

OSNS LINK TO SUCCESS

Employment Support Workshop
for Autistic Youth

Navigating the Neurotypical Work Environment

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Unwritten Workplace Rules

- “I wish I just knew the rules!” - a very common autistic experience
- They can feel like “social secrets”
- Disclaimer: You already have social skills



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Unwritten Workplace Rules

Very General Guidelines

- Be on time (and what this actually means)
- Let people know if you need additional response time
- Be positive
- Don't gossip!
- Ask about dress code policies
- Notice where you are in space



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Unwritten Workplace Rules

Very General Guidelines

- Consider “hard” and “soft” rules
- Let someone know when you are leaving
- Know that people are listening for tone



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Unwritten Workplace Rules

Practices That Make Others Feel Respected

- Greet people when you arrive and let them know when you are leaving
- Use people's names in conversations
- Look up if you hear your name being called
- How to approach someone who looks busy
- Look at people (or in their general direction) when they are speaking



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Unwritten Workplace Rules

More unwritten rules

- Lunchroom etiquette
- Workplace emails
- Workplace hierarchies
- A note on “why?” questions
- Topics to avoid
- What is a “good team player”?



How To Ask For Help

JUST ASK!

- It can be hard to ask for help!
 - Past experiences of not consenting to help we received
 - It involves **executive function** skills
 - We may need more help than our allistic counterparts
- It is okay to ask for help in a new environment!



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Whom to Ask For Help

- A trusted adult: parent, grandparent, teacher
- A job coach or workplace mentor
- A colleague, supervisor, manager

**If you are unsure, you can go
down the list in order**



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Words We Can Use To Ask For Help

Expanding on “why” questions:

E.g. “Why does this need to be done a certain way? Could I possibly do it another way, or is there a reason I am not yet aware of?”

For questions about miscommunication:

“I think I may have misunderstood what you said; can I ask a few questions to clarify?”



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Words We Can Use to Ask for Help

Other Possible Sentence Structures:

- "Would you mind explaining ___ to me again?"
 - "Can I ask for some support with _____?"
 - "I wasn't sure what you meant by _____. Could you please show me?"
 - "I'm unsure of how to best approach _____. Do you have any tips?"
- Affirm the other person's expertise and experience when asking for help



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Final Tips on Asking for Help

PLEASE

THANK YOU

&



- Choose a good time to ask for help
- Information might be repeated - thank them anyway!
- Remember to say please and thank you



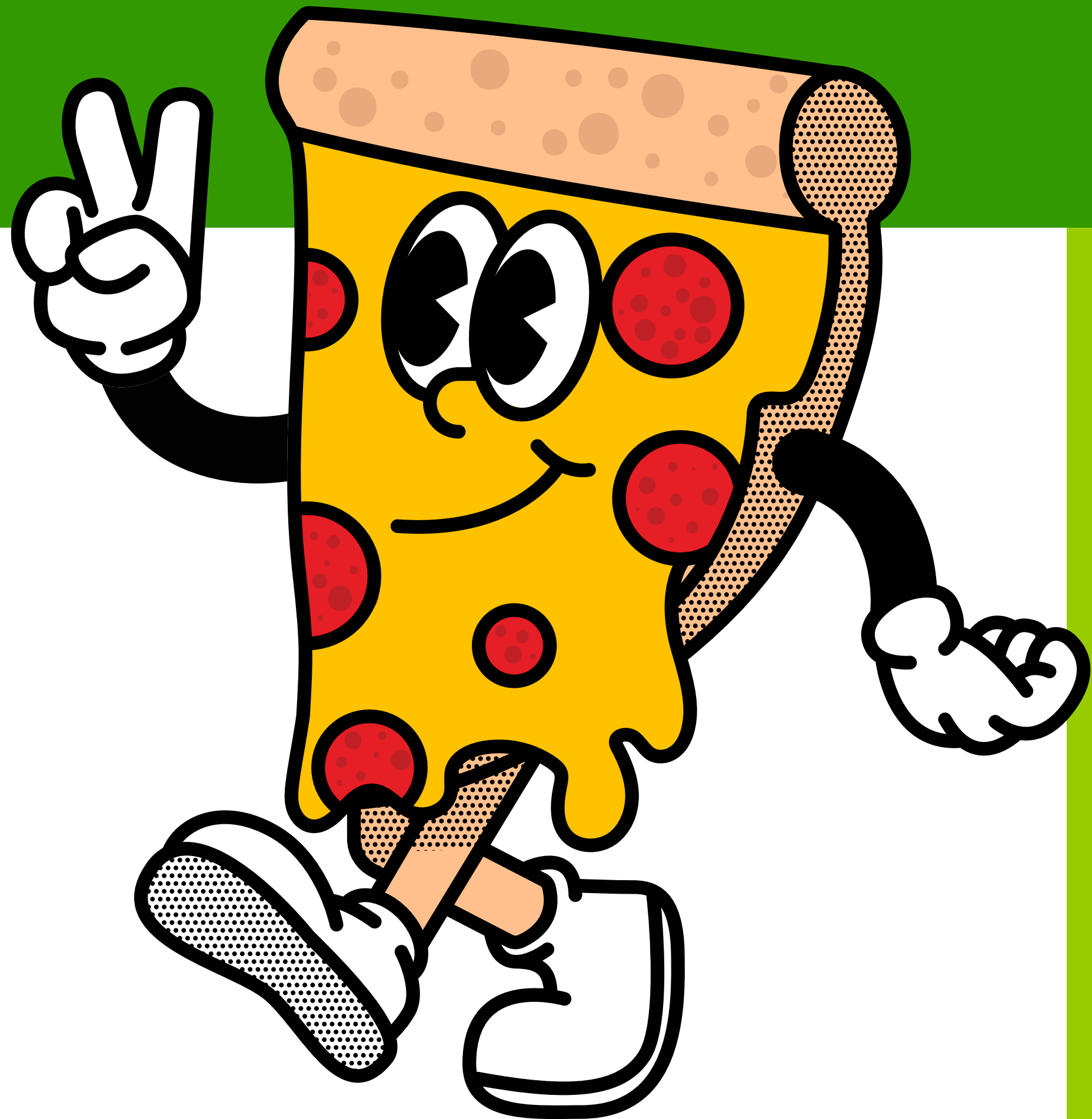
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Workplace Accommodations

- Many workplace accommodations do not need to be formal, written accommodations
- If you are asking for an accommodation that needs to be documented, the employer may need to know the reason you are asking
- Employers are not allowed to ask for the specifics of a disability
- Employers are not allowed to challenge your diagnosis



10 minute
break



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Workplace Stress

- Stress is a natural response to new situations, challenges, pressures, or unexpected events
- Stress can be healthy, anxiety can be natural
- If stress/anxiety is becoming more persistent or severe, it can lead to autistic burnout. It is important (and okay!) to seek help



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It Can We Stressful When

- You are unsure of what to say or do in a new situation
- You experience sensory challenges/overwhelm
- You have an upcoming deadline or performance review
- Someone criticizes the way you work
- You are forced to mask (hide your autistic traits) at work
- Someone asks you to complete a task with no instructions



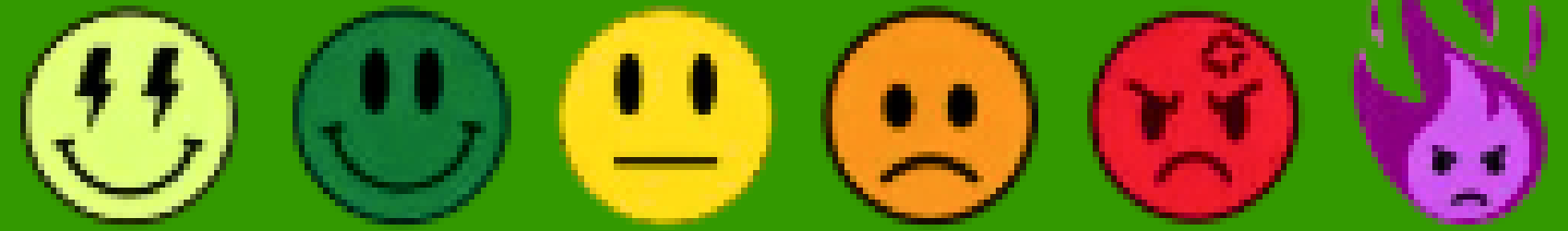
Managing Stress At Work

- Make minor sensory adjustments
- Keep track of your stressors and look for patterns
- Create a list of things that help you relax
- Establish clear boundaries
- Talk to your supervisor about the stress and ask for accommodations if needed
- Seek support from friends, family members, healthcare professionals



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Autistic Meltdowns At Work



- Sometimes workplace stress results in autistic meltdowns
 - It can be explosive, or it can be quiet (situational mutism)
- While meltdowns are often outside of our control, we can anticipate possible triggers:
 - Sensory stimuli
 - Miscommunication or misinterpretation
 - Changes in routine
 - Social situations



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Autistic Meltdowns At Work

- Until we have truly inclusive spaces, meltdowns will likely continue to be a part of our work experiences
- It helps to have a support system in place
- After a meltdown, remember to check in with yourself and anyone else affected - take ownership of your meltdowns
 - Accept that they happen
 - Know your triggers and be prepared to learn through experience
 - It is okay to ask for help!



Making Mistakes At Work

Oops!

- Mistakes are to be expected!
- Acknowledge the mistake as soon as you can
- How to apologize at work:
 - Start with the words, "I'm sorry"
 - Acknowledge what the error was
 - Focus on what you've learnt
 - Suggest a plan going forward to avoid the same mistake in the future



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How Would You Fix These Mistakes?

- You can't remember a coworker's name, even though they have told you twice already
- You missed a deadline to submit a work document
- You've arrived 5 minutes late to work, but no one has noticed
- You've gone into auto-pilot mode at work and notice at the end of the day that you made a mistake that affects customers



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A Few Notes On Apologies

- Apologizing can be awkward!
- Don't over-apologize. Ask yourself:
 - Was anyone else involved?
 - Was anyone hurt by this mistake?
- Some mistakes do not require apologies and are part of the natural learning process

SORRY!



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The Double Empathy Problem

- A theory that suggests that people with different experiences of the world may have difficulty empathizing with one another
- Autistic people tend to communicate well with other autistic people
- We do NOT lack social skills!



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Thank You for Joining Us!

Workshop Slide
Presentation



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