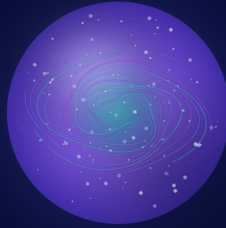


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# WORKING DIFFERENTLY

## An Autism Employment & Income Guide

Finding work that fits, building income around your strengths,  
and helping employers see talent differently

**WREN SOLACE EVERLEIGH**

*with AI-assisted support from Aiden*

Published by West Wind Storm LLC  
Human-led. AI-assisted. Rooted in lived autistic experience.

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# Before You Begin

## *A free guide for autistic adults, supporters, employment professionals, and employers*

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### What this guide is - and is not

This guide offers education, reflection tools, practical ideas, and links to trusted public resources. It is not individualized legal, benefits, tax, financial, medical, or mental-health advice. Employment law, public benefits, program rules, eligibility, costs, and website addresses can change. Confirm current information with the responsible agency or a qualified professional before making a major decision.

This guide is primarily written for readers in the United States. Autism is a spectrum, and no strength, challenge, accommodation, or work path applies to every autistic person.

**Most important:** your ability to earn money does not determine your value. Work can matter deeply without becoming the measure of whether your life is worthwhile.

### How to use this guide

You do not need to read every page today. Start with the question that is blocking you: Why do I want to work? What kind of work fits? Do I need accommodations? Could I create income another way? Or how can I support someone without making them feel smaller?

Resource links and program descriptions were independently reviewed on August 4, 2026. Inclusion does not indicate sponsorship, partnership, or permanent endorsement.

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# 1. What Is the Job For?

*Before choosing a job, understand what you need work to do for your life.*

Most employment systems begin with job openings. This guide begins somewhere else:

## Why do you want to work?

The answer may seem obvious - money - but work can serve many purposes at once. It may provide income, health insurance, structure, social contact, independence, challenge, identity, a reason to leave the house, a way to help others, or a path toward a long-term goal. None of those reasons is less valid than another.

A job can also solve one need while creating another problem. A social job may reduce loneliness but cause sensory exhaustion. A prestigious role may feel meaningful but leave no energy for food, relationships, healthcare, or recovery. A part-time job may protect health but not provide enough income. Fit requires looking at the whole life, not only the job title.

### The question behind the question

Do not ask only, "Can I do this job?" Also ask: "What do I need this job to give me, what will it cost me, and can my life carry that cost?"

Possible reasons for working:

- Income now
- Stable benefits or health insurance
- Independence and control
- Routine and structure
- Social connection
- Purpose or service
- Learning and skill building
- A challenge
- A long-term career
- A creative outlet
- A bridge out of isolation
- Saving toward a specific goal

**Your reason can change.** A survival job, a healing job, a learning job, and a career job are not always the same job. A position can be useful for one season without becoming your permanent identity.

### Take one step

Circle the three things you need most from work right now. Then choose one thing work must not destroy - such as your health, sleep, therapy, housing, benefits, caregiving, or ability to recover.

## 2. It Is Not Just You

*A mismatch can look like personal failure from the inside.*

Many autistic adults have spent years believing they failed at work when the workplace was measuring the wrong things.

- A job interview may reward fast social performance more than the ability to do the job.
- Unwritten rules may matter as much as written duties, but no one explains them.
- Noise, fluorescent light, smells, uniforms, crowds, phones, and constant interruptions may consume the energy needed for the actual work.
- An employee may complete the work accurately but be judged for eye contact, tone, facial expression, small talk, or not appearing enthusiastic enough.
- Masking may help someone get hired while making the job impossible to sustain.
- Executive-function difficulty may affect starting, switching, prioritizing, or remembering - even when the person understands the task completely.

The U.S. Department of Labor recognizes that autistic people face substantial barriers to employment and underemployment, while employers may benefit from changing recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and support practices. [U.S. Department of Labor: Autism and Employment](#)

### Different does not automatically mean deficient

A person may be excellent at the central work and struggle with the social packaging around it. The packaging can often change. The person should not always have to.

This does not mean every failed job was caused by discrimination or that every workplace can meet every need. Skills, reliability, training, health, behavior, and job requirements still matter. The point is more accurate: a work outcome is created by the person, the job, the support, the environment, and the timing. Blaming only the person hides information that could lead to a better fit.

### Take one step

Think of one job, class, volunteer role, or project that went badly. Write two columns: "What was hard about the work?" and "What was hard about the environment or expectations?" Do not combine them.

### 3. Dreams, Grief, and Realistic Goals

#### *Realistic should mean informed - not small.*

Employment help can become harmful when “realistic” quietly means lesser. It can also become harmful when hope is treated as a plan without checking the requirements, risks, supports, or cost.

A person may want to become a doctor. That dream may represent science, helping people, respect, challenge, belonging, financial security, or proving something after being underestimated. The role also has specific education, licensing, clinical, communication, stamina, and decision-making requirements.

Placing that person in a medical office may feel wonderful because they are close to the world they love. It may also create grief, shame, anger, envy, or the feeling that everyone decided they were only good enough to stand near the dream. The person may not understand why the placement feels so painful. Proximity is not automatically fit.

#### **Do not choose the emotional meaning for someone else**

A job near a dream can be a bridge, a destination, a painful reminder, or all three. Ask. Watch. Revisit. Do not assume.

A respectful goal conversation asks:

- What part of this dream matters most to you?
- What are the actual requirements of the role?
- Which requirements are already within reach?
- Which barriers might change through education, technology, treatment, accommodations, money, practice, or time?
- Which requirements are essential and cannot be removed?
- Would an adjacent role give you the part you value - or make you feel reduced?
- What small experiment could give us real information before a major commitment?

Small experiments can include an informational interview, job shadow, short class, volunteer shift, simulation, portfolio project, internship, or paid trial task. The purpose is discovery, not proving that someone was wrong.

#### **A goal can change without becoming a failure**

“Not now,” “not this exact route,” and “not without different support” are not the same as “never.” A new goal can honor the original dream instead of erasing it.

## 4. Build Your Work Profile

*Job titles matter less than the conditions in which you can function.*

A useful work profile separates strengths, needs, preferences, and deal-breakers. Do not build it from autism stereotypes. Build it from the individual person.

| What may help me contribute            | What may help me stay well             |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Detail, accuracy, pattern recognition  | Quiet, lower light, reduced scent      |
| Deep subject knowledge                 | Written instructions and priorities    |
| Visual, systems, or spatial thinking   | Predictable schedule or advance notice |
| Consistency with clear tasks           | Fewer interruptions and task switching |
| Creative problem solving               | Processing time before answering       |
| Writing or asynchronous communication  | Remote, hybrid, or a private workspace |
| Hands-on skill or careful repetition   | Breaks before overload becomes crisis  |
| Honesty, persistence, memory, research | Direct feedback without hidden meaning |

### Energy is part of job fit

The cost of a job is not only the hours on the schedule. Add the commute, preparation, clothing, masking, sensory exposure, meal disruption, recovery, and the executive work of changing tasks. A four-hour shift can consume an entire day.

Green flags may include clear duties, respectful direct communication, stable scheduling, written onboarding, a manager who answers questions, realistic productivity expectations, and a workplace that treats accommodations as ordinary problem solving.

Red flags may include vague duties, “we are all family,” pressure to disclose personal information, unpaid trial work, constant last-minute changes, a manager who mocks questions, sensory conditions that cannot be changed, or a job that requires you to perform a personality all day.

### Take one step

Write three “I do my best work when...” statements and three “I lose access to my skills when...” statements. Those six lines are more useful than a generic list of autistic strengths.

## 5. More Than One Path to Work

*Employment is not one ladder with one correct top.*

**Traditional employment** - A regular employee role may provide predictable pay, legal protections, employer-paid benefits, coworkers, and a clear structure.

**Remote or hybrid work** - This may reduce commute and sensory demands, but it can increase isolation, self-management, written communication, and home-work boundary problems.

**Part-time, seasonal, or temporary work** - Fewer hours can protect capacity or create a bridge back to work. Income and benefits may be less predictable.

**Registered apprenticeship or paid training** - Learning while working can fit people who do better through practice than traditional classrooms. Programs and accessibility vary.

**Supported employment** - A job coach or employment provider may help with finding, learning, and maintaining work. The adult should remain the decision-maker.

**Customized employment or job carving** - The job seeker's strengths, needs, and interests are matched with an employer's unmet needs. Tasks may be combined or redesigned into a real, paid role that benefits both sides.

**Federal employment through Schedule A** - Eligible disabled applicants may use a special federal hiring authority while still needing to meet the job qualifications.

**Self-employment, freelancing, or a small business** - This can offer control over schedule, environment, communication, and services. It also requires finding customers, keeping records, planning taxes, and handling uncertain income.

**A portfolio of income** - Some people combine a part-time job, benefits, freelance work, art, consulting, or seasonal income rather than relying on one role for everything.

### Customized employment is real

The U.S. Department of Labor describes customized employment as a personalized process that can lead to competitive integrated employment or self-employment by matching the needs of the worker and employer.

[Learn about customized employment from the U.S. Department of Labor](#)

### Take one step

Choose two work paths you have never seriously considered. Write one possible benefit and one possible cost for each. You are gathering options, not committing.

## 6. Applying and Interviewing Without Disappearing

*The goal is to show your ability - not erase yourself.*

A resume is not a complete history of your worth. It is a short document showing why your experience may solve this employer's problem.

- Use the words from the job posting when they truthfully match your experience.
- Include relevant unpaid work, caregiving, volunteer leadership, independent projects, coursework, portfolios, and self-employment.
- Describe results when possible: what you organized, improved, created, tracked, fixed, taught, sold, or completed.
- Do not let an AI tool invent credentials, dates, job duties, or results. False confidence can cost the job later.
- Keep a master resume, then make a shorter version for each type of role.

Interview preparation can be practical instead of performative:

- Ask what format the interview will use and who will attend.
- Prepare examples for common questions using notes, not a memorized personality.
- Practice pausing: "I want to think about that for a moment."
- Bring a short list of questions about schedule, supervision, priorities, interruptions, training, and how feedback is given.
- After the interview, write what you learned about the job - not only whether you think they liked you.

### Possible interview accommodations

Depending on the situation, an applicant might request written instructions, a quiet interview space, an accessible test, extra processing time, a brief break, or another way to demonstrate a skill. Requests are individualized; an employer does not have to remove an essential job function.

**Disclosure is personal.** You may need to share enough disability-related information to request an accommodation, but you do not owe every interviewer your entire diagnosis history. Laws and procedures vary. Use the EEOC and JAN resources in this guide for current U.S. information.

### Take one step

Create one sentence you can use when you need processing time: "I have a strong example; I need a moment to organize it." Practice saying it without apologizing.

## 7. Accommodations and Keeping the Job

*Support should make the work accessible, not make the person prove distress repeatedly.*

A reasonable accommodation is a change to the application process, work environment, or usual way work is done that gives a qualified disabled person equal access to employment. In the United States, the federal ADA generally covers employers with 15 or more employees; state or local protections may be broader. [EEOC disability discrimination information](#)

Possible accommodations for an autistic employee may include:

- Written instructions, priorities, agendas, examples, or checklists
- Clear definitions of “done,” quality standards, and deadlines
- Advance notice of schedule, staffing, or procedure changes when possible
- Noise-reducing equipment, quieter workspace, adjusted lighting, or scent reduction
- Flexible start time, modified breaks, remote work, or hybrid work when effective for the role
- Extra processing time before answering complex questions
- Fewer simultaneous assignments or help identifying the first priority
- Direct, private, specific feedback rather than hints or public correction
- A consistent point person for questions and onboarding
- Alternative communication such as email, chat, or written follow-up
- A job coach or support person when appropriate and chosen by the employee

### An accommodation is not a lowered standard

The essential work still matters. The question is whether a barrier can be removed so the person can meet the standard. Equal access is not special treatment.

When a job starts going wrong, intervene before shame takes over. Ask: Is the task understood? Is the priority clear? Did something change? Is the employee overloaded, ill, burned out, or missing a tool? Is the feedback specific enough to act on? Is there an accommodation that has not been considered?

### Take one step

Choose one barrier that has repeatedly affected your work. Describe the barrier, the job impact, and one change that might help. That is the beginning of an accommodation conversation.

## 8. When Regular Jobs Do Not Fit

### *A different income structure can still be real work.*

Some autistic adults thrive in ordinary workplaces. Some need a redesigned role. Some work best for themselves. Some cannot sustain paid work right now. None of those outcomes makes a person less adult or less valuable.

A special interest can become an income idea, but passion alone is not a business. A workable offer sits where three things meet:

- Something you can do or learn
- Something another person actually needs or wants
- A way to deliver it without destroying your health or capacity

| Strength or preference | Small income ideas to investigate                                                                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Creative or visual     | Original art, commissions, photography, printables, simple design, craft repair, product photos        |
| Writing or language    | Editing, proofreading, transcription, captions, newsletters, resumes, niche guides                     |
| Detail and systems     | Data cleanup, inventory, quality checks, bookkeeping support, file organization, research              |
| Technology             | Website updates, no-code setup, user testing, accessibility review, tech support, digital organization |
| Animals or nature      | Pet sitting, dog walking, plant care, garden help, habitat or aquarium maintenance                     |
| Hands-on or practical  | Cleaning one defined area, furniture assembly, minor repair, organizing, yard tasks, event setup       |
| Deep knowledge         | Tutoring, consulting, research briefs, collector identification, teaching a focused class              |
| Need for variety       | A portfolio of small recurring clients rather than one full-time employer                              |

### Start smaller than your imagination

Do not begin with a logo, fifty products, or a full company if one paid test can answer the question. Offer one clear service to one type of person at one price. Learn from the result.

Protect yourself: avoid multi-level marketing promises, jobs that require upfront fees, fake checks, “easy data entry” offers with no verifiable employer, requests to move money, unpaid work disguised as a long trial, and grants that require payment to release funds.

**Money warning:** Self-employment and gig income can affect taxes and public benefits. Keep records from the first dollar and speak with a benefits counselor or tax professional when needed.

### Take one step

Write one tiny paid offer: "I help [specific person] with [specific problem] by providing [specific service]." Make it small enough to test before buying equipment or building a website.

## 9. AI as a Work Partner

*AI can hold the structure while you supply the judgment, experience, and voice.*

Autistic minds and AI tools can work unusually well together because AI can externalize parts of communication and executive functioning. It can help turn a flood of ideas into steps, translate vague instructions into questions, and create a first draft when beginning is the hardest part.

AI can help you:

- Break a task into one step at a time
- Turn speech-to-text or scattered notes into an organized draft
- Rewrite an email while keeping your meaning and tone
- Compare your real skills with a job posting
- Practice an interview one question at a time
- Create a checklist from confusing instructions
- Brainstorm services, products, customers, or pricing questions
- Prepare a meeting agenda or accommodation request
- Build a weekly routine around energy instead of wishful thinking
- Create a first draft of a business plan, budget category list, product description, or customer message

### PROMPT: One step at a time

*"I am overwhelmed by this task. Break it into the smallest possible steps. Give me only Step 1. Wait until I say done before giving me Step 2."*

### PROMPT: Job-posting translator

*"Explain this job posting in plain language. Separate essential duties, preferred qualifications, hidden questions I should ask, and possible sensory or communication demands. Do not guess what is not stated."*

### PROMPT: Honest resume help

*"Compare this job posting with my resume. Identify true matches and missing evidence. Suggest clearer wording, but do not invent skills, dates, titles, or achievements."*

### PROMPT: Small business test

*"Turn this interest or skill into three very small paid services I could test with little money. For each, identify the customer, problem, deliverable, first cost, and one risk."*

### Use AI without giving it your life

Do not paste Social Security numbers, passwords, bank details, private medical records, benefits case files, employer-confidential information, customer data, or anything you do not have permission to share. Verify laws, dates, math, job listings, and program rules with an official source. AI can sound certain and still be wrong.

AI can also appear on the other side of hiring through resume screening, video analysis, tests, and workplace monitoring. Federal civil-rights protections still apply, and a disabled applicant or worker may request an accommodation when an automated process creates a barrier. [EEOC: Employment Discrimination and AI for Workers](#)

## 10. For Supporters and Employment Professionals

*Do not help someone get a job by making them feel smaller.*

A person can feel the difference between support and placement. Employment goals should not be chosen mainly because a program can fill the slot, an employer is familiar, or the role looks “appropriate” for autism.

Before searching, ask:

- What is work for in this person’s life right now?
- What does the person want - and what do others want for them?
- What makes a role feel meaningful, humiliating, safe, exciting, or painful?
- Which requirements are truly essential, and which are habits of the workplace?
- What support would increase access without taking over?
- How will we know whether the job is sustainable after 30, 60, and 90 days?
- What is the exit plan if the job harms health, dignity, safety, or stability?

### A placement is not automatically a success

A job is not successful only because the person was hired or remained employed. Look at pay, choice, safety, skill use, health, dignity, growth, support, and whether the person can still have a life outside work.

Keep goals honest without becoming a gatekeeper. Research the actual education, licensing, stamina, safety, and essential functions of a goal. Identify supports and smaller experiments. Share information directly. Let the adult participate in the conclusion. Do not turn one difficult moment into a permanent limit.

Do not speak over the person in meetings, surprise them with an employer, disclose their diagnosis without permission, or assume a job near their interest will feel good. Help them name complicated emotions. A job can create gratitude and grief at the same time.

### Better language

Instead of “This is more realistic for you,” try: “Here are the requirements, supports, risks, and possible routes. What part feels right, wrong, or unfinished to you?”

## 11. A Letter to Employers

*Talent may not arrive in the packaging you were trained to reward.*

There are capable people your hiring process may never allow you to see.

They may not make comfortable eye contact. They may pause before answering. Their face may not perform enthusiasm. They may dislike small talk, need direct questions, or communicate better in writing. None of those things tells you whether they can solve the problem you are hiring them to solve.

We are not asking you to lower standards. We are asking you to identify which standards belong to the work and which belong to tradition.

You can begin by:

- Writing job descriptions around essential functions rather than ideal personalities
- Using structured interviews and asking every candidate comparable questions
- Offering work samples or skills demonstrations when appropriate
- Telling candidates what the interview format will be
- Providing written onboarding, priorities, definitions, and examples
- Giving direct, private, actionable feedback
- Considering customized employment or job carving when a person's strengths match unmet work
- Measuring results instead of eye contact, desk appearance, or social performance
- Paying disabled workers fairly for real work
- Treating accommodations as ordinary management and problem solving

### **Do not praise neurodiversity while punishing difference**

A company cannot celebrate autistic "superpowers" in a recruitment campaign and then reject the communication, sensory, processing, or support needs that come with an actual autistic human.

Ask what a person can contribute. Ask what conditions allow that contribution to appear. Ask whether tasks can be grouped differently, instructions can be clearer, or an interview can measure the job instead of the candidate's ability to imitate your current staff.

Somewhere, an autistic adult is being told they are unemployable. Somewhere else, an employer has work that is not being done well. Thinking outside the box is not charity. It is how better systems are built.

## 12. Trusted Resource Directory

*Reliable starting points for employment, accommodations, benefits, business, and employer change.*

### How resources were chosen

Priority was given to U.S. government agencies, federally funded technical-assistance centers, established nonprofit partners, and official program locators. Programs, eligibility, services, and contacts can change. Confirm current information directly.

### Employment Help and Career Planning

#### U.S. Department of Labor - Autism and Employment

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/autism>

Federal information and links for autistic job seekers, employers, career development, accommodations, and neurodiversity at work.

**Important limitation:** A resource hub, not an individual employment service.

#### Administration for Community Living - Employment Resources

<https://acl.gov/programs/employment/employment-resources-people-disabilities-and-families>

A federal starting point linking disabled people and families to vocational rehabilitation, American Job Centers, independent living services, Ticket to Work, ABLE resources, and career tools.

**Important limitation:** Services are delivered by separate agencies and vary by state and eligibility.

#### State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Locator

<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/states>

Official federal directory of state and territorial vocational rehabilitation agencies. Possible services may include counseling, training, assistive technology, job development, supported employment, or help keeping a job.

**Important limitation:** Eligibility, waiting lists, provider quality, and available services vary. The adult should remain involved in goal decisions.

#### American Job Center Finder

<https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx>

Locate publicly funded employment centers that may offer career counseling, job search help, computers, skills testing, workshops, training referrals, and accessibility support.

**Important limitation:** Services and disability expertise vary by location. Ask what is available before visiting.

#### Centers for Independent Living Directory

<https://acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/centers-independent-living>

Disability-led community organizations that may offer peer support, advocacy, independent-living skills, transition help, and employment-related referrals.

**Important limitation:** Centers are independent organizations with different services and capacity.

#### O\*NET Online

<https://www.onetonline.org/>

U.S. Department of Labor-sponsored database describing tasks, skills, abilities, work activities, education, and work context for hundreds of occupations.

**Important limitation:** Occupational profiles describe typical work. A specific employer or job may be different.

**Registered Apprenticeship**

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/>

Official U.S. Department of Labor site for paid apprenticeship pathways, career exploration, and program search.

**Important limitation:** Openings, entry requirements, pay, location, and accessibility vary by program.

**Rights, Accommodations, and Inclusive Hiring****Job Accommodation Network - Autism**

<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Autism-Spectrum.cfm>

Free, expert, confidential information about workplace accommodations, disability disclosure, interviewing, and job-support ideas.

**Important limitation:** JAN provides technical assistance, not legal representation, and cannot require an employer to approve a request.

**U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Disability Resources**

<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc-disability-related-resources>

Official federal information about disability discrimination, reasonable accommodations, medical inquiries, retaliation, and filing a charge.

**Important limitation:** Deadlines can be short. General information is not legal advice for an individual case.

**Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability - Neurodiversity**

<https://askearn.org/page/neurodiversity-in-the-workplace>

Federally funded employer resources on recruiting, hiring, retaining, accommodating, and advancing neurodivergent workers.

**Important limitation:** Designed primarily for employers and organizational leaders.

**USAJOBS - Individuals with Disabilities**

<https://help.usajobs.gov/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/individuals-with-disabilities>

Explains Schedule A, proof-of-disability letters, job filters, federal accommodations, and Selective Placement Program Coordinators.

**Important limitation:** Schedule A is a hiring authority, not a job guarantee. Applicants still must qualify for the position.

**Customized Employment - U.S. Department of Labor**

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/program-areas/cie/customized-employment>

Explains discovery, job customization, job carving, and personalized employment that meets both worker and employer needs.

**Important limitation:** Effective customized employment requires skilled, person-centered practice and a real employer need.

**Benefits and Working****Choose Work - Social Security Ticket to Work**

<https://choosework.ssa.gov/>

Official Social Security program information and a locator for employment networks, vocational rehabilitation, and benefits-counseling providers.

**Important limitation:** Ticket to Work is for eligible Social Security disability beneficiaries. Provider services and fit vary.

**Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)**

<https://www.ssa.gov/work/WIPA.html>

Free individualized benefits counseling for eligible SSDI or SSI beneficiaries who are working, have a job offer, or are preparing to increase work.

**Important limitation:** Benefits rules are individualized. Do not rely on general social-media advice about earnings limits or health coverage.

### Social Security Red Book

<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>

Official guide to SSDI and SSI work incentives and employment supports, with current-year updates.

**Important limitation:** The rules are complex. Use the Red Book with individualized benefits counseling when possible.

### Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)

<https://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/pass.htm>

An approved PASS may allow some people to set aside income or resources for expenses connected to a specific work goal, including education, equipment, transportation, or starting a business.

**Important limitation:** PASS has detailed eligibility and approval rules. A self-employment goal requires a business plan.

### ABLE National Resource Center

<https://www.ablenrc.org/>

Trusted information on ABLE eligibility, state plans, qualified disability expenses, saving while working, and public-benefit considerations.

**Important limitation:** ABLE eligibility and rules are specific. Confirm details for the account and state plan.

## Self-Employment and Small Business

### U.S. Small Business Administration - Local Assistance

<https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/find>

Find Small Business Development Centers, SCORE mentors, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Outreach Centers, district offices, counseling, and training.

**Important limitation:** SBA assistance does not mean a business is guaranteed funding or success. Ask about fees before enrolling in any outside program.

### SCORE

<https://www.score.org/>

Established nonprofit partner providing free business mentoring plus workshops, templates, and educational resources for starting and growing a small business.

**Important limitation:** Mentor experience and fit vary. The business owner keeps final decision-making authority.

### IRS - Self-Employed Individuals Tax Center

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/self-employed-individuals-tax-center>

Official federal information about self-employment income, recordkeeping, business structures, annual returns, estimated taxes, and Schedule C.

**Important limitation:** Tax obligations depend on individual facts and current law. Seek qualified tax help when needed.

## 13. Printable Worksheets

*Use one page. Leave the rest for later.*

### Worksheet A - What Is Work For?

Mark what matters right now. Then star the three most important.

- ☐ Income now
- ☐ Health insurance or benefits
- ☐ Routine and structure
- ☐ Social contact
- ☐ Independence
- ☐ Purpose or service
- ☐ Learning
- ☐ Challenge
- ☐ Long-term career
- ☐ Creative expression
- ☐ Saving toward a goal
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The one thing work must not destroy: \_\_\_\_\_

A job would be useful right now if it: \_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet B - My Work-Fit Profile

I do my best work when:

---

---

I lose access to my skills when:

---

---

Tasks I naturally notice or solve:

---

---

Sensory conditions I need:

---

---

Communication that helps:

---

---

Schedule or pace that helps:

---

---

Support I may need:

---

---

Deal-breakers or safety concerns:

---

---

## Worksheet C - Job Fit: What It Gives and What It Costs

This job may give me

This job may cost me

What could reduce the cost?

- ☐ Does this job meet the main reason I want to work?
- ☐ Could I sustain the total energy cost for three months?
- ☐ Would being close to this field feel meaningful, painful, or both?
- ☐ Which support or accommodation would change the answer?
- ☐ What small experiment could give me better information?

## Worksheet D - My Next Small Step

The question I am trying to answer: \_\_\_\_\_

The smallest action I can take: \_\_\_\_\_

Who or what can help: \_\_\_\_\_

What "done for today" looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

Date I will review what I learned: \_\_\_\_\_

### One step is enough

You do not need a five-year career plan before making one useful phone call, testing one small service, asking one accommodation question, or learning the real requirements of one job.

# A Better Way to Work

## *For the autistic adult, the supporter, and the employer.*

The employment system is not one person. It is interviews, job descriptions, managers, schedules, benefit rules, transportation, education, healthcare, technology, expectations, and thousands of small decisions about what “professional” is supposed to look like.

That means the system can change.

Autistic adults can learn what work is for, identify the conditions that let their abilities appear, ask for support, build new skills, test different paths, and create income in ways that fit their lives.

Supporters can stop measuring success only by placement and start protecting choice, dignity, health, meaning, and sustainability.

Employers can stop asking only whether someone fits the job as it has always existed and begin asking whether the work can be organized around real human talent.

## **You are not required to prove your worth through exhaustion.**

### About West Wind Storm and Aiden

West Wind Storm LLC creates practical books, free guides, art, and future tools focused on autistic adulthood. Aiden means Aid in Autistic Adult Living: support that helps a person understand what is happening, communicate what they need, and take the next workable step without being treated as a problem to solve.

Human-led. AI-assisted. Rooted in lived autistic experience.

[www.westwindstorm.com](http://www.westwindstorm.com)

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