

Table 5. Problem-Oriented Work-related Coping Strategies applied by Autistic Workers.

Strategy	Description	Example Autistic Workers	Example Experts
Finalizing Tasks	Finalizing tasks aims at reducing the stressor by finishing the work task before finishing working for the day.	When you're still occupied with the topic in the afternoon and you'd like to wrap it up, you also have the option and don't have to leave exactly at 4 p.m. You can stay a bit longer and finish the topic for yourself. (A3)	Because he always, well, he takes the steps more slowly. What I notice with neurotypical people is that they often do many things in parallel. But he does one thing first, and when that's finished, he moves on to the next. But what she does, she does at 150 percent." (E4)
Use of Personal Resources	Personal resources that are used at work and reduce stress at work.	Because I work with numbers so much and I'm really good at remembering numbers, I do think — I believe that's a strength of my autism. But it's really hard to pin down. Would I be able to do that too if I weren't autistic? (A4)	And she said she would like to have her own dishes with her. It's just hers, and I know it, so it's kind of like a little piece of home. I said, okay. (E5)
Communication Strategies	Using communication strategies to reduce risk for work-related stress.	Yes, so what stresses me out much more than I'd like to admit is that I really don't like talking on the phone anymore. [...] But with an email, I always see the advantage that I can stay in my structure, I can continue to organize myself, and I can decide when I want to respond." (A2)	She's only reachable by email, which is great. She's really good with email, and I can also text her on WhatsApp, which works fine too, but always very short and to the point, of course. And I keep my messages short and to the point when I write to her because I know she can't do anything with all the small talk around it. (E1)
Self-initiated workplace adoptions	This strategy refers to crafting actions to reduce the stress effects at work.	A strategy I always used when I was going into the office. I would go in earlier than everyone else. That way I could just be there, settle in, wind down a bit, and arrive in that environment. And then I was at least calm enough to be in the 'yellow zone' so people could come in. Or I did the opposite when I knew someone had a birthday or someone was coming back from vacation — there's always so much chatter then.[...] So I would come in later, when the first hype had died down and everyone had calmed down again. (A1)	She already has that very clear for herself. And for her it's also clear, in her autistic way of thinking: I need Fridays — Friday afternoons are free, because that's how it's stored in her mind. If I then say to her, 'Yes, but now it's like this, you're in this situation now, you're doing an internship, and they're saying it runs every day from nine until quarter to four,' then that's an instruction — but that's difficult, because it already causes stress just by itself, because in her head there's this fixed idea that Fridays are always free. (E4)
Employer-initiated workplace adoptions	Workplace amendments initiated by the employer to reduce stress	At the moment, I'm working much less. I work almost entirely from home. I don't have any staff responsibilities anymore. I don't have any customer contact anymore. I don't do any of the commercial tasks anymore. (A3)	Some have individual workstations, and many find that working from home works really well. That's also something that often helps." (E1)

Interactional Workplace Adaptions	Adaptions targeting to reduce the stress caused through social interaction at the workplace	There was also a situation once when I was still sharing an office with the designers, and the team lead, the designer often used a lot of irony and teasing. [...] And at some point, over lunch, I said to him, ‘Look, I find it too much. I can handle it, but that’s not how I want to interact in my daily life. I’d rather just send clear messages and receive clear messages too.’ And he really appreciated me saying that and told me he’d try to tone it down a bit. (A2)	We talk about it [the stressful situation] right away. Or if he thinks he didn’t act properly in that situation, that he gets in touch immediately, without thinking about it for too long, and that you really discuss it together in a constructive way straight away. How it came about, maybe look at what he might still need so that he can perhaps avoid such a situation in the future. (E2)
Health-Oriented Strategies	Coping strategies using health-oriented behaviors to regulate work stress	One thing I sometimes do when I notice, okay, it’s all getting to be too much, is that I do a short breathing awareness exercise. But that’s really just part of my coping behaviors. (A2)	Now he’s also been meditating for two years. I found that really interesting, because he’s actually someone who really does meditate [...] meditation helps him calm down. (E5)
Use of Humor	Use of humor to manage stressful work situation	--- (not mentioned)	She often tries to approach things through humor. But of course, the humor of autistic people is a bit different. She tries to make things funny, but it doesn’t always work out that well. (E2)
Instrumental Support	Using others or resources of others to manage the stressful work situation.	And then there are also the meetings [...]. At the beginning, during all the small talk, I was quiet. Then I presented the facts, and I wouldn’t engage in all the goodbyes and chit-chat either [...] I usually ended up bringing someone else along. (A2)	But he always compensated for that by doing things with others — for example, at school they were supposed to get an ice pack from the teachers’ lounge. But he would never have found the teachers’ lounge on his own [...] But then they went together, and he just stuck close to his friend so he could orient himself without having to say, ‘I have no idea where I’m supposed to go.’ (E5)

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).