

A woman with long brown hair and glasses is seen from the side, reaching up to a high shelf in a library to touch a book. The shelves are filled with books. A network diagram with grey nodes and lines is overlaid on the image. The background is split into a dark blue upper-left section and a purple lower-right section.

Aspergers Victoria **Work KnowHow Programs**

Autism at Work

Australian Centre for Career Education

Speaker: Jacob Alan

- Employment Projects Manager at Aspergers Victoria



Our WHY : Vision and Mission

Mission for change: inclusion for autistics

Autistics can be themselves and realise their ambitions through social connection, employment inclusion and advocacy across their lives.

Our purpose is to provide individuals, families, businesses and professionals with opportunities to connect with peers feel they belong & are understood in our community share autistic knowhow with a focus on inclusion, strengths and respect.

Our Vision

A world where the strengths of all Asperger Autistics are celebrated, realised and valued





Where we came from

Creating a peer community of connection and belonging

- NFP operating since 1991: charity
- Started by autistics & parents wanting to connect
- WHOLE community for WHOLE of lifetime
- Run by Aspies for Aspies with Aspies & their supporters
- use Strengths-based & codesigned approaches
- 75% of our staff and volunteers are autistic, all of team have autistic lived experience
- Volunteers and codesign: our past and future

Come join our Peer Community

Our difference is whole of person support across whole of life through peers with lived & shared experience of your journey

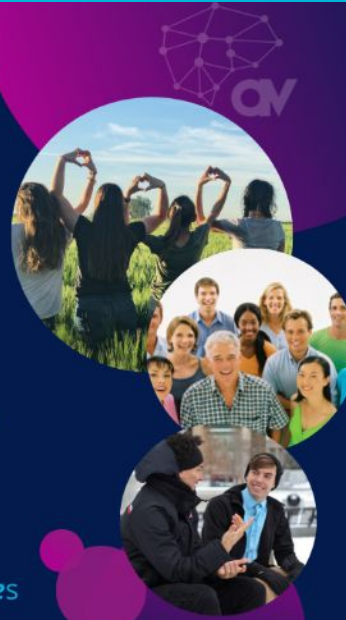
Please join us as a Member and discover our NFP's codesigned upcoming peer programs

We welcome more peer Volunteers to support our vision

A spectrum of empowering possibilities

Visit aspergersvic.org.au

or email admin@aspergersvic.org.au

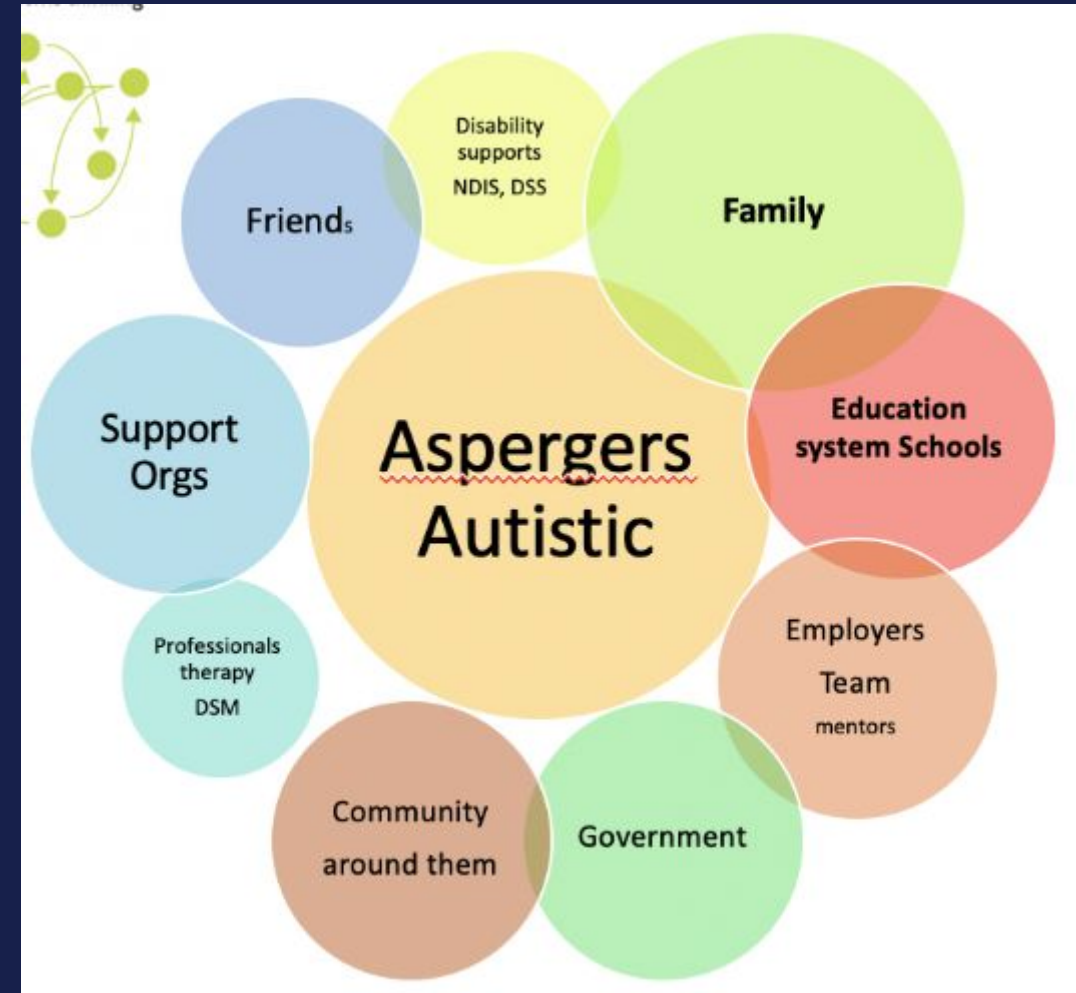


Our WHO

Neurodivergent Autistics: highly creative, system thinkers with **hidden challenges** in communication, mainly **independently capable, want to blend in and be accepted as they are**

AND their support system: families, supporters, partners, employers

We want a RIPPLE effect across communities





Lived experience inclusion

<h3>Employment Support</h3> <p>Programs and Coaching to support Aspergers at work, their Manager and team as well as HR D&I advice</p>	<h3>Peer Mentor Groups</h3> <p>For Teens, Young Adults, Adults, Women & Non-binary, Partners & Parents and Carers</p>
<h3>Help Service</h3> <p>Confidential email service to provide support, peer knowhow, information and referrals to community members & their allies</p>	<h3>Knowhow events & workshops</h3> <p>Group Coaching, Training and Guest speakers to educate and inspire while building understanding.</p>
<h3>Interest Groups</h3> <p>Small peer groups dedicated to passions including Dungeons and Dragons, Book Club or Minecraft- AspieLand - as well as our Career Network</p>	<h3>Advocacy & Training</h3> <p>Combined voice for Aspergers & advocating for change through Governement submissions, workplace & school training</p>

Peers that 'get' you
Feeling understood



1. Our social inclusion: peer community

PEER MENTOR GROUPS

TEENS	PARENTS OF TEENS	ADULTS
YOUNG ADULTS		PARENTS & CARERS
WOMEN & NON-BINARY	PARTNERS	PROFESSIONALS Career network

AV PEER PASSION GROUPS



Peers that 'get' you



Employment challenges

Autism in Australia



1 in 100 Australians is autistic

85% of Australians have personal contact with an autistic person. It could be a family member, friend, colleague at work or student at school.

Valuable skills and insight



Autistic people have a range of strengths, interests and skills. They can be **innovators and changemakers** in the workforce.

Finding work is challenging



A 2016 survey of Victoria's autism community found that only **50% of respondents** had been able to find employment.

Attitudes are a big barrier



One of the biggest barriers to employment is **employer attitudes** – assuming that autistic people will be less capable or that it will be a burden to make adjustments.

Lack of support



The same survey found that **94% of autistic people felt they had not received enough support** to help find a job.

High unemployment rates



The unemployment rate for autistic people is 31.6%

That's more than three times the rate for people with disability generally and almost six times the rate of people without disability.



2. Employment Inclusion

1. Job Coaching

1. Teen Work KnowHow Program

1. **Employer consulting:** HR support & training/coaching



WHY?

Autistics are ...

AWESOME

detail thinkers

experts

specialists

sensitive

honest

diligent

hyperfocus

attention to detail

use different ways of communicating

misunderstood

traumatised

feeling excluded

facing barriers everyday

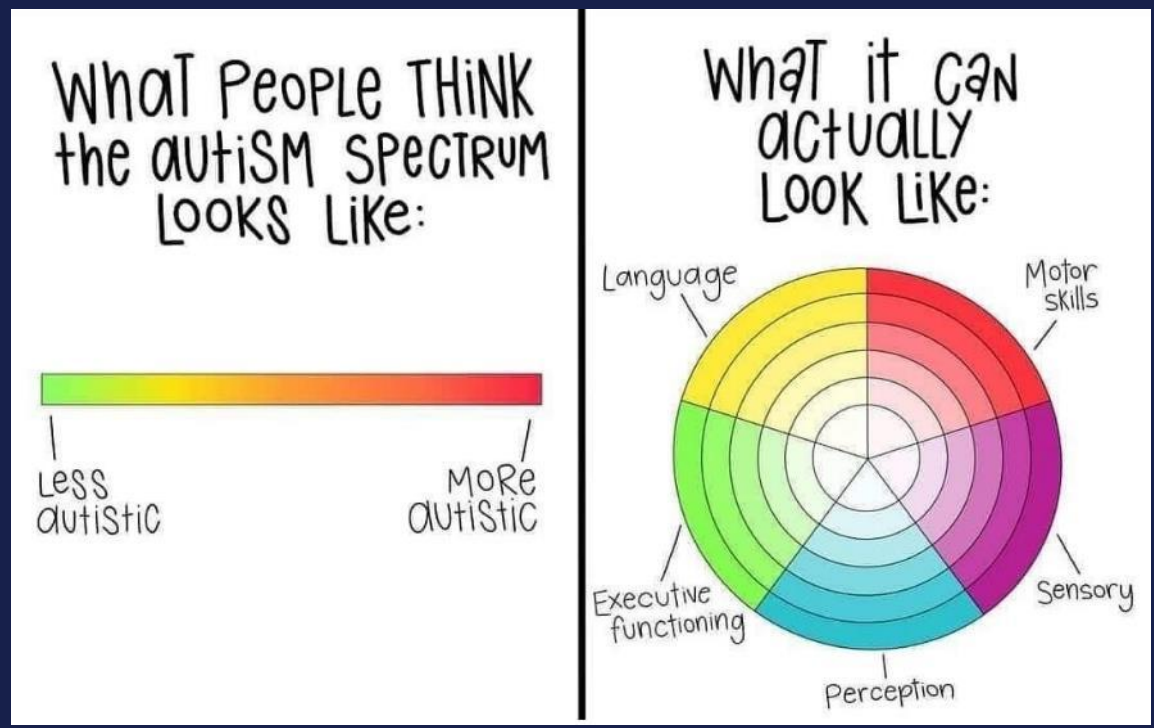
unemployed...

our future creators...





The Spectrum: diagnosis by deficits



Almost all autistic people will 'exhibit the following traits in some form':

1. difficulty with social communication and interaction
2. restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities
3. (Sensory sensitivities)
4. (Resulting in anxiety)

Creates misunderstanding of 'high functioning' and 'low functioning'



Diversity simply means different NOT less

Our autism involves different ways of communicating (language) and ways of being

It is a culture

“...autistics must be accepted for who we are and with reasonable accommodations we can deliver beyond expectations”

@Neurodiversitylibrary.org





Autistic minds

Our autistic mind is a different operating system super-specialised in collecting the detailed information which it inter-connects

See the world as systems and use RULES to manage complexity

Who do you think created the internet...?

- Highest productivity at work e.g. RISE@DHHS
- Conscious learning is our strength: logic & facts
- Have encyclopedic knowledge: factual
- Notice details others miss
- Extra-ordinary ability with critical thinking (But can have slow processing)





Each individual is different

Strengths

intellect: expertise

Different perspective

Honest

love learning

determined

ability to focus

notice sounds, smells, feel

attention to detail

kind: Over-empathise

loyal

enjoy solitude

reliable worker & friend

perfectionist

no bullshit: straight talker

Creative: drawing, design, music

Team productivity

Acting

Challenges

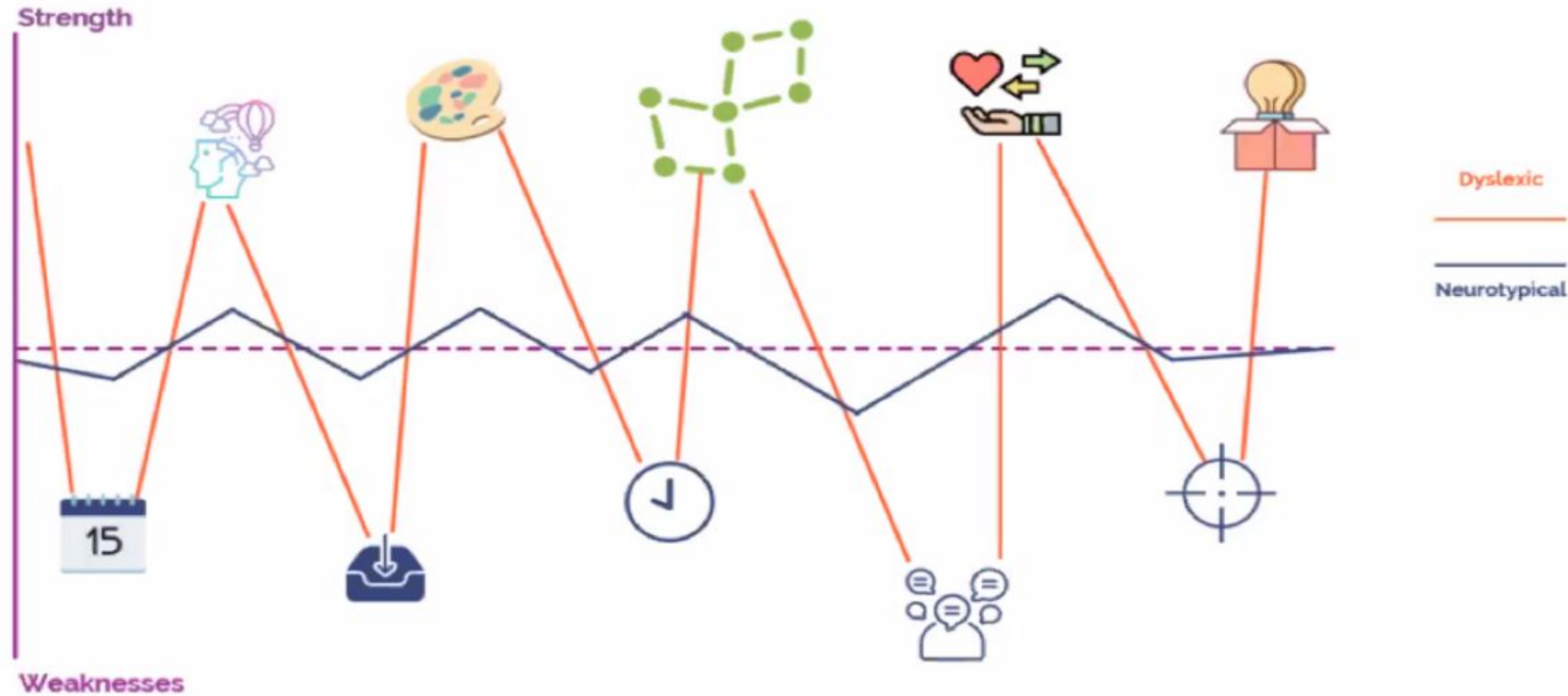
- **OTHERS** lack of understanding & adjustment
- **Sensory overwhelm as NO FILTER:** environments trigger overwhelm
- **LITERAL** interpretation
- **MAKING FRIENDS:** need acceptance
- **Teamwork**
- **Taking advice:** see feedback as criticism
- Handwriting
- **Managing feelings & over-empathy**
- **Showing & Reacting to emotion in others (conflict)**
- **Loneliness**
- **Social chit chat**
- **MASKING TO FIT IN**
- **Anxiety...**





Autism is not static

“Spiky profiles”



From John Hicks

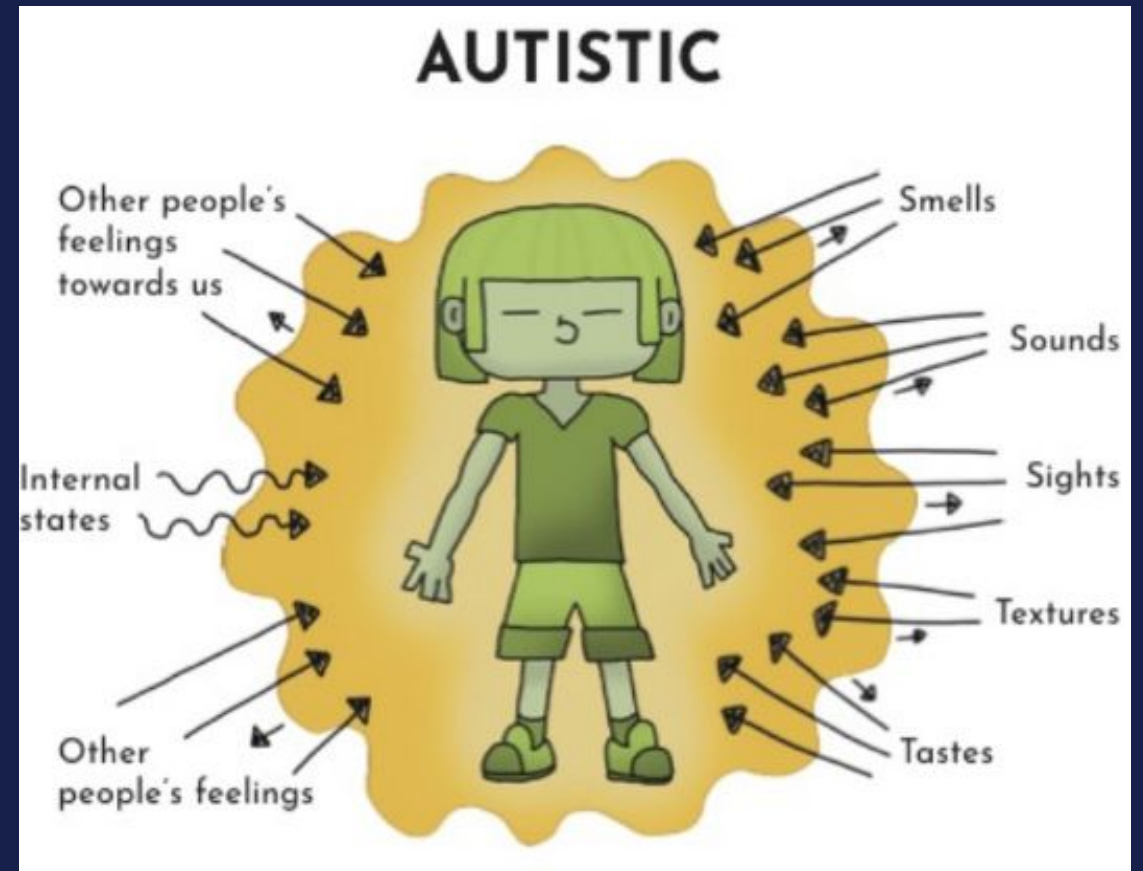
Can build skills
BUT
stress
reduces skills





Key tips

- Treat each autistic as a whole & capable individual
- Often sensitive to emotions & feelings
- Anxiety & stress are key issue
- Likely have **sensory sensitivity**:
 - noise, smell, light, touch



Capabilities reduce with STRESS



Key tips



Executive functioning

- Processing speed (auditory)
- Short term memory
- Organisation
- Initiation of tasks
- Motivation
- **Write instructions**
- **Break down tasks into chunks**
- **Someone to ask if unsure**
- **Clear schedules**

Verbal communication

- literalness
- straight talker
- don't read between the lines
- maybe not get sarcasm or jargon
- figures of speech
- PLUS may have auditory **processing difficulties**
- **Give time to process & answer**
- **Use less words & aware of jargon**
- Ask respectfully if understood





Non-verbal blindness

Social cues: miss 70% of communication

- facial expressions & body language
- eye contact
- can sense emotions
- context blindness: nuances & politics
- how we do things: unwritten rules of culture
- target for bullying without guidance



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- ✓ Explain your social norms at work
 - ✓ Don't expect eye contact
 - ✓ Notice if show distress
 - ✓ actively listen to them: watch



OVERLOAD

Stress builds up

Uses mental energy

Meltdowns Not temper tantrum

- ✓ Sensory overload
- ✓ Communication difficulties
- ✓ Social problems
- ✓ Difficulty with social comprehension
- ✓ Difficult understanding cause and effect
- ✓ No quiet spot
- ✓ Executive functioning short circuits
- ✓ Difficulty processing information
- ✓ Tiredness
- ✓ Anxiety



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I4qSSEB_oc

What to do

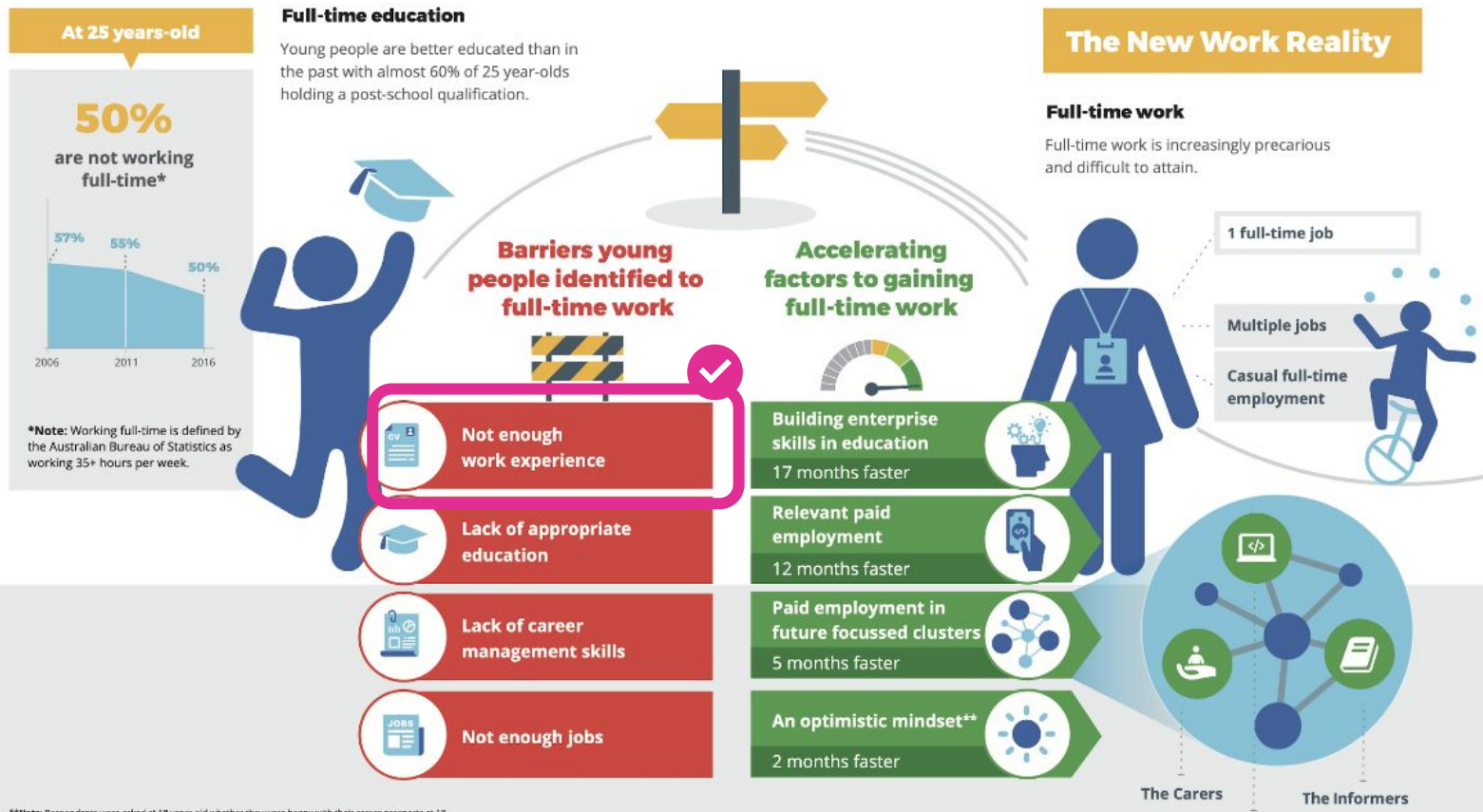
- know what stresses them (& signs)
- agree & plan best approach to de-stress
- find ways for them to access their de-stress needs **without asking**
- **Don't** try and discuss it with them when they are **stressed**



Why work experience?

Foundation of Young Australians FYA Report

This report followed 14,000 young people's journey over a decade (15 to 25 years old) and found...



**Note: Respondents were asked at 18 years-old whether they were happy with their career prospects at 18.



Teens Work KnowHow Program

Thank you for being
one of our
supporting employers





Teens Work KnowHow Program

Outcomes

Student

- Self understanding & improved self advocacy
- Has resume, completed an interview, apply for a 'job'
- Executive function & team work understanding & capabilities
- Career awareness
- Aim for improved study, realisation why needs school with hope

School

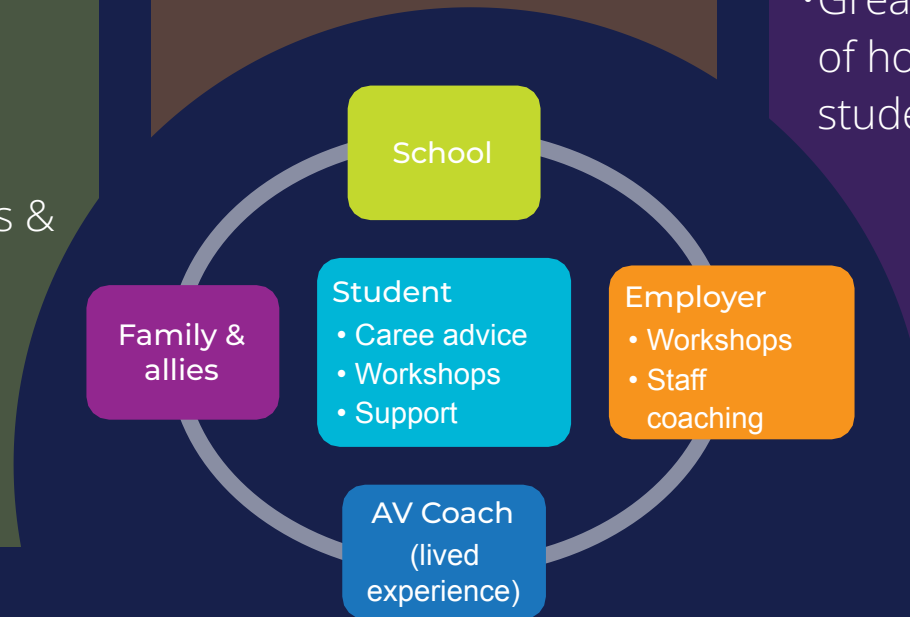
- Delivery of supported work experience for their student/s
- Improved student engagement
- Build school understanding of student's career needs & strengths

Employer

- Understanding from direct experience & AV training supports

Parent/s

- Hope & more empowering for them & child
- Greater understanding of how to support their student





Our program

Expression of interest	EOI through AV website when open
Intake	Teens and parent application and meeting AV touch base with school. Program designed within DET work experience program, teens complete intake forms and strengths outline
Job readiness workshops x 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mental Toughness and Autistic Stress Management: Danny Blackford (<i>online</i>)2. Resume writing: Barb Cook (<i>online</i>)3. Teamwork: Svetlana Usatov (PIC) (<i>in person</i>)4. Interview skills: Warren Tate (<i>in person</i>) <p><i>Trainers and coaches all have autistic lived experience</i></p>
Job coaching sessions	Meet your coach: Introductory Zoom chat (<i>15 min</i>) Job coach: Resume coaching session Job coach: Application preparation and interview skills workshop
Conduct Zoom mock interviews	Conduct mock zoom Interviews and provided feedback Panel members: AV team and possibly employer
Work experience placement in school holidays <i>(timing dependant)</i>	School & Employer complete DET required forms Employer allocated to host Teens Work KnowHow Program Participants over 3-4 days <ul style="list-style-type: none">• includes rest day as needed• training for employer in supporting autistic• AV rep supports students with placement• Participants apply for junior “positions” with employer: used in mock interview





GET READY, DO, DONE

(example of how to explain tasks by breaking the task up into steps)

GET READY

What do I need?

List the resources that are required in order to complete the task e.g.

1. file with results
2. excel
3. Computer

DO

What steps do I need to take to be done?

List the steps involved with completing the task e.g.

- Step 1: Open results in excel
- Step 2: Highlight results
- Step 3: Select a chart

DONE

What will it look like when I'm done?

Add a graphic representation of the outcome

e.g. a picture of the final report





GET READY, DO, DONE

Tips on task allocation/design

GET READY

What do I need?

Multiply the amount of time it will take you by 3
e.g. If it will take you 1 hour to complete a task then it is likely to take the participant 3 hours

DO

What steps do I need to take to be done?

Think about the time that it would take you to complete the task

DONE

What will it look like when I'm done?

Come up with a list of tasks





GET READY, DO, DONE

Tips on shadowing

GET READY

What do I need?

Brief the teen at the start of the placement when they will be shadowing you

DO

What steps do I need to take to be done?

Explain to them what you would like them to do, e.g. take notes, observe, ask questions

DONE

What will it look like when I'm done?

Your calendar for the work experience days with the allocated meetings etc.





Resources

We have additional handouts we will provide you to support you

Any questions now?

Please call us with any other queries



Teens Work KnowHow Program

Thank you

Our Teens are looking forward to their work
experience with you

