

DISCLOSURE PROCESS

STEP 1: PREPARING TO DISCLOSE

- Explore your feelings about your disability...how comfortable are you talking about your disability
- Identify (by yourself or with other's help) what accommodations you may need during the hiring process or on the job.
- Weigh the benefits, risks and timing of disclosure.
- If you decide not to disclose, make sure you can perform the essential functions of the position before accepting it.
- If you decide to disclose, plan in advance how you will handle it
 - Whom to tell (interviewer, HR representative, etc.)
 - What you will say

STEP 2: WHEN YOU DISCLOSE

- Decide how specific you will be in describing your disability
 - General terms: a medical condition, a disability, etc.
 - Specifically refer to your disability
 - Exact diagnosis

Remember, try to use language that is informative, yet non-threatening. Be concise in your explanation and prepare brief answers for anticipated questions.

- Describe the skills that you have that make you able to perform the essential functions of the job.
 - Qualifications
 - Technical Skills
- General Work Skills
 - Describe any functional limitations caused by your disability that may interfere with your performance and identify those accommodations you may need to overcome those limitations.

STEP 3: PREPARE SCRIPT (If Necessary)

“I have (name of disability). Currently, I have (the skills required) to do the essential functions of the job. Sometimes, (functional limitations) may interfere with my ability to (duties you have trouble performing). It helps if I have (name the specific accommodations you need). I work best when (other accommodations).”

Rules for a Good Disclosure

1. **Script your disclosure.** Write it down and have it critiqued. Run through it with friends who are employers, with people in the working world.
2. **Rehearse** your disclosure script until you feel comfortable and good about it, not only with your lips, but also with your body language.
3. When you prepare your script, **avoid being too clinical or too detailed.** It may be of great interest to you, but the interviewer wants to know only 3 things: will you be there; can you do the job as well or better than anyone else; will you be of value to the company?
4. **Remember your script and be positive** about your skills and abilities. The more positive you are, the more you will convey that you are you and you “just happen to have a disability.” Conversely, the more you discuss your disability, the more important it will become in the employer’s mind.

THE BOTTOM LINE: You and the employer must both feel comfortable.

Suggestions for Scripts

“I have (preferred term for disability). Currently, I can/have the skills required to do (the main duties) of the job, but sometimes (functional limitations) interfere with my ability to (duties you may have trouble performing). It helps if I have (name the specific accommodations you need). I work best when (other accommodations).”

You could also add the following information...

Sometimes you might see (symptoms or behaviors associated with symptoms). When you see that, you can (name the action steps for the employer). Here is the number of my (employment specialist, doctor, therapist, previous employer, JAN, etc.) for any information you might need about my ability to handle the job.

*Information provided by the University of Tennessee.
“Aase and Smith, 1989, Witt, M.A., 1992”*