



Disclosing an autism diagnosis

Autistic individuals can experience more challenges as a student in comparison to those students who are not autistic.

According to Romualdez et al. (2021), one way to mitigate these difficulties can be to disclose an autism diagnosis, as this can enable others to make the adjustments required.

Research has shown that telling others about an autism diagnosis can lead to both positive and negative outcomes.

Many students fear that disclosure will only result in negative reactions. This understandably can be heightened if students have previously experienced bullying or stigmatization at school and/or college.

However, whilst sadly this can sometimes be the case, there can be many advantages associated with disclosure for the autistic student.

Sasson and Morrison (2017) reported that first perceptions of individuals were more favourable if a diagnosis had been disclosed, particularly if there was a higher level of autism knowledge and understanding.

This highlights the need for increased autism awareness, especially understanding in the education community.

By telling others about your diagnosis, adjustments can be made which should ensure that your time at an education setting is easier.

The National Autistic Society states that one key advantage is that "*you won't have to try and hide that you are autistic*".

This phenomenon is known as masking or camouflaging and is associated with poor mental health outcomes. Of course, the decision to disclose is a personal choice.

You may be unsure that this is the right time for you. One tip that the National Autistic Society recommends is to write a list of negatives and positives associated with telling people, before taking this step.

You may also want to give information about how your autism presents personally. A good way to do this can be a one-page profile describing your strengths and difficulties.

Developing a positive autistic identity can also help you to feel more confident in disclosing an autism diagnosis. The West Cheshire Autism hub who can help to foster this positive identity. They can also help you to fill in resources such as the one-page profile.

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