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Autism in the Workplace

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By Gundars Kaupins

Autism is a lifelong, genetic disorder that creates communication challenges, including social-emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behavior deficits, and relationship struggles; restricted or repetitive behavior patterns and interests; and sensitivity to sensory inputs.¹ This disorder presents a range of conditions, known as the autism spectrum, which spans from “low-functioning” individuals, who have

significant speech challenges, to “high-functioning” individuals, who can communicate but have other social and behavioral challenges; high-functioning autism has traditionally been called Asperger’s syndrome. This disorder has become more of a mainstream topic, with television shows and movies, such as *The Good Doctor* and *Rainman*, depicting characters on the spectrum and more celebrities, including Dan Ackroyd, revealing their condition. Further, in their “Data and Statistics on Autism Spectrum

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Disorder,” the Centers for Disease Control show an increase in recorded autism spectrum disorder diagnoses from 2,000 (1 in 150 children) to 2,018 (1 in 44 children). With a growing awareness of autism comes a greater need to combat hurtful stereotypes and provide support to individuals on the spectrum in society and the workforce.

According to Simon Baron-Cohen, in *The Pattern Seekers: How Autism Drives Human Invention*, individuals on the autism spectrum have advantages and disadvantages in the workplace: they can find patterns easier than neurotypicals but have a harder time with empathy. This author’s thesis is that both have to be considered when incorporating individuals with autism into the workplace. Doing so may reduce the problems of high unemployment and high turnover among people with autism.² This essay covers how individuals on the autism spectrum obtain jobs, adapt to jobs, and fit in. It also addresses how companies can support those on the spectrum through reasonable accommodations, such as

training them to complete required tasks and communicate with colleagues, placing them in quiet offices, and teaching staff how to support diversity, including employees on the spectrum.

The Academy of Management, a professional association for management and organization scholars, has created a new subdivision dealing with autism, and there has been substantial growth in research on this specific topic as well as general growth in research on autism in adulthood in the disciplines of psychology, business, health sciences, sociology, gender studies, and criminology. Autism has become more popular as a research subject, because it has gotten a clearer definition from the American Psychiatric Association, has appeared more in movies and television, and has received more awareness among health professionals and counselors. However, even with this growth, it is still an emergent area. Academic studies cover children and teenagers very well, but adults, especially in the workplace, have not received as much attention.

The books discussed in this essay are mostly research studies and practitioner-oriented works, with a specific focus on what to do for autistic individuals in the workplace. This topic is relevant to a variety of fields, because individuals on the autism spectrum are hired to do all sorts of work, from artistic to STEM, but the essay will particularly appeal to practitioners in psychiatry, counseling, and psychology and scholars in criminology, sociology, employment discrimination, information technology, and art. This essay is divided into five sections. The first section is geared toward those who research autism

in the workplace and it comprises works by academics. Sections two through four provide practitioner-oriented guides for helping those on the spectrum. These titles also offer those on the spectrum advice on the best ways to search for careers, obtain employment, and succeed in organizations. The final section lists prominent online autism-related organizations offering job search links, organizations, counseling-related resources, and forums for individuals with autism, mental-health professionals, and researchers.

Academic Resources for Researchers

SEVERAL OF THE RESEARCH-ORIENTED BOOKS in this section discuss autism in general but have at least one chapter formally discussing autism in the workplace. These books provide scientifically based results, which often compare neurotypical individuals to those on the autism spectrum. They also cover the success of autism programs and make suggestions for best practices. Though the target market for these books is mostly researchers, autism-related counselors, business managers, and nonprofit leaders can take advantage of the key takeaways in the summaries of each section or chapter.

In *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* Tony Attwood discusses characteristics and experiences of individuals with autism in the workplace, including teasing and bullying, high focus on special interests, lack of physical coordination, and excessive sensitivity to flickering lights and outside noises. A chapter on careers focuses on the research related to finding jobs: help to complete job applications and résumés, interview skills, and self-assessments. Individuals on the spectrum may have many positive employment qualities—reliability, persistence, attention to detail, honesty, logic, and advanced knowledge—but challenges they face include lower teamwork skills, difficulties coping with change and asking for help, sensitivity to lights and sounds, personal grooming, and overqualification.

Asperger Syndrome: Assessing and Treating High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders, edited by James McPartland, Ami Klin, and Fred Volkmar, is one of the most comprehensive research resources on autism.

Regarding the workplace, it has a chapter on the transition from adolescence to adulthood, emphasizing the development of coordinated care systems to support those on the spectrum. Career-centered planning in high schools, self-help support groups, and individual therapy with trained counselors—such as psychologists, social workers, and career experts—can help. Cognitive behavior therapy is often used to help people manage challenges by limiting unhealthy ways of thinking and behaving. The book also covers neurological characteristics, behavioral therapy, psychopharmacological treatments, social brain function, genetics, communication problems, adolescence, and the transition to higher education.

New research examines the career resources and strategies for the 1.5 million individuals on the spectrum in Generation A (those born in the mid-2010s and 2020s). *Generation A: Research on Autism in the Workplace*, edited by Cristina Giannantonio and Amy Hurley-Hanson, covers recommended jobs for individuals with high-functioning autism to enhance person-job fit, workforce development, and successful and failed pre-employment transition programs.

An earlier but related book is Amy Hurley-Hanson, Cristina Giannantonio, and Amy Jane Griffith's *Autism in the Workplace: Creating Positive Employment and Career Outcomes for Generation A*. It provides articles on the stigma and costs of autism and the career experiences of those on the spectrum. In an important section, researchers show the problems in the transition between school and employment and how universities and employers can make it easier. The final section gives the nuts and bolts of hiring, highlighting corporate autism initiatives—as well as showing a model initiative—and reasons to hire those on the spectrum. Almost all chapters have a literature review of the latest empirical research.

Mentioned above, Baron-Cohen's readable research-related book, *The Pattern Seekers*, describes how individuals on the autism spectrum are often excellent at finding *if-then* patterns. *If-then* experimentation is useful in the workplace to invent new products and processes. Thomas Edison,

who is speculated to have been on the spectrum, went through ten-thousand loops of checking *if-then* patterns to invent the light bulb. This sort of experimentation can require extreme work hours, which individuals with autism tend to tolerate well.

In *Employment of Persons with Autism*, Matthew Bennett and Emma Goodall provide a literature review of six topics: the differences between employees on and not on the spectrum, views of employers about those on the spectrum, employment experiences of employees on the spectrum, strategies to help people on the spectrum get jobs, and miscellaneous topics, such as bullying and employment termination. They also address the success and failure of specific autism-related programs, such as Community Works. Though the book is targeted toward researchers, it also would be beneficial to those on the spectrum, employees, and mental health professionals.

Some research-focused books about disabilities in the workplace have few chapters on autism, sometimes only one chapter. For example, *International Perspectives on Teaching with Disability*, edited by Michael Jeffress, has a chapter on the decision to reveal one's autism. Doing so is usually a good idea, because it enables autistic employees to receive reasonable accommodations and enhances transparency. *Neurodiversity in the Workplace: Interest, Issues, and Opportunities*, edited by Susanne Bruyère and Adrienne Colella, also includes a revealing autism chapter. This book emphasizes human resource management, including workplace accommodations, performance management, applicant screening, interviewing, selection, leadership theories, and the legal environment.

Self-Help for Individuals on the Spectrum

PRACTITIONER-ORIENTED BOOKS ON AUTISM tend to be much more readable and practical for employees on the spectrum. These individuals might be able to improve themselves by reading case studies of similar individuals, completing questionnaires that provide insight into their condition, receiving guidance from autism experts, and learning about autism resources.

This category includes workbooks, which offer employees and managers many questions for reflection. Suzanne Whang's *Thrive with Neurodivergent Colleagues* discusses challenges employees on the spectrum face: unconscious bias against them; the process of recruiting, hiring, onboarding; accommodations for light/sound sensitivities; stimming, i.e., self-stimulating repetitive behaviors such as finger snapping, rocking, and hand flapping; enhancing productivity; and cultivating empathy. This how-to book provides seven to ten questions at the end of each chapter—such as “Who in your company would make a good mentor to a neurodivergent colleague?”—that encourage employees on the spectrum and managers to think about accommodations.

Another workbook is Michelle Garnett and Tony Attwood's *Autism Working: A Seven-Stage Plan to Thriving at Work*. The seven stages involve stress management, sensory management, and social, awareness, thinking, and organizational tools. The workbook is self-guided and provides activities for each stage to help individuals on the spectrum set goals and manage sensory overload, communication, and stress problems. A sample activity has readers list the variety of work situations that make them stressed. Most activities ask for brief essay answers and can be taken as part of a course led by a mentor or teacher.³ Barbara Bissonnette has three works covering how individuals with Asperger's can obtain and be successful in jobs: *Asperger's Syndrome Workplace Survival Guide: A Neurotypical's Secrets for Success*, *The Complete Guide to Getting a Job for People with Asperger's Syndrome: Find the Right Career and Get Hired*, and *Helping Adults with Asperger's Syndrome Get and Stay Hired: Career Coaching Strategies for Professionals and Parents of Adults on the Autism Spectrum*. Bissonnette is a certified coach for individuals on the spectrum and has helped individuals secure a wide variety of jobs—including in areas frequently not considered for them, such as sales managers. Though she discusses how employers can help those on the spectrum, a substantial portion of her work focuses on determining a person's goals, identifying obstacles to those goals, and developing action plans.

Employment for Individuals with Asperger Syndrome or Non-Verbal Learning Disability, edited by Yvonne Fast et al., begins with stories of individuals who are professors, teachers, transcriptionists, salespeople, and entrepreneurs. As this author argues in his essay “Investigating Recommended Jobs for Generation A Individuals with High-Functioning Autism to Enhance Person-Job Fit,” published in *Generation A: Research on Autism in the Workplace*, edited by Cristina Giannantonio and Amy Hurley-Hanson, these jobs tend to run against the stereotype that those on the autism spectrum can only do nonsocial or dull jobs. Most of the collection edited by Fast et al. is a self-help guide that discusses how to plan a career, find a job, and maintain a career. Many short and readable chapters cover subjects such as questions to ask in an interview, the first hundred work days, and workplace bullying. The final section covers organizations providing disability resources (mostly in the United States and Canada), career-oriented books, and websites related to work and career planning. Ashley Stanford's *Business for Aspies* is another guide for employees on the spectrum. The book is very positive and proactive about solving key employment problems. Some tips focus on working in groups, moving up the career ladder, increasing compensation, and handling issues with supervisors, peers, subordinates, and customers. Stanford advises taking a minimalist approach, suggesting, for instance, that, during meetings the employee should rein in hand gestures, such as pointing at people. This is an effort to reduce negative perceptions about the individual with autism.

Blythe Grossberg's *Asperger's and Adulthood: A Guide to Working, Loving, and Living with Asperger's Syndrome* seeks to help adults on the spectrum laugh in their careers. Jobs can be fun, even though discrimination and reduced ability can provide challenges. A unique topic in the book is the chapter on the advantages and disadvantages of leaving a parent's home. Living independently requires paying bills, cooking meals, and getting to work. These basic responsibilities must be coordinated with work activities. The book offers multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank exams, lists of activities, and appropriate responses to various situations. A similar book, which does not mention autism but

covers the role of neuroscience in helping employees to love what they do, is Daniel M. Cable's *Alive at Work: The Neuroscience of Helping Your People Love What They Do*. Some of the topics this book covers—such as enhancing creativity, experimentation, and enthusiasm—are related to the strengths of autism will be helpful topics for individuals on the spectrum.

Strategies to Help Individuals on the Spectrum

SOME PRACTITIONER-ORIENTED BOOKS target employers, counselors, and families, showing them how to reasonably accommodate employees on the spectrum. These books cover human resource management issues, such as recruiting, hiring, compensation, training, performance appraisal, discipline, and termination.

Janine Booth's *Autism Equality in the Workplace* is a compact how-to book. Its most notable characteristic is its bullet-point lists of what employers can do to accommodate employees on the spectrum. Topics include social interaction, sensory issues, organizing work, bullying, harassment, and discrimination. For instance, the bullet points on the list for alleviating sensory overstimulation include avoiding fluorescent light, muting bright colors, providing earplugs or noise-canceling headphones, shielding the workplace from strong smells, reducing complex upholstery, and providing counseling to reduce sensitivities. The book also provides summaries of the legal neurodiversity protections of the United Nations, European Union, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia.

Gail Hawkins's *How to Find Work that Works for People with Asperger Syndrome* is a long book that also has many bullet point lists for employers. The lists focus on specific behaviors, for instance, always wearing dark-colored socks. One chapter on the “Employment Toolbox” has lists at two levels. The first level has scripted dialogues for given situations, role-plays for scenes, and so on. The second level, under each of the ten topics, is a description of the

topic, instruction on what is appropriate, an example, and experience tips. The book's chapters target employers, job coaches, job candidates, families, and educational and medical professionals.

Another book about employer actions is Michael Bernick and Richard Holden's *The Autism Job Club*, which explores how to build an improved employment structure for individuals with autism. Most of the book discusses autism employment initiatives to help people with autism find and keep jobs. The authors suggest training autism job coaches; enhancing employment among tech firms; sharing the benefits of the internet economy by incorporating individuals with autism into micro-businesses; taking advantage of the practical economy; leveraging the growth of knowledge-oriented jobs (such as accountants, management analysts, and software developers); augmenting formal employment initiatives in companies; and encouraging lifelong learning with a positive workplace culture to help those on the spectrum.

Rudy Simone's *Asperger's on the Job* gives practitioner-oriented advice for individuals and employers. Its 20 chapters average six pages and discuss what the employee and the company should do to improve the work lives of those on the spectrum. Some topics include the need for quiet, the power of praise, the importance of routines, the decision to reveal autism, emotional detachment, and bluntness.

Two books have a point-blank focus on employers. Victoria Honeybourne's *The Neurodiverse Workplace* describes the characteristics of neurodiverse individuals, employer responsibilities, inclusive recruitment, and the creation of neurodiverse-friendly environments. Marcia Scheiner's *An Employer's Guide to Managing Professionals on the Autism Spectrum*, written with Joan Bogden, gives employers and colleagues ways to increase the organizational fit and productivity of individuals on the spectrum. Simple-to-understand strategies include reducing noises around autistic workers, adjusting the lighting, establishing nonverbal and verbal signals to manage the content and length of verbal and written communications, and training neurotypical employees how to recognize and work with those on the

spectrum. The goals of the book are to enhance the advantages that those on the spectrum can offer, anticipate challenges, promote person-job fit, and retain and promote workers on the spectrum.

Theo Smith and Amanda Kirby's *Neurodiversity at Work: Drive Innovation, Performance, and Productivity with a Neurodiverse Workforce* is meant particularly for human resource management professionals. It is similar to the books mentioned above but adds many case studies of organizations, such as Microsoft, that augmented their efforts to find qualified individuals on the spectrum. It details the results of interviews with companies that changed their human resource management practices and how, in doing so, the productivity of individuals and the companies as a whole improved.

Adam Feinstein's *Autism Works: A Guide to Successful Employment across the Entire Spectrum* provides advice to employers and employees on the spectrum on improving workplaces and considering viable employment options. Case studies examine the daily challenges and rewards of individuals who are not only high-functioning but also those lower on the spectrum. Even though Feinstein mentions that jobs such as cashiers, receptionists, waiters, and airline ticket agents may not be good fits for individuals with autism because of their high levels of socializing and sensory overload, the book's main focus is that such individuals should not be limited by those stereotypes.

Temple Grandin's *Visual Thinking: The Hidden Gifts of People Who Think in Pictures, Patterns, and Abstractions*, written with Betsy Lerner, makes strong arguments for hiring and supporting visual thinkers, such as those on the spectrum. Educational systems and hiring practices are biased against those who can see the details in buildings and equipment that others cannot see. Engineering problems need to be solved through multiple perspectives. For example, one engineer encouraged the use of the Hubble Space Telescope to observe an "empty" part of space. As it turns out, that empty part had thousands of galaxies. Grandin has chapters on the role of geniuses, the need to visualize risk to prevent disasters, and the importance of understanding the nonverbal world.

Jaclyn Hunt's *Life Coaching for Adults on the Autism Spectrum* shows how those on the spectrum can survive day-to-day challenges with the help of one-on-one life coaches. Coaches can give tips to help individuals enhance their social relationships and find and maintain jobs.

The majority of research and practitioner works focus on helping K-12 and college students cope with school, everyday life, and very early careers. The following books may seem like materials designed for younger audiences, but basic skills, especially those associated with communication, are very relevant at work. The exercises take a direct approach, nailing the greatest incidents that those on the spectrum face.

The mechanical steps to achieving success feature in Michelle Rigler, Amy Rutherford, and Emily Quinn's *Developing Workplace Skills for Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The BASICS College Curriculum*. This hands-on book provides exercises on how to work in a team, manage stress, enhance self-control, and communicate with colleagues. The exercises may more relevant for high-school students, but sometimes a simple and direct approach to problems can be the best.

Carol Burmeister, Sheri Wilkins, and Rebecca Silva's *FLIPP 2.0: Mastering Executive Function Skills from School to Adult Life for Students with Autism* focuses on helping high-school students with challenges, including autism, make a good transition to a successful life. Though some exercises are geared toward lower grades, but high-school-related exercises focus on adult employment. The book has questionnaires for teachers, counselors, and school administrators to use to evaluate students' autism-related challenges. Several critical incident questionnaires help teachers evaluate what happened, who was involved, where and when the activity occurred, why it happened, and how it might be prevented (or supported) in the future. Another assesses what the students can tolerate, such as busy wall decorations, air quality, lighting, temperature, and noise level. These are topics that a career counselor, mentor, coach, or employee trainer can also employ to generate reasonable accommodations.

Lives of Individuals on the Spectrum

BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES SHARE stories to which many on the spectrum can relate. Each story highlights the early challenges individuals faced, the struggles in their career, and, most important, their successes. They show individuals who have excelled in their fields or industries. Some read like stories and others have some story elements combined with discussion of some major topics around autism.

Temple Grandin became famous for her success in promoting and developing the humane treatment of cattle going to slaughter. Her ability to see patterns in their behavior—one feature of autism—has made stockyards more efficient. Her life story has been shown in documentaries and books such as Sy Montgomery's *Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World*. Though a children's book, this biography helps readers understand how the autism-related behaviors that stifled Grandin in her early life now enhance her life as a professor at Colorado State University and an advocate for those on the spectrum.

Many individuals on the spectrum have written autobiographically about autism.

Grandin has been the subject of many biographies and documentaries and she has written several books, among them *Different... Not Less*, which is about 14 successful individuals in their fifties and sixties. These individual's life stories have been influenced by their nationality, sexual orientation, and the industries in which they found success. They were bullied and scoffed at as nerds when they were young, and early failures were common. According to Grandin, there is hope for young people who feel that their condition will block them from having good relationships and a successful career. A chapter about registered nurse Anita Lesko shares her

pre-employment experiences of being called bad names, facing social exclusion, learning to be kind to others, and gaining basic skills, like cooking. Her school years featured sensory overload and overly easy classes, but in her adult life she became a successful nurse and got married.

Herman Jansen and Betty Rombout's *AutiPower! Successful Living and Working with an Autism Spectrum Disorder* shares stories of individuals on the spectrum and employers and professionals who help people on the spectrum. Through interviews, the authors discuss how those on the spectrum failed to obtain or stay in jobs. Overemphasis on attention to detail and reduced communication skills contributed to their failures. The most important characteristic of the book is the hope it brings to individuals and professionals by showing how people have successfully incorporated their strengths into their jobs and how others can help them.

In *An Asperger's Guide to Entrepreneurship*, Rosalind Bergemann argues that individuals high on the spectrum (i.e., with Asperger's) can go against stereotypes and be successful entrepreneurs. This book will guide people with Asperger's in starting their own companies, and it gives helpful

advice about business strategy, marketing, finance, and networking. It also includes biographies of entrepreneurs on the spectrum who have succeeded.

Based on research and including examples of individual success, Sarah Hendrick's *Asperger Syndrome and Employment* is another book that provides suggestions for both employers and employees on the spectrum. The emphasis is on the suggestions rather than the stories of individuals. The variance in the symptoms people on the autism spectrum present results in a large range of strengths and weaknesses, some of which explain why there is high unemployment among those on the spectrum.

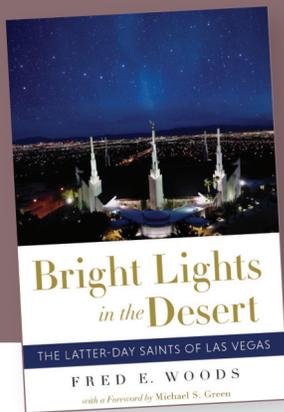
Many individuals on the spectrum have written autobiographically about autism. These works shed light on the authors' experiences growing up and pursuing careers while on the spectrum and are useful to both other individuals on the spectrum and neurotypical people trying to learn more about the lives of autistic people. Some autobiographical works discuss how to react to a diagnosis of autism and proceed with careers as a result. For example, Philip Wylie's *Very Late Diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome* tells his experience discovering his diagnosis later in life. The benefits of this revelation include gaining awareness of his strengths and weaknesses, obtaining support services, understanding legal rights, finding employment, and understanding why past issues occurred. At the same time, meltdowns, confusion, anger, and relief can result from new interpretations of life experiences.

Mentioned earlier, Grandin is likely the most famous person on the spectrum who has written an autobiography. Coauthored with Richard Panek, *The Autistic Brain: Helping Different Kinds of Minds Succeed* shows the challenges Grandin went through as a child and the success she had in the cattle industry thanks to her strong visual memory. Beyond her autobiography, she presents the results of the genetic research linking autism to anomalies in the brain, which might affect behavior. She even details the results of her brain scan.

Malcolm Johnson's *Managing with Asperger Syndrome* focuses on his experiences as a manager and the challenges that managers with autism can overcome in the business setting. His easy-to-read book contradicts the stereotypical impression that individuals with autism are not capable of being managers. He shares his challenges but also shows how his honesty and attention to detail made him successful.

David William Plummer's independently published *Secrets of the Autistic Millionaire* documents tools, techniques, and strategies for becoming successful. Plummer reveals that a child he was bullied, tended to be alone, and stymied by snapping his fingers while awkwardly walking. When he went to high school, he was labeled gifted. Using his failures and successes, he found his niche as a computer programmer at Microsoft. He created the Windows Task Manager

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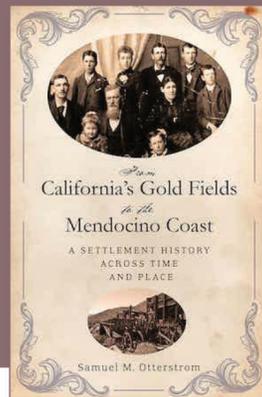


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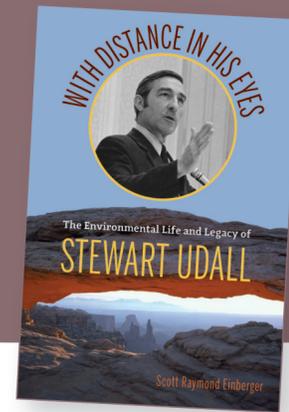


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and ZIP file support for Windows. He even has a world-record score in a video game. He outlines the characteristics frequently found in individuals on the spectrum that have affected his jobs, such as a resistance to change. This is an excellent read, covering Plummer’s early life, work life, and personal life. The only caveat is that Plummer is gifted in computer programming, which does not apply to everyone on the spectrum hoping to become a millionaire.

Two autobiographies of note examine the experiences of autistic women struggling and learning to fit into their social environments. Michelle Vines’s *Asperger’s on the Inside* looks inside her autism-related brain. She shares her feelings and thoughts about her life on the spectrum. Her failure to understand unwritten communication rules led to broken friendships and unprovable discrimination in the workplace. Finding solace in fellow “aspies” has helped her understand more about her challenges and how to work with neurotypical individuals. There is hope. And in *Autism in Heels: The Untold Story of a*

Female Life on the Spectrum, Jennifer Cook O’Toole shares her story of trying to fit into a nonautistic world. O’Toole highlights the frequently overlooked women’s experience of autism. The ratio of men to women on the autism spectrum is about four to one, and most research and practitioner-oriented materials concentrate on boys and men partially due to this prevalence.⁴ There is growing research on women on the spectrum, and O’Toole’s book provides anecdotal examples from her life that could be a launchpad of ideas for researchers. The book is excellent for general readers.

Online Job-Related Autism Organizations

HUNDREDS OF GREAT WEBSITES PROVIDE advice to employers and employees on the spectrum about how to improve their lives. Most of the sites involve child development. The resources shown below are this author’s picks for the best organizations that provide

support for adults on the autism spectrum. Links to their websites are provided at the end of the works cited.

Autism@Work helps individuals with autism find meaningful work, to educate organizations about effective hiring practices, and to raise general public awareness of the benefits of hiring those on the spectrum. The organization is known for networking between executives, researchers, and educators. Its annual conferences bring those individuals together

The Autism Society provides resources for employers, employees, counselors, and others about education, support, advocacy, and community programs. The website features employment toolkits, statistics on the employment of those on the spectrum, and links to resources such as the *Autism@Work Playbook*, which guides employers in recruiting individuals with autism. The Disability Equality Index has benchmarking information, allowing companies to see how inclusive they are in hiring people with

disabilities. Most noteworthy about the organization is its extensive discussion of public policy efforts to protect individuals on the spectrum and their supporters, such as counselors and educators. It has doctoral fellowships, a summit on autism and aging, and a network of affiliates.

Other online organizations offer more general resources for people on the spectrum and allies. Autism Speaks provides information and advocacy for autistic people. One of most significant features is a list of about 400 international autism organizations, from Albania to Zambia. It provides an autism screening questionnaire; grants for researchers, service providers, individuals, and families; and research programs. The Asperger-Autism Network also supports a wide variety of people on the spectrum. Like the Autism Society, this network provides education, support, advocacy, information, and community programs. As a network, it has a directory of Asperger/autism diagnosticians to test whether an individual is on the spectrum. It shows some research studies and divides its resources among adults/teens, family/friends, and professionals. Similarly, the National Autistic Society, which is based in the United Kingdom, provides advice, information, support, and guidance for adults and children on the spectrum. It encourages businesses and the government to give reasonable accommodations to individuals with autism and improve services and laws. The guidance covers work-related topics, such as benefits, money, mental health, education, and much more. Conferences and training programs are available.

With a focus on public policy, the Autism National Committee (AUTCOM) supports “social justice for all autistics.” As a policy organization, it provides position papers, books, and newsletters. The national conference covers issues such as employment, exercise for adults on the spectrum, transgender identity, and autism-related PTSD. AUTCOM’s website provides access to educational position pages, other links related to autism, and articles on issues of interest to individuals, families, and professionals who support those on the autism spectrum.

Research organizations offer many cutting-edge educational resources and insights. The Autism Research Institute supports “the health and well-being of people affected by autism through innovative, impactful research and education.”

Along with scientific research grants, it has educational information about the symptoms and interventions associated with autism and diagnostic checklists. It also offers online educational events, a quarterly science newsletter, and think tanks to discuss promising treatments. There are plenty of webinars, autism news items, and editorials.

The Organization for Autism Research “strives to use science to address the social, educational, and treatment concerns of self-advocates, autism professionals, and caregivers.” Through its website it provides an employer portal to support those who are interested in employing people on the spectrum. It is the only autism organization to focus on applied autism research funding. For instance, it gives direct support for college students on the spectrum, teachers teaching about autism, and researchers. Adults can find employment support to help them apply for jobs such as providing résumé guidelines. Among its charity events is a 5K “Run for Autism.”

The Autism Science Foundation supports autism research and provides educational resources for all interested parties, including companies and people on the spectrum. It also gives information about autism symptoms, diagnoses, treatments, and the relationship between vaccines and autism. The website has a good section on individuals entering adulthood.

Conclusion

THIS ESSAYS COVERS MOST OF THE MAIN and recent books and internet sources intended to help employers, counselors, and educators to train, support, and accommodate individuals on the spectrum at the workplace. Those on the spectrum also benefit by receiving tips on how to work best in their work environments. The bottom line is that those on the spectrum have skills that can be extremely valuable for companies. Individuals may present initial negative impressions in interviews and in

the workplace, but with their visual skills, honesty, and other positive traits they can contribute to the productivity and bottom line of organizations. Such individuals should not be limited by stereotypes.

Notes

1. This description is adapted from the American Psychological Association’s definition of autism in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-V).
2. The UK’s Office for National Statistics showed, in a 2020 report entitled “Outcomes for Disabled People in the UK,” that people with autism, as a group, had the lowest employment rate among disabled people, with only 22 percent in any type of employment.
3. How-to books also fall within the category of self-help. In 2020 Alisa Shawn self-published a series of short books about working in the film and video game industries: *Autism: How to Work in the Video Game Industry*, *Autism: How to Work in the Film Industry*, *Autism: How to Work in the Animation Industry*, *Autism: How to Work in the Visual Effects Industry*, *Autism: How to Work in the Voice Over Industry*. Available through Amazon.com, each of these addresses how individuals on the spectrum can start in the industry, what education they need, how to network through social media, and how to handle employment issues, such as communication with teams.
4. Simon Baron-Cohen’s “The Extreme Male-Brain Theory of Autism,” published in *Neurodevelopmental Disorders*, edited by Helen Tager-Flusberg (1999), suggests that men tend to have the autistic characteristics of systemizing—e.g., finding patterns or following rules—but are less empathic than women. Higher levels of testosterone in the womb might contribute to autistic characteristics.

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Internet Resources

- Asperger-Autism Network
<https://www.aane.org/>
- Autism at Work
<https://www.autismatwork.org/>
- Autism National Committee
<https://www.autcom.org/>
- Autism Research Institute
<https://www.autism.org/>
- Autism Science Foundation
<https://www.autismsciencefoundation.org/>
- Autism Society
<https://www.autismsociety.org/>
- Autism Speaks
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- Disability:IN (Disability Equality Index)
<https://disabilityin.org/>
- National Autistic Society
<https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- Organization for Autism Research
<https://www.researchautism.org/>

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