



DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF AUTISTIC STAFF IN HOSPITALITY

Project Number 2023-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000152721



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ABOUT:

The 'PERFORM' project is about educating Hospitality Managers and HR Experts in developing and supporting Autistic Staff in the EU Hospitality Sector. It also delivers an Innovative HR Platform, for performance appraisals and employee monitoring.

PROJECT RESULTS

1

Project Result 1: PERFORM HR Platform

2

Project Result 2: PERFORM Digital Toolkit

3

Project Result 3: VET Course for Hospitality Managers and HR Experts



Module 3 : Work Environment Management

Module Aim

In order to support the Development and Retention of Autistic Staff, Hospitality

Managers and HR Experts need to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to appropriately evaluate and adapt the Work Environment. This module aims to do so.

Learning Outcomes

1

To give the understanding the Definition of an Autism-friendly Work Environment

2

The Development of Team Management Skills in inclusive workplace

3

Provide Guidelines for assessing and adapting the Work Environment in an Autism-friendly context



Module 3: Module content

1. Defining an Autism Friendly Work Environment

2. Sensory Overload

- Tactile
- Auditory
- Visual

3. Best Practices for Sensory Accommodation

4. Inclusive Management Skills

5. Building inclusive Teams



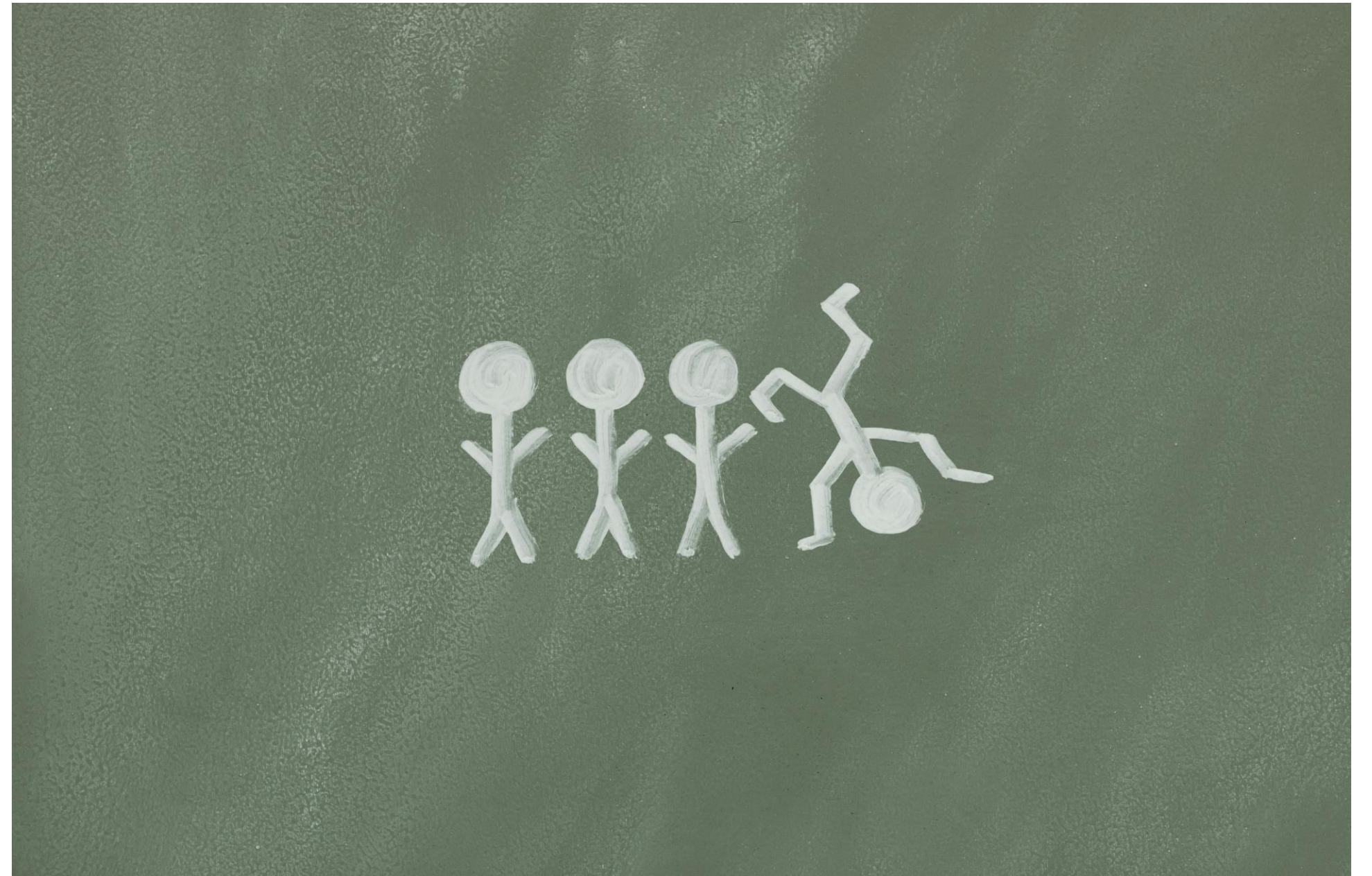
1. AN AUTISM FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT



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What is an **autism friendly**
work environment?



Physical environment
Social environment
Organizational culture



Sensory accommodations

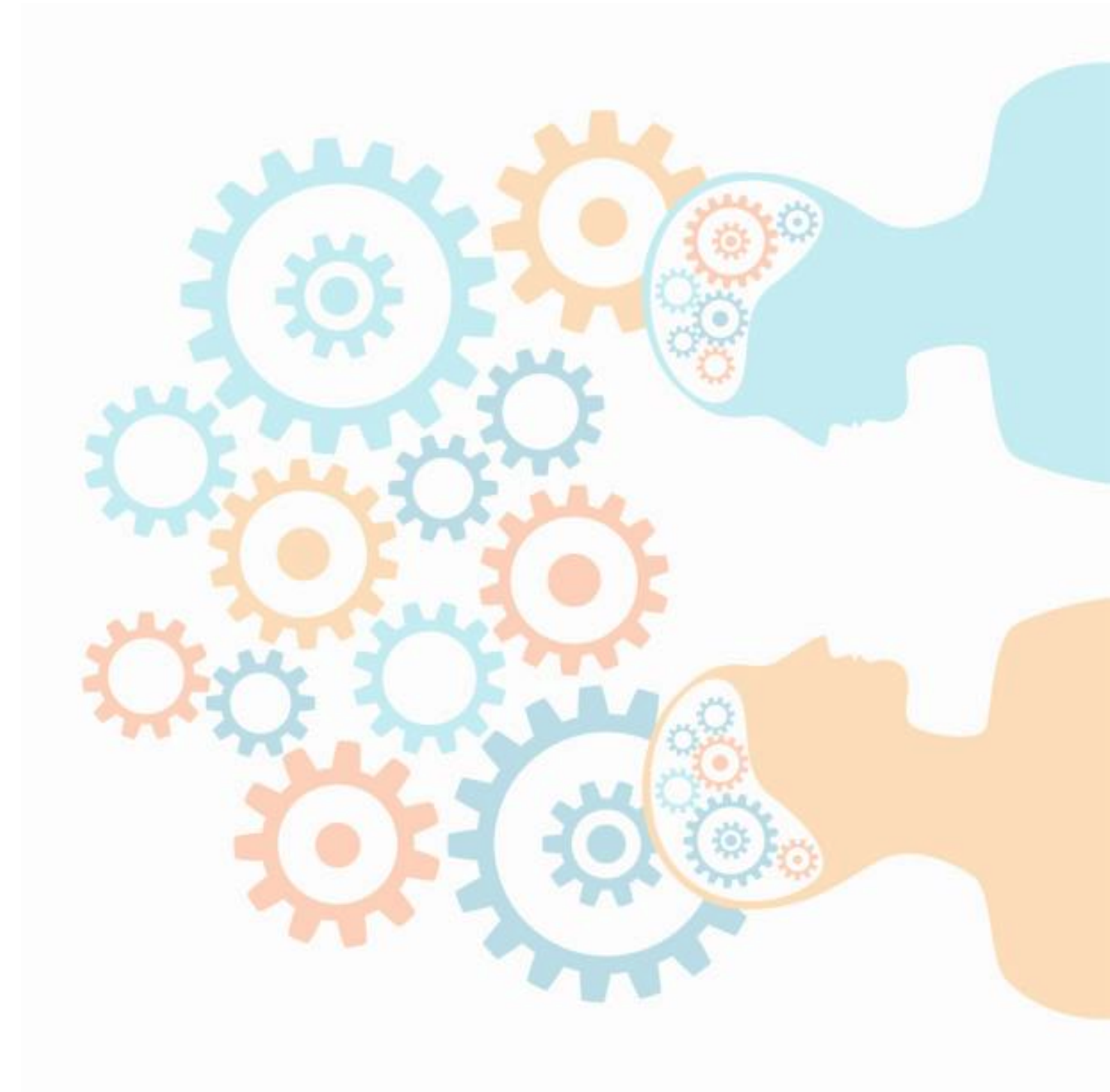
Clear communication

Flexibility

Routine

Inclusive culture

Supportive management



What can the work
environment **feel** like for an
individual with autism?



2. SENSORY OVERLOAD



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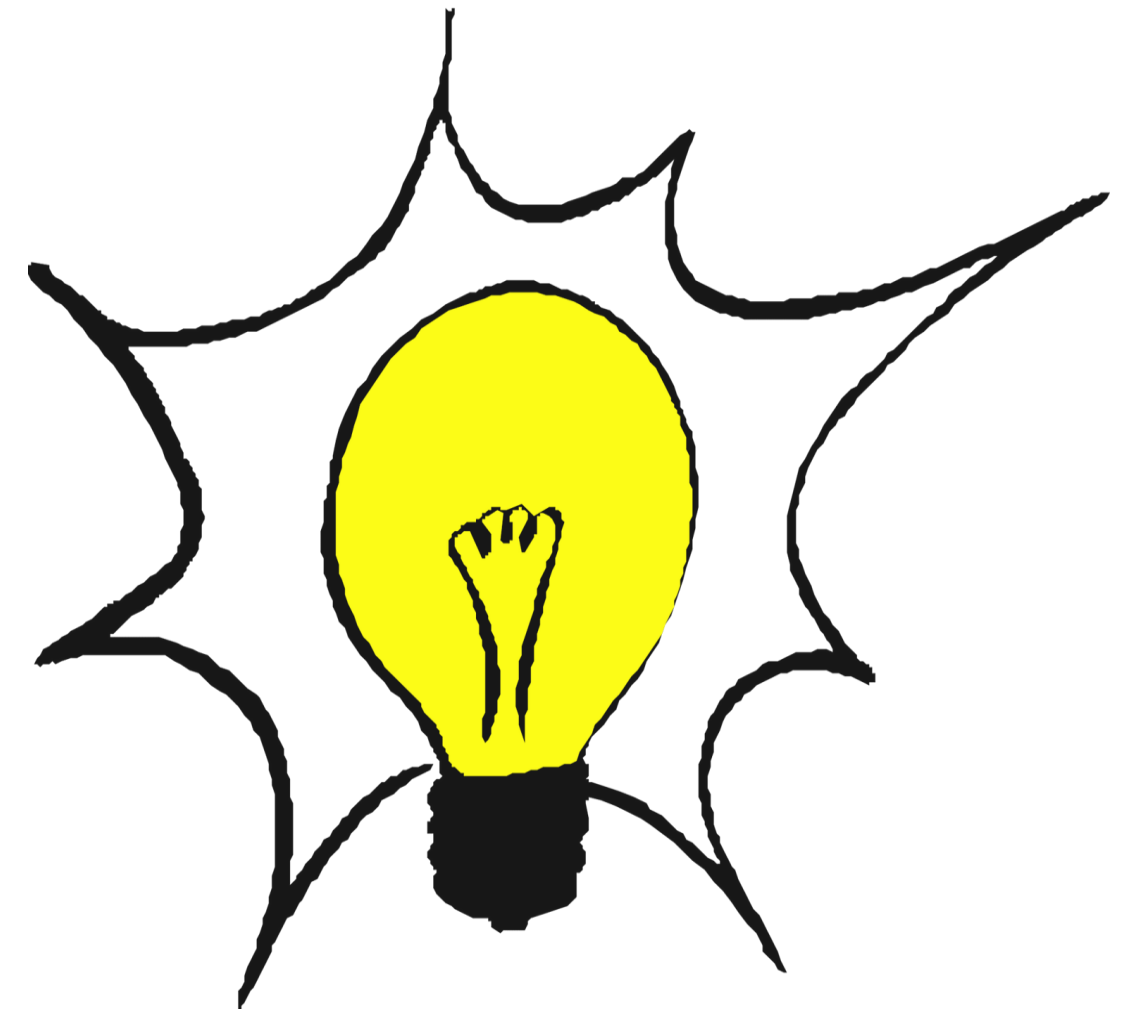
TACTILE ISSUES

- avoids or is bothered by light touch;
- bothered by certain fabrics, textures or clothes;
- bothered by tags on clothing;
- has an aversion to normal skin-contact interactions, handshakes for example;
- gets very upset by minor bruises;
- is resistant on wearing protective clothing or using safety aids etc.



VISUAL DISTRACTIONS

- bothered by bright or fluorescent lights;
- bothered by patterns;
- trouble reading high-contrast materials (such as black on white);
- squint, blink, or rub their eyes frequently.



AUDIAL DISTRACTIONS

Hypo-responsive (under-responsive)

- seeks out noisy situations or specific noises;
- makes noise to themselves or make noise “for noise’s sake”;
- do not respond to verbal cues (even when called by name);
- likes excessively loud music;
- seems oblivious to certain sounds;
- do not understand or remember things said to them



AUDIAL DISTRACTIONS

Hyper-responsive (over-responsive) :

- is easily distracted by noise;
- makes their own noise to drown out other sounds;
- dislikes noisy appliances (printers, air conditioners, ventilators, chatting) etc;
- notices background noises others don't seem to hear;
- frequently asks people to be quiet—to stop talking or singing.



3. BEST PRACTICES FOR SENSORY ADJUSTMENTS



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Sound (Auditory)

- Offer noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs
- Assign quieter tasks or zones when possible
- Minimize background noise in staff areas
- Provide written instructions to supplement verbal ones

Light (Visual)

- Use soft, adjustable lighting (avoid fluorescent lights)
- Install blinds or allow sunglasses/caps
- Reduce visual clutter in shared spaces
- Provide clear, simple signage



Touch (Tactile)

- Allow alternative uniform fabrics
- Respect personal space and physical contact preferences
- Provide fidget tools or sensory items if helpful
- Offer quiet break areas for regulation

4. INCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT SKILLS



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SUPPORTING AUTISTIC EMPLOYEES THROUGH INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Provide extra structure

Adapt communication styles

Rethink feedback

Assign based on strengths

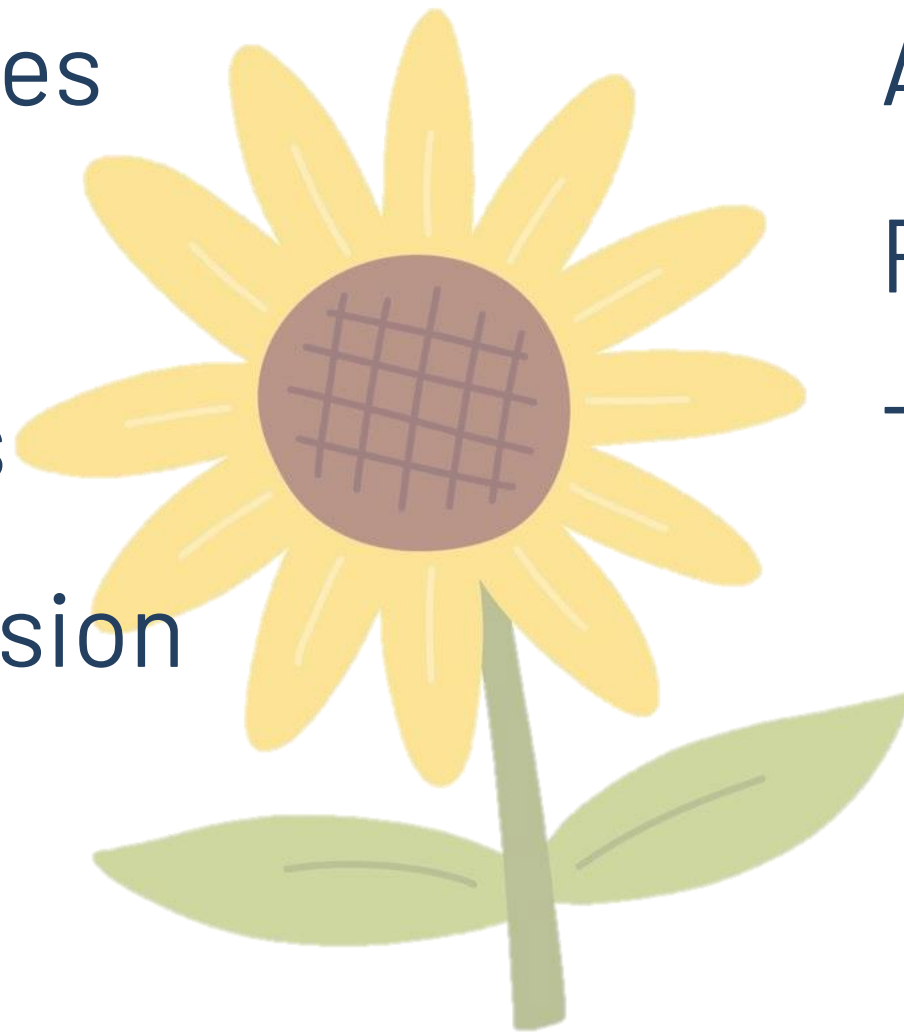
Respect emotional expression

Reframe social participation

Avoid assumptions

Promote autonomy

Train managers and teams



5. TEAM MANAGEMENT & BUILDING INCLUSIVE TEAMS



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What makes a team inclusive for
autistic people?

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autistic people?



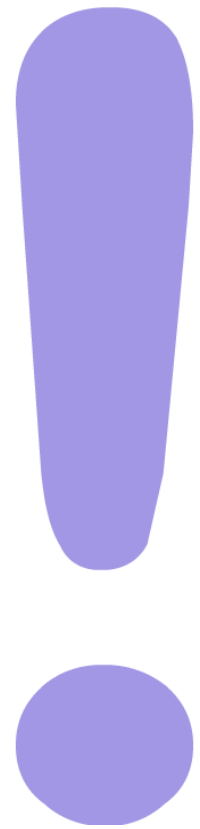
BULLYING AND ISOLATION



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TRAINING FOR INCLUSION: WHY IT WORKS



Inclusion is not just policy—it's mindset and behavior.

Education helps coworkers understand autism and avoid misunderstandings.

It reduces stigma and builds empathy toward different behaviors.





TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Avoid or make alternatives to activities that are...

- ✗ Loud, high-sensory environments (e.g. crowded parties, bars, or noisy venues)
- ✗ Unstructured social events
- ✗ Mandatory participation in group games involving touch, improvisation, or fast-paced talkin
- ✗ Activities focused on small talk or networking (e.g. speed networking or “get to know you” mingling)
- ✗ Alcohol-centered events (e.g. pub crawls or cocktail hours)



TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

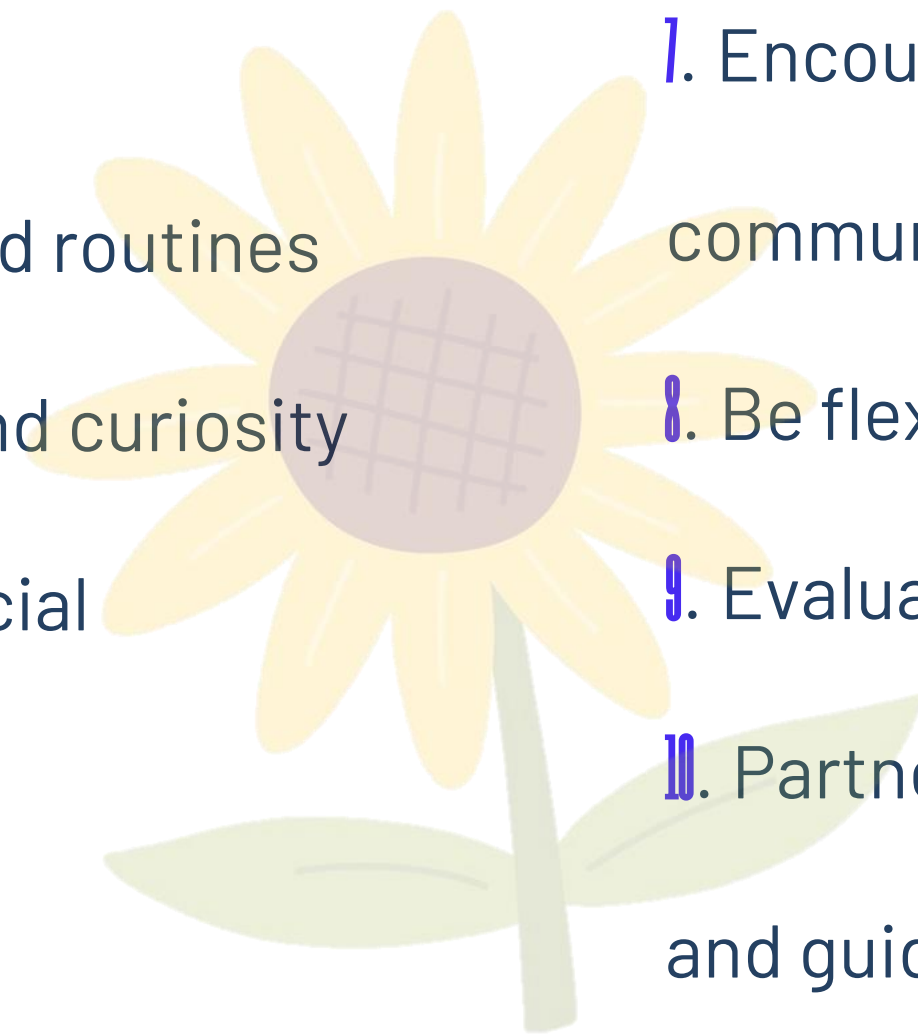
Instead, offer structured, calm, and optional alternatives like...

- Icebreaker activities
- Collaborative problem-solving activities
- Group brainstorming sessions
- Team-building games

Social events or parties can involve e.g. escape rooms, alcohol free lunches, interest-based workshops, quiet areas

10 STEPS TO MANAGE AN INCLUSIVE TEAM

1. Educate the team about autism regularly
2. Set clear communication guidelines (avoid sarcasm, use written follow-up)
3. Establish consistent expectations and routines
4. Foster a culture of mutual respect and curiosity
5. Provide structured, low-pressure social interaction
6. Train managers in inclusive leadership techniques
7. Encourage open, non-judgmental communication
8. Be flexible in how work gets done
9. Evaluate and adjust practices regularly
10. Partner with autism organizations for support and guidance



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