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"If we are to achieve a richer culture, we must weave one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place." – Margaret Meade

Navigating the professional world can be both exciting and challenging, however, with the right strategies and support, you can thrive and make meaningful contributions and connections. Self-advocacy is the tool that empowers you to steer through obstacles. As you practice self-advocacy in the workplace, remember that your perspective is valuable, and that you have rights.

Advocating for yourself in the workplace and/or enlisting support with advocacy, is essential to ensure that your needs are met, your contributions are recognized, and you are able to grow and learn with confidence.

What is the Duty to Accommodate?

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, employers have a duty to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities to the point of undue hardship, to make sure they have equal opportunities, equal access and can enjoy equal benefits.

The Goals of Accommodation:

- Respect for dignity
- Individualization
- Integration and full participation

Ways to Advocate for yourself

- Understand your strengths, challenges, and the accommodations that work for you in order to be successful.
- Learn about your rights in the workplace.
- Communicate your needs and preferred accommodations to your employer. Be specific about what you need to be successful.
- Document discussions and accommodations received in the workplace.
- Seek feedback from your supervisors to identify areas of growth and demonstrate a willingness to learn.

Workplace Accommodations

Examples:

- Flexible work schedules.
- Modifying duties/routines.
- Making changes to the building and workstations to ensure that it is accessible.
- Providing assistive devices.
- Providing alternative ways of communication.
- Providing short and long term disability leave.
- Visual supports
- Remote work options

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Interview Accommodations

Examples

- Ask for the interview questions the day before.
- Request extra time for timed tests.
- Request a one-on-one interview rather than a panel interview with multiple individuals.
- Ask for a video call or phone interview as an initial interview.
- If interviews are held virtually, ask if you can keep your camera off for the interview.
- Request a quiet environment for the interview.
- Bring a fidget tool with you to the interview.

Communicating your Strengths in the Workplace

Here is a way you can effectively communicate your strengths with your employers/colleagues:
I am neurodivergent which means that I sometimes struggle with _____, however this comes with strengths in other areas such as _____:



Requesting Accommodations

- Making your needs clearly known to the employer.
- Provide your employer with sufficient information and take part in discussions regarding solutions and plans.
- Once an accommodation has been received, you can then work towards meeting performance standards.

Reasons to Consider Disclosing

- Sharing your needs and barriers with your employer or team fosters understanding and support in your work environment.
- Your skills could be relevant to your job or role. For example - energy and passion would be a great match for working with children in a high energy and fast paced environment.
- Requesting accommodations for the interview process enables you to present your best self.
- Highlighting and demonstrating that being neurodivergent does not limit your employment capabilities.

Additional Resources:

- ➔*Ontario human Rights Commission - Discrimination based on disability and the duty to accommodate: Information for employers
- ➔*Ontario Human Rights Commission - Working Together: The Code and the AODA Video Series
- ➔*Spectrum Works
- ➔*Autism Works - A Guide to Successful Employment Across the Spectrum by Adam Feinstein

Need help implementing these recommendations?

WonderTree has Job Coaches, Life skills supports, psychologists, social workers, educational consultant, tutors, SLPs, OTs, and executive functioning coaches that can help support individuals to thrive in employment.