

Explaining Your Autism

Use this worksheet to help you create a handout about autism that is specific to you and your characteristics of autism. It may be hard to identify and acknowledge what characteristics of autism apply to you. Therefore, have someone help you complete this worksheet.

Step 1. Define Autism Spectrum Disorder

Here are some sample definitions:

- Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by differences in socialization, communication, and flexibility in thinking.
- Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the way someone thinks and behaves. Specifically, there are differences in the way someone with autism socializes and communicates with others.
- Autism is a developmental disability that can affect a person's communication and socialization. Repetitive behaviors, narrow interests, or inflexibility are also characteristics of autism.

Write your definition

here: _____

Step 2: Include some factual information about autism.

Here are some ideas of more information you might like to include. Check off the ones you would like to include:

- ☐ Approximately 1 in 59 people have an autism spectrum disorder.
- ☐ Autism is present from a young age.
- ☐ Autism is a lifelong disorder.
- ☐ Autism is a spectrum disorder, meaning the severity and intensity of its characteristics vary greatly.
- ☐ Autism is present in males 4 times more than in females.
- ☐ It is unknown what causes autism at this point, but there is strong evidence that a genetic component is involved.
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Step 3: State that you have an autism spectrum disorder.

Here are some examples of how to say that. Check off the one you will use.

- ☐ I think it is important for you to know that I have an autism spectrum disorder so that you can understand me better.
- ☐ I have autism.
- ☐ I have a diagnosis of high functioning autism.

Or, write your own sentence stating that you have autism here: _____

Step 4: Identify which characteristics of an autism spectrum disorder apply to you.

The following are typical characteristics of autism spectrum disorders. Check off the ones that describe you.

Social Communication

- ☐ Difficulty maintaining a back and forth conversation
- ☐ Difficulty staying on topic in a conversation
- ☐ Difficulty talking about what others want to talk about as opposed to your preferred interests
- ☐ Difficulty asking conversational questions of others
- ☐ Difficulty starting up a conversation with others
- ☐ Trouble asking for help when needed
- ☐ Awkward social interactions with others
- ☐ Not enjoying small talk
- ☐ Using repetitive language (using the same “canned” phrase a lot)
- ☐ Speaking more formally than expected
- ☐ Having an unusual intonation or tone of voice (flat tone of voice)
- ☐ Using fewer facial expressions than expected
- ☐ Limited or unusual eye contact
- ☐ Limited understanding about friendships and other relationships
- ☐ Not knowing how to approach a group of people
- ☐ Not knowing how to start a conversation or starting a conversation awkwardly
- ☐ Difficulty understanding sarcasm or other forms of humor
- ☐ Missing social cues, such as when others are bored or impatient with you
- ☐ Take things literally

Flexibility/Narrow Interests/Other Characteristics

- ☐ Very strong interest in a particular topic or topics
- ☐ Difficulty adjusting to changes in your routine
- ☐ Sensory differences, including more sensitive than typical to lights, sounds, smells, or textures
- ☐ Difficulty with organization
- ☐ Easily distracted by things in your environment
- ☐ Repetitive movements or behaviors (rocking, tapping, flapping, picking)
- ☐ Wanting things to stay the same
- ☐ Ritualistic behavior

Step 5: Mention your strengths.

The following are strengths related to autism spectrum disorders. Check off the ones that fit you. Then add in any others that you would like to mention.

- ☐ Intelligence
- ☐ Strong visual skills
- ☐ Excellent memory
- ☐ Learns or memorizes facts easily
- ☐ Special ability or talent (perfect pitch, dates, numbers)
- ☐ Charismatic, charming
- ☐ Funny
- ☐ Genuine or honest personality
- ☐ Attention to detail
- ☐ Focused
- ☐ Artistic
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

You can also mention strengths that are not necessarily related to your autism. Check off the ones that fit you. Add any others that you would like to mention.

- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Lives independently
- ☐ Able to drive
- ☐ Good at math
- ☐ Good at reading
- ☐ Good at writing
- ☐ Good sense of humor
- ☐ Good personality
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Step 6: If you want, mention a few (1-3) accommodations that would be helpful or necessary for you at the workplace. This step is optional.

Here is a list of reasonable accommodations you might request. Check off 1-3 that you would like to request, if any. Or, write your own.

- ☐ Using a written schedule
- ☐ Using a to do list
- ☐ Wearing head phones to block out sound
- ☐ Allowing short, but frequent breaks
- ☐ Using visual reminders of workplace rules
- ☐ Having a quiet workspace as opposed to a noisy or crowded workspace
- ☐ Providing additional on-the-job training if needed
- ☐ Allowing alternative methods to communication with your supervisor or co-workers when appropriate, such as email rather than face-to-face meetings
- ☐ Assisting in breaking down the steps to a long term project
- ☐ Assisting in identifying high priority versus low priority tasks
- ☐ Providing advanced notice for changes to schedule or typical job duties
- ☐ Other: _____
- ☐ Other: _____

Step 7: Make your hand out

Use your responses from Steps 1 -6 to make your own handout. These answers give you the information you need to include in your handout. Write the answers in paragraph or bullet form, or a combination of paragraphs and bullet points. Make sure it looks and sounds professional. It is best to type this handout. Follow the examples provided on the website if needed.