SHOULD I DISCLOSE MY DIAGNOSIS ON MY COLLEGE APPLICATION?

For any high school senior, there may be few more stressful situations than applying to college. Figuring out what you like in a school, how far away you want to go, and what you might want to study are big decisions for most 17 or 18-year olds. Once you finally have those decisions underway, you are faced with the college application.

Much of what goes into a college application is already pre-determined: there’s not much you can do about your grades and your test scores at this point, and teacher recommendations, aside from choosing who writes them, are pretty much out of your control. What you can influence, however, are your personal essays.

Colleges say that they want to know who you are after reading your essay. They want to know what is important to you, what you’re passionate about, and what have been your challenges. For high school students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), your answers to these questions may be intricately tied to your diagnosis.

So.... should you mention your diagnosis in your essay or elsewhere in your application?

This is an extremely personal decision for each student and his or her family. The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits schools from discriminating against students with disabilities during the application process and once they are enrolled. Yet, with so many students applying to colleges, if you aren’t accepted, how would you ever know if the decision was related to your disclosure of your ASD diagnosis.

Factors to consider when deciding whether to disclose your diagnosis include:

- Does disclosing your diagnosis help illustrate obstacles that you have faced and overcome?
- Does disclosing your diagnosis help explain inconsistencies in your classwork (for example, a few grades that are not on par with the rest of your transcript)?
- Will your diagnosis be something positive that sets you apart from other candidates?
- Would you want to attend a college that wouldn’t accept you because of your diagnosis?

After pondering these questions, discuss your feelings with your family and school guidance
counselor. They can help you weigh your decision. Ultimately, however, the decision is up to you.

Related Articles:

- POST-SECONDARY ADMISSION ASSESSMENTS
- COLLEGE OR EMPLOYMENT: WHAT’S RIGHT FOR ME?

Recommended Link:

- CAR RESOURCE DIRECTORY (SELECT TRANSITION SERVICES)

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