

• TIPS FOR MANAGING WORK STRESS•

From the A-Team Group Session with Carol McMullen

Disclaimer: These tips are the opinions of Carol McMullen and the group, based on their own professional and personal experiences. The points below are meant to serve as suggestions rather than rules or guidelines. You have the freedom to decide which of these suggestions are appropriate for you, in your situation.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

e.g., gaining access to the hidden job market, lack of confidence, feeling overwhelmed or discouraged by the job search, feeling intimidated by the interview process, not knowing whether or not to be open about diagnosis, getting too comfortable in a role, struggling to adapt to change and navigate workplace politics and develop relationships with bosses/ coworkers, etc.

There are many barriers that prevent or make it difficult for people on the ASD spectrum to seek and maintain employment. You are not alone if you are struggling. Below are some suggestions that might help one address such challenges:

EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

- 'Networking' is key:
 - Find a mentor that understands and appreciates your unique skill set, and that can help you make links with potential employers; **ask for introductions via email, ask them to give you advice to improve your resume and cover letter**
 - Instructors, classmates, and various staff members can also be good resources to help you make links to potential employers; **get in touch**
 - **Make it known that you are looking for work**; be sure to be clear about what type of work you are looking for
- **Journal your experiences** in search for a job, including your ideal job, successes and challenges, tips and reminders, etc.
- **Know yourself** and what kind of work you are looking for/ good at; **focus your job search**

APPLYING FOR THE JOB

- **Format your resume strategically**
- **Apply directly** to the people in charge of hiring, rather than to a general mailbox, when possible
- **Apply to jobs/ organizations that you really want to work for regardless of whether or not they are currently hiring**; many organizations will keep your resume on file and potentially contact you later if a position becomes available
- **Find a job that fits**; be open to learning whether or not the job/ organization is right for you

INTERVIEWS

- **Research potential interview questions**
- **Approach interviews with a positive attitude**
- Frame all of your weaknesses as strengths; **highlight key parts of your resume that emphasize your strengths**
- **Dress well**. Choose clothes that are appropriate for the job that you are applying for. Avoid over- or under-dressing
- **Avoid disclosing your diagnosis during the interview process**; wait to do that after you've gotten the job. Instead you might cautiously discuss how and in what types of environments you work best
- **Be equally prepared to get or not get a job offer**

IMPROVING YOUR CONFIDENCE

- **Be aware that stress can make it easy to focus on the negatives and hurt your confidence**; especially during the job search. Do your best to maintain a positive attitude about employment.
- **Make and re-read notes** about your positive attributes and unique skill set, write about what makes you a valuable employee (i.e. positive affirmation); bonus: this will make related interview questions much easier to answer
- **A compliment can go a long way**. People appreciate hearing positive feedback and are likely to offer it back to you upon receipt
- **Surround yourself with people that make you feel appreciated and valued**

HOW TO SURVIVE ON THE JOB

- **Be aware that the first few weeks on the job are crucial**
- Ask your supervisor for regular 'connecting' meetings; **be proactive about asking for feedback** about how you're doing (what you're doing well and where you can improve). Use these meetings to make specific requests for accommodations as needed
- **Be open to offering other explanations** about why you do things a certain way to help other understand you
- **Find a 'safe' person at work**; someone you can talk and ask for advice about navigating office dynamics
- **Learn about the people you work with**. Make brief notes about office dynamics/ coworkers/ workplace culture to help you develop interpersonal relationships. Be aware that the social aspects of work can be as important as the work that you do
- **Get to know your tolerance for change and set standards**; take 'time-outs' / 'buy' time when changes occur and you need time to process

For more information, please access Carol McMullen's book titled: [Saving your Child, Saving Yourself: Navigating Roadblocks in Managing ADHD, Asperger's and Learning Disabilities](#)

As stated by Carol McMullen and discussed by the group,
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