



AUTISM ALWAYS UNIQUE TOTALLY INTERESTING SOMETIMES MYSTERIOUS

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Local 306 President, Women's Committee Chairperson

At our April Women Committee Meeting, one of the topics that was discussed was adults in the workplace with autism. The misconceptions on behalf of co-workers and management caused unnecessary discomfort for everyone. Being a grandmother to a child with autism, I understand the importance of people knowing the uniqueness and specialness of people with this condition. My grandchild is smart beyond words. Though very quiet, his presence can not be ignored. He is loving, watchful, and very picky. Routine and few changes are great. Noise is an irritant, but expressing his thoughts with very few words is common.

Society seems to have more empathy for a child with autism. Educators have a specific regimen for reaching and teaching their minds. They know that these angels need patience, attention, and much love. But what about the adults with autism? *Remember, the kids with autism become adults with autism.* Adults who enter the workplace are sometimes totally misunderstood. People think they are acting funny or weird because they don't act the way we think they should. They are labeled with derogatory names and placed in categories that don't define the real them. These adults are not walking around with a sign telling their co-workers that they

have autism. This is virgin territory to many of them, and we have to work to unscramble this newness.

Autism, also called autism spectrum disorder, is a condition related to brain development that affects how people

see others and socialize with them.

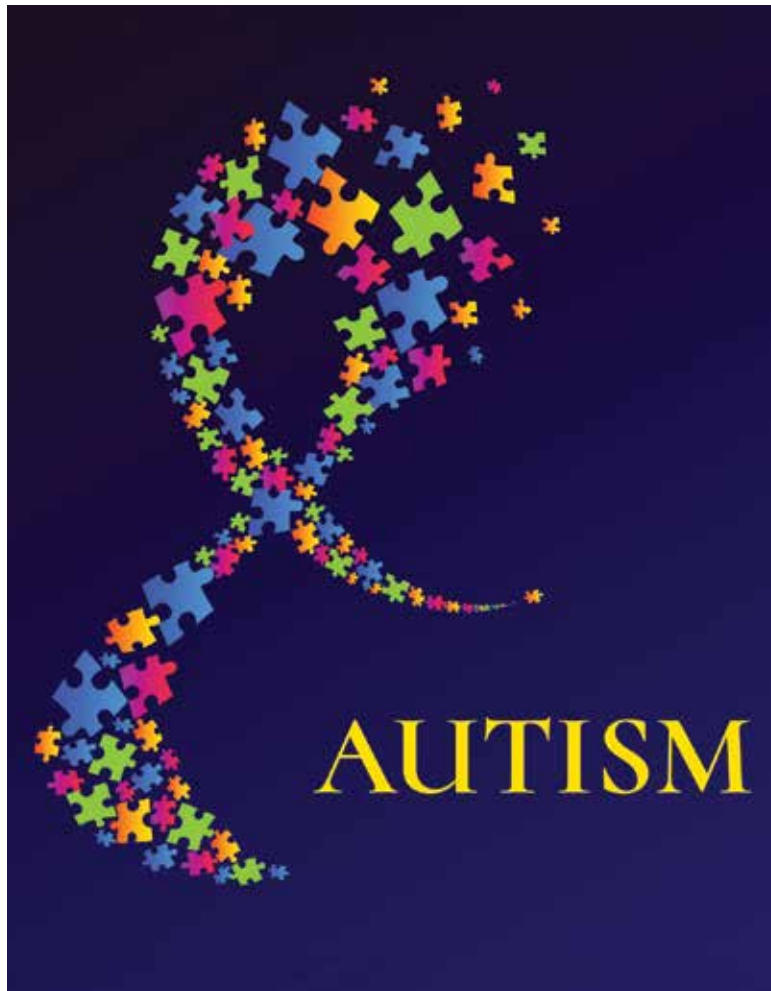
This causes problems in communication and getting along with others socially. The condition also includes limited and repeated patterns of behavior.

The term "spectrum" in autism spectrum disorder refers to the wide range of symptoms and the severity of these symptoms.

Believe it or not, there are employees that you work with that have this condition. Autism does not minimize their abilities to work and perform the tasks of their job, but misconception or ignorance of the condition causes unnecessary stress.

We are not medical professionals, but we need to be aware that a co-worker may have

autism. There's no need for a personal examination or interrogation of your co-worker, but try to create an environment where we accept the differences without negativity. Some people aren't diagnosed until they enter adulthood. They are just becoming acquainted with their condition. Again, empathy and kindness are needed. The month of April is



designated as “Autism Awareness Month”, but yearly awareness is needed.

An adult with autism may exhibit some of these characteristics:

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:

- Feel awkward in social situations
- Having difficulty understanding what others are thinking or feeling
- Prefer to be alone
- Difficulty making friends
- Having difficulty understanding social rules
- Verbal and nonverbal communication:
 - Difficulty making eye contact
 - Responding to conversations in a blunt way
 - Taking things literally

REPETITIVE AND/OR RESTRICTIVE BEHAVIORS:

- Having the same routine every day
- Noticing small details or patterns that peers wouldn't
- Having very intense and specific interests

Adults with autism are not weird. They are beautiful people who operate differently. **People with autism are “Always Unique Totally Interesting Sometimes Mysterious”!!!**



AUTISM
AWARENESS DAY

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