



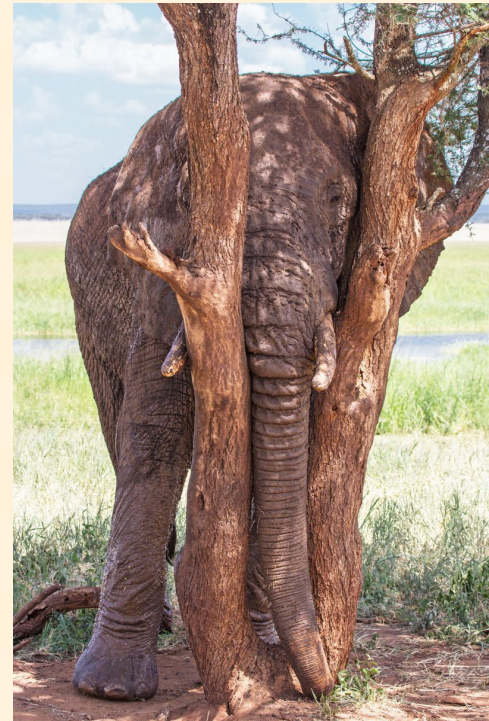
# Strength Based Disclosure

Presented by:  
Ricardo Flores

# Agenda

## OBJECTIVES

- Know your disability like no one else does
- Know the law
- Job-seekers with disabilities are entitled to
- Job-seekers with disabilities' responsibilities
- 6 Steps to Presenting a Complete Package for Employers
- Prepping your strength-based disclosure script
- Examples of accommodations
- Next steps



# Introduction

Howdy! My name is Ricardo Flores, and I identify as an independent blind person. The Americans with Disabilities Act includes legal blindness and visual impairment as a physical disability that may require reasonable accommodation. Accommodations that empower my success in the workplace are:

- Use of a white cane
- Assistive technology and text-to-speech software
- Occasion verbal communication

# Introduction

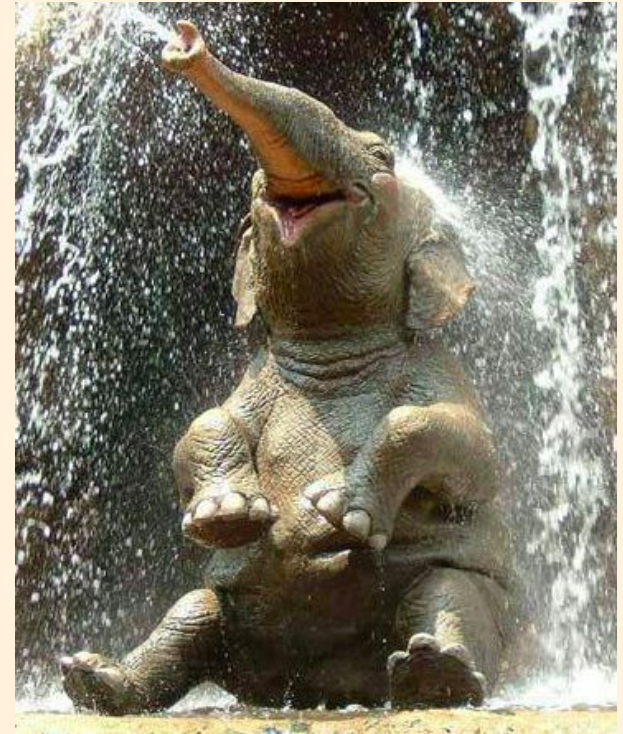
It has been my experience that when these accommodations are deemed reasonable, I have productive working relationships. I'm willing and open to questions at any time to help further understanding and respect to what I consider one of my unique characteristics.



“In life you have a choice: Bitter or Better? Choose better, forget bitter.” - Nick Vujicic, motivational speaker with a rare disorder characterized by the absence of arms and legs

# Objectives

- Prepare ourselves to become the expert and best advocate of our individual disability
- Discuss various aspects to disclosure of disability in the employment sector
- Examine reasonable accommodation and its role in the disclosure of disability decision





with disabilities.

# Know your disability like no one else does



1. Are you able to provide general information about your disability - exact diagnosis, related medical facts and common rehabilitation methods?
2. How does your disability affect your ability to perform key job-tasks?
3. Do you understand the types of accommodations that have worked for you in the past, and do you recognize types of accommodations you anticipate needing in the workplace?

# Know the Law

- The Americans with Disability Act ‘ADA’ was adopted in 1990
- ADA is a federal law protecting the civil rights of Persons with Disabilities ‘PWDS’
- Title I of the ADA, strictly prohibits discrimination of qualified PWDS -- this was enacted to increase equal employment opportunities
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in Section 501 and 503, requires disability non-discrimination and affirmative action for federal agency employers, federal contractors and subcontractors



# Know the Law

- Executive Order 13548 signed by President Obama in 2010, encourages the federal government to be a model employer for PWDS, requiring targeted hiring and retention practices toward PWDS
- The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs set recommended regulations for federal contractors with contracts set at \$10,000 or more, to achieve and maintain a workforce in which 7% of employees have disabilities

# Job-seekers with disabilities are entitled to

1. Have information about your disability kept confidential
2. Seek information about hiring practices from any organization
3. Choose to disclose at any point in the employment process
4. Receive reasonable accommodations for an interview
5. To be considered for a position on your skill and merit
6. Have respectful questioning about your disability for the purpose of determining whether you need accommodation and if so what kind

# Job-seekers with disabilities have the responsibility to

1. Disclose your need for any type of accommodation
2. Bring your skills and merits to the table
3. Be truthful, self-determined and proactive

“I think that everyone has something about themselves that they feel is their weakness, their disability. And I’m certain we all have one, because I think of a disability as being anything which undermines our belief and confidence in our abilities.” - Aimee Mullins, American athlete, actress, fashion model, born with condition that resulted in lower legs amputated



# 6 Steps to Presenting a Complete Package for Employers

1. Present a solid resume: emphasizing your up-to-date contact, education, training, work history, and relative experience

# 6 Steps Cont'd...

2. Do not downgrade unpaid experiences - student activities, memberships and projects, volunteering with nonprofits, civic organizations, and churches



# 6 Steps Cont'd...

3. Write a cover letter - introducing yourself to the potential employer, identifying who you are, why you are applying, and professionally extend a request for an interview

**“I want to talk about it, and not feel embarrassment or shame, because I think it’s important for people to hear from adults who have good fulfilling lives and manage mental illness as part of those good fulfilling lives.” - John Green, American author, vlogger, educator**

# 6 Steps Cont'd...

4. Disclosing in the cover letter: this could be the first opportunity to disclose disability which could work to one's advantage if:

- The job is federally-based and complying with affirmative action
- The job is related to a disability such as a rehabilitation counselor
- Having a disability is a qualification for the position, for ex. an addiction counselor may require someone who's been through the recovery process



# 6 Steps Cont'd...

## 5. Complete applications:

- Highlight key points in your resume, attach when possible
- Work on applications in a calm and stress-free environment
- The ADA prohibits questions related to medical or disability except when a government agency is asking for affirmative action purposes
- For those with non-apparent disabilities, to alleviate personal anxieties, leave disability related questions blank on applications so that you can offer your best outlook to your circumstance in-person and disclose at your personal convenience



# 6 Steps Cont'd...

## 6. Rock the interview!

- You have 1 minute to make a good first impression
- Disclose is critical if you need accommodations such as access to the building or adaptive equipment for written components to an interview
- Be prepared for difficult questions such as: gaps in employment
- Emphasize your talents, strengths, abilities, and other career-forward attributes to your interview answers keeping the conversation positive in nature
- Do not dwell on the limitations of your disability

# Prepping your strength-based disclosure script

- Use common words rather than technical terms or acronyms when articulating
- Maintain a professional tone, play it straight and focus on the key message of strengths, providing clarity about the alternative techniques utilized to perform job duties
- When possible use personal examples to accurately explain your individual needs
- Avoid using terms such as “chronic condition” and “permanently debilitating” as the employer will likely find these descriptions distressing

# Prepping your strength-based disclosure script



example) “Howdy my name is Ricardo Flores and I identify as an independent blind person. The Americans with Disabilities acts includes legal blindness and visual impairment as a physical disability that may require reasonable accommodation. Accomodations that empower my success in the workforce are: the use of a long like cane, assistive technology, text to speech software, and occasional verbal communication. It has been my experience that when these accommodations are deemed reasonable, I have productive working relationships. I’m willing and open to questions at any time to help further understanding and respect to what I consider one of my unique characteristics. ”

# Examples of Accommodations

## 1. Scheduling Accommodations

- Modified shifts, reduced hours, flexible work hours
- Work from home, job-sharing, split shifts
- Scheduling work only at one location

**“No disability or dictionary out there is capable of clearly defining who we are as a person.” - Robert M. Hensel, Guinness World Records holder for longest non-stop wheelie in wheelchair (6 miles)**

# Examples of Accommodations

## 2. Modifications to environment & technology accommodations

- Personal attendant, job coach, elimination/ reassignment of non-essential tasks, individualized training, minimized distractions
- Additional training, written job instructions, prioritize job tasks, modified job duties/ lighting, reduced background noise
- Calming music via headphones, earplugs, assistive devices, magnified print, recording devices, ramps, automatic doors
- Hand-rails, accessible washrooms, parking, presentation materials, sign language, screen reading software

# Examples of Accommodations

3. Visit the link below to find common accommodations for specific disabilities

<https://askjan.org/links/atoz.htm>

**“My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn’t prevent you from doing well, and don’t regret the things it interferes with. Don’t be disabled in spirit as well as physically.” - Stephen Hawking, English physicist, cosmologist, author with Lou Gehrig’s disease**

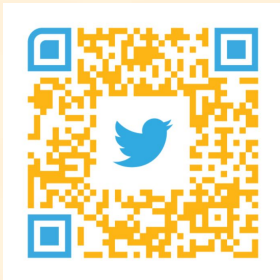
# Next Steps

- Check out this informative website: AskJAN - [www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)
- Make a follow up career counseling appointment through Handshake: <https://career.berkeley.edu/handshake>
- Review this presentation: consider what you will say in your job search (you can request a PDF of this powerpoint)

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# THANK YOU

