National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

Employment Disclosure Worksheet
For Self Advocacy

First of all, remember that disclosure is a highly individual decision. The Fall 2004 issue of *InsideMS* included a pop quiz, "Should You Tell Your Boss?" You may find the following questions from this quiz helpful in your decision whether or not to disclose.

	Yes	No
1) Am I avoiding medical treatment to keep my health status secret on the job?		
2) Am I telling lies or making excuses to cover MS symptoms more than once or twice a month?		
3) Have I received negative comments about my effectiveness on the job? A performance evaluation that was less than I expected?		
4) Do I have episodes of staggering, slurring, or falling asleep at my desk?		

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, it may be time to consider disclosing to your employer.

Take the time now to determine your feelings as to whether or not you want to disclose to your current employer, a new supervisor, or new co-worker. Answering the following questions and discussing your answers with a person close to you may assist you with this decision.

What are the advantages of disclosing?

_____

_____

_____

What do I hope to gain from disclosing?

_____

_____

_____

What is my biggest fear in disclosing?

_____

_____

_____

What are the disadvantages of disclosing?

_____

_____

_____

If you decide to disclose, you need a game plan with a three-step approach – **research**, **script writing**, and **practice**. Consultation with an occupational or physical therapist, psychologist, career counselor, or your state's vocational rehabilitation office is highly recommended. Talking to these experts will assist you in your research about the kinds of accommodations that would work for you. Remember to take advantage of the educational support provided by the National MS Society as you go through this process.

Your disclosure script should be specific, brief and non-apologetic. Keep in mind the perspective of your employer as you write this script. Your employer will be considering the questions:

- Can you do the job?
- Are you reliable and dependable?
- Can you grow in your job and be of value to the company?

Include answers to these questions in your disclosure. Other tips include:

- Keep it short with few, if any, details about MS. Focus on symptoms that are interfering with your work. We recommend starting at the lowest level of disclosure and only providing more details if your employer requires it.
- Keep it non-medical, avoiding clinical or medical terminology.
- Relate your request for accommodations to your ability and success in your job performance (the next section will address specific accommodations).
- Explain that you can do the job and, with (or without) accommodations, your disability will not interfere with your ability to do the work.
- Remind your employer that your need for and use of some accommodations may vary due to the relapsing/remitting nature of your medical condition.

- Be positive, focus on your best attributes, and end on a positive note, highlighting the continued good work you will be able to do with the help of accommodations (if any).

The final step of your game plan is practice, practice, practice. Ask your family and friends to critique your script and delivery.

Use the following formula to practice writing your own disclosure script.

I have MS (or a disorder), which affects people differently. In my case, I have (job-related) difficulty with _____ and _____. However, this would not interfere with my ability to perform the duties of the job, if minor accommodations could be made such as _____. With these accommodations, I will _____ (positive statement).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Taken from **Career Crossroads: Employment and MS**, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 1-800-344-4867, www.nationalMSsociety.org.