

## Positive Traits

**Alongside challenges, there are many positive traits of those diagnosed with Autism or Asperger Syndrome. Recognize these strengths and grow the employee!**

- High integrity
- Can recall fine details that others miss
- Persistent with excellent follow through
- Above-average intelligence
- Loathe office small talk and trivialities, preferring instead to talk about significant things that will enhance their knowledge base
- Ability to focus intensely for long periods



- Enhanced learning ability
- Deep knowledge of an obscure or difficult subject resulting in success scholastically and professionally when channeled
- Honest & hard workers who make for excellent employees when painstaking & methodical analysis are required

## Employer Take Away

Never assume a persons needs based on the diagnosis of Autism. Get to know the person.

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### Individuals with Asperger Syndrome thrives with:

- Consistency
- Predictability
- A calm and controlled supervisor
- An organized work environment

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Autism is a very broad spectrum. Know that the brain is wired differently and its effect on employee(s). Don't let your fear of the word, Autism, get in the way of their (and your) success.

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**ASPERGERS101**

Your Resource for High-Functioning Autism and Aspergers Syndrome



**ASPERGERS101**

for

**EMPLOYERS**

**Guide to  
Understanding  
High-Functioning  
Autism  
and  
Asperger Syndrome**

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# What is Asperger Syndrome?



Asperger Syndrome is a neurological condition resulting in a group of social and behavioral symptoms. It is part of a category of conditions called Autism Spectrum Disorders, though the revised DSM-V leaves Asperger Syndrome out of it's manuel and places the symptoms under Autism Spectrum Disorder(s) or pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified," or PDD-NOS.

The name, Asperger Syndrome is still used among the community as there has not otherwise been a name to specifically fit the diagnosis. People with Asperger Syndrome usually have normal to above normal intelligence and do not have the language problems typical of autism. It can lead to difficulty interacting socially, repeat behaviors, and clumsiness.

## Key Characteristics of High Functioning Autism/Asperger Syndrome are:

- Difficulty with Social Relationships
- Difficulty with Communication
- Special Interests
- Love of Routine
- Poor Concentration/Easily Distracted

## Workplace Challenges & Accommodations

A full day of work may be difficult. Areas of challenge may include social cues, sensory and thinking and processing or more. Know that gifts and challenges are unique to the individual with ASD so don't be afraid to discuss a customized plan *if they require one*.

### Common Workplace Challenges

- 1) Social Interaction
- 2) Sensory Issues
- 3) Thinking and Processing

#### 1) Social Interaction

##### Challenges

- Does not know how to engage with co-workers (small talk)
- Unsettled over workplace rules such as breaks, being late, basic expectations
- Difficulty initiating or maintaining eye contact
- Co-workers and managers display frustration and/or bullying to the employee with autism

##### Accommodations

- Assign a "work buddy" or mentor to explain social norms. Know that small talk is pointless and painful for people with ASD
- Provide Stress balls, offer an intro to the workplace day to learn protocol. Have it in written format for easy reference
- Do not pressure the person to make direct eye contact as it is very stressful if not painful for people with ASD
- Educate human resources personnel, managers and employees about Autism & Asperger's Syndrome

## Workplace Challenges & Accommodations

#### 2) Sensory Issues

##### Challenges

- Loud, sudden or repetitive sounds may distract or hurt
- Tactile issues such as texture on office chair or fabric of company shirt may be painful
- Overhead fluorescent lights painful
- Heavy perfumes from co-workers or strong odors from food distracts

##### Accommodations

- Offer noise cancelling headphones, white noise or a quiet workspace
- Offer seating surfaces or uniforms without polyester. Allow for cotton or other desired fabric instead
- Switch from fluorescent lighting to soothing natural light
- Allow for personal air fresheners

#### 3) Thinking and Processing

##### Challenges

- Forgets verbal instructions
- Distracted by co-workers
- Confused by expected deadlines
- Job Growth and Performance

##### Accommodations

- Avoid abstract directives
- Create checklists for multi-step processes through a pictorial or visual timetable
- May need a quiet space to work, background music, headphones or other strategies to overcome distraction
- Pictorial or visual timetables
- Use of a self-assessment/self-rating scale, to identify strengths and weaknesses may be beneficial