

10 ways to make your workplace autism-friendly

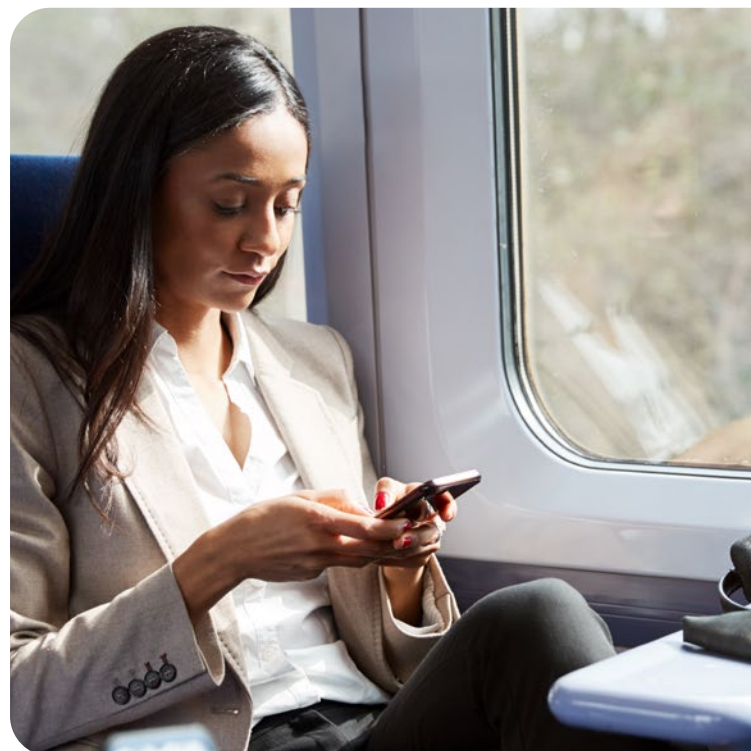


Making your workplace autism-friendly isn't just the right thing to do. It helps create a more productive, innovative, and supportive work environment. People on the autism spectrum bring **unique skills and perspectives**, but traditional office environments can be challenging for them. Globally, employment rates for autistic people remain among the lowest across all groups, with estimates showing that **between 76% and 90% are unemployed in Europe**.

By making some changes, you can create a **space where everyone feels comfortable and can do their best work**. Here are 10 practical ways to get started.

1. Use clear and simple communication

Many autistic people prefer direct communication. Avoid vague phrases, metaphors, or sarcasm. Instead, be straightforward and clear. For example, instead of saying, "Can you get to this soon?" specify a time or date like, **"Can you finish this by Friday at noon?"** Provide written instructions whenever possible. For example, share a **clear checklist or step-by-step guide** for tasks. Having a written record helps reduce misunderstandings and gives people time to process the information.



2. Provide flexible working options

Not everyone thrives in a traditional 9-to-5 schedule or a busy office. **Flexible working hours or remote work options** can make a big difference. Letting employees work in ways that suit their needs can lead to better results for everyone. If remote work isn't possible, consider allowing adjustments like **starting earlier or later** to avoid peak commuting times.

3. Create a sensory-friendly workspace

Noise, bright lights, and strong smells can be overwhelming for autistic employees. You can make the workspace more comfortable by:

- Offering **noise-cancelling headphones**.
 - Providing **adjustable lighting** or access to natural light.
 - **Avoiding air fresheners** or strong cleaning products.
 - Setting up **quiet areas** where people can work without distractions.
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4. Encourage breaks

Taking regular breaks can help **reduce stress** and **prevent sensory overload**. Make sure employees know they can step away when they need to. Providing a designated break room or quiet area can help. Let staff know it's okay to take **short walks** or **spend a few minutes away from their desks** to recharge.

5. Offer autism awareness training

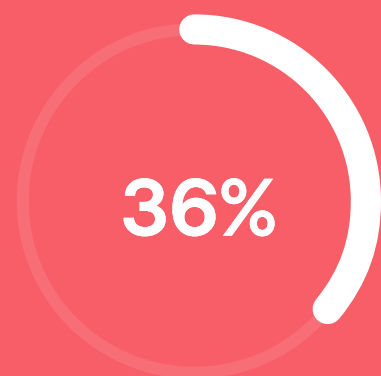
Educating managers and teams about autism can make a huge difference. Training helps people understand common challenges and how to support their colleagues. It can also **reduce misunderstandings** and **create a more inclusive environment**. Look for training providers with lived experience of autism to ensure the sessions are meaningful and relatable.

6. Make recruitment accessible

Traditional hiring processes can be a barrier for autistic candidates, often due to sensory challenges in interview settings or a focus on social interaction over technical skills. For example, unstructured interviews often focus on social skills, which may not reflect someone's abilities or potential.

To improve accessibility:

- Use skills-based assessments instead of open-ended interviews.
- Share detailed job descriptions and what to expect during the hiring process.
- Allow candidates to request adjustments, like a quiet interview space or extra time to answer questions.



According to the Buckland Review of Autism Employment, autistic graduates are twice as likely to be unemployed after 15 months as non-disabled graduates, with only 36% finding full-time work in this period.



7. Focus on strengths

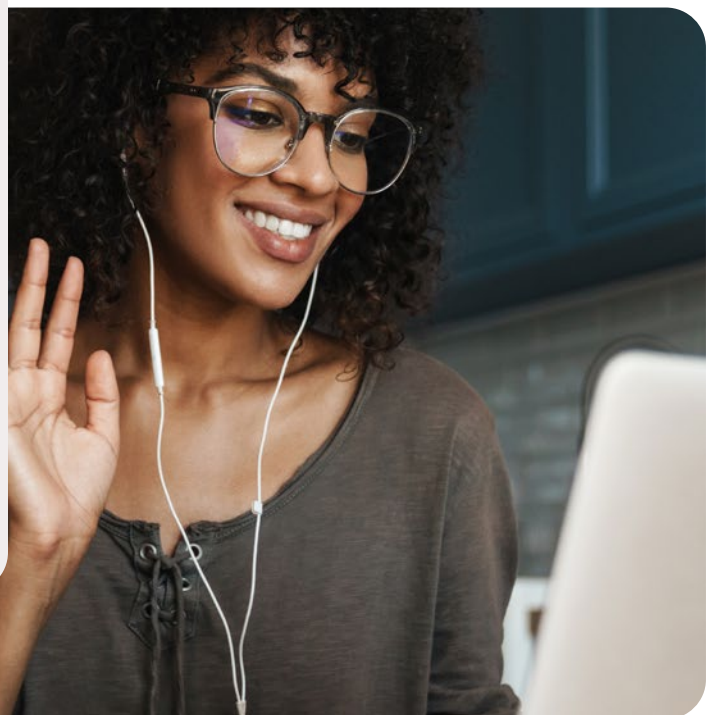
Rather than concentrating on what someone might struggle with, **highlight their strengths**. Many autistic people excel in areas like attention to detail, creative problem-solving, or analytical thinking. When assigning tasks, **consider how their strengths can benefit the team**.

8. Provide clear feedback

Ambiguous feedback can be confusing and stressful. Be specific about what went well and what needs improvement. For example, instead of saying, "You need to be more proactive," explain what that looks like, such as, **"Please email me updates at the end of each day."** Consider **offering feedback in writing**, so employees can review it in their own time.

9. Be mindful of social events

Workplace social events can be challenging for autistic employees. They might prefer smaller gatherings or activities that don't involve loud music or crowded spaces. **Ask for input when planning events** and make it clear that **attendance is optional**. Providing alternative ways to connect, like virtual events or smaller team lunches, can make everyone feel included.





10. Try a mentoring programme

Mentoring where experienced employees can guide and support autistic colleagues can be hugely beneficial. for workplace integration, skill development, and career progression. Mentors can provide **valuable insights into workplace culture** and **unwritten social rules**, which autistic employees might find challenging to navigate.

Contact **HealthHero** today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.

All information correct as of April, 2025