

# How to disclose – guidelines

- You should discuss with your employer (usually your line manager and/or HR):
  - **WHAT you do want, and don't want your colleagues to know** – it may not be useful to share information about for example, medications you may be taking to help to manage any anxiety symptoms, but it may be helpful to your colleagues and managers to know that you need a 5 minute breaks at regular intervals during meetings.
  - **WHO will be told** – it's important to consider telling those that you communicate regularly with, particularly those that you share an office with and work together on projects with, but it may not be important to tell your customers/clients if you have no face-to-face or telephone contact with them.
  - **HOW they will be told and who will do the telling** – for example people could be told in a group, 1:1, verbally, by email, or by using a disclosure document. How people are told will largely depend on how comfortable you are at communicating with other people, an advocate/trusted manager or colleague could disclose on your behalf, but it is important that they have all the information they need for the disclosure to be effective – and so it is always useful to develop a disclosure document either for your own use, or others. A disclosure document can be either referred to as a “script” to practise, so that you can confidently tell people verbally, or to print and give to the key people that you work with.
- It can be helpful to keep a written record of what you have agreed about confidentiality or the sharing of information about your autism.

*Until everyone understands*

# Writing a Disclosure Document – tips and guidance

Depending on when your diagnosis was, how self-aware you are, and on your specific circumstances and reasons for disclosing, it may be quite easy, or very difficult for you to be able to write an effective disclosure document.

- It can be useful to ask a friend, partner, adult-offspring, support worker, specialist job-coach, manager, colleague or a trusted work-friend to help you to write your document.
- It can be useful to refer to any diagnostic reports and/or occupational health or workplace assessments you may have when writing your disclosure document as well. Identify and summarise key points that relate to your condition that describe your strengths, difficulties and recommendations for support or adjustments that may be useful for you.

It can be useful to use a disclosure “template”, the next three slides show examples of disclosure documents and how they may be structured.

*Until everyone understands*

# Disclosure document example 1

It helps me when people	I have difficulty when people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use short, clear sentences</li> <li>✓ Speak more slowly if asked</li> <li>✓ Are prepared to repeat / clarify / reword</li> <li>✓ Are direct with any message / feedback</li> <li>✓ Use positive / calm / gentle tone of voice</li> <li>✓ Give me plenty of time to respond</li> <li>✓ Check if they think I have misunderstood / misinterpreted something</li> <li>✓ Check if they think they have misunderstood / misinterpreted something</li> <li>✓ Follow up important points via email</li> <li>✓ Actively bring me into group conversations</li> <li>✓ Arrange meetings in a quiet area</li> <li>✓ Respond calmly if I appear to be getting anxious / agitated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Shout, raise their voice or use a harsh tone of voice</li> <li>× Speak too quickly</li> <li>× Dismiss something I have asked them to explain</li> <li>× Assume I can read between the lines</li> <li>× Interrupt</li> <li>× Rely on facial expressions or body language – either theirs or mine</li> <li>× Continue with a joke if I seem to have missed the point</li> </ul>

Until everyone understands

# Disclosure document example 2.....



The National  
Autistic Society

## It may be useful for you to know this about me and my condition:

- It takes me longer than most people to process and respond to verbal input.
- I can therefore come across as lacking in confidence or not prepared to speak up.
- It helps me if this is considered when I am asked to liaise with people who may not be aware of my condition.
- Group situations (more than 4 people) are particularly difficult due to:
  - Processing delay meaning that by the time I have formed a response, the discussion has often moved on;
  - Sensory issues meaning that I can become overwhelmed when multiple people speak at once or there is a lot of background noise;
  - Inability to read facial expression / body language means that I can't always tell when there is an appropriate place to interject, or when other people may want to speak.
- Using an appropriate tone of voice and vocal level is critical. The sensory and communication issues linked to my condition mean that a harsh tone or raised voice causes both severe anxiety and physical discomfort / pain. Line management, in particular, need to be aware of this when delivering uncomfortable messages or negative feedback – the words themselves are generally sufficient to get the point across.
- I can sometimes interpret things very literally, particularly when I am anxious, and this can lead to misunderstandings with colleagues.
- Any misunderstandings arising from verbal communication should be addressed as soon as possible as otherwise it leads to uncertainty (a key driver of anxiety for me).

*Until everyone understands*

# Disclosure document example 3.....

**Name: XXXX Diagnosis: Asperger Syndrome**

The following is intended as a guideline for adjustments for communication, anxiety and sensory processing.

**Strengths:**

Remembering policies, procedures, and information that has been read  
Reliable  
Focussed on work

**Difficulties:**

Learning new tasks takes longer  
Anxiety –always watching the schedule and the clock, anxiety if people, meetings are late  
Noise sensitivity, especially high tones, alarms, emergency vehicles, squeaks, tapping, crackling sounds.

**Communication Style:**

Prefer written wherever possible, direct and clear communication is good.  
Can concentrate on what's being said better when not trying to sustain an expected amount of eye contact.

**Things that will help me:**

Being able to calm down quietly and privately if overloaded or tired.

*Until everyone understands*

# Creating a disclosure document ACTIVITY

Please now choose one of the blank templates that follows and spend half an hour creating your own disclosure document.

**TIP:** use the information in the topic “diagnosis and the impact for women”  
on pages 7 and 8 (List of Traits activity)  
and also on page 14 (Strengths associated with autism)



Until everyone understands

# Blank template 1

It helps me when people	I have difficulty when people
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x
✓	x

Until everyone understands

# Blank template 2.....

It may be useful for you to know this about me and my condition:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Until everyone understands

# Disclosure document example 3.....

**Name:**

**Diagnosis:**

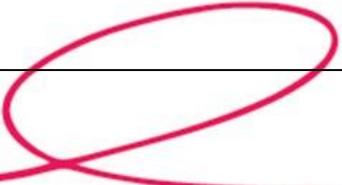
The following is intended as a guideline for adjustments for communication, anxiety and sensory processing.

**Strengths:**

**Difficulties:**

**Communication Style:**

**Things that will help me:**



Until everyone understands