

Table 3. Autism-Specific Work-related Coping Strategies applied by Autistic Workers.

Strategy	Description	Example Autistic Workers	Example Experts
Masking	Masking is a strategy where autistic reactions are suppressed in social situations and non-autistic behaviors are imitated, often at the cost of fatigue for the autistic person.	I'm always trying all the time to be completely normal so that no one notices anything about me — and I guess no one would really notice now, either. And maybe I even try to be at least better than everyone else (A1).	I've heard from many that they already have kind of standard repertoire for communication. In other words, they prepare standard phrases in advance that they can then use in communication (E1).
Order and Routines	Establishing and keeping routines is often closely connected to core symptoms of ASD and for many a way of coping with the demands of everyday work life.	I really believe that without my routines, everyday life wouldn't be manageable at all. My routines make sure I get through the day with some momentum. I have an activity that I always do at the start of the day. (A2)	For many people, it's extremely helpful if they get a plan from their employer that lays out exactly what needs to be done that day. Some people even need to know the exact order in which tasks should be completed, but they definitely always need an overview. So something like a daily plan or a weekly plan is already a very good strategy (E1)
Reduction of Sensory Stimulation	Reducing sensory input is often a stress-management strategy closely connected to hyper- or hyposensitivity common in ASD.	When it got too bad—when the colleagues... I'd sometimes put on my headset to dampen things a bit. That made it more bearable. (A3)	I don't think I know a single autistic person who doesn't have noise-cancelling headphones. [...] It's basically a way to block out sensory input. (E5)
Stimming (including the Use of Fidget Toys)	Stimming refers to repetitive behavior common in ASD and is often described as self-regulatory and serves a stress-reducing function	When I feel it's getting too much I just do it automatically [...] We used to have a server room. I'd go in there because it was cold and dark. No one ever came in. I'd sit in the corner, shut out everything with my eyes and ears, and then I'd just start rocking back and forth a bit, or quietly humming, or doing something, just to move (A1).	She would always do this thing with her feet — I don't even know exactly how she did it — but she would tap her feet to calm herself down. Of course, that disturbed a colleague who was trying to work with focus at the neighboring desk. (E2)
Use of Special Interests	Some autistic people have deep interest they develop expertise in, and engaging with these interests is sometimes described as stress-reducing.	Yeah, it's kind of like turning a hobby into a job. I think programming really is a special interest of mine, because I spend time on it outside of work too, and I always make sure I know what's new out there. [...] I basically always know when something new and exciting is happening, and then I bring that into my work too. (A2)	For example, her special interest is knitting and when it was stressful in the morning, during the lunch break she is by herself and knits for a while. (E3)

Disclosure	Disclosure refers to disclosing one's autism at work.	I'm actually pretty good at understanding irony or sarcasm. There are certain moments when I don't get it right away [...]. I've been very open about being autistic at my workplace, and there's really no one who would leave me hanging because of that. (A4)	And it also helps him to know, okay, they know that I'm autistic. Because then maybe he doesn't have to make such an effort to hide it. (E2).
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Note. Autists refers to autistic employees included in the study, and experts refers to employers of autistic employees or therapists working in professional settings with autistic employees.