Disclosure... To Tell or Not to Tell?

Many adults with autism find it difficult to share their diagnosis with others, even those closest to them. This can be partially due to the stigma many people feel is associated with autism. Whether or not to disclose your diagnosis is a very personal decision that is of course entirely up to you.

Some adults have found it helpful to share the new information with their families and friends because it may help explain their behaviors and past experiences that may have been challenging. Just like your diagnosis may have helped answer questions you may have had about yourself, it can also help clarify questions others in your life may have wondered about. For example, telling your sister you have been diagnosed with autism will likely help her understand why you haven’t understood her sense of humor or why you would much prefer to talk about cars than the latest movies that she might find interesting. Telling her will also allow her to do her own research about autism so she can learn how to support you and help you on your journey after your diagnosis. You can even share this tool kit with her!

In terms of the workplace, the issue of disclosure can be complicated. You may feel that your employer or a prospective employer will judge you or label you if you tell them you have been diagnosed with autism. But as is the case with family members, disclosing your autism diagnosis can also help increase the supports available to you. For example, if there is an accommodation that could be helpful to you such as a desk in a quiet area or a couple additional breaks throughout the day, revealing your diagnosis to your boss can help you secure that accommodation, and as a result, allow you to be more successful at work. Your employer or human resources officer is required to keep your diagnosis confidential if you’d rather keep that information between the two of you rather than something your coworkers are also aware of.

“People do not fully understand the person I am, and therefore treat me like I am different. I had to find a way to help my social interactions with people without being scared to socialize. Then I found the solution, and it was simple. I spoke out about my autism, and told my friends, peers and professors about it. After I did that people accepted me for who I am, and I have lifted a heavy burden off my back.”

- David Powell

There are pros and cons to disclosing your autism and only you can decide what you feel is best for you. Try making a list of both sides to determine what will make you as happy and as supported as possible.