

# autism

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a quick-reference resource

# autism

[au-tiz-uhm] *noun*

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts how someone experiences and interacts with their environment. It is estimated that there are over 1.2 million autistic adults in the UK<sup>1</sup> – more than 1 in every 100 people – of which more than half are undiagnosed.

Some of the common characteristics of autism include:

- Differences in social communication and interaction.
- Cognitive differences relating to executive functioning and attention to detail.
- A preference for routine and structure over change or uncertainty.
- Focused areas of interest and passion.
- Over- or under-sensitivity to the sensory environment.

illustration: Megan Rhiannon 'Existing Autistic'



## did you know?

Only **29%**  
of autistic adults are  
in full-time  
employment<sup>2</sup>

Only **30%**  
of autistic adults feel  
comfortable enough to  
share their condition with  
their HR department<sup>3</sup>

**35%**  
of autistic adults in  
employment said settling  
into a new organisation has  
been the most challenging  
phase of working life  
for them<sup>3</sup>

Only **44%**  
of autistic individuals  
felt they could be their  
authentic self at work<sup>3</sup>

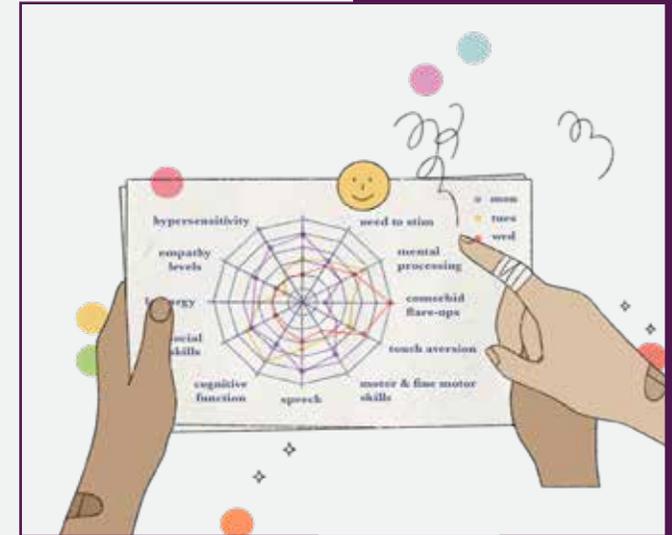
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## strengths

- » Attention to detail
- » Hyperfocus with a high degree of accuracy
- » Honest, fact-based and clear communication
  - » Creativity
- » Heightened problem-solving
- » Strong long-term memory

## challenges

- » Intuitive aspects of communication can be misunderstood
  - » Navigating unwritten social rules
  - » Managing sensory sensitivities
- » Time perception and time management
- » Organisation and transitioning between tasks



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## in the workplace

### How can you support an autistic person in the workplace?

- Support your autistic colleague by being **person-centred** and consider their lived experience.
- Complete a **support assessment** reviewing all aspects of the current role (e.g. ways of working; sensory environment; learning styles).
- **Implement reasonable workplace adjustments** to support challenges and review regularly.

### Examples of reasonable adjustments:

- **Flexible** working practices (e.g. work from home, hybrid work, adjusted work hours).
- Provide a **clear agenda** for all meetings to **clarify expectations**.
- Use **clear, direct, and literal** instructions – align communication to the individual's **preference**.
- Provide **advance notice** of changes to tasks or meetings.
- Provide a **preferred** desk which is away from busy paths or foot traffic.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> [Elizabeth O’Nions et al., “Autism in England: Assessing Underdiagnosis etc.” \(June 1, 2023\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Office for National Statistics \(2021\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Auticon OnePoll study \(Feb 2023\)](#)

auticon is a social enterprise with the mission to **address the inequalities** in employment for **neurodivergent** adults.

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