

Dandelion Program Management Training Handout

Autism Spectrum Consultant Strategy





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1. Scenario A

Jackson and the AS Consultant have implemented two types of activities – based on what he needs when he is having a difficult day or has problems on his mind.

On a good day concentration can be a challenge, but can be managed by following the basics:

Going for a quick walk, having a lunch break, drinking enough water, listening to music when there is background noise.

The AS Consultant has put in place the following strategies for days which are more difficult for Jackson:

He starts the day with a “to do list” and prioritises his top three tasks for the day. He then puts music on to help block out sounds around him. The AS Consultant and team Managers check in on him regularly as they sit near him. The AS Consultant now sits close to him so that they can see Jackson’s face so that they can monitor him and make sure that he is not falling asleep or surfing the net.

On days which are less problematic, Jackson still requires strategies to keep him focused on his work. These strategies include:

Jackson uses a crossword puzzle book for 1-2 minutes to help clear and refocus his mind. Jackson uses a list of the top three most important tasks for his day. Jackson takes a morning break for 10-15 minutes to get a snack and take a walk through the building.



2. Scenario B

The priority is to keep Angela awake. The AS Consultant woke her up as soon as they found her asleep, and then gently remind her of what she can do to wake her body up and be able to get back onto her work:

She could go for a walk outside to get some fresh air, make a cup of tea, or have a drink of water.

When the AS Consultant noticed that Angela began browsing the internet again, they took her into a nearby meeting room and reminded her of her conduct whilst at work. They explained that this is paid time when she is expected to be working, or breaking to reenergise for work. Angela was reminded that personal browsing was unacceptable work behaviour. She was also asked whether she believed it was fair if there were two sets up rules and standards – one for her colleagues that meant they were to be working at all times and not browsing, and another set for her that allowed her to browse the internet, even though they all held the same position. The AS Consultant reiterated that it was not fair on her colleagues and that there was only one standard.

Angela continued to be sleepy in this meeting and so she and the AS Consultant agreed that if she fell asleep again, she would go home as she could not be productive while so tired. She later went home (2 hours early) and took this time as personal leave.

The AS Consultant and Angela later created a support plan to help Angela adjust her sleeping patterns and routine. She has not fallen asleep at work since that day and is now arriving a few minutes before 9am each day. Her productivity has increased and although her web browsing continues to be an issue when she is tired or bored, the AS Consultant and Managers redirect her to work the moment she starts browsing the net.



3. Scenario C

The AS Consultant spoke with Frank to find out what was upsetting and making him feel stressed. Frank explained that he did not know when to do this new piece of work, and when to continue with his old work. He had not been told that he needed to complete only the new task, and so had reverted back to what he knew. They both agreed that Frank needed help to plan and schedule his day, and assistance with prioritising so that he remembered throughout his day what work needed to be completed and when.

The AS Consultant met individually with Frank's Managers to explain the need to be specific about which piece of work was his priority.

Frank, his Managers, and the AS Consultant then introduced planning time at the beginning of each day to ensure that Frank knew what steps he needed to take that day to complete the task.

The AS Consultant and Frank held breathing sessions 3 times per day for 5 minutes. The first of these was usually a reactive session to help Frank reduce his stress to be able to start the day. The second was a chance to keep any rising stress and anxiety in check and therefore prevent escalation. The final was used to relax, but also for praise and feedback to Frank about what he had done well that day.



4. Scenario D

Reece has been spoken to about his constant phone use on several occasions over several months. His phone has been looked after by the AS Consultant during work hours for periods of time, and returned to Reece after a period of time to see if the habit had been broken.

Each time it is given back, the team member reverts to using it again. Reece admits that he has NO restraint with his phone.

Eventually, the AS Consultant advised Reece that he needed to hand the phone in every morning on arrival at work, and that it can be used during lunch break and collected again at the end of the day.

Reece has given his family members his desk phone number, and the AS Consultants mobile number as an alternate contact in case of emergency. Reece knows and accepts that he will not have his phone with him during work hours at this point in time.

After some time has passed, the AS Consultant will suggest to Reece to take responsibility for his own behaviours with his phone. This will be closely monitored and if the undesired behaviours reoccur, the phone will have to be returned to the AS Consultant for minding during work hours.

Discuss – compulsive behaviour, restricted and repetitive behaviour, lack of awareness of expected workplace behaviour (social context).



5. Scenario E

The AS Consultant has advised Brett that he has to arrive on time, as it is an issue for the other team mates who are able to arrive on time. There cannot be 2 sets of rules. It is also important that our team has 15 minutes to transition into the day before undertaking any important meetings or instructions. A later start time is not possible, as the whole team's day is structured around this transition process.

Strategies to help Brett arrive on time have been:

The AS Consultant and Brett have put three alarms on his phone. One to wake up, one to have breakfast, and one to say that he has to be out of the house in 10 minutes to catch the train which will get Brett to arrive at work on time.

The alarm strategy was successful for a while, but Brett began to be consistently late to work again. The next strategy was to set up a goal based diary where the arrival time was recorded each day, and goals were set, e.g. arrive early 5 days in a row. Brett was also given an extra 5 minutes working time penalty every time he was late.

Again this worked for a short while. Third strategy was for the AS Consultant to call Brett every day at 7:30am to make sure he was out of bed.

This again was successful for a short while. The latest strategy has been to print out a hand-out "Help for the Punctually Challenged" flyer which highlights that lateness can be interpreted by others to be a lack of respect or concern about their job and it affects others. It also states that one reason for being late is being easily distracted (which is a big problem for people with an ADD diagnosis). The AS Consultant will advise Brett that habits are formed by repetition, so he needs to make a conscious decision to practice being on time for several weeks. Hopefully one day soon Brett will be able to arrive at work on time every day.



6. Scenario F

The AS Consultant is not Veronica's Psychologist. The AS Consultant's role is to ensure success in the work place which may mean connecting the team member to other services.

The AS Consultant helped Veronica go to a psychologist, by researching a psychologist that has a good knowledge of autism, is easily accessible by public transport, and is affordable.

The AS Consultant was able to negotiate a cheaper price, and helped Veronica to get a Mental Health Care Plan from the GP, and fill out all the appropriate paperwork. These would all have been barriers to Veronica accessing this service. The AS Consultant attended with Veronica to the first appointment so that they could find out where it was and help her feel less anxious about the first appointment.

The AS Consultant also made forward bookings for the whole year to ensure that Veronica had regular and ongoing support. Strategies in the work place have been regular catch ups to see how Veronica is going, and reminding her it is important to keep work as the safe and successful place and that the family situation does not impact on her success. Veronica has also been encouraged to have regular days off when work is not busy to de-stress.