

Advantages & Disadvantages of Disclosure

Before you decide to disclose your disability consider these lists of advantages and disadvantages. Talk to the people close to you like friends (both with and without disabilities), teachers, mentors, coaches, and family members. Allow them to help you determine if you need accommodations in the classroom, on the job, or elsewhere in your community, and whether it is appropriate for you to disclose your disability.

Advantages of Disclosure

- ✓ It allows you to receive reasonable accommodations so you can pursue work, school, or community activities more effectively.
- ✓ It provides legal protection against discrimination (as specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act).
- ✓ It reduces stress, since protecting a "secret" can take a lot of energy.
- ✓ It gives you a clearer impression of what kinds of expectations people may have of you and your abilities.
- ✓ It ensures that you are getting what you need in order to be successful.
- ✓ It provides full freedom to examine and question health insurance and other benefits.
- ✓ It provides greater freedom to communicate should you face changes in your particular situation.
- ✓ It improves your self-image through self-advocacy.
- ✓ It allows you to involve other professionals (for example, educators and employment service providers) in the learning of skills and the development of accommodations.
- ✓ It increase you comfort level.

***Remember that it is important to select a private, confidential, comfortable place to disclose and to allow enough time to discuss the impact of your disability. The person(s) to whom you are disclosing might have questions, suggestions, or concerns that require more time for discussion.



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Disadvantages of Disclosure

- ✓ It can cause you to relive bad past experiences that resulted in the loss of a job or negative responses from your peers.
- ✓ It can lead to the experience of exclusion.
- ✓ It can cause you to become the object of curiosity.
- ✓ It can lead to your being blamed if something doesn't go right.
- ✓ It can lead to your being treated differently than others.
- ✓ It can bring up conflicting feelings about your self-image.
- ✓ It can lead to your being viewed as needy, not self-sufficient, or unable to perform on par with peers.
- ✓ It could cause you to be overlooked for a job, team, group, or organization.
- ✓ Disclosing personal and sensitive information can be extremely difficult and embarrassing.



*****Remember that it is not essential to divulge specific personal information about your disability. Your disability is only important if it affects (or can potentially affect) your ability to perform successfully within the school, work, or community settings.**

The 411 Disability Disclosure... A workbook for Youth with Disabilities, Maine Transition Network.