A guide for locating services in NSW:
For families who have a post school aged child
with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Compiled by the Autism Information Line
Autism Spectrum Australia
Who is Autism Spectrum Australia?
Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is the largest service provider for individuals with autism spectrum disorder\(^1\) (ASD) and their families in Australia.

What is the Autism Information Line?
Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) recognises that there are many questions for individuals who have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as well as for their families, carers, support staff and professionals. It is with the support of fundraising that Aspect operates the Autism Information Line (AIL).

The role of the AIL is to:
- Assist in answering specific enquiries
- Provide a referral point for services within Aspect and the wider community
- Offer brief practical advice to assist families and carers with their day to day management of children with ASD

The information line is staffed by Aspect professionals from a range of disciplines, who access a wide range of information regarding services and resources.

Please call the Autism Information Line

02 8977 8377
1800 069 978

Email: infoline@autismspectrum.org.au

\(^1\) ASD includes autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disability – not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger’s disorder.
Introduction

All young people and their parents are faced with important decisions about the directions their lives will take after they complete their secondary education. In addition to the range of opportunities for further learning that are open to school leavers, such as studying at TAFE or a University, there are some options that have been designed particularly for students with a disability.

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Every care is taken to ensure that the information included in this Navigation Pack is correct but inaccuracies may nevertheless occur. If you discover any information which you believe to be inaccurate please contact Infoline@autismspectrum.org.au.

Services are included in the Navigation Pack to assist you. Their inclusion in the pack does not necessarily imply that Aspect endorses or supports them, nor does the absence of a service imply that Aspect does not support them. Aspect cannot be held responsible for any damage or loss caused by any inaccuracy in the Navigation Pack.
Who can help?

**Your School** Contact your School Careers Advisor, School Counsellors, Support Teachers Transition and the Department of Education Student Support Co-ordinator.

**Support Teachers Transition** co-ordinate post school planning including Individual Transition Planning (ITP) meetings at school to assist the school, the family and the student explore options for post school. Each year they will hold an expo for parents and students to meet post school service providers.

**National Disability Coordination Officer Program (DEEWR)** The NDCO Program assists people with a disability to move from school, into training and higher education, and then into their chosen career. There is a national network of 31 co-ordination officers and the service is free. A free e-newsletter about education and employment is available by subscribing to the website. Phone 133 873 or visit [www.deewr.gov.au/ndco](http://www.deewr.gov.au/ndco) or email ndco@deewr.gov.au There are NDCOs for all areas in NSW and information about how to contact them is on their website. They have a new website to assist [www.youngworkertoolkit.youth.gov.au](http://www.youngworkertoolkit.youth.gov.au)

**Post School Options Info line** Information on ADHC’ Post School Programs is available on the 1800 761 030 or visit [www.adhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au)

**Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)** provides up to date and comprehensive information about inclusive teaching, learning and assessment strategies, accommodation and support strategies for people with disabilities in post-secondary education and training. Visit [www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)

**ADHC Programs - Transition to Work and Community Participation**

NSW Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) funds two post school programs, the Transition to Work and the Community Participation Programs for school leavers with a disability. A student in Year 12 who wants to be considered for one of these 2 programs will be assessed in May/June by teachers who are familiar with their needs and this assessment is forwarded to ADHC. Funding is then allocated according to the individual's assessed needs.

**Transition to Work Program**- aims to develop skills over a period of 2 years that may assist a school leaver gain paid employment, vocational education or training. The program is primarily targeted to young people with moderate to high support needs and typically provides 3 days of support each week.

**Community Participation Program**- teaches life skills and community involvement as an alternative to paid employment. The program has been developed for young people with a disability with moderate to very high support needs and provides a minimum of 24 up to 30 hours of support each week.

Service providers deliver both of these programs across NSW. Booklets with details of service providers are published annually by ADHC in print and on the ADHC website. [www.adhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au)

Aspect has three Adult Day Program services in:
- Bexley/Allawah- For details contact Greg Mealey, Program Co-ordinator on 9597 3142
- Canterbury- For details contact Annette McCarthy, Program Co-ordinator on 9784 0900
- Ryde – For details contact Gunta Jarjoura Program Co-ordinator on 9887 1098

**Higher Education and Training**

TAFE NSW employs specialist Teacher/Consultants for students with disabilities to ensure that all students have equal access to education and training at TAFE. The range of support offered includes, enrolment assistance, course advice, equipment/technological support and classroom support.

Students in the *Community Participation* and *Transition to Work* programs are entitled to one full year exemption for one TAFE NSW course/year, and are eligible for the $50 concession fee for subsequent enrolments in that year. The same applies for students in receipt of the Disability Support Pension who are assessed as eligible by a TAFE Teacher/Consultant.

Contact the Teacher/Consultant at your college for further information.


**Social and Occupational Skills Program (SOCS)** is aimed at students with Asperger's Syndrome seeking to explore and develop personal attributes and skills to assist them in continuing their education or successfully entering the work force. Graduates of SOCS are eligible to join SOCS + elective programs: they currently offer cafe work experience and evening acting classes to further expand their student's social networks. Available at Hornsby, Meadowbank and Crows Nest TAFE for 2 days a week selective terms. For further details contact Simon Piggot simon.piggott@tafensw.edu.au Mob 0434 322451

**University** - all universities have a Disability Adviser who can support and advise people with a disability attending the University. Assistance may include enrolment assistance, arrangement of access to buildings, provision of note-taking support, volunteer readers, loans of equipment and special exam conditions. Contact the Disability Adviser at your University.

A good website with useful tips about getting ready for University is [www.uws.edu.au/ndco/getready](http://www.uws.edu.au/ndco/getready)

**Willing and Able Mentoring (WAM)** Program matches enrolled University students who have a disability, and are registered with disability services, with mentors in leading organisations. Mentees are matched with mentors in their field of interest for a series of discussion meetings. During the meetings the following strategies are developed: gathering information about the career environment they are heading towards; refining interview skills; experiencing the workplace culture (e.g. staff meetings); developing better skills in presenting a professional profile; disclosure and demystifying disability and related workplace issues (e.g. workplace modifications). See [www.graduatecareers.com.au](http://www.graduatecareers.com.au) or email kevin.murfitt@deakin.edu.au
Employment Programs

A range of employment services and employment incentive programs have been set up to support people with a disability to gain and maintain employment.

**Centrelink** employs disability officers who are specially trained to provide assistance to people with a disability, including employment advice. Phone 131 021

*Job Capacity Assessment* is a comprehensive assessment, arranged through Centrelink of an individuals ability to work. It is used to determine the appropriate type and level of support that a person requires.


**Australian Network on Disability** The Australian Network on Disability (AND) is a not-for-profit organisation resourced by its members to advance the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of business. They are not an employment agency, and do not find jobs for people with disability. Rather, they work with their member organisations so that they become more confident and prepared to welcome people with disability into their organisations. They offer the “Stepping Into …2012” program that is a unique paid internship program designed to assist students with disability enter their chosen profession such as Law, It, Engineering and Human Resources [www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au) 1300 363 645Contact for “Stepping Into” Program is caroline.kwong@and.org.au

**Disability Employment Services** play a specialist role in helping people with a disability get ready to look for a job, find a job and keep a job in the open labour market. They provide a range of supports to meet individual needs, including training in specific job skills, job search support, on the job training and co-worker and employer supports.. Free to both jobseekers and employers and funded by DEEWR. For details of services in your area call the Disability Employment Service Information Line 13 26 68 or visit [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)

You can apply directly to a service whilst at school or 6 months after leaving without having to complete a job Capacity Assessment and being referred by Centrelink. After that time you need to apply through Centrelink and have a Job Capacity Assessment.

Services that support adults with an intellectual disability, including ASD, include:

- Disability Services Australia [www.dsa.org.au](http://www.dsa.org.au) Phone 02 9791 6599-
- Break-thru People Solutions [www.breakthru.org.au](http://www.breakthru.org.au)
- Job Support [www.jobsupport.org.au](http://www.jobsupport.org.au)
- Sydney Employment Development Service (SEDS)
www.thespasticcentre.com.au/seds  02 9413 3400 (ASD)

- or call direct on (02) 9890 0970
- APM assists students who have a learning difficulty or disability to find and keep a job. This assistance can also be provided while you are still at school. The service is free. You, your parent or a teacher can contact them. Call 1300 366 047

Also  www.abilityoptions.org.au  is an organisation which seeks to support people with High Functioning Autism or Aspergers in finding and keeping employment. They are based in the Hills district but have a presence in the Northern Beaches

ASCAPable is a specialist employment service for adults with aspergers in the Sydney Metro area. For further details contact Vicki Little on 0406 371 066  vicky.little@ASCapable.com  www.ascapable.com

**Employment Incentive Programs** designed to encourage the employment of people with a disability

- Supported Wage System
- Workplace Modifications Scheme. Can be used for structural alterations, as well as for the purchase or hire of specific equipment or aids.
- Wage Subsidy Scheme. The Government pays a proportion of the wage for the employee for a maximum period of 12 weeks.

For more information call FaHSCIA 1300 653 227 or Centrelink on 132 717.

**Employment Assistance Fund**

**Job Access**  www.jobaccess.gov.au  or 1800 464 800 will take applications for workplace modifications through the Employment Assistance Fund. Examples include; information technology such as the ipad, disability awareness training and information and communication devices.

**Australian Disability Enterprises** are commercial businesses that provide employment opportunities for people with a disability  www.australiandisabilityenterprises.com.au

**Volunteer Opportunities**

Becoming a volunteer is a great way to make a difference but donating your time can also benefit you. It is a great way to make new friends, develop new skills and expand those which you already have. It also looks good on your resume. Examples include conservation, sport and community projects. For more information visit  www.volunteering.com.au

**Green Corps** is an Australian Government youth development and environmental training programme for young people aged between 17 and 20 years. Green Corps provides young people with the opportunity to volunteer their time and effort to conserve, preserve and restore Australia’s natural environment and cultural heritage.

If you have any questions regarding Conservation Volunteers please email  info@conservationvolunteers.com.au  - make sure you include your return email or postal address.
Aspect's Adult Asperger's Social Club is for young adults who have asperger's or similar communication or social needs. The group meets in Sydney every fortnight on Wednesdays from 7 to 9 pm. For the calendar of events and details of how to join see our website www.autismspectrum.org.au or contact the Co-ordinator, Caroline Smith on 0409 603 582.

Accommodation

In NSW there is a range of Government-funded models designed to support people with a disability to live in their local community but availability is extremely limited. The level and type of support provided varies from drop-in support every few days to the family home, to group home accommodation which offers 24 hour support 7 days a week.

To access accommodation ring your local ADHC Regional Office and ask for the Intake and Referral Service. ADHC will record a future need (which is not an immediate need) without the need for an assessment but your child must be over 16 years of age. For children less than 16 there is a strong preference to providing additional supports in the family home, or finding a foster home for the child, rather than placing the child in supported accommodation.

If your need is immediate ADHC will conduct an assessment and, if they consider you eligible, will place your child on the Register of Requests for Supported Accommodation. Unfortunately this does not guarantee you a place either now or in the future and priority is given to those who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness.

Respite care

Commonwealth Carer and Respite Centres co-ordinate access to respite services in your local area. Phone 1800 059 059

ADHC RIAP Intake Line. Respite Intake and Allocation Process (RIAP) is a centralised intake and allocation point for carers/parents wishing to access ADHC funded flexible respite services. Not yet established in all regions in NSW. Referrals are prioritised according to certain criteria such as support needs and the family situation. Meetings are held during March and April to allocate for the coming year. To apply contact your local ADHC office.

Home Care Service of NSW provides personal care and respite services in your home. These services are required to have a fee policy, with the flexibility to reduce or waive fees according to the person's financial situation. Personal care services for children under 16 are free. For information contact your ADHC Regional office.

Finances

Turning 16 years:

When your child turns 16 years of age the payment system administered by Centrelink changes. Soon after your child's 15th birthday, you need to talk to Centrelink about the following:
• assessment for the Adult Carer Allowance
• your child's eligibility for the Disability Support Pension
• eligibility for the Youth Allowance if your child does not qualify for the Disability Support Pension
• eligibility for a Mobility Allowance to help with travel to training and work.
• Other allowances such as Education Entry Payments, Pensioner Education Supplements or Rent Assistance.

Be aware that separate medical reports must be completed for the DSP, Carer's Allowance (Adult) and Mobility Allowance, and keep copies of these reports for your own records.

When your child turns 18, you will need to complete a Nominee Form if you wish to continue to represent your child and receive information concerning your child.

For more detail refer to Finance Navigation Pack produced by the Autism Information Line.

To contact Centrelink call 132 717 or visit www.centrelink.gov.au

Further reading and resources


Get ready for study and work- the top 10 tips NDCO Program An excellent workbook for students to complete to prepare them for life after school. Produced by the NDCO and available from www.deewr.gov.au/ndco or by emailing ndco@uws.edu.au

Preparing for Life-the complete guide for transitioning to adulthood for those with autism/asperger’s syndrome by Dr Jed Baker www.jedbaker.com

AccessApps is the umbrella term for a range of free assistive technologies. It consists of over 60 open source and freeware Windows applications, which run directly from a USB stick. AccessApps provides a range of solutions to support writing, reading and planning as well as sensory, cognitive and physical difficulties. See www.eduapps.org for more information and to download AccessApps

Working with Adults with Autism: Using Learning Strengths and Increasing Independence Aspect publication www.autismspectrum.org.au

Thinking and Learning in Autism  Aspect publication www.autismspectrum.org.au

Asperger syndrome An Owner's Manual 2 for Older Adolescents and Adults: What you, your parents and your employer need to know  Ellen s Heller Korin  Autism Asperger Publishing Company. An interactive workbook for older adolescents and adults designed to assist users in identifying their unique profiles in order to devise appropriate and customized interventions and strategies.

Asperger Syndrome and Employment: A personal guide to succeeding at Work  N Dubin. This practical manual is useful for both adults with Asperger syndrome and career advisors
providing in-depth guidance and research on fulfilling employment.

Asperger Syndrome Employment Workbook: An Employment Workbook for Adults with Asperger Syndrome Myer R (2001) JKP Roger Myer has a diagnosis of asperger syndrome and this is an excellent resource.

A survival guide for people with Asperger syndrome Marc Seager Includes chapters on moving away from home, higher education and employment. This is available as a free download from http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~alisrair/survival/looking.html


“Choosing your path: disclosure it's a personal decision” is a web based resource providing comprehensive information about disclosure of disability in higher education and employment environments. www.pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/ check

Coming out Asperger: Diagnosis, Disclosure and Self-confidence Murray, D (2006) JKP

Useful websites:

www.equity.moodle.com.au TAFE and Aspect online training fact sheets on subjects such as stress anxiety, improving organisation, creative writing, coping with change and social skills

www.autismtraining.com.au Positive Partnerships. Workshops and online training for Teachers and parents of school aged children. 1300 881 971

www.autisminternetmodules.org/ A website for learning more about autism spectrum disorder. It has different learning levels.

www.nas.org.uk The National Autistic Society website in the UK. Good factsheets on subjects such as creating an autism-friendly environment and employment tips for interviewing people with ASD.


www.careermoves.net.au aims to help young people with a disability successfully move from school to further study, work or other programs.

www.jobaccess.gov.au help and workplace solutions for the employment of people with disability

www.aspergersyndrome.org OASIS On-line Asperger's Syndrome Information and Support

www.uws.edu.au/ndco/employment Useful information for TAFE and University students on finding Employment
www.myfuture.edu.au career information service. You can use the personalized career exploration tool to discover career options and identify your career path. You will also find occupation profiles, job seeking tips, information about courses and scholarships, and many activities and quizzes to help you explore your career options.


www.uws.edu.au/ndco Get ready for study and work
www.uws.edu.au/ndco/getready Get ready for Uni

www.jobaccess.gov.au/joac/home A one-stop shop for employers, co-workers, and people with a disability, supported by a free professional telephone information/advice service 1800 464 800

www.nscchealth.nsw.gov.au/carers Useful resources and information
www.clickstart.org.au Resources and information
www.services.unimelbourne.edu.au/studentequity Good information and resources

WORKING WITH ADULTS WITH AUTISM:
USING LEARNING STRENGTHS AND INCREASING INDEPENDENCE

We can assist the person with autism to be as successful and independent as possible by making sure that the way we teach capitalises on the learning strengths in autism and takes into account learning difficulties that occur. **Learning strengths of people with autism include:**

- Taking in whole chunks of information quickly
- Remembering information for a long time
- Using visual information meaningfully
- Learning and repeating long routines
- Understanding and using concrete, context-free information and rules
- Concentrating on narrow topics of interest

1. Use VISUAL teaching methods.
Use **visual supports** such as written words, photos,
templates and timetables and non-verbal communication such as gestures, pointing and facial expression.

2. Establish routines and predictable environments.
People with autism quickly learn routines and are naturally motivated to repeat them. If the steps in a routine are presented with a clear beginning and end, the total routine is often learned quickly. Since people with autism are naturally motivated to repeat routines, the completion of the routine is in itself reinforcing. This includes daily, weekly, monthly and annual routines, as well as structuring tasks as consistent routines.

- Certain tasks and activities to be done the same way by all staff
- Daily and weekly events should follow a predictable sequence

3. Inform people with autism what is about to happen before it occurs.
People with autism have difficulty anticipating what is about to happen before it happens and coping with transitions and changes to routines. It is critical that they are informed about what is about to happen before it occurs. This means using visual supports. Verbal instructions are not enough.

4. Encourage the generalisation of skills to different situations.
Set up ways for skills to be practiced in different places, e.g. making a snack of three-minute noodles at the day program as well as at home. Have different people train the person with autism but make sure all trainers use consistent routines and teaching methods.

5. Be prepared.
People with autism take in chunks of information quickly and remember things for a long time. This means the first time you teach something, you need to provide relevant cues for the person to attend to. Make sure you:

- Have all the equipment you need before commencing the task
- Have visual supports prepared
- Work out concise, verbal cues at an appropriate level
- Make all staff follow the same sequence and use the same cues — consistency is vital

6. Teach the whole task.
Practising small parts of a task without going through the whole task loses the meaning for people with autism. Make sure the person at least observes the whole task from beginning to end. If the person will tolerate being guided through the whole task then this is recommended.

- Use visual support to show the end product before commencing
- Use visual support to show how the steps fit together.
7. Adapt your verbal language
- Simplify your language — use key words and simple phrases (remember politeness and respect is communicated by your tone of voice, body posture and facial expression much more than the words you use)
- Express one thing at a time and say things in the order that they happen
- Use direct and specific language
- Don’t use questions to give instructions
- Use pauses and plenty of silences
- Talk at a normal volume and with varied intonation
- Augment with nonverbal supports such as gestures where possible

8. Use positive statements.
Overuse of words like “no”, “don’t”, “stop”, “wait” and “not now” MAY TRIGGER CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS. Use positive words, don’t focus on negatives. If the person needs redirecting, explain what to do, not what not to do. Don’t say: “No reading” or “Stop that” — say: “It’s time to….. now… (pause) …let’s go”.

9. Allow plenty of time for the person to respond.
Many people with autism are likely to have a long response time, taking longer than usual to comprehend and respond to what is said to them. Sometimes as much as 30 to 45 seconds. Allow sufficient processing time for the person with autism to respond; don’t expect them to react immediately to what is said, as this will place them under unnecessary stress. Repeating a message within seconds of the original message makes it even more stressful. Wait at least 20 seconds for the person to respond before repeating or using other support.

10. Give specific choices.
People with autism will respond to questions better if given a clear choice.
Don’t ask: “What do you want to eat?” — say: “Do you want chips or biscuit?”
The client does not need to be able to speak to make a choice. They may simply reach toward their choice or push the non-preferred item away. To assist understanding, show the items or a visual representation of the items involved in the choice.
Helping open and supported employment services and employers understand the needs of people with Asperger’s Syndrome and high functioning autism- Gateways www.autismhelp.info

Introduction
The most important thing to remember when working with adults with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) and high functioning autism (HFA) is that no two people are alike. Each has individual requirements for assistance with job placement, individual capabilities, special talents and a unique perspective to contribute to the workplace. Sadly some young adults with AS or HFA can exit the education system highly qualified but lacking the social and communication skills to impress potential employers at an interview and function successfully in the workplace.

Common difficulties experienced by people with AS and HFA that impact on their employment opportunities include:
- difficulty with communication,
- difficulty with social interaction,
- difficulty coping with change and a strong need for routine,
- difficulty concentrating and focusing on relevant information,
- difficulty with time management, and
- issues arising from stress and anxiety.

Some positive aspects about adults with AS and HFA:
- many have an excellent memory for facts, figures, names etc.
- many have a special talent or skill, some have savant abilities,
- positive character traits include honesty, punctuality, loyalty, reliability, attention to detail, perfectionism and single-mindedness.

Social Characteristics
The following tables list the characteristics of adults with AS or HFA. While most neuro-typical adults will identify with many of these characteristics at some point in their lives, adults with AS and HFA experience these continuously with many of them appearing simultaneously; they also experience them far more intensely.

The column on the right lists strategies and suggestions that can support the person with AS or HFA during training and in the workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty offering criticism without appearing insensitive</th>
<th>Tactfully suggest a more appropriate comment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty accepting criticism</td>
<td>Be sensitive to their self-esteem. Make it seem like a learning opportunity rather than a deficit. End the discussion in a positive way and give them one or two clear, practical, achievable tasks to work on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in perceiving and applying unwritten social rules</td>
<td>Social skills training may be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immature manners</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naïve trust in others</td>
<td>Be aware this can lead them into distressing or dangerous situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shyness</td>
<td>Social and communication difficulties often lead to withdrawal and isolation. Encourage them to observe others and learn from them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little or no participation in group conversation</td>
<td>Don’t be too concerned if they do not contribute to the conversation. Many adults with AS/HFA prefer one-on-one interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant anxiety about performance and acceptance</td>
<td>Make praise and comments meaningful. Instead of ‘good job’ tell them specifically what you liked about their work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme honesty, often expressed in an inappropriate manner</td>
<td>Tactfully suggest a more appropriate comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluntness in emotional expression</td>
<td>Adults with AS/HFA do have emotions; they just don’t talk about them in a direct way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems to have little or no sense of humour, bizarre sense of humour</td>
<td>Adults with AS/HFA may not get humour that relies on understanding inference or how others think; they might prefer word-play or slapstick humour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty reciprocating greetings or pleasantries</td>
<td>Encourage them to observe others and take their cues from them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty expressing empathy to others, eg. condolence, congratulations</td>
<td>A lack of empathy may be off putting to a person who doesn’t know them, remember it takes longer to build a relationship with someone who has AS/HFA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong expression of likes and dislikes</td>
<td>We all have likes/dislikes; people with AS/HFA tend to express them more intensely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid adherence to rules where flexibility is desirable</td>
<td>When learning rules, it is helpful for people with AS/HFA to learn that some rules must be adhered to at all times (ie. a safety rule) some rules can be broken in certain circumstances and some rules are flexible. Write these down for reference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Serious’ all the time</td>
<td>May not recognise jokes or sarcasm, takes things literally. There may be difficulty forgiving colleagues over minor grievances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-minded</td>
<td>Can be an advantage if channelled in the right direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash temper or tantrums</td>
<td>Don’t make a big issue out of it – suggest they go for a walk to calm down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive talk</td>
<td>People with AS/HFA may lack the skills to just ‘chat’ so they may talk about their interests a great deal. May also be calming strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty distinguishing between acquaintance and friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense concern for privacy</td>
<td>However a person with AS/HFA may ask their colleagues many personal questions. This may help them establish a point of reference – “if they’re OK, then I’m OK.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty judging others’ personal space</td>
<td>Tactfully remind the person with AS/HFA of the need to respect personal space, use concrete terms such as arms’ length.</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited clothing preference</td>
<td>May not be suited to positions that require formal attire or uniforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seem to ‘be in their own world’</td>
<td>Many adults with AS/HFA are aware of their differences to those around them but have no idea how to handle the feeling of isolation. They just want to be accepted for who they are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Physical Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong sensory sensitivities</th>
<th>May need an occupational therapist (OT) to conduct an assessment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self stimulatory behaviour to reduce anxiety</td>
<td>Reduce or eliminate sources of anxiety in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clumsiness, poor balance</td>
<td>May need an assessment by an OT. It is important not to joke about this as these characteristics are inherent in the disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual gait, posture or stance</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty judging distances</td>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross or fine motor difficulties</td>
<td>May need an OT assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression, anxiety</td>
<td>Make a list of things they have achieved to encourage positive thinking. Access mental health services if necessary, medication can have significant benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty expressing anger</td>
<td>Organise a daily/weekly feedback session with supervisor to encourage the person with AS/HFA to air grievances. Some are better at expressing themselves in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat or monotone vocal expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty initiating or maintaining eye contact</td>
<td>It is important for a person with AS/HFA to understand they should position their body toward someone when communicating even if they can’t maintain eye contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor personal hygiene</td>
<td>Make a visual schedule or list with daily requirements for acceptable standard of hygiene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong food preferences or aversions</td>
<td>We all have likes/dislikes but people with AS/HFA are more inflexible due to sensory processing difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Characteristics</td>
<td>What to Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptible to distraction</td>
<td>Limit visual and auditory distractions in the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty expressing emotions</td>
<td>Picture charts or graphs can be used to indicate emotions or level of anxiety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental shutdown response to conflicting demands or multiple tasks</td>
<td>Avoid ambiguity. Don’t expect they will automatically understand an instruction that seems obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor understanding of conversational rules, eg. interrupting, shifting topics</td>
<td>Need to be explicit, “We’ve finished talking about that now.” “It’s my turn now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literal interpretation of instructions (and language in general)</td>
<td>Use precise, direct language but avoid talking ‘down’. Avoid statements like ‘maybe’ ‘sometimes’ ‘possibly’. Check to ensure they have interpreted the instruction correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on step-by-step learning procedures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in generalising</td>
<td>When a new skill has been learnt it is helpful to reflect on what has been learnt and discuss how this skill might be useful in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for repetitive tasks or routines</td>
<td>If forced to change a routine, help them develop a new one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme reaction to changes in routine</td>
<td>As above. Give advance warning of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to finish one task completely before starting another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid adherence to rules</td>
<td>Teach rules in a way that allows for flexibility, eg. rules regarding safety must be adhered to at all times but some rules can be broken in certain circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty imagining another person’s thoughts or intentions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent lack of common sense</td>
<td>Be aware of safety implications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty assessing cause and effect</td>
<td>Will need training in carrying out risk assessment if the position involves hazardous tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with time management</td>
<td>Use visual schedules. Help the person with ASD establish priorities and estimate time to be spent on given tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with teamwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoids socialising with other employees on or off the job</td>
<td>Not being aloof or rude, many adults with AS/HFA find it difficult to interact socially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual and conscientious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty handling relationships with authority figures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to accept positions of authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of assertiveness</td>
<td>Make time for regular feedback sessions with supervisor to discuss concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little awareness of risks in the environment to self or others</td>
<td>Help them make connections between cause and effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency to ‘lose it’ when given contradictory or confusing priorities</td>
<td>Avoid ambiguity. Check that they have interpreted instructions correctly. Be aware of information overload. People with AS/HFA take much longer to process verbal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty starting a task</td>
<td>Break tasks down into well-defined steps. Use physical or verbal cues as a prompt. Gradually fade prompts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little motivation to perform tasks outside personal interest</td>
<td>Ensure the position involves tasks that appeal to their interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to forget tasks without reminders</td>
<td>Use lists or visual schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with order and appearance of work area</td>
<td>People with AS/HFA find it difficult to focus on what is relevant and essential, a tidy work area helps them focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>Can be a positive attribute in the right position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with unstructured time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to ask for help</td>
<td>Make colleagues aware so they can offer help if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive questioning</td>
<td>Can be a self-calming strategy, answer the question but try to move the conversation on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress, frustration and anger in reaction to interruptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty negotiating with others</td>
<td>May have unrealistic expectations of others due to inability to understand thoughts, feelings and motivations of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable to harassment by others</td>
<td>Educate other employees to ensure the person with AS/HFA receives the same respect as everyone else.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>