HANDOUT:

Persona for Case Study: Adult with ASD

Background Information

Name: Alex Morgan

Age: 28

Gender: Male

Occupation: Data analyst at a mid-sized technology company

Living Situation: Lives alone in a one-bedroom flat; visits family weekly

Education: Bachelor's degree in Computer Science

Diagnosis: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), diagnosed at age 15

Developmental and Medical History

Alex was born full-term after an uncomplicated pregnancy. Early milestones were reached within typical ranges for motor development, though language development was slightly delayed. Alex began speaking in two-word phrases around age three. As a child, Alex demonstrated intense focus on specific interests (trains, computer programming, and astronomy) but found imaginative play and group activities challenging.

Alex's parents first became concerned about social communication difficulties when Alex entered primary school. Teachers noted that Alex rarely initiated interaction with peers and often played alone during breaks. Sensory sensitivities became apparent as Alex showed strong aversion to loud noises and certain food textures.

At age 15, after comprehensive assessment by a multidisciplinary team, Alex was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Level 1, requiring support). There are no co-occurring intellectual disabilities, though Alex experiences moderate anxiety, particularly in social situations and when routines change unexpectedly.

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Alex's physical health is good, with no significant medical issues beyond mild eczema. Alex takes no regular medication, but has attended cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions for anxiety management.

Daily Life and Routines

Alex thrives on predictability and structure. Weekday mornings follow a strict routine: waking at 7:00 am, eating the same breakfast (porridge with banana), and leaving for work at precisely 8:10 am. Alex uses public transport to commute, always catching the same bus. Workdays are structured with the aid of detailed to-do lists and calendar reminders. Alex prefers tasks that require independent problem-solving and has a reputation for attention to detail and accuracy.

During lunchtime, Alex eats at the same spot in the company's break room, usually reading a book or listening to music with noise-cancelling headphones. Social interaction at work is limited to brief, functional conversations about projects. Alex finds office small talk and group meetings draining and often needs quiet time in a designated sensory-friendly space after such events.

After work, Alex enjoys solitary activities: playing video games, working on coding projects, or researching astronomy topics. Evenings are spent following a familiar pattern—dinner at 7:00 pm (stir fry or pasta), a video call with a close friend once a week, and winding down with a puzzle or audiobook.

Social Communication and Relationships

Alex communicates clearly and directly, often taking language literally and missing implied meanings or sarcasm. Eye contact is minimal, and body language tends to be reserved. While Alex is polite and considerate, interpreting others' emotions and social cues can be difficult, which sometimes leads to misunderstandings in conversation.

Alex values friendships, though maintaining them requires conscious effort. A small, close-knit circle of friends provides support, and relationships tend to be based on shared interests rather than emotional intimacy. Alex is close to family members, particularly a younger sibling, and makes weekly visits for dinner. Romantic relationships have been limited, with sensory sensitivities and challenges in expressing emotions playing a role.

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Strengths and Challenges

- Strengths:
- Excellent attention to detail and pattern recognition
- Strong analytical and technical skills
- Reliable and punctual
- Honest and direct communicator
- Loyalty to friends and family
- Ability to focus deeply on areas of interest

Challenges:

Difficulty with unstructured or unpredictable situations

Sensitivity to noise, light, and certain textures

Managing anxiety, especially in social or unfamiliar settings

Understanding and responding to social cues

Fatigue from extended social interaction

Adapting to changes in routine at work or home

Employment and Workplace Experience

Alex works as a data analyst and excels at processing large amounts of information and identifying trends. Alex's employer has made several accommodations, including flexible scheduling, remote work options when needed, and access to a quiet workspace. Feedback is provided in clear, written form, and expectations are outlined with specific instructions.

While Alex's technical performance is highly valued, challenges arise during team projects, especially when collaboration requires frequent brainstorming or open-ended discussion. Alex prefers role clarity and well-defined tasks, which minimise ambiguity and social stress.

Alex's manager has attended autism awareness training and facilitates inclusion by encouraging respectful communication and allowing for sensory breaks. Alex participates in a neurodiversity affinity group at work, finding comfort in shared experiences and the advocacy of supportive colleagues.

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Sensory Profile

Alex is highly sensitive to loud, sudden noises (e.g., alarms, sirens), bright or flickering lights, and certain fabrics (prefers soft, tagless clothing). This sensitivity can lead to discomfort and distraction. To mitigate sensory overload, Alex uses noise-cancelling headphones, dim office lamps, and fidget tools, and avoids crowded environments when possible.

Food preferences are limited, with aversions to strong flavours and mixed textures. Alex prepares most meals at home, ensuring consistency and predictability in diet.

Coping Strategies and Supports

- Maintains a structured daily routine and uses visual schedules
- Uses digital reminders and checklists to manage tasks and appointments
- Seeks support from family, friends, and professionals for emotional regulation
- Takes regular breaks in quiet spaces to prevent overwhelm
- Practises deep breathing and mindfulness techniques to manage anxiety
- Engages in special interests (coding, astronomy) for relaxation and personal fulfilment
- Advocates for personal needs at work and in social settings

Goals and Aspirations

Alex hopes to advance in their career, possibly moving into a senior data analyst or specialist role. Continuing education is important to Alex, who regularly attends online courses and workshops. Socially, Alex aims to strengthen existing friendships and become more comfortable in group settings, while acknowledging that alone time is essential for wellbeing.

Alex dreams of travelling to national parks for stargazing, provided travel arrangements can be carefully planned in advance. Long-term, Alex is interested in contributing to autism advocacy and supporting others through mentorship or volunteering.

Summary and Case Study Value

This persona provides a nuanced and realistic profile of an adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder, illustrating both the strengths and the challenges that shape daily life. Alex's experiences highlight the importance of supportive environments, personalised coping strategies, and the vital roles of structure, routine, and understanding. This case study can be

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used in educational, clinical, and workplace contexts to foster empathy, inform best practices, and guide interventions that empower adults with ASD to lead fulfilling lives.

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