

Autism disclosure A guide for **Autistic people**

Autism disclosure is when you consider telling someone that you are Autistic.

Every situation is different, and you can choose what feels right for you every time.

Disclosure is complex and can be hard. We encourage you to talk to someone you trust as you reflect on your experiences, or contact one of these organisations for further support:

- Beyond Blue, phone: 1300 22 46 36
- Lifeline, phone: 13 11 14
- Headspace

Keep this guide handy! Download and add it to your mobile phone home screen.



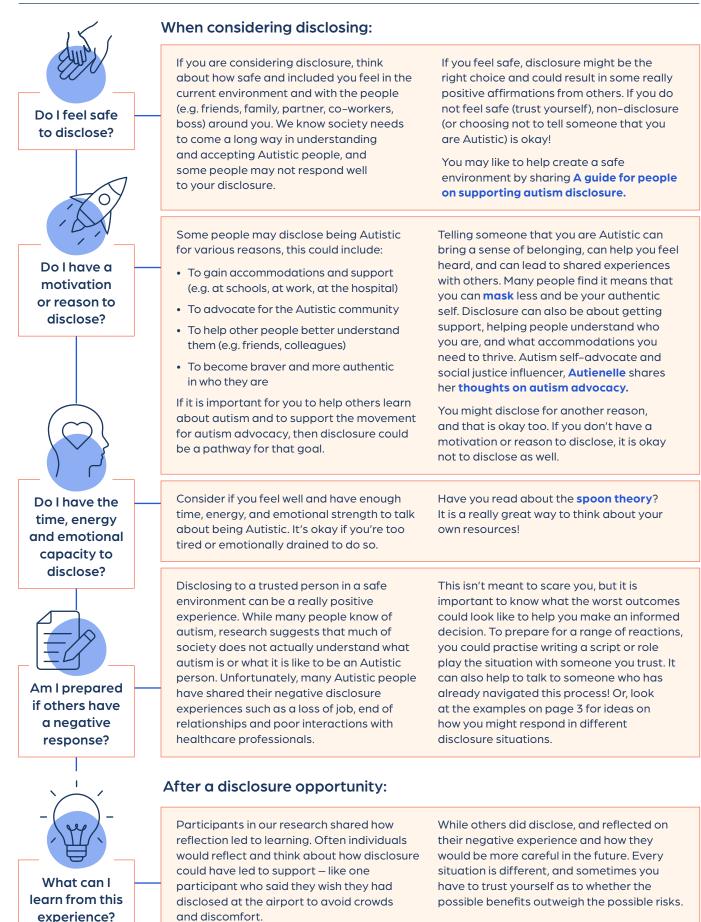
When considering disclosure:



INFORMATION SHEET Autism disclosure - A guide for Autistic people

Autism disclosure - A guide for Autistic people





Autism disclosure - A guide for Autistic people





Here are some real-life disclosure scenarios that Autistic people shared with us. We asked our Autistic researchers and Autistic advisors to offer their suggestions for what they might say or do. These examples may help you prepare or give you ideas on how you can respond.

Possible scenarios	Possible responses
The other person was shocked and asked how could I be a hairdresser if I was Autistic?	"Well actually, Autistic people can bring a range of strengths to any workplace or role."
They gave me an odd look and didn't respond.	I don't have to do anything in this situation. It would take more resources than I have to continue a conversation with this stranger – its best if I just finish my shopping and leave them.
They were shocked, they didn't believe me.	I would take a breath to calm myself (if I become emotional, they will become emotional) before responding with what autism is and what it means to me.
	"Autism is a lot different from how it is portrayed in TV and movies. The original diagnostic criteria were based off young boys. If you do some research I think you will find many people are discovering they are Autistic later in life now, especially women and non-binary people."
I disclosed to my work colleague via text and they didn't really acknowledge it and just kind of ended the text exchange.	Maybe this isn't the workplace or co-worker I need in my life if they can't accept me.
A customer complimented me and said I should be proud that I have a job.	As this is my workplace, I would need to pause before responding professionally and challenging their assumptions about autism.
They asked, "Isn't everybody a little Autistic?"	"Well actually, implying that everybody is Autistic is harmful to the experiences of Autistic people it would be like comparing my headaches to somebody's experiences of chronic cluster migraines."
They challenged me, "But HOW are you Autistic? You can't be Autistic, you are so outgoing."	I would need to think what to say next, but first I would challenge them by asking why they thought I was not Autistic. That is to learn their concept of autism and what autism looks like to them.
Positive, expressed thanks for sharing, advised it was 'good to know', gives better insight for accommodations I might need.	"Thank you, having accommodations and my needs met will allow me to give my best work in this role."
They wished that I disclosed to them earlier.	"Disclosing being Autistic is a private and personal decision. I disclosed when I felt ready to do so."
They nodded and thanked me for telling them.	"Thank you for accepting me."
They took it well and had some questions, one person said they wouldn't have guessed I was Autistic.	"Thank you for your interest – as an invisible disability, you can't simply spot an Autistic person or know their story by looking at them."

This guide was informed by autism disclosure **research**:

- <u>'Most people have no idea what autism is': Unpacking autism disclosure using social media analysis.</u> Autism. 2023.
- Using Experience Sampling Methodology to Capture Disclosure Opportunities for Autistic Adults. Autism in Adulthood. 2023.

Our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging and celebrating the strengths, interests and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum.

Aspect Research Centre for Autism Practice (ARCAP)

Level 5, Tower B, The Zenith 821 Pacific Highway, Chatswood NSW 2067 PO Box 697, Chatswood NSW 2057

T 1800 ASPECT (1800 277 328) E research@aspect.org.au W aspect.org.au/arcap



Research Centre for Autism Practice