



Empower Autism

Pre-Vocational Skills

Most families hope that their child will one day hold a job. According to recent statistics, only about 6% of adults with autism maintain any kind of job at all, and less than that work full time or for competitive wages. The unemployment rates for other special needs are slightly better, but they are not impressive. This indicates that many high school graduates with autism and other special needs are not adequately prepared to work.

Most high schools offer some kind of vocational curriculum, internships, and community placement. However, many students are not prepared to access and take full advantage of this curriculum, because they have not developed the pre-requisite skills.

In order to begin training for employment, most people need to be able to do many of the following pre-vocational skills:

1. Understand and accept 'work times' and 'relax times' of day
2. Sustain attention to tasks (at least 15 minutes)
3. Independently recognize feelings of anxiety, frustration, and anger in self
4. Do non-preferred tasks without complaining/arguing/negotiating
5. Ask for help
6. Follow multi-step directions (out of sight of a prompter)
7. Be comfortable with getting temporarily interrupted
8. Accept suggestions/corrections
9. Read time on a variety of clocks/watches/phones
10. Understand various forms of authority
11. Regularly demonstrate semi-professional social niceties
12. Attend to personal cleanliness/hygiene, including dress code
13. Explore self-awareness: understand/accept diagnosis, learn about accommodations, strengths and challenges.
14. Disclose diagnosis (if desired)
15. Make small decisions independently
16. Demonstrate self-advocacy skills (indicating preferences, not waiting for prompts, making goals, asking for accommodations)
17. Demonstrate safety skills in the community (strangers, unwanted advances, emergencies)

This is a large and possibly intimidating list of skills, which is why it is important to start early. Vocational training usually starts in the junior year of high school, and if these pre-requisites are not met, there is not enough time to learn these skills AND access the next level of skills (how to get a job, learn a job, and keep a job).

For specific ways of practicing these skills at home, school and in the community, you can find us online or email us. Sylvia@empowerautism.com.