

Career Success for Adults with Asperger's: Coaching Tips for Teamwork

By: Patricia Robinson, MS, MA, MFT

It seems like everyone is worried about the economy right now. And for adults with Asperger's, career issues can be especially challenging. But opportunity arises in times of change, and you can use the advantages of Asperger's to build your career and ensure future job security.

Asperger's Syndrome is a condition that carries strengths and weaknesses. For career success, the key is to know your own strengths and weaknesses, and use them to your advantage. What are some of the strengths of Asperger's? In many cases, those with Asperger's are logical, technically proficient, straightforward, hardworking, reliable and honest. All the traits that today's more streamlined and cost conscious businesses need!

What about the challenges of Asperger's Syndrome? According to Tony Attwood, in *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*, (2007, Jessica Kingsley Publishers) adults with Asperger's may struggle with, among other things, teamwork, managing others, organization, conflicts, and coping with change. In this article, I give some tips for how to minimize the challenges of teamwork by emphasizing your strengths. Look for future articles on other challenges.

Challenge: Teamwork Issues

Suppose you've been assigned a group project, and it's not going well. Think about the objective of the team here. The point is to get the job done. This is what you're good at! Focus your energy on completing the job, even if it means doing more than your share, or trying other people's ideas even when you know that yours are better.

While it may seem like the team isn't being fair or that others aren't doing their share, it rarely pays to go complaining to management. They've got bigger problems right now, and your boss is probably hoping that the project will get done without having to spend management resources on it. Make it your goal to be a part of a winning team. Trust that management will eventually notice who's getting the work done, and who is just coasting along on the efforts of others. Your Asperger's strengths give you a strong advantage here. Focus on the work, and leave the political maneuvering to the people who aren't doing their share. Your company can't afford to carry dead weight, so they'll be paying attention to results, and who achieved them.

Coaching for Asperger's Tip for Teamwork:

Complaining about teammates may get you labeled as a whiner or troublemaker. Adults with Asperger's struggle with reading social signals, so it pays to get an impartial opinion from someone else. Make a pact with yourself that you will always get a second opinion before you

discuss the problems of your group with anyone else at the office. Don't complain to your boss without a second opinion!

Who to ask? Someone you can trust completely, preferably from outside the company, such as a spouse, close friend, former colleague, or mentor. Lay out what's going on, ask for your advisor's opinion on the people issues specifically, and listen to that opinion. Social skills aren't your strength, that's why you're seeking advice. If you're not sure who to trust, you might consider hiring a coach who is not part of the company, and who will be bound by ethics to keep your conversation confidential.

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