

# About : Autism Spectrum Disorders

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## Autistic Traits: A Plus for Many Careers

From [Lisa Jo Rudy](#),  
Your Guide to [Autism Spectrum Disorders](#).  
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**Redefining the Workplace for Autistic Teens and Adults:** Since when have passion, meticulous attention to detail, and lack of interest in office gossip been problems in the workplace? Since the workplace was defined as a 9-5 social setting! It's true that offices -- and the stock rooms at Walmart -- are "typical" work settings. But autistic people aren't typical. And neither are the careers for which they're ALREADY good candidates.

**He Just Can't See the Forest for the Trees:** It's a common trait among autistic people: they see the parts instead of the whole. It's a problem in some settings, but a terrific attribute if you're looking for... deep space anomalies (as an astronomer), unique cells (as a lab technician), differences among species (as a biological researcher), particular qualities of objects (as a gemologist, antiques appraiser, or art historian).

**Her Only Friends Are Her Family:** This trait may not get you invited to the prom. But it's a wonderful attribute if you're... a forest ranger; a self-employed writer or artist; a caretaker at an estate; a gardener or horticulturalist; or even a paleontologist (dinosaur scientist). After all, lack of interest in other people is not indicative of lack of interest in or ability to manage things, animals, or systems. And it's not easy to find a qualified person who's willing to spend extended periods on their own.

**All He Cares About in the World Is... [Fill In the Blank]:** If you've ever worked at museum, lab or university, you'll find worlds full of single-minded, passionate people. To an academic, their area of interest, no matter how small, is desperately interesting. The same is true of museum professionals and archaeologists, who spend their lives studying individual artifacts, bones or textiles.

**She Thinks In Pictures, But It's Hard for Her to Understand Conversations:** Some autistic people can, with virtually no effort, envision a 2-dimensional photograph as a 3-dimensional object. With appropriate training, such people are ideal candidates for jobs in areas like CAD (computer aided design), architectural model construction, industrial design, exhibit prototyping, and much more. The key is finding and supporting the training that can lead to such careers.

**He's So Rule-Oriented That He Drives People Crazy!:** In a typical workplace, most people bend and break the rules. This is very tough for many autistic people, who need and respond to structure. But there are plenty of work places in which rules are absolute -- for everyone. Of course, the most obvious choice for rule-oriented people is the military. But even in hospitals and labs, rule-following is not only important -- it's critical.

**She Likes Animals, Not People!:** It's not easy to become a veterinarian. But consider some of the many, many animal-oriented careers available. Caring for horses at a stable, horse-farm or track. Working on a farm. Zookeeper or animal curator at a zoo or petting farm. Animal wrangler for the entertainment industry. Naturalist or husbandry expert at a museum or aquarium. Pet store employee. Animal tech at a veterinary practice or kennel. The list goes on and on!

**Keeping an Open Mind:** What's out there? Who's doing it? For people on the autism spectrum, the answers need to be as wide ranging as possible. Whether your autistic loved one is a dinosaur devotee or crazy about computers, with a college degree or GED, there are career options available. Take a close look at your child's passions, abilities and needs, and the wide world of possible careers. He or she may already be halfway there.

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