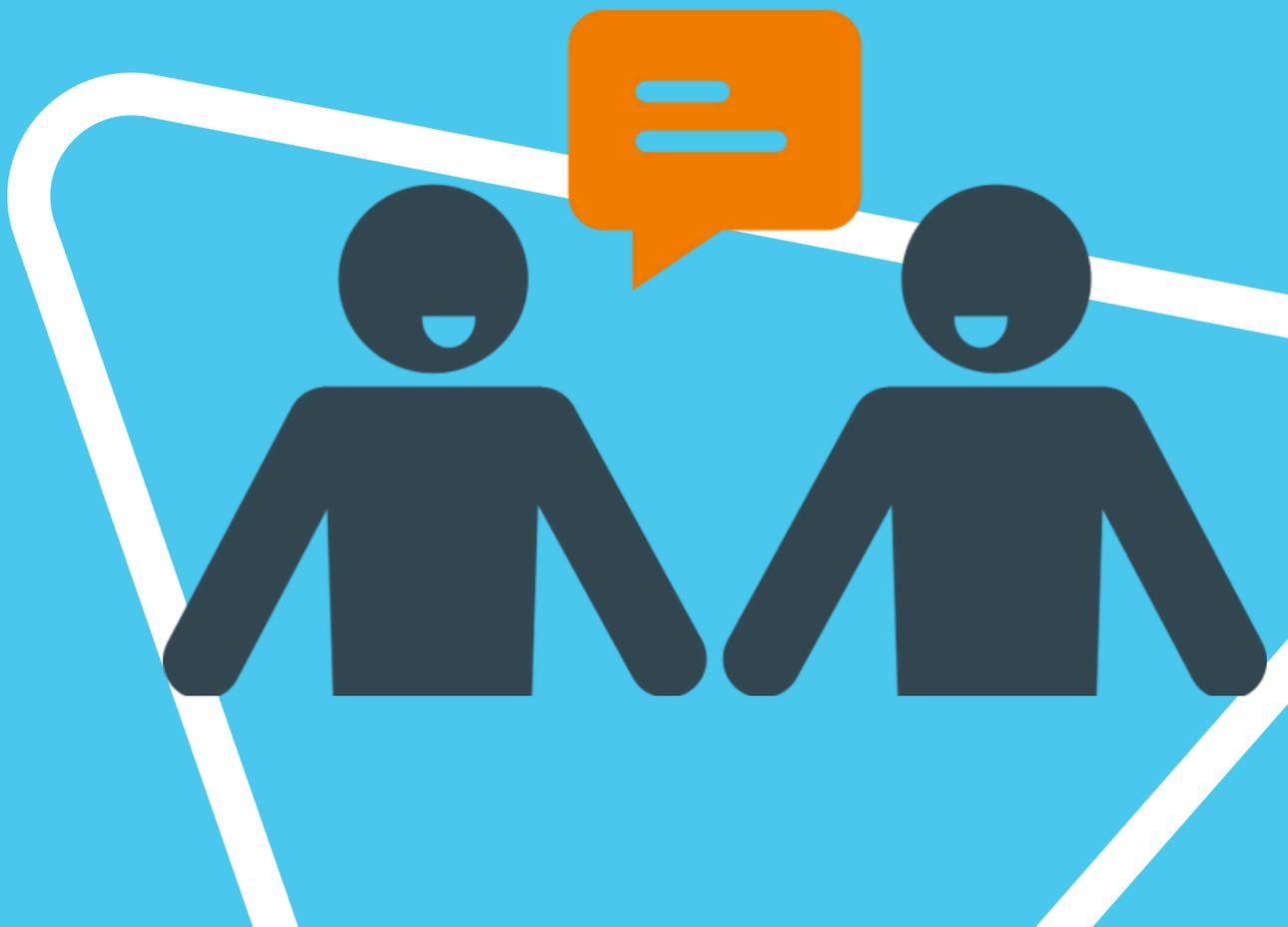




**Ambitious
about Autism**

Networking: a guide to building connections



What is networking?

Networking means building connections with people who can guide you with your goals, job searches or professional development.

Remember, it doesn't mean you have to be outgoing or social all the time – it just means connecting with others in a way that works for you.

Why is networking important?

- **Opportunities:** some jobs are gained through professional connections before they're advertised more widely.
- **Support and advice:** a strong network gives you access to insights, encouragement, and practical advice.
- **Professional growth:** learning from others helps you to develop skills and confidence and understand different careers.
- **Confidence:** engaging with other professionals improves communication and interpersonal skills, which can be essential for career success.

“

Networking is a great way to find out about jobs or get information and support. People in your network can help you find out about jobs, apprenticeships, learn about a company, find out about job vacancies and get advice and support”.

-The National Careers Service

How to network (even if you're new to it)

- **Start small:** begin by speaking with people you already know, such as mentors or your manager. You can ask them to tell you more about their role or introduce you to someone else.
- **Be curious:** ask others about their jobs, experiences, and what helped them get to where they are. You can prepare questions and bring them with you.
- **Bring a support person:** ask a mentor, friend or trusted colleague to join you in networking situations. They can help to start a conversation if you are unsure.

Examples of networking

There are various ways to network.

On your placement

- Attend events where people share information about their careers.
- During one-to-one chats with team members or colleagues from other teams, ask about their roles and career paths.



Online

- Use LinkedIn to connect with professionals and explore their careers.
- Participate during virtual events and webinars by asking questions and messaging attendees afterwards to build your network. For example, an attendee may share their contact details or LinkedIn profile with you, which will enable you to contact them and build that connection.
- Join forums and online groups to stay updated and interact with other professionals.



In person

- Visit careers fairs, specialist recruitment events, industry days, or insight events to meet employers and professionals. You can always ask for any adjustments, such as access to quiet rooms or having the agenda ahead of time so you can prepare questions.
- Engage with employees during company events and meetups; this can help to expand your professional contacts. You can always go with a team member you are comfortable with and ask them for some guidance.



Family and friends

- Ask people you know about their jobs and how they found work, such as what platforms they used to search and apply for jobs or professional opportunities. They may share tips from their own job search.



Top tips

- Be polite, positive, and professional in all your interactions.
- Prepare a short introduction about yourself (your name, what you're doing, and your interests).
- Every chat with colleagues during breaks or team meetings can lead to valuable opportunities.
- It's normal to feel nervous! Networking is a skill, and it gets easier with practice – don't rush, it's okay to do things at your own pace.
- Don't forget, you can take a break when needed to reduce the likelihood of burnout.



Professional tips

Iveta Pudilova is a multi-award-winning neurodivergent entrepreneur, speaker, and mentor, celebrated for her transformative impact in neurodiversity inclusion. She also leads innovative training solutions. These are some of her tips:

- You can develop conversation-starter questions to use when you don't know what to talk about, such as: **'What would you be doing today if you didn't have any work?'** or **'How did you get to where you are today in your career?'**
- Develop a script of questions and answers for common conversations. These can include asking for the other person's **name, what they do and what their job responsibilities** are, or ask **what they like about their job**.
- It's also important to remember that **you don't have an obligation to speak to someone** at an event if you don't feel like it or if they are not relevant to you. It is okay to keep a conversation short and excuse yourself.



We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

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