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Presented by Damian Milton and Richard Mills

10 rules for being a bad employer for  
someone on the autistic spectrum  
.... and maybe what to do about it



# Rule 1

## Make interviews compulsory

- As unstructured as possible
- Have a panel fire random questions at me
- Interrupt me if I'm thinking about something
- Make questions vague and open-ended
- Have as many distractions as possible- Talk among yourselves when I am trying to think or answer



# Rule 1. Make interviews compulsory

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Find an alternative

- 1-1 discussion or work experience
- Let me show you my work and discuss it
- Relaxed setting with no distractions
- If you **must** interview - provide questions in writing 20 minutes in advance - this will allow me to think and process



# Rule 2.

## **Make learning the job as stressful as possible**

- Provide vague oral instructions only
- Expect me to remember everything I've been told
- Expect me to read your mind
- Do not provide written a schedule or guidance
- In new situations tell me to 'get on with it' – or 'figure it out' - ensure I don't know where or how to get help



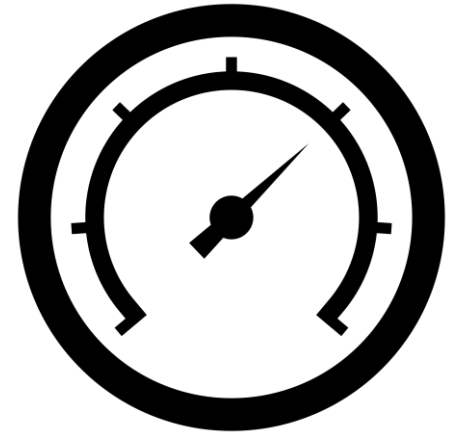


# Rule 2. Make learning the job as stressful as possible

## .....and maybe what to do about it

### Reduce stress

- Provide a written schedule of work – instructions- and where to get help
- Check how well I have understood instruction and offer guidance, support and clarification



Lecture Hall 105	Lecture Hall 102	Lecture Hall 100	Lecture Hall 101	Lecture Hall 103
Panama	Virginia	Penn	Berkeley	Alberta
Calgary	Missouri_Minors	Harvard	Toronto	WashU
Hunter-NYC	Northwestern	Waterloo	GeorgiaTech	Yale
Break				
VCU	NYC_VetWare	Michigan	MIT	Utah_State
Virginia_Tech	Queens_Canada	UIUC-BioIs	UCSF	Grinnell
UC_Davis	Columbia	Baltimore	UT_Dallas	GeorgiaState
Lunch				
Washington	Cornell	Catech	Duke	Rutgers
UTP-Panama	Columbia-Cooper	Wisconsin-Madison	Arizona_State	UANL_Uty-Mexico
Johns_Hopkins	British_Columbia	ITESM_Mexico	Brown-Stanford	BYU_Pivo
Break				
West_Point	Nevada	uOttawa	Lethbridge	Bard-Annapolis
UNICAMP-EMSE_Brazil	UNAM-Genomics_Mexico	USC	Penn_State	BU_Veeseley_Software
Poster Reception	Tec-Monterrey	Minnesota	Gaston_Day_School	NYC_Software
Hub Space				
Social Event	Hub Space			



# Rule 3. Destroy my confidence and self esteem

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Build me up buttercup

- Give structured feedback. Tell me where I'm doing well, where I need to develop –be specific –if I did a good job let me know
- Ask me if I need help - and what kind of help
- Consider a mentor





# Rule 4.

## Set me up to fail

- Never give guidance on workplace culture, boundaries, customs or hierarchy- I will find out soon enough if I break them
- Force me to take part in social events





# Rule 4- set me up to fail

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Be clear and supportive

- Provide clarity. Who's who - and what they do
- Give proactive guidance on policy on relationships and boundaries and conduct
- Tell me where to get help
- Provide guidance on social events – i.e. they are not compulsory – (or e.g. length of time to be spent in pub. Saying no (to that last drink) -Develop my skills in engagement /disengagement



# Rule 5.

## Patronise me

- Don't pay me the rate for the job
- 'Detail' someone to 'look after me' -  
such as sit with me at lunch - or spend  
breaks with me –or take me to the pub
- Ignore any grievance or complaint



# Rule 5. Patronise me

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Accept me for who I am

- Include me but do not force me to get involved in social events if it doesn't suit me
- Breaks are quiet times – I will tell you if I need company and help to make friends. I might need this to de-stress
- Shared interests/ topics better ways of making friends
- Pay me the rate for the job





# Rule 6.

- Give no help or guidance on expectations of any 'dress code' or feedback on hygiene or grooming





# Rule 6. 'dress code', grooming and hygiene

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Show me the way

- Make sure I know about any culture or expectations on any 'dress code', grooming or hygiene
- Even if there is no 'dress code'. I am likely to stress not knowing.
- Please give guidance as part of a schedule
- Maybe a mentor can address these issues sensitively ?

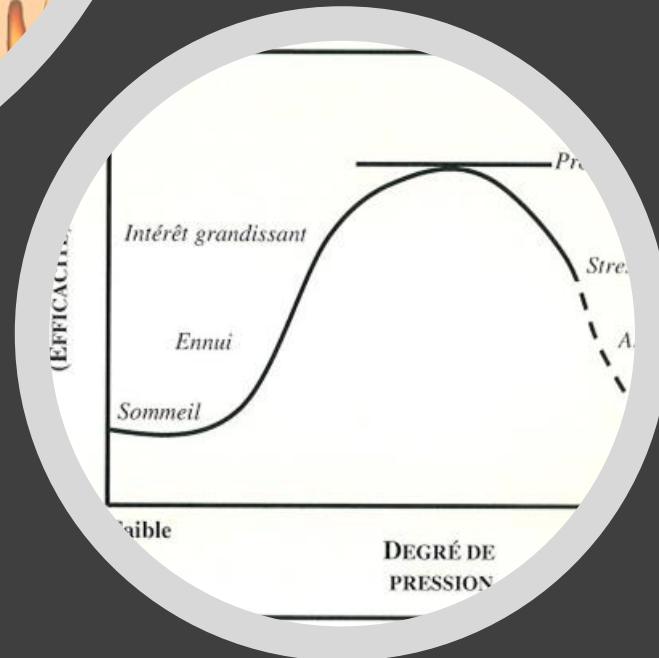




## Rule 7.

### Burn me out

- Expect me to know when to take a break
- Overload me
- Allow me to work until exhausted
- Give me extra work late in the day
- Bully me



# Rule 7. Burn me out

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Look after me

- Ensure my schedule includes regular breaks
- Monitor how well I am dealing with work/life
- Ask if I am managing and how many hours I am working
- Monitor my tendency to take work home or take on too much- I'm likely to
- Allocate new work in the morning





# Rule 8.

## Make the workplace unbearable—for example

- Bright overhead lights
- Brightly distracting colour schemes or patterns
- Annoying or intrusive background sound
- Odours –especially air-fresheners or perfumes
- Fabrics and textures aversive to touch
- Loud hand dryers in loos
- Constant distractions and interruptions





# Rule 8. Make workplace unbearable

.....and maybe what to do about it

## Make me comfortable

- Up-lighting /adapted workspaces/quiet space
- Audit for sensory issues
- Train workforce on inclusive practice
  - Workplace code e.g. air-freshening devices ,  
perfume etc
- Universal design



# Rule 9.

## Make unreasonable demands

- Do not allow me to finish a job
- Change the instruction or request without notice
- Random requests for information
- Give me jobs I can't do or a timescale I can't achieve





# Rule 10

## Have low expectations of me

- Do not review my job or grade
- Expect me to continue in the same job for ever
- Overlook me for promotion or advancement
- Do not pay me equally





# Rule 10- and maybe what to do about it

## Have high expectations of me

- Take a positive 'can do' attitude. Mentor me
- Pay me equally
- Encourage me – be nice –be kind –be a role model
- Consider me for extra training and advancement
- Support me through anxieties and change through practice and by talking them through



# Rule 11

Have rules but break them!



Rule 11. Broken rules

...and maybe what to do about it

Be fair and consistent

Reasonable adjustment

**CONSISTENCY**

**IS**



# Remember

Reasonable adjustments and inclusive employment practice for autistic people will be beneficial for everyone

## 7 PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:



Equitable



Flexibility



Simple &  
intuitive



Perception  
information



Tolerance  
for error



Low physical  
effort



Size &  
space



# In appreciation

Sandra Robilliard and past  
Prospects clients, autistic  
colleagues and those employers  
who make such a difference



*Thank you !*

Damian Milton and  
Richard Mills

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