**Autism Hub - Unpacking employment expectations**

**TRANSCRIPT**

- So, all day, every day, we give context around the work environment and what work is and why we do it, and why it's important to do a good job. The greatest learning I have had over the last six or seven years is that autistic people come into the workplace and they don't understand autism. And that was one of the most important things I learned. So, when we have teams start with us, we actually run autism training with them. And they're actually the most receptive audience of any of our training that we have run. Because, if you think about it, when do we teach people about autism? Like when do we, through that journey of being diagnosed, going through school, what does autism mean to the way I learn? Have I got strong areas of executive functioning, or have I got challenges in some areas of executive functioning? So, employees coming into work with us, and they don't know that they have executive dysfunction. And so, they don't know how to pick the right pieces of information out of instructions. Or if they're getting multiple instructions and deadlines that they don't realise about themselves, that that's actually really difficult for them to do. So, one of the most wonderful things that we do is talk to them about that and say, "You're not defective, you're not lazy. You're not trying to get out of work. This is actually how your brain is wired and you have to adopt strategies to follow instructions." So, I love to see my team walking around with a notebook and they highlight things, and they write things down and they do to-do lists. We always encourage them, that's important that info, can you write that down. Because I'm helping them pick from all of this verbal stuff that's going on, pick what's important. What's those five words that they need to remember. So, that's been really important, but also one of the greatest things I've learned as well, is interoception. And that Emma Goodall is an amazing autistic lady who has written a program, and they're running them in some schools in Adelaide. And I came across the materials a couple of years ago, and I was just amazed to learn about interoception, and how autistic people actually can't feel what's happening within their body. And so, they're not picking up the signs of stress and fatigue, and things like that. So how that manifests in the workplace is that someone will just go into a meltdown, or become really stressed very quickly. And they won't have known that they're getting close to that point, because they can't read the signals for their body. So, what we do, we do a lot of work with them in identifying that and observing that, and putting some words and language around what led to that. So, starting to feel and understand the emotions and the feelings that they're having in their body. And so, we do have to take on an observation role. And in a school context, this was really important for my daughter. And I didn't know it at the time, but she appeared, and she can still appear, to want to get out of things, and to become very overwhelmed and go into avoidance. So, she's got assignments due, especially in senior years. Executive dysfunction, that's all a bit stressful, I can't really break it all down and work out what I've got to do and by when. And so, the time comes for putting the assignment in, it's not done, meltdown. Then self-loathing, I'm hopeless, I'm terrible. It was just a cycle for two or three years of that. And what I now know is that she didn't know all of that about herself, and certainly the school didn't either, because that's kind of complex. But what we do now in our programs and at work is actually start talking to them about that. So that individuals know they're not necessarily manipulative or avoiding, or lazy, that that's actually how they're wired. And so, that has just been so empowering for individuals that I work with. To go, okay, I have executive dysfunction, I'm unorganised, I need to do these things, rather than, oh, I'm hopeless, I'm lazy, I never achieve anything. And now that's been wonderful, most exciting part of the work that I've done, I think.