

Disclosure on the job for autism self-advocates

Disclosing to employers or potential employers that you are on the autism spectrum is a personal choice. There are no one-size-fits-all answers, but here are some factors to consider.

Should I disclose to employers that I have autism?

Again, this is a personal choice based on your circumstances and feelings. If you require accommodations to perform your job, you may be required to disclose your diagnosis.

If you do not require accommodations, you can consider other factors. Are you comfortable with your employer and/or co-workers knowing about your diagnosis? Your worst fear may be discrimination, and that is understandable. Discrimination is illegal but can still occur because humans often do have biases, whether they are aware of it or not. You may also be concerned about others judging you based on your diagnosis.

It is up to you to weigh the pros and cons and decide for yourself.

Disclosure Advantages:

- Full protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act
- The ability to ask for workplace accommodations necessary to complete your job duties
- The ability to be yourself, to be open and honest
- The ability to open the minds of others who may not have had experience with autism



Should I disclose during the interview process?

Timing is a big question. In some cases, disclosing early in the job search might help people who might have difficulty landing a job otherwise. If you think that your interviewer will notice unexpected behaviors, then you might want to disclose at the interview or even prior to the interview.

If you are scared the employer might not hire you because of your disclosure, consider this advice from one of our job coaches: If that is the case, then you do not want to work for them anyway. It is very important to have open and understanding employers.

In some cases, your need for accommodations might signal when to disclose. For example, if you will be working with a job coach, the employer will need to know that a job coach will be on the work site and that is a necessary accommodation. Another example would be if you know right away that you will need an accommodation. Individuals are not required to disclose to an employer until an accommodation is needed,

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but ideally you would want to ask for accommodations up front to avoid performance issues that might occur without them.

Disclosing early also enables you to talk about your strengths. Employees on the autism spectrum are considered to have certain strengths such as attention to detail, a strong work ethic, strong visual memory, etc. By disclosing your diagnosis, you have the opportunity to let your employer know this.

If I decide to disclose, how should I do it?

You may decide to disclose your diagnosis before you even interview, by including it in your cover letter, resume, or job application. In this case, you have the opportunity to provide some general information about ASD.

You could refer them to the Autism Society of North Carolina website:

- **General statistics:** www.autismsociety-nc.org/signs-statistics
- **Information for employers:** www.autismsociety-nc.org/for-employers

You could also take that information and create your own handout about autism and how it affects you personally.

Another way to disclose your diagnosis is to bring it up during your interview. Think about what you want to say, write a script, and practice saying it with someone you trust.

Do:

Provide some general information on ASD, in just one to two sentences.

Describe your strengths and talents because of this learning difference. Focus on those that will help you do this particular job better.

Describe any communication or learning differences you have.

Request accommodations that would help you deal with those differences and do your job to the best of your ability.

Ask your interviewer **whether they have any questions**.

Remember to always **emphasize your strengths!**

Don't:

Tell the history of your ASD. Keep your information focused on the present!

Describe medications you are taking (or have taken), or therapists or counselors you are seeing (or have seen).

Talk about all of your struggles or challenges, such as not having a driver's license.

Mention problems with relationships (from home, school, or work).

Here is a sample script from the JobTIPS website that you could adapt to describe yourself:

<https://do2learn.com/JobTIPSstudent/index.html>

“ 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

If I didn’t disclose before I was hired, should I disclose later?

If you discover once you have the job that you do need accommodations, it is not too late to have a conversation with your employer. You can still use the format described above in a one-on-one meeting so you can request the accommodations you need to do your job to the best of your ability.

Some individuals disclose not out of necessity, but more so they can talk about autism as part of who they are. One positive thing that comes out of these interactions is better autism awareness. Employees with autism are reliable, dedicated, focused, attentive to detail, hard-working, and have less turnover than the national average. When talented and valued employees disclose that they have an autism diagnosis, it can help break down some biases.



Autism Society
of NORTH CAROLINA

For more assistance, contact us.

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