



## ***The Uniquely Abled Academy® Replication Guide***

### ***Element 1 - Match the Individual to the Job***

#### ***Exhibit 1.1 - Information about Autism***

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From DSM-5 3 levels of autism:

- Level 1: Requiring (Minimal) Support (previously known as Asperger's Syndrome), formerly referred to high functioning (is not a diagnostic term but used frequently)
- Level 2: Requiring Substantial Support
- Level 3: Requiring Very Substantial Support

Applicable terms: There are differences of views as to the terms to be used and what some prefer to be called, e.g., individual with autism, autistic individual, or autistics.

What Autism IS:

- A neurological difference in brain wiring
- A lifelong condition
- Difficulty with social interactions and social cues (due to lower levels of mirror neurons)
- Thinking and encountering the world in a black-and-white way
- Often accompanied by another diagnosis, e.g., ADHD

Autism can also look like:

- Intense interest areas and knowledge related to those interests, often concrete interest areas and facts. Some individuals find it comforting to talk about their interest areas, what they know.
- Sensory sensitivities
- Keen attention to detail
- Distinct learning styles, different for different individuals

Autism is NOT

- A disease or something that is curable
- Choosing to be difficult or inflexible by choice
- Something that only impacts children
- Unwillingness or inability to interact with others



- Being attention-seeking, rude, or self-centered

#### As Employees Autistics Have Many Strengths

- Attention to detail
- Extraordinary observation skills
- Deep interest in specific fields
- Intense focus
- Expansive long term memory
- Comfort with rules and guidance, rule followers. (May not have an issue with letting you know that someone else is not following the rules.)
- An affinity and ability to analyze complex patterns and notice errors.
- Creativity in specific areas.
- Will happily devote time to interests and talents
- Great visual spatial skills
- Success with repetitive tasks
- Strong systemizing skills
- Reliable
- Punctual
- Take pride in their work.
- Integrity – they care about doing things the right way and being consistent about it.

#### As Co-workers Autistics Can Be:

- Funny
- Helpful
- Caring
- Brilliant
- Cooperative
- Quirky
- Genuine

#### Three Main Challenges

- 1. Communication
  - The Aspie World - Autism and Communication. This video goes over some details on the issues of communications with people with autism.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgng\\_jXvBkQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgng_jXvBkQ)
  - **Communication Definition:** Process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.



- **Communication Theory:** Communication means transferring thoughts, information, emotion, and ideas through gestures, voice, symbols, signs, and expressions from one person to another.
  - The 4 types of communication are verbal, non-verbal, written, and visual.
  - **Alternative Communication Methods:** formal, informal
    - Formal vs. Informal includes written and verbal communication.
    - Communication is different to a friend than to a boss – they may not know this.
  - Texting, etc. is easier than face to face communication.
  - It is often hard for an autistic individual to decipher facial expressions. At times they may find it hard to tell if people are serious or trying to be funny, etc.
- 2. Social Intricacies
    - Active listening: “The Big Bang Theory Active Listening”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_dAkDsBQyk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_dAkDsBQyk)
    - Young adults in social situation: Ambitious about Autism “Young people explain communication”  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o\\_NbDdBq0pU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_NbDdBq0pU)
    - Social Intricacies and Interactions – Things to Consider
      - Personal space and boundaries.
      - Facial expressions/emotions – ensure you match your voice and words.
      - Be aware of your tone of voice/inflection.
      - Joking/ Sarcasm is not always well received, Since they typically interpret what is said literally, they may misunderstand or not get the intended message. Same with using a figure of speech/ idiom / slang.
      - Formal or informal appropriateness.
      - Your gestures – may not always be understood.
      - Processing information – it is common for autistics to also have information processing issues, e.g., they may need more time to listen, understand, and file verbally transmitted information.
      - Inferring information – they struggle with this.
      - Context clues may not be reliably understood. Need to be explicit in your communication.
      - Unpredictability – try to avoid a situation that triggered a student in the past.
      - They often have difficulty filtering out environment to focus on conversation (sensory issues). Minimize or eliminate background noise or distractions.



- 3. Self-Determination
  - **Self Determination** is the process by which a person controls their own life.
  - Self-awareness – of their strengths, weaknesses, preferences, interests, and needs.
  - Knowing what works and doesn't work for them.
  - Knowing coping skills/techniques to calm down if upset.
  - Includes self-awareness, self-advocacy, and the motivation to be independent.
  - National Gateway: Self-Determination, My Voice, My Choice
    - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5r-kVhemaAQ>
  - Elementary, Middle, and High School: teachers instruct the students, and the students follow those instructions. They are not taught self-determination skills.
  - Disability Awareness – knowing how it affects you. Some students don't know their diagnosis.
  - Disability Disclosure – choosing whether to disclose to employer or others. To know whether you need accommodations. UAA employers will know but co-workers may not. Supervisors probably will but may not. Ideally UAA graduates are taught how to make the decision whether to disclose and how to disclose.
  - Self-Esteem – confidence to try and fail, learn from it, and then try again.
  - Self-Advocacy – expressing your wants and needs and knowing the difference between them, standing up for yourself.
    - The ability to recognize and ask for help is always a strength.

## Frequently Exhibited Characteristics

When you've met one person with autism, you've met only one person with autism. As with neurotypicals, everyone is different. However, here are some frequently exhibited characteristics and some suggestions in how you can thoughtfully accomodate:

- Individuals may need extra processing time before answering questions (our society does not like silence, "awkward silences", particularly in social situations).
  - They might take 10-20 seconds for them to respond. Helps them calm down if anxious.
  - Can also use scripting saying something they have memorized, e.g., a commercial (echolalia is a form of scripting, parroting) to help calm down.
- Some process faster than others in a classroom, e.g., in answering questions.
  - For slower processors, give them a forewarning. "Today we're going to talk about A, B, C. I would like you to answer C when we get to it." Give them visual aid to answer questions. Give them extra time.



- Stimming (repetitive movements, fidgeting) helps an individual to calm down.
- Often have difficulty with eye contact. Some may not be able to listen and make eye contact at the same time – is too much data input especially in time of stress. So, you need to decide what you want them to do – listen or look at you.
- Anxiety is very common, and many carry the knowledge that they are different than others. New situations are often tough. They like routine, consistency, and knowing what's coming next – these items can assist in lowering their anxiety levels.
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common, chronic, and long-lasting disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts ("obsessions") and/or behaviors ("compulsions") that he or she feels the urge to repeat over and over. OCD is a branch of anxiety, e.g., perfectionism, perseveration.
- Executive Dysfunction.
  - Sometimes individuals have trouble with critical thinking, with working memory, organization, prioritization.
  - This is where checklists and visual aids come in to help them through those. Visual aids are very useful in the classroom.
- May have difficulty with “daily life” skills and may have fine motor deficits.
- Heightened sensory sensitivities (touch, sound, smell) or insensitivities are common.
  - Perfume, fluorescent lights, a loud ticking clock are all examples of things that may aggravate sensory issues.
  - The noise of a CNC shop could be an issue. It is helpful for them to know certain sounds will be coming. Instructor – let them know the different sounds the machines will make. In shop can be expected and unexpected sounds.
  - Headphones.
    - Sometimes they might bring in music and listen while working. Probably not a problem with noise-cancelling headphones. BUT must be able to hear if machine is chattering (a sign that something is wrong). Can't use complete noise cancelling headphones because operator has to hear somethings.
  - See demonstration of sensory overwhelm at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?y=ycCN3qTYVyo>
  - See “Too Much Information and Us | Sensory Overloads” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWPL3QPD4p0>
- Speech difference (tone, volume, rhythm) – sometimes individuals may talk too loud or too softly and don't realize it.
  - May demonstrate echolalia - meaningless repetition of words just spoken by another person.
- Prefers consistency/routines.



- May not recognize other's need for personal space.

#Autism is a lifelong condition often characterised by:

- an inability to bullshit
- a pathological need for fairness
- a compulsion to help others
- an inexplicable need to expose hypocrisy
- an excessive tendency to let other people be

There is no known cure 🤔

22:47 · 27 Nov 19 · Twitter for Android

From Autism Speaks website:

- Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 54 children in the United States today.
- We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.

These are some of the characteristics of ASD:

- Problems with social interaction with others. ...
- Unusual interest in objects.
- Need for sameness.
- Great variation in abilities.
- Under or over reaction to one or more of the five senses: sight, touch, taste, smell, or hearing.
- Repeated actions or body movements.

From John Wheeler

- Autistic individuals are known for speaking literally. Well, here's my learning experience:
- At our UAA orientation, I told the students that we would eat lunch on site, due to the fact that there is no food on campus due to the Pandemic and the fast-food joints are too far away to travel to during a 30-minute lunch period.
- I suggested that they bring a sack lunch.
- Over the weekend I received an email from one of the parents stating that she had purchased a new lunch bucket for her son. She said that her son promptly informed her that "Mr. Wheeler said that we need to bring a sack lunch!"
- I told her that sack lunch was just a generic term. She replied that she thought so and that her son takes most everything literally!

| Tips for Talking To Autistic People |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| by @the.autisticats                 | Instead of...   | Say...  |
| Explain the "why"                   | "Stop doing that!"  | "Stop doing that, because xyz."   |
|                                     | "I need you to do something for me."                                  | "I need you to do xyz please, because xyz."   |
| Be specific                         | "We need to talk."  | "We need to talk about xyz."  |
|                                     | "I'm upset with you."   | "I'm upset about xyz thing you did."  |
| Be direct                           | *assuming the person knows how you're feeling based on context clues* | "I'm feeling xyz way because of xyz thing."   |
|                                     | *stifling feelings of irritation, then acting passive aggressively*   | "I'm getting annoyed by xyz thing you're doing, could you please stop?"                 |
| Be respectful                       | "Nobody wants to hear about [special interest]!"                      | "Can we talk about [special interest] later?"   |
|                                     | "What's wrong with you? Why are you acting so weird right now?"       | "Is there something bothering you? Do you want to go somewhere else and talk about it?" |

### Tips for talking to Autistic people

"Please be as concrete, literal, black & white, specific. A lot of us can't read between the lines. I don't do the double meaning thing and all the hidden nuances. I end up heightened and in panic mode. I'm panicked about communication because people don't understand my communication method. I simply communicate using neutral, factual statements & observations. I've developed a social phobia due to being perpetually misunderstood."





Autism is often characterized by challenges in:

- Social Skills/Relationships
- Communication
- Stereotypic Behaviors/Desire for Sameness

Appreciate Neurodiversity

- Autism is a natural and valuable variation in thinking and learning. Symbols in this image like puzzle pieces, graphs, and patterns represent different ways of thinking and learning, or neurodiversity. A neurodiverse workforce is an asset to any organization.
- When you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism. There's great diversity among people with autism. That's why the term autism spectrum is used.

See webpage [About Autism](#) on the Uniquely Abled Project website.