

Youth Leadership

Disability Disclosure Advantages and Disadvantages

Only you can decide whether or not you want to disclose your disability (or any other sensitive information) to others. As with most important informed decisions you will make during your lifetime, there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with your decision to disclose. This is not a complete list, but some things to think about.

Advantages of disclosure:

- It allows you to receive reasonable accommodations so that 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 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.

Disadvantages of disclosure:

- It can lead to the experience of exclusion.
- 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.
- Disclosing personal and sensitive information can be extremely difficult and embarrassing.

Adapted from National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth. (2005).
The 411 on Disability Disclosure Workbook.
Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

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