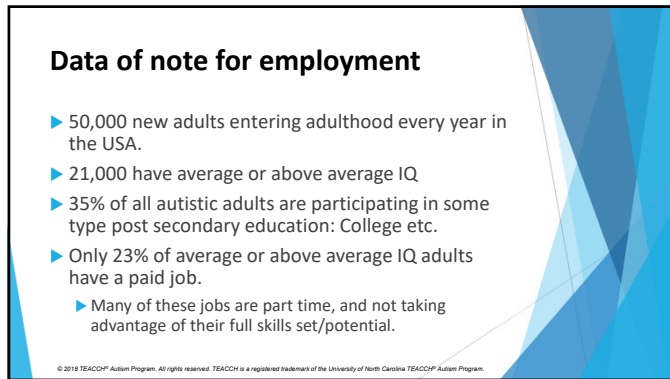
---Harvey Blume, Neurodiversity, The Atlantic

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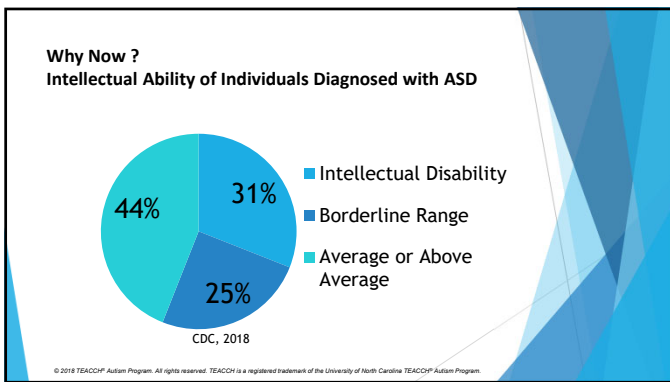
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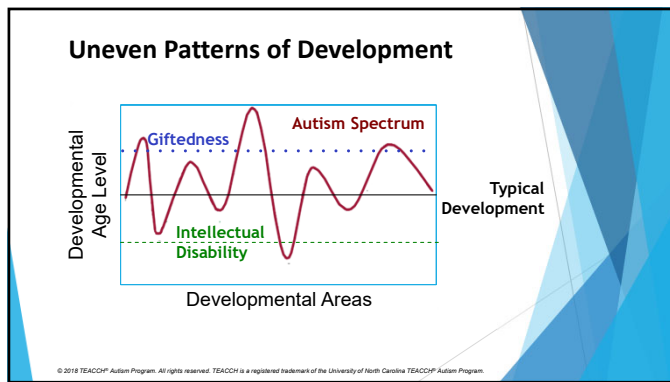
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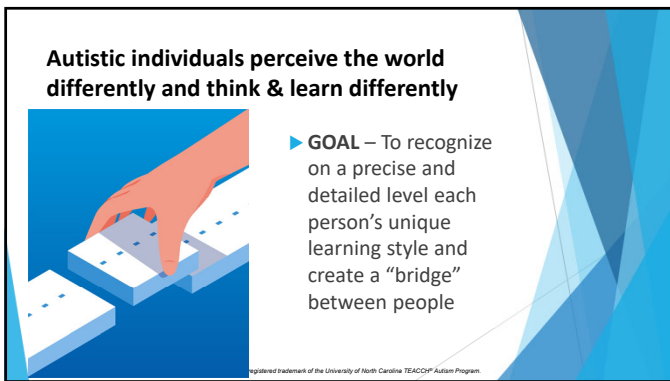
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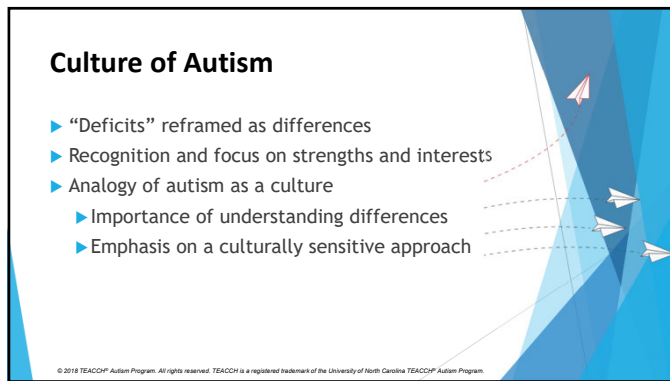
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Return on Investment

- ▶ Next slides we will talk more about:
 - ▶ Reduction in turnover
 - ▶ Productivity increase
 - ▶ Untapped talent pool
 - ▶ Aligning your company with the autism community
 - ▶ Accommodations are minimal and enhance business practices in general

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Reduction in Turnover

- ▶ Studies show autistic adults stay in jobs others move in and out of over time.
- ▶ Reduced retraining time for new employees over time.
- ▶ More time spent focusing on business needs, less time on hiring.

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Productivity Increase

- ▶ People on the Spectrum:
 - ▶ are often focused and task oriented.
 - ▶ prefer to do things correctly the first time.
 - ▶ are often fact, numbers and information oriented.
 - ▶ frequently like more routine tasks that others avoid.

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Untapped Talent Pool

- ▶ Individuals on the spectrum have the skills companies need, yet
- ▶ less than 25% are employed at their potential.

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Accommodations

- ▶ Are often minimal and best practice.
 - ▶ Enhances awareness of all abilities in the company, not just autism.
 - ▶ Examples of accommodations:
 - ▶ Concrete visual information
 - ▶ Clear, explicit policies
- ▶ Manager training on how to support individuals on the spectrum also benefits other employees.

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How does Autism affect employment?

- ▶ Negative image of people with differences.
- ▶ Harder to obtain and maintain employment.
- ▶ Data on employment:
 - ▶ 20% employed.
 - ▶ 80% unemployed.
- ▶ Because it affects learning, may take assistance and specialized training.




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What is a good employee?

- ▶ An Individual that operates like a machine?
- ▶ An individual with great personal skills? Or one who avoids social drama?
- ▶ Every employee comes with unique issues.
- ▶ Employers seek the perfect employee. Is that realistic?
- ▶ How are people with autism good employees!



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Autism impacts employment in positive ways

- ▶ Individuals with Autism:
 - ▶ are unique “thinkers”.
 - ▶ tend to learn a job and do it the same way every time.
 - ▶ can have good attention to detail.
 - ▶ tend to adhere strictly to the rules and regulations of their place of employment.
 - ▶ are typically honest, punctual, and rarely absent.
- ▶ With appropriate supports, they are efficient, competent, and reliable.

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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication

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Communication differences can lead to challenges

- ▶ Recognizing the need for help and correctly putting together all of the “parts” of asking for help
- ▶ Difficulty recognizing when to communicate something.
- ▶ Difficulty recognizing what is important to communicate
 - ▶ Under or over communication
- ▶ Understanding/judging the importance of a communication from a coworker or supervisor and acting upon it.

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Communication is more than words

- ▶ Words
- ▶ Context dependent/clarity
- ▶ Tone of voice
- ▶ Body language and gestures
- ▶ Email and texting (how to convey emotion/intonation)

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Communication Change with inflection

- ▶ "I didn't tell her you were stupid."
- ▶ "I **didn't** tell her you were stupid."
- ▶ "I didn't **tell** her you were stupid."
- ▶ "I didn't tell **her** you were stupid."
- ▶ "I didn't tell her **you** were stupid."
- ▶ "I didn't tell her you **were** stupid."
- ▶ "I didn't tell her you were **stupid**."

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When do people need to communicate at work? ("Signs that you may need to 'Speak Up'")

- ▶ When you don't know what to do. For example, you are finished with an assignment and don't know what to do next
- ▶ When you are confused or don't understand instructions.
- ▶ When you don't have enough of something; materials to complete a task, space to work, time to finish a project.
- ▶ When you are stuck, and you can't solve a problem.

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Supporting Autistic Individuals: Getting the Help You Need Plan (as opposed to getting help you *don't* need)

Who can help me in certain situations?		
Problem/Situation	Who can help? Name	Phone and Email

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Supporting Individuals on the Spectrum: "Notepad Strategy"

Keep a small notepad with you at all times. Write instructions, steps, directions, any information you may need to remember.

To ensure accuracy:

- 1) Ask to have the information checked by the person (manager, professor, doctor, staff, counselor, etc.) who gave the information.
- 2) Read and follow the information during the completion of the task.

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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social

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Social Definition

- ▶ **2a** : marked by or passed in pleasant companionship with friends or associates an active *social* life
- ▶ **3**: of or relating to human *society*, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society *social* institutions
- ▶ **4** : tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others
(Miriam-Webster – Online)

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Social in the Workplace


- ▶ Every workplace has it's on social rules.
- ▶ Often those rules are unwritten.
 - ▶ We refer to this as the "Hidden Curriculum".
- ▶ Think of all the social rules you follow at work or life...
- ▶ How did you learn those?

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Social Differences lead to employment challenges

- ▶ Social differences: May not be as outgoing or socially "fluent" as others and may struggle with social demands of nonautistic employees.
 - ▶ Can lead to situations/interactions that are awkward *for neurotypicals*.
- ▶ Typically interpreted by HR through *neurotypical lens*, which can lead to misunderstanding and "legal" situations.



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Social Descriptions often associated with employees on Autism Spectrum

Observed Behaviors	Interpretation of Behavior
Talks a lot about certain topics they like	Only thinks about themselves
Seems to be distracted in group meetings	Doesn't seem to pay attention, seems disinterested
Says things that are judged as "rude"	Doesn't care about other's feelings
Doesn't immediately respond to instruction or direction	Inattention, noncompliant or defiant
Becomes upset over little changes	Rigid, isn't flexible

* Remember, every person is unique with differing personalities and abilities.

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Why is it hard for autistic adults

- ▶ Individuals on the Autism Spectrum:
 - ▶ struggle to understand multiple perspectives,
 - ▶ typically cannot put themselves in some else's shoes, and
 - ▶ have trouble understanding all of the contextual clues of a situation.
- ▶ Social Rules change quickly for subtle reasons.
- ▶ Decisions for how to respond in social situations are often based upon your past social interactions (limited interactions = limited responses).

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Ty Tashiro, PhD 2017 "Awkward"

Neurotypical person: "Why do you think you have these lapses in attention to social expectations?"

Doctoral Candidate in Chemical Engineering: "Why do you have lapses in your attention to advanced organic chemistry?" (p.22)

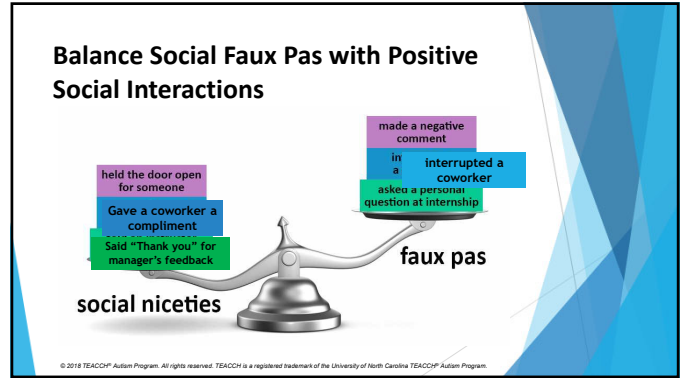
- ▶ For whom is an encounter "socially awkward"?...

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Interactions with Co-Workers

- ▶ Differences in communication and social expectations between coworkers may need to be addressed.

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Supporting Autistic Employees: Problem-solving Strategy

- ▶ Understand their perspective.
- ▶ Create strategies that give the person support they need.
 - ▶ Define the issue.
 - ▶ Understand from their perspective: Try to understand why it is happening based upon what you know of Autism.
 - ▶ Use skills and strategies to support individual.
 - ▶ Provide the "why". Why is this important for you, and for us/the company.

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Using Tools to Support Autistic Individuals: Problem-solving "Solutions Sheet"

Step	Problem-solving strategy
Define the issue	Does not respond to greetings from coworkers.
Understand from their perspective (Autism).	Is very focused on work, thinks greetings are a waste of time.
Skills and Strategies: <i>Written Rules, Self-Monitoring, Time Management (schedules, "to do lists"), Visual Reminders, Routines, etc.</i>	Give Clear and Precise rules: You need to say "Hi/Hello" to at least 3 coworkers everyday. You should also say "Hello/Hi", if someone says, "Hello/Hi" to you. Use a self-monitoring tool to show progress.
Provide the "why." <i>"Why" is this important for us and for you.</i>	I like that you are dedicated, but I need people to work together. When you do not say "Hello" to your coworkers, they think you do not like them, and they may avoid you. This can hurt our teamwork.

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Summary

- ▶ Social expectations are everchanging in the workplace.
- ▶ People on the Spectrum may find it hard to adapt to different social demands.
- ▶ Need to provide clear expectations:
 - ▶ in a supportive manner,
 - ▶ from the perspective of Autism,
 - ▶ in a clear, routine way....Use standard tools.

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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Resource Management

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Resource management can lead to challenges

- ▶ Organization to complete tasks:
 - ▶ Time and materials.
 - ▶ Sequencing activities and effective planning
 - ▶ Both personal and work
- ▶ Moving from activity to activity, knowing when to move on.
- ▶ Initiating activities or tasks
- ▶ Individual's current strategies and solutions may not be optimal.

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Supporting Autistic individuals: Schedule/Time management Routines

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Resource management can lead to challenges

- ▶ Responding to changes in the workplace or daily routines.
 - ▶ Daily fluctuations in workload.
- ▶ Being flexible when there are “new” things: new tasks, new instructions, new staff, etc.
 - ▶ Flexibility.

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Resource management can lead to challenges

- ▶ Monitoring progress on goals both short term and long term.
 - ▶ What to monitor?
 - ▶ What measures?

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Supporting Autistic Individuals: Self-Monitoring Forms

Date	I arrived on time	I have my badge	I greeted 3 people		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Resource Management
- ▶ Dealing with stress and stressors

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Dealing with stressors and stress may seem different

- ▶ Exaggerated or inconsistent response to sensory issues.
- ▶ Confusing responses to stress.

We all regulate our reaction to stress/stressors and deal with stress in different ways throughout the day.

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Self-regulation: Calming Routine

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Supporting Autistic Individuals: Calming Routine

- ▶ When regularly practiced, a calming routine can become an automatic response to stress, much like the escape route for a fire drill.
- ▶ Engage in stress reduction activities throughout the day.

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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Resource Management
- ▶ Dealing with stress and stressors
 - ▶ Corrective Feedback

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Challenges with Giving Corrective Feedback

- ▶ “I don’t want to hurt their feelings....”
- ▶ “I am not sure what to say....”
- ▶ “It feels ‘socially awkward’ to tell them something that seems so obvious....”
- ▶ “It’s really not that big of a deal....”

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Dealing with Corrective Feedback

Issue with effectively dealing with corrective feedback	What can you do to help?
Not expecting the corrective feedback and/or feeling interrupted by it.	Develop a Routine for dealing with corrective feedback. Start with being aware when this happens.
Feeling bad about yourself.	Develop a Routine . Part of this routine: be positive about yourself and understand that everyone receives corrective feedback.
Not understanding that the person giving you the feedback is trying to help and/or feeling bad or negative toward that person.	Develop a Routine . Part of this routine: be positive about the person giving you feedback. Remember, this person has a job to give corrective feedback.
Feeling stressed about the corrective feedback or about needing to change.	Develop a Routine . Part of this routine: if you experience stress, do your calming routine .

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Supporting Autistic Individuals: Dealing with Corrective Feedback

1. **be AWARE** and name it!! ... When someone starts to give you corrective feedback.
2. **be POSITIVE**:
 **about the person giving you feedback.
 (Remember, this person has a job to give corrective feedback.)
be POSITIVE
 **about yourself and remember that everyone gets corrective feedback.
3. Experience stress? Do your **Calming Routine**.
4. **ANSWER POSITIVELY**:
 SAY: "I can do that!"
5. **REVISE** your actions to follow the instructions of the supervisor. If you are not sure what to do, ask for help.
6. **Self-Reward!** Congratulations! You did it!

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Neuro differences in autism

- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Resource management
- ▶ Dealing with stress and stressors
- ▶ Harassment (bullying)

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Definition of Harassment (bullying)

- ▶ Miriam-Webster Definition:
 - ▶ abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger, more powerful, etc.
- ▶ Legal Definition:
 - ▶ acts or written or spoken words intended to intimidate or harass a person or to cause physical harm to a person or his or her property.

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Harassment at work

- ▶ 1/3 of people with autism have been bullied at work (National Autistic Society, UK 2012)
- ▶ Why:
 - ▶ People with autism may struggle to fit in to various workplace cultures or practices
 - ▶ Trouble understanding or unaware they are being bullied
 - ▶ Difficulty advocating for themselves and explaining their side of the situation

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Forms of Harassment - Social

- ▶ Making jokes about the person.
- ▶ Condescending behavior towards the person.
- ▶ Excluding them from social situations.
- ▶ Spreading rumors.
- ▶ Acting rudely towards the individual.

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Forms of Harassment – Work Related

- ▶ Giving the individual work that is not theirs and asking them to do it.
- ▶ Taking credit for their work.
- ▶ Making their work harder, through actions or decisions:
 - ▶ Impossible deadlines.
 - ▶ Not giving the tools to complete work.
 - ▶ Being assigned menial tasks.

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Forms of Harassment - Management

- ▶ Aggressive supervision
- ▶ Overly critical
- ▶ Denying opportunities
 - ▶ Promotion
 - ▶ Training

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What to do when you see it

- ▶ Support the autistic employee.
- ▶ Stop the person engaging in the activity.
- ▶ Follow company guidelines regarding harassment.

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How to support the individual

- ▶ Help the person report it.
 - ▶ Get their side of the story.
 - ▶ Validate their feelings as you work to understand the situation.
 - ▶ Recognize they may struggle to explain it or admit it.
 - ▶ Help them understand perspective differences.
 - ▶ Write it down to process the information.
 - ▶ Discuss possible disclosure options.
- ▶ Person on the spectrum may not be as fluent as the other individual in explaining what happened.

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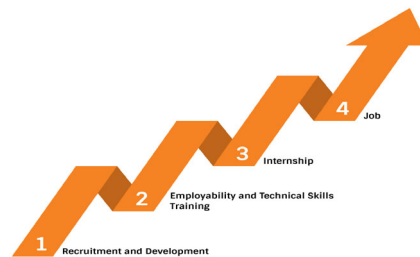
Become an Autism Ally



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LiNC → IT



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LiNC → IT

Phase 1 Recruitment and Development

Businesses

- ▶ Work with LiNC-IT to develop and Neurodiverse way of thinking with regards to:
 - ▶ Recruitment
 - ▶ Job Identification
 - ▶ Interview process
 - ▶ Onboarding

Talent

- ▶ Use www.LiNC-IT.org
- ▶ Work with State agencies offering employment supports.
 - ▶ ASNC
 - ▶ TEACCH

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Phase 2 Employability and Technical Skills Training

Employers

- ▶ Train on employability
- ▶ Train on how to support Neurodiverse employees

Talent

- ▶ Work on Soft Skills
- ▶ Interviewing
- ▶ Self Advocacy
- ▶ Coworker relations

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Phase 3 Internship

Employers

- ▶ Help develop paid internship opportunities
- ▶ Educate on hiring and support of individuals.
- ▶ Typically 12-week internships
- ▶ Salaries are paid by the company

Talent

- ▶ Work with State agencies to identify internship matches
- ▶ Provide support to ensure success on the job.

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Phase 4 Employment

Employers

- ▶ Recognize this is an internship, that could lead to a job offer
- ▶ Help companies realize the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce

Talent

- ▶ Working to find jobs within the company.
- ▶ After the internships, what comes next:
 - ▶ Job offer?
 - ▶ Complete degree program/more education/certification
 - ▶ Experience added to resume and look for new job.

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Accommodations

- ▶ Are often minimal and best practice.
 - ▶ Enhances awareness of all abilities in the company, not just autistic employees.
 - ▶ Examples of accommodations:
 - ▶ Concrete visual information
 - ▶ Clear, explicit policies
- ▶ Manager training on how to support autistic individuals also benefits ALL employees.

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Disclosure: Why Disclose?

- ▶ Employers have opportunity to consider workplace adjustments and supports (e.g., reasonable accommodations, peer mentors, employment specialist, the establishment of a disability resource group).
- ▶ A springboard for opportunities in the company (e.g., customized job description, creating a new job role, being a neurodiversity trainer or peer-support person)
- ▶ Allows for protection under ADA
 - ▶ A person cannot seek workplace anti-discrimination protection under the law unless he reveals the ASD. The same regulations that require businesses to provide equal opportunities to employees with disabilities *also* require the employee to self-disclose in order for the business to be held unaccountable for meeting that standard.
- ▶ Transparency
 - ▶ Feeling honest
 - ▶ Avoid the possibility of an employer feeling misled or misinformed
- ▶ Bigger picture: Can lead to policy change and open new doors for others

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Disclosure

Concerns about Disclosure

- ▶ If disclosing before hire: may not get hired
- ▶ It is challenging to disclose: not sure what to say, not sure when to disclose, not sure who to disclose to
- ▶ Others may treat you differently

Risks of Not Disclosing

- ▶ Misinterpretation of behaviors
- ▶ You will not know what options and accommodations might be available to you
- ▶ No protection from ADA

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Disclosure Doesn't Have to be all or nothing

- ▶ employees can decide
 - ▶ *how* to disclose.
 - ▶ *how much* to disclose
 - ▶ *when* to disclose.
 - ▶ *to whom* you disclose
- ▶ employees do not have to disclose their autism upfront but can choose to disclose a *symptomology* disclosure. In other words, to disclose a coexisting condition such as sensory integration challenges or a subset of a condition such as over-sensitivity to specific uniform fabrics.

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What you can expect from our support

- ▶ Understanding and applying these principles.
- ▶ A sounding board for developing solutions with positive outcomes.
- ▶ Help identifying and training talent.
- ▶ Support through the whole process.
 - ▶ Hiring
 - ▶ Onboarding
 - ▶ Training
 - ▶ Ongoing support.

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Supporting you, The Employer


- ▶ I do! We do! You do!
 - ▶ This process helps the you feel confident, by giving you the tools to succeed.
 - ▶ Reduces Long Term Supports, by developing Natural Supports.
 - ▶ Increases awareness of the culture of autism and other neurodivergent populations.
 - ▶ Increases longevity in the job.

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Supporting the Employer

- ▶ What do to when it gets too complicated, and you need help? What happens?
- ▶ If we support you, you will be best positions to take care of your employees.



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Questions?

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 - ▶ Mike Chapman
 - ▶ mikechapman@unc.edu

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Supporting Autistic Employees



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