WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS & CCRW

Making workplaces more accessible for autistic and neurodivergent employees

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2026 Autism Symposium • 60-minute interactive session

What we'll do in 60 minutes

Both presenters

Practical, respectful, and centred on workplace barriers—not assumptions.

01	**Understand**	What accommodation is—and why barriers matter
02	**Notice**	How sensory, communication and work-design barriers arise
03	**Respond**	A five-step accommodation process
04	**Practise**	A scenario with real workplace choices
05	**Apply**	Proactive changes you can use tomorrow

Participation choices

You can pass on any question.

No one has to disclose a diagnosis or personal experience.

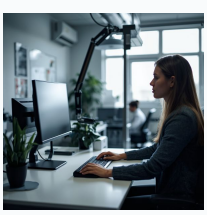
Use hypothetical examples.

Step out, move, or return when needed.

Accommodation starts with the barrier

Both presenters

A performance concern can also be a prompt to ask better questions.



Instead of asking…

"What is wrong with this person?"

Ask…

"What is getting in the way of the work—and what might help?"

Notice the barrier • Understand the impact • Explore support

HR lens: missed deadlines, absenteeism or a performance plan can be moments to investigate the work environment—not to assume a diagnosis.

Autism at work: barriers, not stereotypes

Stephanie Kennedy

Different sensory, communication and processing needs call for individualized options.

Sensory environment

Sound, lighting, temperature, movement, touc internal body cues.

Communication

Direct vs. indirect wording, implied expectations, processing time.

Predictability & schedule

Sudden changes, transitions, shifting routines that do not match practice.

Task organization

Working memory, planning, multiple priorities and executive functioning.

The same environment can support one person and create a barrier for another.

What accommodations can look like

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Choice, predictability and clarity are often practical workplace design.

Communication choices

Written or spoken options; advance agendas; follow-up notes.

Predictable transitions

Notice before task changes; explain why plans change.

Flexible scheduling

Adjusted starts or breaks; remote/hybrid where suitable.

Sensory options

Lighting, quiet spaces, seating, temperature and safe hearing supports.

Task clarity

Priorities, checklists, chunked work, explicit deadlines.

Participation choices

Questions in writing; async input; optional camera where suitable.

Small, collaboratively chosen adjustments can have a big impact.

Quick activity: where do you start?

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"The way our meetings run makes it hard for me to contribute."

A. Ask for their diagnosis

B. **Understand the work barrier and its impact**

C. **Ask which supports might help**

D. Ask coworkers whether it seems fair

Best first steps: B + C • Start with the task, barrier, impact and support.

Five steps to a consistent accommodation process

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A respectful process is more useful than a perfect answer on the spot.

1	2	3	4	5
Receive	**Explore**	**Identify**	**Implement**	**Review**
Listen, acknowledge	Understand the barrier	Co-design options	Document and act	Check and adapt

The employee should not have to retell their story at every step.

Steps 1–2: receive and explore

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Make the first conversation safe, practical and work-focused.

1 Receive the request

DO
- Thank the employee for raising the concern
- Offer a private, accessible way to talk
- Explain who will follow up and when

AVOID
- Dismissing, diagnosing or promising an instant fix

2 Explore the barrier

ASK
- Which task or situation is affected?
- When does it become difficult?
- What has helped before?
- Which changes might make it more workable?

"Thank you for raising this. Let's focus on what is making the work difficult and what might help."

Steps 3–5: act, document, revisit

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An accommodation is only useful when the change actually happens.

3 Identify options
Offer choices and involve the employee.

4 Implement the plan
Agree on the change, owner, timeline and privacy.

5 Review and adjust
Ask whether it works; revisit as tasks or needs change.

Follow-up is support, not surveillance.

From reactive accommodation to proactive access

Stephanie Evans

Individual accommodations matter. Accessible workplace design reduces avoidable requests.

REACTIVE

Employee encounters barrier
↓
Must identify and request support
↓
Waits for an individual response

PROACTIVE

Organization builds in choices
↓
Clear instructions, flexible participation, predictable processes
↓
Fewer preventable barriers

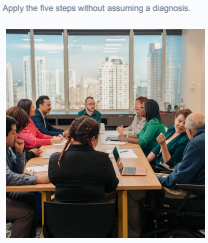
Do not make disabled people earn accessibility.

Proactive design never replaces the duty to address an individual's needs.

Scenario: meet Jordan

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Apply the five steps without assuming a diagnosis.



Jordan works in an open-plan office.

Noise makes focus harder. Priorities change quickly. Unplanned meetings and workflow changes leave Jordan struggling to track work.

1	2	3
What are the barriers?	**How is work affected?**	**Which options might help?**

No diagnosis given—and no diagnosis needed to begin a useful conversation.

Disclosure & privacy: keep it proportional

Stephanie Kennedy

The information requested should serve the accommodation—not satisfy curiosity.

Understand what is relevant

- Work-related barrier and functional impact
- Which tasks or situations are affected
- Potential accommodation options
- Relevant documentation when reasonably required

Avoid requesting unnecessary details

- Full medical histories
- Diagnostic assumptions or speculation
- Broad sharing with coworkers
- Repeated disclosure when it serves no purpose

Need-to-know means need-to-know.

What good practice sounds like

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Accessible language keeps the conversation moving.

OPEN	“Thank you for telling me. What is making this work difficult?”
EXPLORE	“What would help you do this task more effectively?”
AGREE	“Here is our plan, who is responsible, and when it begins.”
REVIEW	“Is this still working? What should we adjust?”

CCRW • Disability Confidence Toolkit • HR / union supports • disability organizations

Three commitments to take back to work

Both presenters

Then let’s make space for your questions.

01

Ask about barriers

Not assumptions or diagnoses

02

Build a real process

Listen, co-design, act, review

03

Design proactively

Make access an everyday practice

“What is one workplace practice you could make more accessible before someone has to ask?”

Questions & discussion