

Wellbeing and the Workplace



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Love Yourself



- Healing emotional wounds means learning to love yourself.
- If you love yourself, you can meet many of your own emotional needs and you are then in the best position to be able to love others, from a position of strength.
- Not loving yourself means feeling not good enough, criticising yourself in your head, and striving to improve and earn love from others, from a position of lack.

Love



- Striving causes unhelpful beliefs, such as:
 - “I must be the best” => comparison with others and criticism of others => pride, jealousy and competitiveness.
 - “I must be perfect” => stress and pressure never to make mistakes => mental health problems.
 - “I must always please others” => even at tremendous personal cost.
- All these are attempts to earn love from others.

Non-Violent Communication

- “Non-Violent Communication: A language of Life” (Marshall B. Rosenberg, 2003.)
- Non-violent communication (NVC) advocates talking about feelings and needs rather than judging, criticising or labelling.

NVC – to express ourselves

- Any judgement can be translated into feelings and needs.

E.g.

- “You are so needy” = “I am feeling tired and need some time to myself”.
- “You are cold and aloof” = “I am feeling lonely and need more connection with you”.

NVC – to receive empathically

- NVC can also be used to empathise with others, connecting with them and diffusing your own negative feelings.
- Any judgement thrown at you can be translated into feelings and needs. E.g.
 - “You are so lazy!”
 - “Oh, are you feeling annoyed because the washing up isn’t done and you are needing to rest?”
- It doesn’t matter if you guess wrong, because they may well say what their true feelings and needs are, or you can guess again.

NVC – to be compassionate to ourselves

- Non-Violent Communication can also be used when we talk to ourselves.
- If I make a mistake, rather than blaming myself, I can:
 1. Identify my feelings and my unmet needs resulting from what went wrong, and simultaneously
 2. Think of the need I was trying to meet when I made the mistake.
- I can replace “should/have to” with “choose to”.

E.g. “I have to cook dinner” = “I choose to cook dinner because I want to nourish myself and be healthy”.

Hiding

- Aspies often “pretend to be normal”, which includes hiding our true selves from others.
- But whatever you hide, feels shameful.
- If you reveal your true self to someone you trust, and if they accept you without judgement, you get proof that that shameful and hidden part of you is loveable after all. This is risky though!



Focus on the positive!

- Focussing on anything negative (e.g. my anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, the Triad of Impairments, and any self-concept of being defective) makes things worse.



- Focussing on fun activities that make me joyful, makes my problems diminish.

Focus on the positive!



- When you feel bad, tell yourself:
 - This will not last forever – I am not going to feel like this every day of my life.
 - It is okay to feel like this.
- Stressing about how terrible it is just maintains the problem.

Strategies for Wellbeing

- Record words of affirmation in a notebook
- Yoga, Tai Chi, meditation
- Find your community on the spectrum
- Writing, art
- Nature, gardening
- Cycling, trampolining, ice-skating, etc.
- Use your voice to say “no”
- Teach people how to deal with you
- Contribute to the wellbeing of others



Necessities for Wellbeing

- Enough money
- House sufficiently warm and sound-proofed
- Household management skills
- Accessible health care
- Gluten-free diet
- Sensory aids, e.g. coloured glasses



Employment



Employment



- It's not in everyone's best interests to be in work.
- Being employed is not a magic solution that removes the need for support. It means more challenges -> **INCREASED** support!
- The not-employed need a weekly routine of meaningful activities that they enjoy.

Problems and solutions



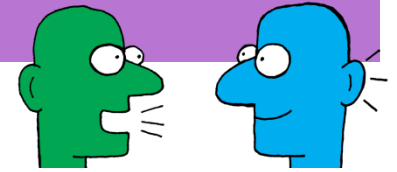
- Indirect language.
 - Ask for clear, literal instructions and feedback.
 - Ask to be told what part of your procedure to change in order to achieve the required result.
- Not being given equal status with others.
 - Challenge this.
- Overload.
 - Slow down, take breaks and/or work fewer hours.
- Boss doesn't know how to deal with you.
 - Suggest they take an autism training course.

Problems and solutions



- Taking advantage.
 - We need to learn about boundaries, how to identify unreasonable demands, how to express our needs and how to say “no”.
- Bullying.
 - Recognise it and report it. Colleagues’ help in recognising it is invaluable.
- Illness.
 - When mentally or physically ill, take sick leave.

Problems and solutions



- Acting differently.
 - Self-advocate. We need colleagues to understand that we cannot be EXACTLY like everyone else.
- Making social errors.
 - Ask questions, research and learn. Find safe people to consult, inside and outside of work.
- Being unfairly judged due to employer's lack of understanding.
 - Explain, at length, without assuming prior knowledge (in writing?). Remember to empathise with the other person's point of view.

Problems and solutions



- Work environment so noisy you cannot think.
 - Ask to move to a quieter location, as a “reasonable adjustment” under the Equality Act (2000). Explain a feature of autism is monoprocessing = processing one sensory channel at once, so you cannot think when you are forced to hear someone else’s conversation.
- Conflict
 - Deal with it as soon as possible (although you will often have to come back after some processing time). Empathise by reflecting back the other person’s feelings and needs, then express your own.

Problems and solutions

- Exhaustion (too tired to have a life outside work)
 - Consider going part-time. Change your job if necessary
- Impassible difficulties?
 - Change job or consider self-employment.
 - Employment tribunal if you've been discriminated against?
 - In worst case scenario where employment is making you ill and there is no reasonable hope any other job would be better, go to doctors, get signed off sick, ultimately get sacked when you don't return, and try to get onto Employment and Support Allowance. Needs to be done through officially being ill – not quitting voluntarily!



Thank you for listening

Debi is available for other speaking engagements on a wide variety of autism-related topics and can be contacted via:

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