



Disability Employment Awareness Symposium: Tips from Panelists

For Students and/or Job Seekers:

- Take advantage of the many **practical learning experiences** available in your program and at your institution, such as work integrated learning placements, student life activities, and sport and social groups.
- If you have never worked before, **consider volunteering**. Volunteering gives you opportunities to develop skills, expand your resume, and gain references.
- Graduating students need to be aware that they may not get the same accessible experience and support in the workplace as they did in school. **If you need accommodations for an interview or a job, the onus is on you to ask for it** – don't wait until things become difficult.
- **Take your best self to an interview**. You have control, you have options.
- Requesting accommodations in the workplace is not a sign of weakness but a **pathway to success**. If the accommodation at work makes you more effective as an employee, this benefits everyone.
- **Disclosing your disability is a personal decision**. Trust your instincts. Disclosing is about sharing what you need to do the job, not sharing your diagnosis. The consensus is to disclose and request accommodations early before any potential performance issues arise. Big organizations have many moving parts and processes so be patient as it may take employers a while to put accommodations in place.
- **Check your own attitude** as a person with a disability. How are you coming across in the way you communicate?

- Workplace accommodations for people with **mental health** difficulties could involve things like virtual work, flexible hours, or more frequent breaks to catch your breath.
- Employers in Canada have a **duty to accommodate** up to the point of hardship. The government directive notes that, “When barriers cannot be removed, individuals are accommodated up to the point of undue hardship, taking into consideration issues of health, safety and cost.”
- While employers are generally good people, sometimes a particular work environment may no longer be the best fit for you. Some workplaces become toxic. **It is OK to walk away from a toxic environment.**
- Don't be afraid to **ask for help!**

For Post-Secondary Institutions & Professors:

- **Universal Design for Learning** helps to level the playing field for students with disabilities.
- When post-secondary institutions and programs become more accessible, it generates confidence and boosts awareness for people with disabilities. **Confident students become confident, effective employees.**