



# Autism and employment

Jeanette Purkis





# Education to work journey

**Jeanette Purkis Autism Books and Other Things**



**Success isn't about reaching some arbitrary goal. It is about reaching your potential, whatever that may be**

- High achiever at school
- First job
- Reluctant student
- Five lost years
- Reengaging with society: 'Ordinary'

# Journey to a professional role










# Autism and Employers



Autism is not  
wrong or  
deficient - it's  
just a  
different  
processing  
system.

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**A LOT OF THE 'DISABILITY'  
ELEMENT AROUND AUTISM  
SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO  
INTERACTING WITH A WORLD  
WHICH OFTEN DOESN'T  
UNDERSTAND OR RESPECT US**

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**Autistic people are individuals. We  
are not all maths geniuses and we  
don't all like trains. I'm hopeless  
with technology and much prefer  
painting. There is no 'typical  
Autistic' but I think we all like being  
respected and validated.**

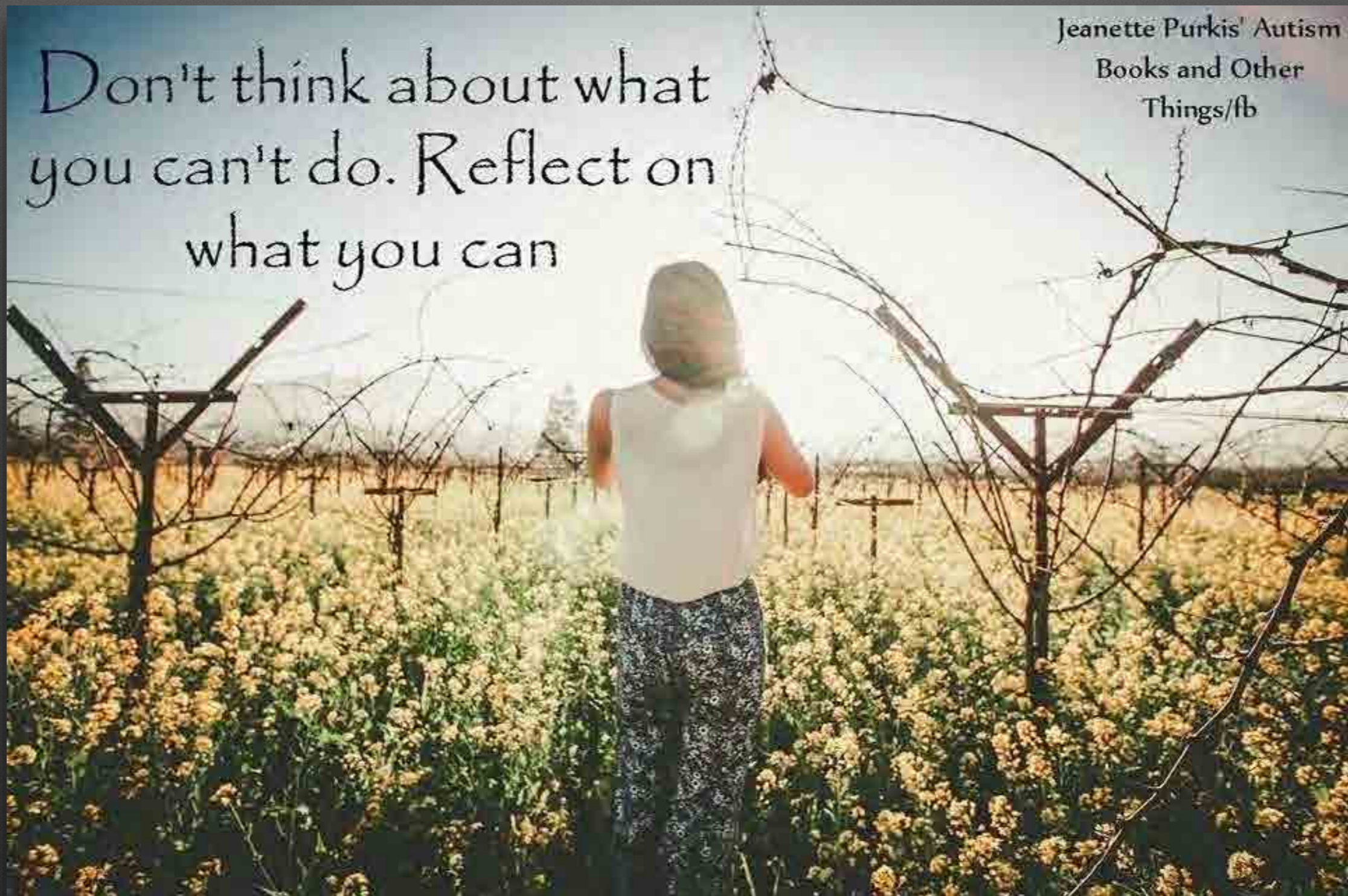
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"Autistic reality is  
of no less value or  
truth than non-  
Autistic reality"-  
Jeanette Purkis.

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**Why employ Autistics?**

# What do Autistic staff bring to your workplace?

- Attention to detail
- Enthusiasm and loyalty
- Honesty
- Work ethic
- Pride in work
- Innovative thinking
- Promotes workforce diversity



**"Autistic people  
can be excellent  
employees:  
dedicated,  
enthusiastic  
and aware of  
important details  
that others may  
miss"**

- Jeanette Purkis

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# What should employers provide?

You can be as job ready, qualified and skilled as you like, but employers need to want to employ Autistic job seekers as well.



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- Information
- Support - doesn't necessarily need to be large effort
- Reassurance
- Training and career progression opportunities
- A safe and respectful workplace

# Addressing workplace issues

- Sensory difficulties
  - Remove or mitigate cause
  - Encourage employee to raise issues with any other sensory difficulties
- Interpersonal issues e.g. perceived rudeness
  - May be unintentional
  - Explain impact of behaviour to autistic employee

# Addressing workplace issues

- Anxiety impacts on performance at work
  - Ascertain reason and address cause if possible
  - Work together to address issues as they arise
  - Reality check
- Issues understanding unwritten 'rules' like internet usage or flexitime
  - Provide clear guidance around expectations - may need to explain to a high level of detail
  - Ensure staff member knows they can ask about 'rules' they don't know intuitively

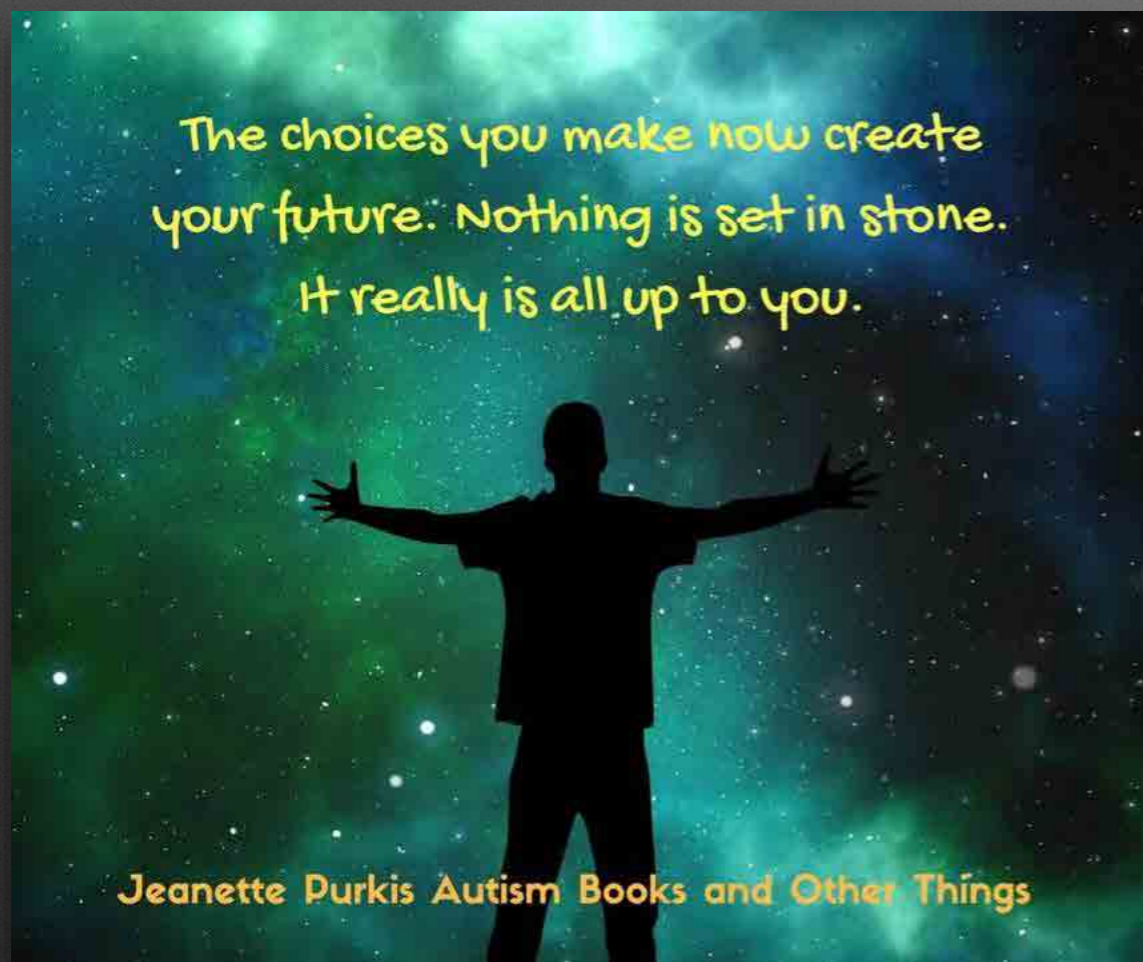
# Addressing workplace issues

- 'Slacks off' when task is finished
  - Clearly explain expectations
  - Set another task
  - Employee needs to ask you for more work when a task is finished
- Literal interpretation of instructions
  - Explain clearly what you mean
  - Be aware of criteria additional to the work itself, such as timeframe and who needs to approve it

# Addressing workplace issues

- Staff member doesn't get along with colleague/s
  - Ascertain what the issue is - talk to all parties
  - May be worth getting some autism or disability training for whole team
  - Is it due to a perception or misunderstanding? - if so, mediation can help
- Staff member is being bullied / micromanaged
  - Treat as you would other workplace bullying issues
  - Ensure the employee has support

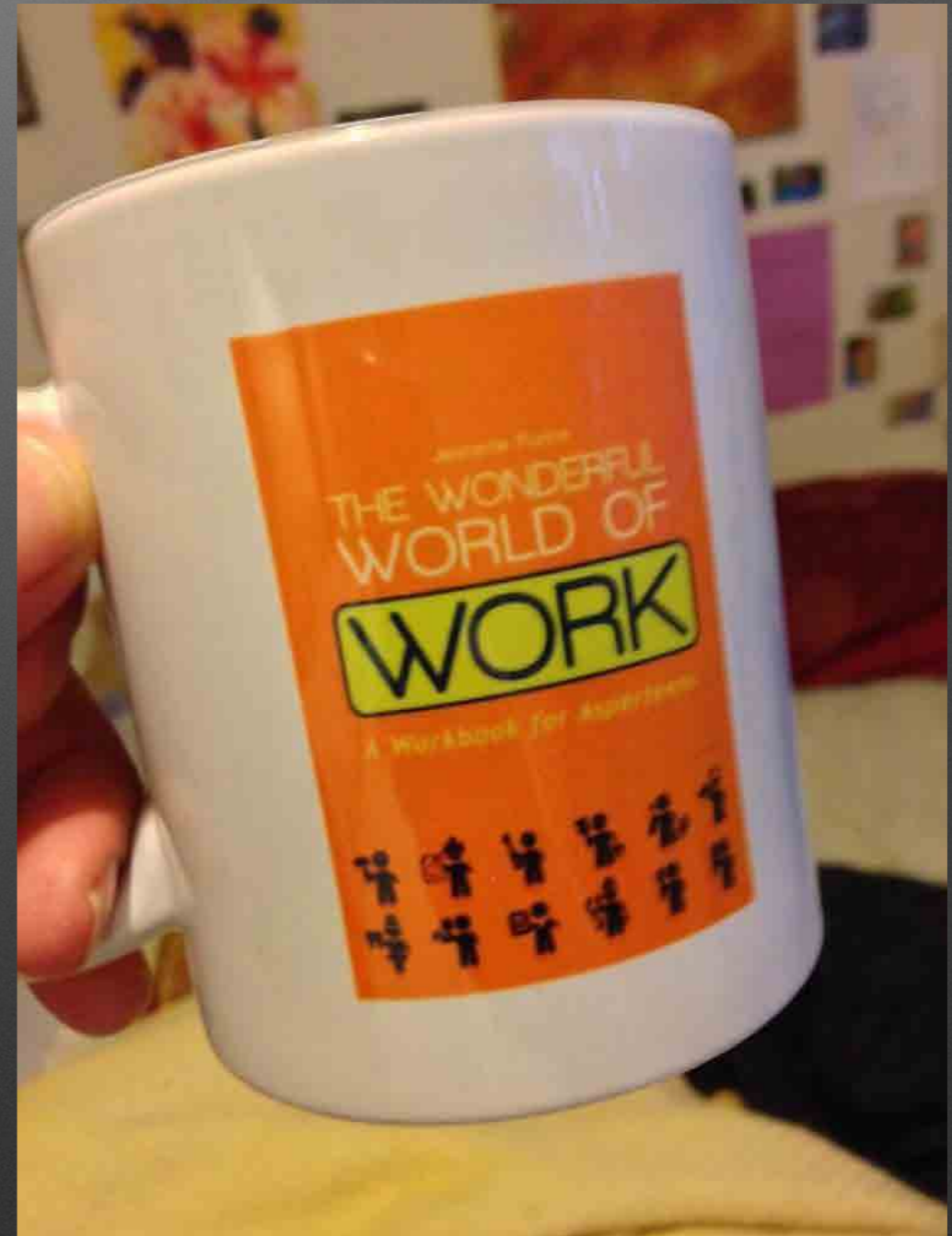
# Assistance for employers



- [www.joaccess.gov.au](http://www.joaccess.gov.au)
- Disability employment services
- National Disability Recruitment Coordinator
- Autism CRC - [www.autismcrc.com.au](http://www.autismcrc.com.au)
- Specialisterne - [au.specialisterne.com](http://au.specialisterne.com)

# Resources

- [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au)
- *The Hidden Curriculum of Getting and Keeping a Job* - M Mayfield, B Myles and J Endow
- *The Wonderful World of Work* - J Purkis
- *Asperger's on the Job* - Rudy Simone
- [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) - Autism and employment books





"I love my job  
and feel like  
i was doing  
what i was  
born too do. I  
wish the same  
level of  
satisfaction  
in work - and  
life - to all  
my fellow  
Aspies"-  
Jeanette  
Purkis



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# Thank you

