

## Smooth Transitions: School to Work

One of the most major transitions in any person's life is that from school to work. In high school or college, many people lead a protected life and are still helped financially and otherwise by their parents. After school, these ties are often cut, leaving the recent graduate to fend for his- or herself. This transition is scary for anyone, but even more so for an individual with autism. Because school is a time to learn to live with peers in a controlled environment, the work force is a difficult concept for autistic people because one must often deal with new situations daily rather than have the comfort of a set living situation.

One of the main things autistic graduates need to learn is how to deal with people in a business world. This includes proper grooming, something that may not have been such a big deal in high school or college. Proper grooming, such as brushing your teeth, wearing appropriate clothing, using deodorant, and combing your hair probably comes natural for most people, but an autistic person needs help with these tasks-he or she may not realize that they are being inappropriate. By this stage in life, many autistic individuals who have gone through schooling are at a maturity level where they can do the task assigned with no problem and avoid outbursts in most situations. In fact, it has been shown that some autistic individuals are highly skilled at tasks involving things such as math or music. Learning a new job in the work force is not the problem-relating to others in a social situation is.

These relationship problems also, unfortunately, help people take advantage of autistic individuals. Most people who suffer from autism believe that all people are like themselves, and inherently good. In business, it is sadly very common to come across companies and business people who do not practice ethically. This often shocks autistic individuals, who may have no idea how to handle this sort of situation. Others in the work force may also not be skilled to deal with autism, leading to bad relationships among employees. By hiring an autistic individual, employers must not only teach them their new job, but also provide direction for others who have to work with him or her. Intolerance in the work force is common, and autistic individuals need to be prepared for this.

Overall, it is important for people with autism to realize that there will be a major change between life in high school or college and life in the work force. It is probably very beneficial for these individuals to seek help in the transition from therapists, family members, or mentors. Going from school to work is difficult, but with a little motivation and hard work anyone, autistic or not, can succeed.