Thank you for taking time to chat with us today and sharing the amazing work you have done to raise awareness of SEND needs within the workplace.

What motivated you to make this presentation?

As a person with autism, I was motivated by the feeling that not everyone understands how I process information; training isn't often reflective of how autism really presents (for example, it can present differently in girls than boys). So I wanted to raise awareness, starting in my own workplace, and I am hopeful to help my colleagues better understand how my brain is wired.

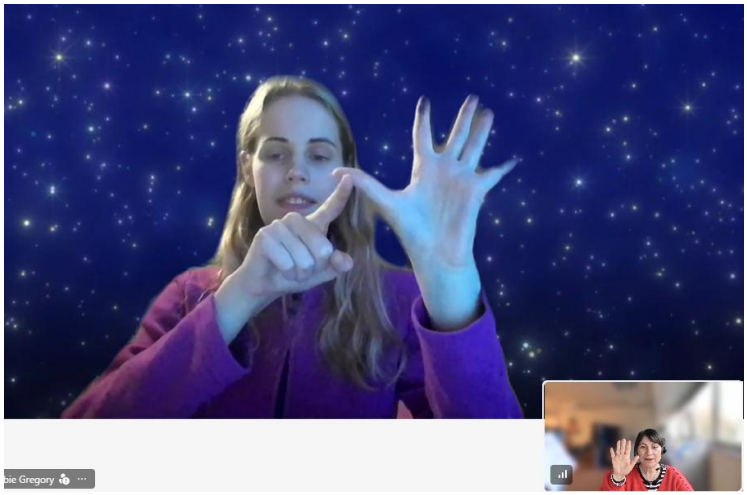
What support did you receive to put this together?

I received support from a Mentor that I meet weekly, from both my parents, and I also got support from a charity called Auti-Ms who support girls and women with autism and they also help to raise awareness. I became a volunteer for them [Auti-Ms], and they've used my presentation when they've spoken to schools about autism.

Who did you present to / what reactions did you receive?

Initially preparing the presentation helped me to communicate a situation that was difficult at work by presenting it to my manager. They made it available to staff at my workplace and now I have shared it with a SEND and You to be part of your website so hopefully it will help others. Most people have related to the slide about gender, how autism presents differently in girls than boys.

In your presentation you share how emotions of someone with autism may be affected, can you share some coping strategies that help you?



The transition from intern at SEND and You to a full-time permanent role in a new workplace wasn't easy. To be honest, my original coping strategy was to cry! But over time I've learned how to help manage my emotions and it has helped to be able to talk with people I trust. One colleague introduced me to finger breathing, where you breath

in as you draw up the side of one finger and out as you draw down the other side and so on as you trace a line along your open hand. Repeat until calm!

Finger breathing is helpful and quite subtle, so I can do it when I'm at my desk. I also have a stress bracelet and other breathing techniques help, in for 4 out for 4, repeat. They all help. I also recommend having somewhere to go if you ever feel overwhelmed, somewhere quiet where you're less likely to be disturbed. Know the route to be able to get out of the workplace easily or get out of the place that's making you feel overwhelmed, just to know you can remove yourself from a situation and take a moment to manage any overwhelm. I've also learned to communicate if I feel my workload is overwhelming, it's important to build good communication with you manager.

I think I have learned a few things about my own emotions and how to handle emotions at work. These days I try to not jump to conclusions when I feel triggered by something but instead take a minute to step back before I react.

Do you have a final message for our readers?

Don't be afraid to show who you really are and let your true personality shine. Although you may feel judged, just remember it's not about how other people see you, it's how you see yourself.