

Table 4. Emotion-Oriented Work-related Coping Strategies applied by Autistic Workers.

Strategy	Description	Example Autistic Workers	Example Experts
Distraction	Distraction is a strategy where the encounter with the stressor is reduced by engaging actively with other activities.	I sit there and draw little flower patterns in the squares until I've filled the whole A4 sheet. It always takes time, but it's just one focus on that [...] I think that really is just one of my strategies — that I always have a little point somewhere I can focus on, so that it doesn't all become too much for me. (A5)	He says, 'I don't even really look at it [the phone], I don't scroll endlessly — I just use it very briefly to check my messages and glance at it for a moment. And that's already enough to help me calm down a bit.'" (E5)
Withdrawal	Withdrawal is a strategy where the encounter with the stressor is reduced by reducing the contact with the stressor.	It's also really hard for me when I have to do something like job interviews, where I have to listen to someone the whole time. [...] And then I just get up, like I'm on autopilot, and leave — or I just stare out the window. It's all very difficult and also a high level of stress. (A1)	Something can happen really quickly — maybe one wrong sentence — and sometimes that can lead to completely giving up on work that day altogether. I've come across that quite often in counselling. (E3)
Aggressiveness	Showing aggression is an emotion-oriented strategy where the negative emotion connected to the stressor is expressed.	I just talk a bit about myself at work. Well, when things get a bit more stressful, it sometimes turns into a bit of swearing. (A2)	She described it to me like this: when it happens, she completely loses control of her emotions and starts yelling at work. Naturally, that's a difficult situation for her colleagues. (E4)
Self-endangering work behavior	This strategy refers to behaviors where work is prioritized above own basic needs, such as the need for breaks.	Yes, and I think that's actually the biggest thing — not paying attention to my own resources at all. The battery could have been empty three times over already, but if the tasks aren't done yet and, in my mind, it feels super urgent, then I keep going. [...] I've tried, but then I just don't sleep. It preoccupies me so much that I could get up again in the middle of the night and do it. (A3)	So, she's doing more and more work — never really finishing — always wanting to get everything done somehow. And not recognizing that it's not your personal failure if you didn't manage to do it all, but rather that it's due to the working conditions. (E1)
Emotional Support	This strategy refers to emotional support received or requested after a stressful work experience.	The reason I even function in the world at all is simply because my wife is by my side. She knows me inside out. [...] She knows how I tick. She tells me everything in the morning, goes through what's in my bag with me, checks whether I've remembered everything, and takes care of it all. (A4)	But it takes a lot of conversations and reassuring words to explain that and to say that we fully support her, and so on and so forth, especially when mistakes happen at work. (E2)

Note. Autistic workers refers to autistic employees included in the study (n = 5), and experts refers to employers of autistic employees or therapists working in professional settings with autistic employees (n = 5).