

Strategies in finding employment for adults on the Autism Spectrum

For anyone, being unemployed can be a very frustrating experience but for adults with Autism, not having a job can place them more so in a serious disadvantage. Employment provides structure to the person's life and more importantly it provides them with money and a quality of life.

Often for adults with Autism there can be many challenges and difficulties in finding employment. I am speaking from personal experience

- A loss of self esteem and confidence
- Belief in that you will never get a job
- Exhaustion and frustration with the application process and selling skills and abilities in selection criteria and within the interview process if the person obtains one
- Frustration with the lack of support from employment agencies and limited job coaches

What therefore can an adult with Autism do?

- Become a volunteer for an employer or company to try and obtain experience
- Find an employment agency that is willing to assist and do not stop until you get the support you require.
- Look into the possibility of starting your own business if possible
- Ensure you can obtain a three pronged approach of finding an employment consultant who will liaise with the employer to assist you with job placement.

As an adult with Autism I spent a long time in finding a job. I found it difficult to be placed into a job and more importantly being able to sell myself within the job interview process. For the majority of people the interview process is in itself a means of selling one's abilities and as a person with Asperger Syndrome I find this especially difficult. Finding the energy to exaggerate about my abilities within a selection criteria was overwhelming added to the rare opportunity of selling myself within an interview process.

To be honest I believe a greater awareness needs to occur in recognising the Autism Spectrum within another concept of disability. People on the Autism Spectrum do not exhibit the general stereotype of symptoms. For example the person with Autism does not have the same needs as a person in a wheel chair or some other mobility impairment or other form of disability. The person with Autism has a difficulty with processing information and not always knowing what script is required within a workplace within a social context. One of the difficulties I have found constantly knows what is expected of me within a job. If I finish a job and need to move onto another task, how often can I ask questions to clear up in my own mind what is expected of me and will this exhaust the other person? More importantly what is my relationship between a manager or supervisor and if a supervisor is

not providing good direction, what implications will occur as a result if I go above this person? Often understanding hierarchy can be extremely difficult and challenging. I have had to resign from some positions because I have not been understood. In some instances I have also received bullying and felt that in my attempts to report it that there may be repercussions or nothing being done with me having to resign from my job.

I would encourage any adult with Asperger Syndrome to not lose hope. Just keeping trying as difficult as it may be to find the necessary and support you need.

The types of employment may vary from adult to adult but here are some possible suggestions for adults with Autism

- Parking Attendant
- Library shelver
- Military
- School Teacher
- Psychologist
- Software Tester
- Data Entry Person
- Mechanic
- Information Technology Person

There are several good books written by persons on the Autism Spectrum and Dr Tony Attwood's website does provide some useful information. I constantly refer to Dr Tony Attwood's website as he is a primary source of information.

FOR ANY ADULT WHO IS UNEMPLOYED PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME TO LET ME KNOW HOW I CAN HELP. I DO A LOT OF ADVOCACY AND FINDING OUT PERSONAL STORIES WOULD HELP IN RAISING GENERAL AWARENESS.