

From IEP to J-O-B: Employment and the Autism Spectrum

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SPED*NET Webinar: October 26, 2022

My Practice

- ▶ Barbara Bissonnette, Principal, Forward Motion Coaching
- ▶ Career development coaching for adults with Asperger's Syndrome/autism
 - ▶ Competitive employment
- ▶ Consultations for parents
- ▶ Training for professionals and employers
- ▶ Formerly VP of Marketing & Sales

My Books

- ▶ *The Complete Guide to Getting a Job for People with Asperger's Syndrome*
- ▶ *Asperger's Syndrome Workplace Survival Guide*
- ▶ *Helping Adults with Asperger's Syndrome Get & Stay Hired, Career Coaching Strategies for Professionals and Parents of Adults on the Autism Spectrum*

Today's Discussion

- ▶ Choosing the Right Job or Career
- ▶ Getting Hired
- ▶ Disclosure and Accommodations



Choosing the Right Job or Career



What is the Right Job?

Accountant ▪ Administrative assistant ▪ Analyst ▪ Bus driver ▪
Canvasser (political) ▪ Chemist ▪ College professor ▪
Computer programmer ▪ Consultant ▪ Creative writer ▪
Editor ▪ Electrician ▪ Engineer ▪ Fine artist ▪ GIS technician
▪ Graphic artist ▪ Lawyer ▪ Librarian ▪ Meteorologist ▪
Nurse ▪ Paralegal ▪ Physician ▪ Physicist ▪ Production
manager ▪ Records manager ▪ Reporter ▪ Retail sales
associate ▪ Sales manager ▪ Screenwriter ▪ Supply chain
manager ▪ Teacher (adult education) ▪ Teacher (early
childhood) ▪ Veterinarian ▪ Warehouse worker ▪ Web
developer

College is Not the Only Path to Success

- ▶ A degree does not guarantee employment
- ▶ The 1:2:7 rule
 - ▶ Master's = 1
 - ▶ Bachelor's = 2
 - ▶ Associate's/certificate = 7
- ▶ Harvard University prediction:
 - ▶ 57% require certificate/associate's (skilled technical)

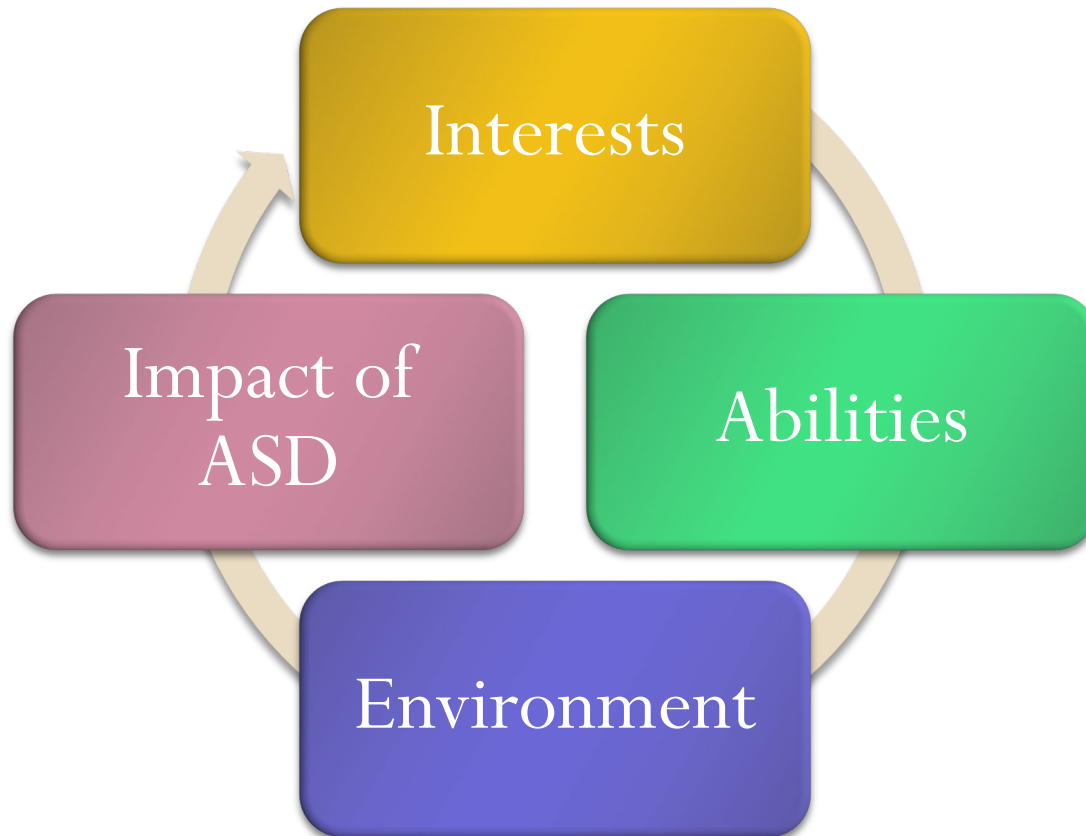
Source: Success in the New Economy, Kevin Fleming and Brian Marsh (video):
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zs6nQpVI164

Consider Several Options

- ▶ Vocational training
- ▶ Certifications/associate's degrees
- ▶ Jobs that do not require post-secondary education



Four Factors to Consider



1. Interests

- ▶ May lead to a career...



...or not



Probe Interests

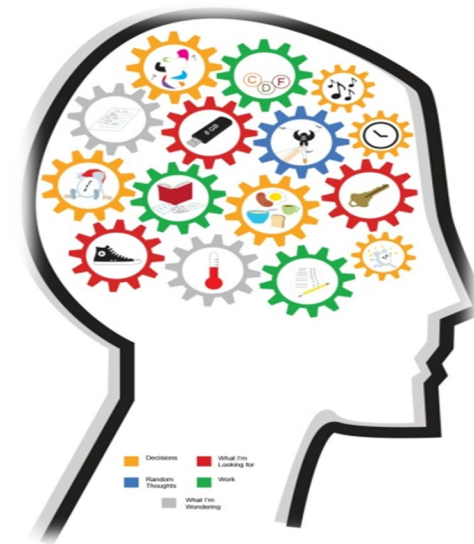
- ▶ What are tasks and required skills?
- ▶ How competitive is the market?
- ▶ Basic career research
 - ▶ Occupational Outlook Handbook
 - ▶ www.bls.gov/ooh/

2. Abilities

- ▶ Self-reported information may not be accurate
 - ▶ Writing well vs. professionally
- ▶ Most jobs are multi-faceted
 - ▶ Teachers teach... create lesson plans ... maintain order in classroom... interact with administrators... meet with parents of students

Neuropsychological Evaluation

- ▶ Measures various cognitive processes
 - ▶ E.g. attention, memory, language, visual-spatial abilities, and executive functioning
- ▶ Summaries are in lay person's language; recommendations



3. Work Environment

Physical

- Location: cubicle, outdoors
- Sensory: noise level, odors, visual distractions
- Tasks: visuo-motor coord.; notice visual detail; auditory processing

Interpersonal

- Type of interaction:
 - scripted/routine
 - novel/complex
 - internal or customers
- Culture: collegial, hierarchical, pressured, etc.

Performance Expectations

- Pace
- Structure
- Level of independence
- Decision making / problem solving
- Multitasking
- Big picture or details

Optimal Environments (According to My Clients)

- ▶ At least some elements of routine
- ▶ Structure and clear performance expectations
- ▶ Minimal interruptions/multitasking
- ▶ Supportive co-workers
- ▶ Not too much pressure/ right pace
- ▶ Quiet workspace/minimal sensory distractions
- ▶ Right level of social interaction

4. Impact of ASD

- ▶ Awareness of personal challenges = better vocational choices
- ▶ *Everyone* has limitations of some kind
- ▶ Goal: find work that emphasizes areas of ability

Two Categories of Limitations



- 1: Can be mitigated
- ◆ skill development
 - ◆ assistive technology
 - ◆ workplace accommodations



- 2: Can't be changed
- Steer people away from jobs/ careers that would be frustrating or impossible



Getting Hired



Troubleshoot Difficulties

- ▶ Sending many resumes, no interviews
 - ▶ Resume is not communicating relevant abilities
 - ▶ Job seeker not qualified
 - ▶ Highly competitive job market
- ▶ Many interviews, no job offer
 - ▶ Candidate is not communicating abilities
 - ▶ Unprofessional personal presentation
 - ▶ Unprepared



Interviews: A Major Social Event!

- ▶ Purpose of questions
- ▶ Up to 3 main points
- ▶ Written notes
- ▶ Practice!





Disclosure & Accommodations



Americans with Disabilities Act

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- ▶ Federal law passed in 1990 to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities
- ▶ “Employer” is defined as business with 15+ full time workers, operating at least 20 weeks per year



Law Protects *Qualified Applicants/*Employees

- ▶ Individuals who meet the employer's requirements
 - ▶ Skills, experience, and education
- ▶ Must be able to perform *essential job functions* (with or without accommodation)
- ▶ Employer does not have to lower standard
- ▶ Employer is not compelled to hire someone w/ disability

Reasonable Accommodation

- ▶ Disclosure compels employer to attempt reasonable accommodation
- ▶ Modification: enables qualified individual to participate in the interview process/ perform essential job functions
- ▶ Cannot cause undue hardship
- ▶ Does not apply to a person who poses threat to others; engaged in serious misconduct

Develop a Plan

- ▶ Focus only on issues that affect performance
- ▶ Keep explanations simple and brief
- ▶ Do not share personal details about medications or emotional state; no negative comments about company, a supervisor or co-workers
- ▶ Do not threaten a legal action! Negotiation

Involve Human Resources

- ▶ Document request, work with employee and manager, follow up



Right Way to Request Accommodations

- ▶ Explanation of specific difficulty
- ▶ Proposed solution
- ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ “I have a hard time processing verbal instructions and need written directions.”
 - ▶ “I am very literal and need instructions explicitly stated.”

Sample Accommodations

- ▶ Interview questions submitted in advance
- ▶ Reassignment of non-essential job functions
- ▶ Written instructions
- ▶ Quiet workspace (other sensory modifications)
- ▶ Modified work schedule
- ▶ Time off for treatment
- ▶ Reassignment to vacant position
- ▶ Adjusting or modifying training materials

Resources

- ▶ Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

<http://askjan.org/>

Information for employers and employees;
accommodation suggestions by disability type

- ▶ Workplace Disclosure Strategies, free guide from Forward Motion Coaching (www.ForwardMotion.info)

Contact Information

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Services available nationwide

Free info session for prospective new clients

Free Asperger's & NLD Career Letter