

# **Disclosing Autism Diagnosis: What to Consider when Applying for Jobs**

## **Should I disclose?**

- It's a personal choice!
- Consider the advantages and risks
- There is no right or wrong answer
- Consider talking it through with a trusted professional or support

## **Advantages**

- Ability to receive workplace accommodations
- Protection under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Ability to be yourself, no reason to camouflage
- You could help spread awareness and understanding of ASD
- Colleagues could understand you more
- Open communication with employer and ability to talk about unique strengths

## **Risks**

- Some people (employers and co-workers) may not understand
- Possibility of prejudice
- You can disclose at any time, but consider the effects of a later disclosure on your relationships with the employer

## **Questions to think about**

- What benefits can come from disclosing?
- What are possible risks of disclosing?
- Do you need accommodations to be successful in this job position?
- Are you comfortable with your employer and co-workers knowing about your diagnosis?
- Why do you want to disclose?
- Who do you want to disclose to?
- How will disclosing impact or improve your interactions at work?
- Are you prepared to ask for support and accommodations?
- If you are scared that you won't be hired because of disclosure, do you even want to work there?

## **Ways to disclose & what to consider**

- On application or cover letter
  - Prepares employer to consider what accommodations they are able to offer
  - May harm chance of employment before having the ability to demonstrate strengths and capabilities
  - Less likely to have autism-related problems on job, even if finding employment takes longer
- At interviews

- Ability to answer questions about autism and its impact
  - Ability to prepare what you will say
  - Are you comfortable answering questions and leading a productive discussion?
  - Consider if disclosure will take away from the actual interview
- After beginning work
    - Chance to prove yourself before disclosing
    - Protected by law if disclosure affects employment status and ASD does not interfere with job performance
    - May affect relationships with employer

### **Tips for disclosing**

- Provide general information on ASD
- Describe your strengths and talents
- Describe your communication preferences
- Describe sensory differences
- Describe any needs for routine and to prepare for change
- Describe any communication or learning differences you have
- Request accommodations that will help you be successful
- Ask your interviewer whether they have any questions

### **Framing characteristics as strengths**

Consider framing your characteristics as a strength. Do you need to stick to a strict schedule? That could be beneficial as you will always be on time to work and keep on schedule. High attention to detail? That can be incredibly useful!

### **Try to avoid**

- Talking about the history of your ASD, rather focus on the present!
- Describe medications, treatments or counselors
- Talk about all of your struggles or challenges
- Mentioning problems with relationships

### **An example of what you can say**

- From Autism Society of North Carolina

“ There is something I would like you to know about me so you understand me better. I have an autism spectrum disorder. This means that I may communicate and interact with people a little differently than others. In terms of communication, I may process verbal instructions with more difficulty than others. This means that when you talk to me or give me a lot of directions at once, I might not hear or remember them all. On the flip side, my visual skills are stronger than most people's. So when giving me instructions, for example, I do much better when they're written down than said aloud.

In terms of social skills, I like spending time with people in moderation. Small talk does not come easily to me, and a lot of noise and stimulation can really distract me, so I generally prefer to work alone. But because I am not socializing as much as others, I am more focused on my work.

Overall, I am very conscientious about my work and am very detail-oriented. I can give you several references who can tell you more about me and my work skills if you'd like. I hope this information does not discourage you from considering me for this job, but rather explains why I may do things a little differently than you might expect, but still do them well. ”

*General information  
about ASD*

*Communication/  
learning differences*

*Strengths & talents*

*Emphasize strengths*

## Resources & Links:

**Job Accommodation Network:** <https://askjan.org/> (see what accommodations are available)

### Disclosure guides, autism specific:

- <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/Disclosure-at-work.pdf>
- <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/diagnosis/disclosing-your-autism/autistic-adults>
- <https://researchautism.org/blog/when-and-if-to-disclose-asd/> (This link is a guide for parents with young adults who have ASD but is still relevant)
- [https://www.kennedykrieger.org/stories/interactive-autism-network-ian/deciding\\_when\\_to\\_disclose](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/stories/interactive-autism-network-ian/deciding_when_to_disclose) (talks about disclosures in all parts of life)
- <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/advocacy/parent-tips-disclosure-how-and-when-to-disclose-your-autism/> (more about ADA and some legal aspects)
- <https://vimeo.com/183848325> (4 minute video)

### Disclosure guide, not autism specific:

- [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/10/smarter-living/disclose-disability-work-employer-rights.html?fbclid=IwAR1Bnpvp-WC77n57JF5rYgwFoPyzL5k-7tDhEWBLF9VArEGeDcBW\\_p0-ggk](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/10/smarter-living/disclose-disability-work-employer-rights.html?fbclid=IwAR1Bnpvp-WC77n57JF5rYgwFoPyzL5k-7tDhEWBLF9VArEGeDcBW_p0-ggk)