

The *Pros* and *Cons* of Sharing an Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis with Police



Sharing a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a personal choice. But when it comes to sharing a diagnosis with law enforcement, that choice may be even more difficult to make. There are many reasons why sharing an ASD diagnosis with law enforcement may be helpful.

But there are also reasons why a person may not feel safe disclosing their diagnosis to police officers.

This resource is to help autistic individuals decide if they should share their diagnosis with law enforcement.

This resource was created with support and reviewed by individuals on the spectrum.

Reasons an Autistic Individual May Want to Share Their Diagnosis

- A police officer may not understand common traits (like stimming or scripting). They could see these traits as someone having a crisis or someone under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- If a person takes longer to answer questions, the police officer may think they are being uncooperative. Sharing an ASD diagnosis will help the police officer understand the autistic individual needs more time to follow orders or answer questions.
- A police officer may think scripting language is mocking. Sharing an ASD diagnosis helps the officer understand the person communicates differently.
- The police officer may be more patient and give an individual with autism time to process questions or commands if aware of the diagnosis.
- The police officer may let an autistic person contact a supporter if they are aware of the ASD diagnosis.
- If eye contact is difficult, the police officer may think this is because of lying or not listening. If an autistic person shares their diagnosis, the police may understand eye contact is hard for someone who is autistic.

Reasons an Autistic Individual May **NOT** Want to Share Their Diagnosis

- An autistic person may have been misunderstood or discriminated against in the past by a police officer and do not trust law enforcement.
- An autistic person may have been misunderstood and treated poorly in the past by police.
- An autistic person may not have been believed in the past when sharing their diagnosis with a police officer.
- An autistic person may have been talked down to or treated badly by a police officer because of their diagnosis.
- An autistic person may fear that they are seen as more dangerous and less predictable by police because of their diagnosis.
- An autistic person may worry that police may not view them as mentally capable due to their diagnosis.



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