Working with Multiple Sclerosis:

YOUR GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE WORKPLACE IN A HEALTHY WAY

Accelerated
Cure
project
for multiple sclerosis

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Who should read this booklet?

YOU, IF YOU:

- are newly diagnosed or have lived with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) for years.
- are living with MS and are unsure about how to stay successfully employed.
- live with MS and want to find employment that allows you to be successful again.
- know someone with MS who struggles to stay working.

Why should you read this?

Those who live with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) face the same challenges that healthy people face in the workplace, but having MS may create some additional problems for you. It may also develop your ability to approach tasks in original and interesting ways, making you a uniquely valuable employee. Living with MS often creates a shift in your priorities and your behavior, and it's critical to understand how this affects what you do and your decision-making process. Living with MS is enough of a challenge – you don't have to figure this out on your own. Learn from the success (and failure) of others.

Who we are:

The Accelerated Cure Project for Multiple Sclerosis is a national nonprofit dedicated to curing MS by determining its causes. We believe the fastest route to a cure will come from knowing what causes MS. We have created a number of documents both to educate people about MS and to educate those who live with MS. For more information visit www.acceleratedcure.org, email info-wwms@acceleratedcure.org, or call 781-487-0008.

Rosalind Joffe is founder and principal of CIcoach.com, a company devoted to giving people living with chronic illness the services, products, and resources they need to be successful in the workplace. Rosalind has lived and worked with Multiple Sclerosis and other autoimmune diseases for almost 30 years. For more information visit www.cicoach.com

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Identifying and Managing the Challenges

> "I want to be known as Sarah, not Sarah with Multiple Sclerosis. If I tell people about this disease, that's how they'll think of me, and I can't bear that. On the other hand, if I don't tell them, they're not going to understand why I'm walking slowly with a limp or have to work from home for days at a time when I'm too tired to drive to work." – Sarah, 27

Your ability to live and work successfully with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) depends on whether you can minimize your limitations and maximize your strengths. You face the fact that your life is different from what you prepared for or could have expected. This booklet is intended to challenge your thinking and to give you the information, resources, and tools you need to meet this challenge. But it doesn't supply answers. That's your job. Today is the moment to take charge of this life.

UNPREDICTABLE AND INVISIBLE SYMPTOMS AFFECT HOW YOU WORK AND HOW OTHERS PERCEIVE YOU

Unpredictable Symptoms

The challenges you face living with MS symptoms are multiplied in the workplace, where your presence and delivery often are required on an ongoing, predictable basis. MS is unpredictable by nature, and there are several ways this can affect you. MS symptoms can flare at seemingly random times and you have no idea if and when they'll get "better." Also, no two people present with the same disease course and for that reason, there isn't a roadmap to follow. Symptoms change in nature (like numbness in your hand one time and difficulty moving your foot the next), where they affect you (first your finger is numb and then your belly) and duration (symptoms can last for one week or six months).

Invisible Symptoms

MS symptoms are often not visible. This can mean that you look healthy, regardless of how you feel. You might think a limp or uneven gait is obvious, but the truth is, many people won't notice it. This can work in your favor when there's no need for others to know. But it can also make it more difficult for others to recognize what you're going through.

Just because you might have told people about the disease, doesn't mean they will necessarily remember. It's easy for others to forget what they don't see.

Here are some tips to get the support you need from others:

- Keep any discussion about your health matter-of-fact. This is not the time to share your own feelings about having MS. Instead, focus the conversation on how the symptoms affect your work.
- Let others know you're doing the best you can not to be a burden. When you can't do something, be prepared with alternatives rather than expecting others to solve the problem.
- You can help others understand the variability of your symptoms by explaining that there will be times when you can't do something today that you could do yesterday, even though you look the same.

> "Every so often, someone on my team makes a negative crack that I didn't go to a meeting at Building P. More than a year ago, I explained that on hot days, I can't do the quarter mile walk and sit in a hot auditorium. I get so angry when I have to explain again that it's not because I don't want to join them. I don't go because it could make me feel so badly that I'd have to leave work for the rest of the day. I can't take that chance." – Dave, 28

- Try to keep your expectations low regarding the emotional support you get from others, particularly if your situation makes their work harder. If everyone shares the same goals for the organization and you've demonstrated your willingness to do your part, you're more likely to get what you need to do your job, which is most important.
- Many people know someone with MS and this often shapes their ideas about what you can and cannot do. When you hear a comment that you find offensive, you have two choices: you can ignore it and go about your business. Or you can take the opportunity to educate others about this illness. Either way, when someone notices that you've developed some good tactics to manage your health, make sure you pat yourself on the back for the good work.

CULTIVATE ALLIES AND ADVOCATES FOR SUPPORT

It's difficult to devote time to personal relationships at work when you're exhausted from just doing your job. Socializing, which can be a satisfying part of the workday and is often a critical part of an organization's culture (think: lunchroom, voluntary meetings, group events), can become a low priority. Don't let this happen.

Allies are your friends and supporters

Surveys show that having friends at work plays a key factor in employee satisfaction. It's easy to fall into the trap of worrying that living with MS makes you less desirable as a friend, but that doesn't have to be the case if you don't let it interfere with your social interactions. Allies can be a valuable source of information when you're in doubt about your performance or how MS might be affecting your work. It's easy to feel isolated when you're sick in a healthy world; it's even more isolating when your illness is not visible. Allies can help you feel less isolated and alone.

Advocates are people with whom you have a professional relationship

They know your work and will "go to bat" for you. Perhaps they've been your supervisor, a colleague, or someone with whom you collaborated on a project. Advocates have influence with others and are willing to use it in your support. With variable and unpredictable health, the time is likely to come when you will need an advocate's support and help.

FAILING TO MEET EXPECTATIONS, YOUR OWN AND THOSE OF OTHERS, IS SOMETHING THAT NO ONE CAN COMPLETELY AVOID

Unpredictable health makes this more likely, but there are things you can do to keep it to a minimum.

Look at deadlines as something you can control, no matter how much others pressure you

Be rigorous in creating reasonable deadlines that you can meet, because you know the unexpected can and does happen.

Avoid the trap of thinking you're able to push yourself the way you used to

If you work in a highly pressured environment where everyone lives with high-performance expectations, you have to be very careful to know your limits. This is especially difficult because your health limits can be a moving target. But remember: just because others can afford to push themselves to meet tight deadlines on too little sleep, that doesn't mean you can. It can be tough to accept this idea of yourself, but it's a small price to pay to stay well and in the workforce.

An Advocate Can Help You Get What You Need

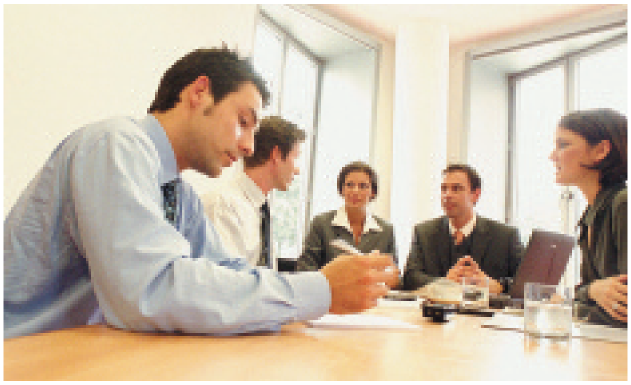
Sharon found that her MS symptoms made it increasingly difficult for her to do the multi-tasking that was essential to her job as an IT project manager. She knew about a different job in another department in her company, one that she could manage much more easily, but she knew her boss would oppose the move. So she asked Alan, a former colleague (now a director), if he would help her. Alan advised her about what to say to her boss. When Sharon's boss refused her request, Alan wrote a letter of support to senior leadership. She was transferred and is doing much better in her current position.

It's no longer OK to be a procrastinator; you can't afford to pull an "all-nighter"

If you know this about yourself, then it's something you can change. Here's a simple tool: With each project, large or small, create a plan for how and when the work is going to get done and build in extra time for the unexpected. Stick to your plan, because that's the only way you can be sure the work will get done on time. Create back-up plans.

Accept that there are things you just can't plan for

This is especially difficult because you've already lost so much that you used to be able to control. The most you can do is create a plan and stick to it the best you can. And then remind yourself that, as with your health, work-related things happen that are out of your control. Accepting this is all you can do — and that's a lot.



WORKING ON A TEAM VS. WORKING SOLO

Many people don't have the option to make this choice, but if you can, you owe it to yourself to work on a team because it can increase the possibility of your success tremendously.

Working as part of a team

A supportive and flexible team in which members are trained and equipped to step in and do each other's jobs can be an ideal situation. That's true for anyone, and particularly so for a person living with unpredictable health. It can give you the camaraderie that is so helpful, especially in tough times. It can also provide the emotional and physical support you need to continue to work when you're unable to do the job on your own.

Unfortunately, teamwork situations don't always fit this description. If team members have clearly defined roles and expectations with little, if any, cross-training, it poses a problem when one member is unable to deliver. A "weak link" makes everyone look bad, creating tension and conflict.

Steps you can take to prepare your team in the event that your health becomes a problem:

- Be realistic about deadlines and try to build in a "fudge" factor to allow for the unexpected.
- Encourage cross-training on your team wherever possible.
- Develop an ally who is willing to help when you need it, with the understanding that you will do the same for them.

Many people who live with MS, or any chronic illness, dream of self-employment

Self-employment means working solo. It can sound like the answer to your dreams, because it eliminates having to answer to a boss who doesn't understand your physical challenges, and offers the possibility of flexible scheduling. Self-employment allows you to follow your dreams, with no one there to argue with your ideas.

But self-employment also has some demanding requirements. You need financial backing while you're building a business, particularly to pay for health benefits. You need the discipline to stick to a schedule when you aren't accountable to anyone but yourself. You have to allow for the times that you aren't well, which might mean hiring a layer of support or creating a job that allows you to intermittently slow down or stop. You must consider a short-term (and maybe long-term) decrease in salary. And you most likely will pay for benefits out of your own salary.

If you can manage all of the above and have a solid business idea, self-employment offers a strong opportunity for success

- You can create your own schedule (if you allow yourself, that is, and don't give in to other people's demands).
- You can ramp up or pull back when you need to, as health or other needs require.
- You have the opportunity to do only what you can do (with your health in mind) without being forced to participate in activities that are draining.

GETTING HELP FROM TEAMMATES

CONSIDER THESE FIVE TIPS when discussing what you need from your teammates in order to accomplish your job more effectively:

1 Decide who needs to know, and who doesn't need to know, about your illness. Make it clear that, although this isn't a "secret," it's not public information, either.

2 Massage your message. Think of the concerns others have regarding your illness and give them a positive, upbeat message so they don't feel you're dumping your problem on them. Keep the details minimal but get your facts straight to maintain your credibility.

3 Be prepared with scenario planning. When health-related problems crop up, rather than force teammates to adjust to new information and face an unplanned situation, offer "Plan B." If you keep it matter-of-fact, that's how most people will receive it.

4 There's a big difference between frequent complaints about your illness, and telling teammates when and how you need their help. If everyone shares the same goals for getting the work done, then they'll respect that you're working to accomplish the goal. You can't do anything about those who don't feel the same way.

5 Keep your guilty feelings to yourself. Your guilt or shame regarding something which you can do little to control only makes others uncomfortable. Don't be an emotional burden in the workplace.

Looking at the Full Picture of a Career

> "I just got a job offer that I've wanted for three years. It's a great next step in my career and, with kids in college, I need the increase in income. But recently my MS has been worse. Will the extra pressure make me sicker?"
>
> – Susan, 46

People in our community who don't have Multiple Sclerosis (MS) face a set of challenges in shaping their career. The choices they make in choosing a job or building a career are strongly influenced by events and choices in their personal life, and vice versa. Those who live with MS have a third influence on their choices because a chronic illness inevitably plays a strong role in both personal and career choices.

It's important to understand that no matter what stage of life you're in when you receive your diagnosis, you have choices about how MS impacts your career and personal directions. Throughout your life, these three factors (health, career and personal) continuously intersect as they shift in their level of priority.

It's easy to see that where you are in your career and life influences the decisions you make. It's not as obvious but just as important to understand that there are also stages that people experience when they live with MS, from diagnosis to learning to live with the disease to real acceptance. While you don't have complete control of your health, you do have control over how you let it influence your decision-making process. It's up to you to decide how you will let an MS diagnosis impact your life

For example, imagine a young woman, Sandy, in her early 20s, just out of college and starting her career. She has a bad flare (optic neuritis and numbness) from which she completely recovers and receives the diagnosis of MS. In one scenario, Sandy, emotionally devastated and very frightened, focuses on the worst possible outcomes. She chooses not to attempt challenging career moves, thus limiting her career satisfaction and earning power. She also has trouble dating because she worries that no one would want to marry someone with her problems.

In an alternate scenario, Sandy understands that it's impossible to predict the illness course, but she should plan in terms of what is most likely. She decides not to become a veterinarian, as she'd planned, because of the physical nature of the job; instead, she chooses to focus on her interest in biology and research. She figures this will allow her to develop a career and family. She hopes that by the time MS symptoms impact her daily life and she has real disabilities, she will be in a position to request (and receive) flexibility and accommodations that allow her to keep working while managing her health.

Let's look at a different situation. Imagine a man, Rob, in his mid-40s with high school-age children and a job as a car salesman. Rob receives a diagnosis of MS after many months of debilitating symptoms. In one scenario, Rob decides that his job is too strenuous and less important than spending time with his family while he's still relatively healthy. His wife has a good job that can support them. He leaves his job, planning that when his kids leave for college, he'll find part-time work that will leave him with enough energy to manage his health effectively.

In an alternate scenario, when Rob gets the diagnosis, he can't believe it. He decides he can't slow down at work because his family depends on his income. Over the next three years, his symptoms become much worse and he has to use a cane to walk. His sales plummet and his income drops dramatically. He loses his job and decides to take a different job doing deskwork in an insurance agency, which he hates. By then Rob is 49 years old and feels too old and too disabled to get a new job. He becomes severely depressed and loses the insurance job.

In both stories, the people described will make the best career decisions if they approach them with a clear head and good information. To do this in your own life, you will need to take stock of your personal goals: are you at the beginning or end of a career? Are you starting a family, are your kids grown, or are you just getting into the dating pool? At what stage is your MS? Are symptoms easily managed, or are you in need of more daily downtime and doctor visits? Before you make important career decisions, your best bet is to evaluate your position in your professional, personal, and health spheres and get a clear idea of how they affect each other.

Managing The Unpredictable

Living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), or any disabling condition, doesn't preclude the ability to work. Like any person with good health or not, you can face and overcome obstacles by reorganizing your approach, creating realistic expectations, and finding other options. This takes discipline and self-control.

ADJUST HOW YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF

It's difficult enough to come to terms with a failing body in old age. It's even more difficult if you're a young adult, yet you feel like an old person. At best, you are forced to realize that your body is not invincible. At worst, you realize that you can no longer rely on your body's performance. You find you can't catch up on lost sleep or over-exertion the way you once did—in fact, you might not be able to lift a box or walk up stairs.

When people ask you to lower your expectations, it feels like you must accept the idea that you're diminished. Instead, if you think of this shift in perspective as changing your expectations, it's easier to accept what you can't change and find hope in what you can do.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY AND BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY

Create modes of operation that fit your health needs

If you've always been an overachiever, create realistic expectations for yourself that are relatively easy to achieve, rather than always "pushing the envelope." Don't rely on how you've always done it. More than ever, focus your thinking on what works for you now and use your creativity to brainstorm new approaches.

Most people are reluctant to delegate for fear that something won't get done the right way or that people will think they are shirking work

But smart and healthy leaders understand that one person can only do so much, and it's more efficient not to do it all. This is true regardless of your position in your company. It's especially true if you live with MS and have limitations.

Tools to Decide When You Need New Ways to Get Things Done

The following tools can help you think more clearly and effectively about your options. Adapt them to your needs and make them work for you.

When you can't do the job the way you've always done it, develop alternate strategies:

- List all the tasks that are part of accomplishing the activity.
- Identify the symptoms that affect your performance and how they impact you day-to-day.
- Identify alternatives you can use to get the job done.
- Identify the point at which you will turn to the alternative.

When symptoms get worse and you know you can't accomplish as much as you had planned, reprioritize:

- List what you originally intended to do, in order of priority.
- Re-number the list, based upon what you know you can and must accomplish.
- Review the list daily to add or delete items, or re-order them.
- Contact all those who will be affected by these changes so they have adequate time to prepare.

WHEN TRAVELING FOR WORK: A PLANNING CHECKLIST

1 **Check out the itinerary in advance so there are few surprises. Is it easier for you to check luggage rather than navigating with it through airports? Avoid driving long distances on your own. Are there alternatives to walking long distances?**

2 **Always schedule extra time for the unexpected.**

3 **Evaluate: Do you have to attend the entire experience (whatever it is), or can you just attend what is necessary?**

4 **Once you arrive, find a place to take rest breaks. If you normally need rest breaks during the day, you'll definitely need them now.**

5 **Business trips and full-day conferences often include business meals. Try to use this time for breaks and, if possible, don't schedule anything more than is necessary. If you believe this is critical socializing time, try to get a break before or after. And remember the key rule: You don't have to attend everything.**

6 **When booking your room, ask to be near an elevator (to decrease unnecessary walking). Don't be shy about explaining that you have a disability that necessitates this accommodation.**

7 **When possible, contact the meeting planner and make your requests known in advance.**

8 **If you need special accommodations in your hotel room, rental car, etc., there are web sites that can recommend vendors. You'll find options galore by searching with the keywords "handicapped travel."**

Dealing with the "Elephant in the Room"

> "I know that my performance is slipping, but I can't decide whether to tell my boss about the MS. I'm afraid he'll think I should leave my job." — John, 29

For many working people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), one of the most provocative issues is the decision to talk about the disease with co-workers or supervisors for the first time.

Conventional wisdom holds that you should disclose your illness at work only if you absolutely have to. The thinking here is that disclosure will most likely hurt you, and there is certainly some truth to that. But there is hardly a "one size fits all" solution and it's best to look at the issue of disclosure from several points of view.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS TO DISCLOSE?

When disabling symptoms prevent you from delivering your best performance, you can only ignore this for so long. If you're struggling to get the job done because of doctor's appointments or time off for illness, people will notice. Unless you give them reason to think otherwise, they will assume you're unmotivated, unable to do the job, or not interested — and you are likely to lose their support.

When you offer a reason others can understand, you've demonstrated that your commitment has not diminished, even if your abilities have changed. In fact, people might be willing to give you the support you need to get the job done. Your illness might not make it "OK" for everyone, but by disclosing it, you have helped maintain your credibility.

> "I felt so alone at work until I shared it with a few close friends. I didn't realize how isolated and withdrawn I'd become." — Mary, 36

Also, if you feel isolated because no one knows what you're going through, it's probably showing at work. If your symptoms leave you with less energy or feeling depressed or isolated, discussing your situation can help you connect to others and do better. MS is a significant part of your experience and hiding it makes it much more difficult to stay fully integrated in the world.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS NOT TO DISCLOSE?

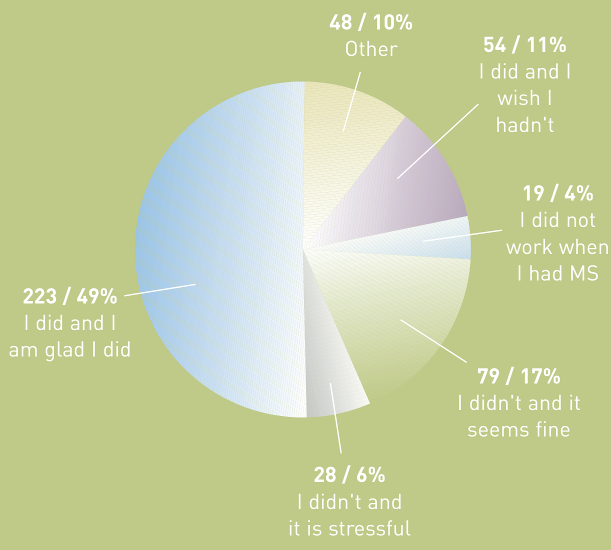
Many people find that when others know about their MS, it changes how they are perceived, regardless of whether it's warranted or not.

People might make incorrect assumptions about you:

- The illness has decreased your commitment to the job.
- You can't handle as much as before. (The result: you're gently — or not — pushed aside or marginalized.)

What People Say About Disclosing (or Not) at Work

In a poll conducted by the Accelerated Cure Project for MS, web site readers were asked: "Did you come out at work about your MS?" Forty-nine percent said, "I disclosed and I'm glad I did." Eleven percent said, "I did and I wish I hadn't." Note that these are not scientific results.



- Anything that goes wrong (like missed deadlines or bad outcomes) is due to your illness. (The result: people can misplace blame.)
- People may make assumptions based on what they have known about someone else with MS.

You are more likely to hear undesirable and unsolicited comments about your health:

- People ask how you're feeling when you're not in the mood to talk about it, or you're disappointed that they don't notice you're doing poorly when you think it's obvious.
- People try to "help" with advice or stories about others they know with MS, but you find it burdensome.
- People make comments about MS that display a lack of knowledge or are simply insulting.
- People avoid you because they don't know what to say about your situation and don't know how to behave.

What can you do about misconceptions surrounding MS and their effect on your work?

Be proactive. Consider what people might say or do that you have trouble responding to. Then decide what you want them to know and develop a response that feels comfortable.

Be prepared to respond to questions regarding MS

Imagine you're in a large group at work with people you don't know well, and a colleague asks how you're feeling. You're feeling bad this week but don't want to discuss it in this setting. You might want to say something like, "Thanks for asking – let's catch up later to talk." Develop your own response and practice it, so it comes out easily. The most valuable element you can bring to these interactions is the ability to help others feel comfortable with the subject.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO DISCLOSE, CONTROL AND CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE

Who should know this?

- Is this information meant for everyone? Make it clear.
- If you want to control who knows you have MS, let it be known that it's on a "need to know basis" and you'll tell those you want to know.

What should they know?

- Some people don't name the disease because there are misconceptions about MS. They describe it as a chronic condition (or disease), or an autoimmune disorder.
- On the other hand, MS is a familiar and well-recognized disease and identifying it as such can reduce the likelihood that others will think it's "in your head."
- KISS (Keep It Short and Simple) is a good motto to remember. Keep the message clear, know your facts, and deliver your explanation calmly to minimize confusion and maximize everyone's comfort. Don't confuse co-workers with too much jargon, but don't let them rely on misconceptions.
- Focus on your talents and strengths, not on what you can't do.
- Provide some examples of how MS affects you: increased doctor's appointments, trouble using your hands, reduced ability to walk, etc.
- Reassure those who might worry by telling them you're prepared to take care of your health, so it will not burden others.
- Explain what has changed and why you are disclosing the MS now. Some might wonder if it's been a problem for a long time, so you may want to reassure them that only now is it a problem. You're talking about it for one of these reasons:
  - – You need some accommodation that requires a financial investment or systems reorganization
  - – You want to do something differently so the symptoms don't get in your way
  - – You're not asking for an accommodation but things have changed for you (for example, you're not as quick as you were, or you'll be taking some time off)

How should you talk about living with MS?

- Set the tone with your words and behavior. Keep the conversations unemotional—not flat, just matter-of-fact.
- Remember, you can control your message. Be as public as you have to be, and as private as you want to be.
- Model your message in the way you want others to receive it. If your message is positive and upbeat, that's what others will take away, and how they will think about you.
- Make it clear that you are neither embarrassed nor ashamed about having MS, even if you feel that way.

Responses to your disclosure will vary depending on your own role in the organization.

Your role as boss, senior management, supervisor, front line, or administrative staff influences the way people process information about you, including your disease.

- If you're the boss or business owner:
  - You don't have to worry about being fired.
  - You should find it easier to get the flexibility you need in your leadership role.
  - You may find that illness makes you seem more vulnerable, which can be a point in your favor or against, depending on the organizational culture.
  - It can be disruptive and demoralizing to others if they think that your disabilities detract from your performance.
  - If your performance is suffering, you have to enlist those whose skills complement yours to fill the gaps.
- If you're senior management or a supervisor:
  - People rely on you, so it's important that those who report to you know what has changed so they can make the necessary adjustments to ensure that their performance doesn't suffer.
  - You have to be able to manage those above and below you so they can provide the support you need without creating problems for you.
  - You have to be as clear and transparent as possible so others feel comfort in knowing that you've told them the truth and divulged as much as you know.

When you speak about living with MS, describe it in a way that others can understand. Which do you think works better?

"I can't attend the meeting because I am in the midst of an MS flare."

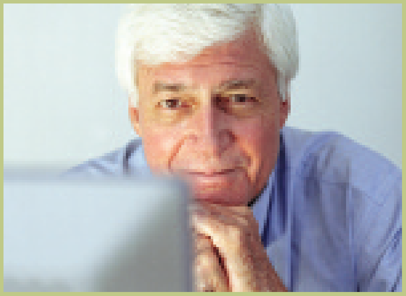
OR

"I can't attend the meeting because I am having trouble walking today."

"I'm in a flare and can't get the report done."

OR

"My fingers are really stiff because the MS is worse today and I can't type on the keyboard."



- If you're an administrative or front line worker:
  - You are more vulnerable to being pushed aside or targeted negatively for an illness if it affects your performance.
  - You have to be vigilant in making sure you can do your job, and where you can't, you must get the help you need.
  - You have to demonstrate your commitment to getting the job done even when you can't do it on time or on your own.

A final comment about disclosure:

People usually need time to digest the news that you have MS. It can be an uncomfortable topic and most people don't know what to say in response to the news. You might suggest that you're available to discuss their questions at a later time.

EVALUATING WHETHER TO DISCLOSE A NEW DIAGNOSIS AT WORK

> "By the time I told my boss and co-workers that I had MS, my work had really suffered. They didn't want to give me the support I needed to make changes so I could continue working with them." – Ed, 42

For most people, receiving a diagnosis of MS is a life-transforming event. It's normal to feel very unsettled. Obviously, there isn't a right or wrong way to respond to the news, and no two people respond precisely the same way. That's why you need to prepare for what might come up if you disclose your disease at work.

Do you need any accommodations?

Has anything changed about your work performance that others need to know? If you can answer yes to this, then you probably need to disclose your illness. (Chapter 5, "Asking for Accommodations or Different Job Duties," covers this issue in detail.)

Ask yourself:

- Who needs to know this? In the beginning, it might be best to keep it on a "need-to-know" basis.
- What should I say? Keep it as simple as possible, particularly in the beginning, to allow yourself to get more comfortable with this new reality. Know the facts and stick to them.

Disclosure: Three Pitfalls To Avoid

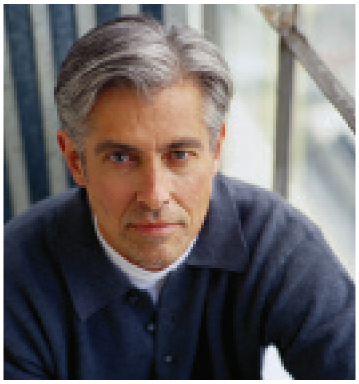
1. Don't leave it up to others to form their own ideas about why you are handling your work differently.

2. Don't assume people already know what they need to know about your situation and that if they wanted to help, they would.

3. Don't wait until you have under-performed so badly that no one believes you can succeed.

If you don't need accommodations and your performance is unaffected, then the timing for disclosure is your choice.

You might choose to do it immediately or to wait until the symptoms become a problem. You should ask yourself:



- Am I ready to talk about this with other people? If you're feeling scared, overwhelmed, or angry about this issue, you might want to become more accustomed to the idea before discussing it with others.
- Have I had sufficient time to live with the disease to learn how it will affect my body?
- Am I being realistic about what I hope to get from others?
- Do I know enough to talk about this disease competently?

EVALUATING WHETHER TO DISCLOSE YOUR ILLNESS AFTER LIVING WITH MS FOR A PERIOD OF TIME

Sophisticated tests make it possible to know you have MS when you barely feel any symptoms. Or maybe your diagnosis came after one brief episode but you were fine for a long time afterwards. Either way, maybe you felt there was no reason to talk about the illness because it wasn't a factor in your life. But now things have changed and your increasing symptoms are affecting your work. What do you do now?

Consider the following:

- If you need to ask for help and/or accommodations that will allow you to continue to be successful, you have to disclose the MS.
- If your performance is suffering, disclosure will prevent others from making incorrect and potentially damaging assumptions about why your performance has changed.
- Disclosure allows you to be more open with others when you have to and will help you feel less isolated.

Improving Your Chances for Success

When you first get a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) it's easy to imagine yourself in a wheelchair someday, because that's a picture many of us associate with the disease. In fact, only 25% of those who live with MS ever need to use a wheelchair, and with improvements in treatment, that number is decreasing.

That doesn't mean you will never have debilitating *(that which impairs your physical or intellectual strength)* or disabling *(that which deprives you of strength)* symptoms. The fact is, at some point, you could experience MS symptoms that interfere with performing tasks that are necessary for your job.

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO TRY TO CONTINUE IN YOUR JOB, EVEN WHEN SYMPTOMS DISABLE YOU FROM DOING PART OR ALL OF IT

Asking for accommodations is a factor both when interviewing for a job and when you already have a job. Disclosure and asking for accommodations at a new job is covered in Chapter 7, "Looking for a New Job."

The first step in getting accommodations is to accept that you have limitations that could be temporary or permanent. If they affect how you work or whether you can accomplish a task, you have three options:

1. Figure out how to get the job done in a different way without discussing the issue with anyone at work.
2. Figure out what you need, whether it is an accommodation to do this job differently or to do a different job, and ask for it.
3. Quit your job, or choose not to apply for a job that will not accommodate to your needs.

Clearly, option #1 is the easiest route, if it doesn't jeopardize your employment or your health.

In most cases, an accommodation or a job change requires the involvement and support of others.

That's when you should employ option #2. Before you ask for an accommodation that would allow you to do your job (because a disability currently prevents you from doing it), take a good, hard look at yourself, your history at this job, and the culture of the workplace. Think about these issues:

- If you have a good track record, you have a better chance of getting what you need because people regard you positively.
- If your work has been sliding recently and you've received a warning or negative feedback, it could be more difficult to get the support you need.
- If the environment has always been a difficult one for you to succeed within, ask yourself: Do I want this job enough to make a request? Do I believe it's worth it to negotiate or even face conflict to get what I need to stay?
- If you get these accommodations, will you be able to be successful here? If you can say yes, you'll know it's worth the effort.

There may come a time when you employ option #3 because you know it's the best choice you've got. It's rarely easy to quit a job (especially if you don't have another one lined up). But when you just can't get the accommodations you need to be effective in your job, it's time to move on. Similarly, it's just as important to recognize job situations that don't offer the flexibility or environment that you need to thrive in before you take or start the job.

INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING THE ACCOMMODATIONS YOU NEED

Do your research and be prepared. Here are some steps to take:

1. Do a functional analysis of your job.
   - Make a list of job responsibilities.
   - Break each responsibility down into tasks.
   - List what is functionally required to do each task.
2. List activities that you can't do because of disabling symptoms.
   - Include all tasks or activities that you can't do, regardless of your job. This will be helpful if your supervisor wants to place you in a different position.
   - Get any documentation from a specialist that will support your claim of disabling symptoms.
3. Determine what you need to continue to be effective in your current job. Some examples:
   - You need more time for tasks.
   - You need a workstation that fits your ergonomic requirements.
   - You need a half-time person to fill in when there is additional work.

4. Develop one or several solutions. This helps you decide what's possible, while demonstrating that you aren't trying to "dump" your problem on others.
   - Identify who would be involved in different solutions.
   - Identify what tasks or functions would be affected.
   - Research any costs involved.
5. Gather supporting documentation.
   - Ask your doctor to write a letter that supports your claim by describing your current health challenges and how they affect your ability to function.
   - Gather annual reviews and other documentation supporting your positive work history (this is not mandatory, but it is helpful).
   - Determine if there are other jobs in your workgroup (or elsewhere) that you could try, ones that would eliminate the need for an accommodation that could create "undue hardship" according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Doing this demonstrates your willingness to be flexible. (For more, see the ADA online: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)
6. Meet with your boss (or other decision-maker) to discuss the situation.
   - Identify the problem and present your ideas for a solution. Have as much information as possible regarding costs and who the changes could affect.
   - Frame your case to demonstrate how the positive outcomes outweigh the negative logistics and costs.
   - Stick to the facts and don't let the discussion become personal or emotional. It's not about you. It's about the job you do.

It is usually easier to get "reasonable accommodations" from your current employer than to find a new job that offers the accommodations you need. Option #3 should only be exercised when you have fully explored options #1 and #2.

Sample Job Functional Analysis

Job Responsibility: Handle customer complaints

Responsibilities:
- Listen to customer complaints.
- Write reports of complaints and get customers to sign off on them.
- Deliver reports to the proper departments.
- Follow up on responses from those departments.
- Follow up with responses, in writing, to customers.

Functional Tasks:
- Hearing and listening; excellent comprehension skills.
- Ability to empathize with people.
- Ability to have patience with angry people.
- Ability to take a complex story, simplify it, and write a report that another person will find usable.
- Ability to work with other people in the organization to get complaints resolved.
- Self-starter personality.
- Ability to organize and track complaints and follow-ups.

Sample of a "Non-functional List"

Functions I cannot currently perform:
- Writing legibly
- Walking long distances (such as between departments in different buildings)
- Climbing stairs (in buildings that don't have elevators)

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CLAIMING AN ACCOMMODATION AS YOUR "RIGHT" UNDER THE ADA

There are numerous resources available that explain the ADA and its obligations and benefits. In particular, the handbook "Know Your Rights: A Handbook for Patients with Chronic Illness" (see Resources, back cover), offers excellent guidance. It offers comprehensive information on such topics as health and disability insurance, types of discrimination, and equity issues, to name a few. One piece of good news about the ADA is that in addition to protecting the rights of the disabled, the Act has raised corporate awareness about disabilities.

On the other hand, most people don't think of chronic illness as a disability, especially one that falls under ADA guidelines. (In fact, such cases have not always been successful in litigation.) If you believe your rights are being violated, it's important to check with a lawyer. In the long run, if you can get the accommodations you need to perform your job without turning the process into a legal dispute, it will be less expensive, less adversarial, and less unpleasant for you.

Identifying and Maximizing Your Options

> "I need a different job. This job is making me sicker. But I can't think about looking for another job because I can barely manage this one. I should quit so I have the time to look for a job. But what if I can't find anything? I can't afford to lose my insurance." – Gary, 37

Struggling in a job when you have debilitating symptoms can feel like a lose-lose situation. Are you pushing yourself to keep going, but delivering substandard performance? Do you think you would feel better if you could find a different job, or stop working altogether? There's no single answer to these questions—each of us has to figure out what's best for us based on the situation. Here are some criteria to assess your situation; they can help you make the best possible decision:

HOW CAN YOU TELL IF YOU NEED A NEW JOB?

Evaluate your current job.

Q: Do you have a job description that includes performance measurements? If you don't have one, create one for yourself. It's impossible to judge how you're doing without objective measurements. Now, use this performance measurement tool to evaluate your work right now.

Q: How would you rate your boss on a scale of 1-5 (1 being very supportive, 5 being totally unsupportive)? According to studies, employees with chronic illness are more likely to be successful with a supportive boss.

Q: Are you working in a supportive environment? Employee-friendly policies embrace individual needs and differences, offer career development opportunities, and encourage supervisors to move employees to alternate jobs when there isn't a good fit. Does your organization do this?

Consider the issues involved in getting a new job.

Q: Is there a different job you could do at your current place of employment that would be a better fit with your current health situation? If yes, do you need additional training, competencies or skills?

Q: Should you look for a new job in a different organization while continuing to work? Make a list of the pros and cons of keeping your job while looking for a job elsewhere.

Evaluate the pros and cons of leaving the work force.

Q: Do you believe you are too sick to do your current job or something similar?

Q: Would you use the time off from work to accomplish things you can't do while you're still working?

Q: Do you qualify for a private disability policy or public disability insurance (more at www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability), or can you afford to be unemployed without an income?

Q: Do you believe you could get better by not working for a while and having the time to rest?

Q: Do you think that not working would be beneficial or harmful to your mental health?

Exercise: Do You Need a New Job?

Answer the questions below honestly. You will get an even better picture if you can find a co-worker who will also answer these questions to give you another perspective. Choose someone who knows your situation and your work.

1. Are you meeting or even exceeding expectations? Or are you underperforming?
2. Are you becoming marginalized because others worry about giving you important tasks?
3. Are you losing career momentum or veering off your career path because of symptoms?
4. Is the team/boss/organizational response to your changes in work style or performance primarily negative?
5. Do you feel this job depletes you more than you can manage?

If you have answered yes to at least two out of the five questions, you probably need to do something different about your situation.

Living With MS and Furthering Your Career

Today, employees lose and leave jobs at a much higher rate than in past decades.

25% report they expect to lose their job at some point (Manchester Partners International Outplacement)

27% say they would leave if they weren't happy (Sirota Consulting Co.)

These statistics are important because they are true for healthy people, as well as those with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). In fact, this supports the idea that living successfully with MS requires finding a job that truly fits your health and personal needs, as well as your career interests. Let's look at what you can do to achieve this.

What do you need from a new job?

Make a list of your needs and rank them in order of importance. These examples will get you started:

- ☐ Salary
- ☐ Benefits
- ☐ Career growth
- ☐ Organizational culture
- ☐ Boss
- ☐ Commute
- ☐ Schedule

Now, take your list and identify which item is a Must Have or a Want:

	Must Have	Want
Salary	☐	☐
Benefits	☐	☐
Career growth	☐	☐
Organizational culture	☐	☐
Boss	☐	☐
Commute	☐	☐
Schedule	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐

SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU START WHERE DO YOU START?

Always start a job search by asking yourself: What do I want to do?

Don't just respond based on your last job and what you think you can get. Take a moment to think about job-hunting from a different perspective. Work is more challenging for you when you experience MS symptoms; that's why looking for a new job offers the opportunity to create the best possible fit within the parameters of your current state of health, your financial needs, and your personal desires. Use the information in the tool, "What do you need from a new job?" to help determine your job needs.

LOOKING AND INTERVIEWING FOR A JOB

Victim Mentality

Do you think of yourself as a victim of MS? This negative thinking will hurt your ability to get the best possible job. One way to combat victimized thinking is to list what you can still do, to remind yourself that MS doesn't prevent you from being a capable worker. If you're stuck, ask a friend or family member. Sometimes you just need a reminder of your skills and positive qualities.

Under-employment

Are you looking for a job in which you'll be "under-employed," meaning that you're not working to your full potential? If so, be clear about why you're choosing to do this. Under-employment makes sense if you need a job that doesn't tax you mentally or physically. For some, this is a temporary solution; for others, it's the only way to stay in the workforce. Use the "Must Have/Want" list (see sidebar) to prioritize what's most important about your next job.

Resume

A resume can be your badge of honor. It can also reflect issues you don't want to highlight, such as periods of unemployment or under-employment. You should be truthful, while presenting such occurrences in the best possible light. If you've been unemployed (due to MS), list any other activities you did during that time, such as self-employment, volunteering or study. If you did nothing but take care of yourself, then don't include that time period. If you were under-employed, list details only if you want to discuss why you made that particular decision. Be prepared to discuss blanks or discrepancies.

References

Prospective employers ask for references, even if they never contact them. Regardless of your health, you should offer references who will speak positively about you (but remember, a reference isn't bound by any laws and can say anything about you). It's always a good idea to tell your references that a prospective employer might be contacting them, at which time you can discuss how you would prefer they do (or do not) discuss your health. (If the reference is unaware you have MS, don't bring it up now!)

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

Interviews are daunting for many people who perceive themselves as disabled by MS. Many people struggle with deciding whether or not to disclose MS when they're interviewing, negotiating, and beginning a new job. That's why it's critical to your confidence and success that you know, in advance, how you want to handle this issue. Most importantly: You should be able to assure your employer that you can do the job well. If you need accommodations, be sure you can get them.

The pros and cons of disclosure in the interview process

Reasons to disclose having MS before you accept a job:

- If your symptoms are visible, you may prefer to bring up the issue so others don't think you're trying to hide something. It can be more comfortable to lead the conversation, instead of being reactive.
- If symptoms mean you can't do the job the same way everyone else does, you may have to disclose the MS soon after starting work anyway—so now may be the best time to disclose. Although employers can't ask you about a disability in the hiring process, you can bring it up. An employer who values honesty and fair play should see this as a point in your favor. And the response reveals information about an employer's attitude and culture.
- If you need accommodations and if disclosure prevents you from being hired, this job probably would have been a difficult fit for you. You should actively seek an employee-friendly environment.

Examples of MS disclosure before and after hire

Before hire:

Peter, a retail store manager who has had MS for eight years, has trouble standing for long periods of time and walks with a limp. Occasionally he needs a brace, but it's not obvious. He disclosed his MS when he was applying for a job because he values candid behavior during interviews. He had worked in a company where issues like his were not a problem and he wanted to be in that kind of environment again; he knew honesty would increase his chances for success. Peter was the company's second choice, but when the first candidate didn't take the job, Peter got it. He'll never know if MS is why he wasn't offered the job in the first place, but he's glad he's there and it's a great fit for him.

After hire:

Susan, a graphic designer, has trouble moving a mouse and using a keyboard because of difficulty with her hands. She has become very adept at using voice recognition software and can work almost as efficiently as she could with her hands. Susan chose not to disclose her MS until she started the job, although she made sure that the office equipment was compatible with the software. The first day, she brought her software with her and got to work. One year later, when her boss was interviewed about his reaction to learning that she worked this way, he said that he might not have hired Susan had he known about the issues with her hands. However, within a few days of Susan's arrival on the job, she became an integral part of the team and no one had second thoughts about her hire.

Reasons not to disclose that you have MS during the interview phase:

- If the symptoms aren't visible and don't affect how you do the job, disclosing the MS could unnecessarily jeopardize your prospects.
- Disclosure can bias people against you before you've had the opportunity to prove your worth to the organization.

If you disclose, choose the most appropriate time

If you choose to disclose your condition during the negotiation phase, it's best to talk about your MS when you're in control of the situation, rather than when you're in a defensive posture. Wait until you've sold yourself based on your abilities so that MS doesn't become the way an interviewer defines you. Once you have a job offer, you're in a position to negotiate your needs (like more personal days, not working weekends, or an ergonomically designed office). This is no different from any other employee's individual needs.

If you choose to wait until you've started the job, disclose once symptoms become an issue for you in your work (but don't wait until they get in your way). You can explain that this is a periodic issue that only recently became a problem again.

Prepare what you will say

- The first time you talk about having MS, it may be easier not to name the disease, to avoid playing into other people's misconceptions (for example, "My Aunt Molly has MS and is in a wheelchair," or "My friend, Bud, has MS and hasn't missed a day of work."). Focus on your symptoms and how they affect your performance.
- Make it clear your MS won't be anyone else's problem. Explain that you've experienced living with it, and you can absolutely get the job done.
- If you need an accommodation, what is it: voice recognition software or an ergonomic workstation? Will the accommodations cost the organization money, and how much? Is the accommodation something that the organization already has in place (like flex time for doctor's appointments)? Consider these questions before discussing it with others.

Questioning the Cause: Is It MS?

> "I was fired and I think it's because I have MS. People were always upset with me about the time off from work. What should I do?"
> – Thomas, 47

FIRED FROM YOUR JOB

Being fired, regardless of the reason, is a big disruption and can be emotionally devastating. Being fired leaves you feeling vulnerable and unemployable. What can you do if you think you've been fired because you have Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

Let's face it: few people are fired solely because they have MS. Although there are reports that some companies don't want to employ chronically ill people who could raise their insurance rates, it's usually difficult to prove. In fact, it's very difficult to prove that you were not hired due to MS.

Unfortunately, however, there are many instances in which MS plays a role in a person's job dismissal. If you believe you were fired because you have MS, ask yourself:

- Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without accommodations?
- Do you believe the MS symptoms or the demands of your illness became a "hardship" or inconvenience for others at work?
- Do you suspect others thought you weren't capable of doing the work because of MS or your disabilities?
- Do you want this job back?
- Were you happy at this job, or were you hoping to be fired?
- Did you allow your performance to suffer so badly that they wanted to let you go before you sought help or asked for accommodations?
- Would you go back if you could? What would make this different?

Use your answers to help guide your actions.

If you want your job back, prepare the following:

- List the stated reasons, as well as what you believe are the unstated reasons, for your dismissal.
- Evaluate yourself honestly. Were you doing your job at an acceptable level? Did you need — and ask for — necessary accommodations, and if so, did you get them?
- List concrete and specific examples to support how you think MS factored into your termination.
- Was your performance appropriately monitored? Were you given ample warnings regarding your performance problems, support to improve your performance, and the tools to do so?
- Assemble corroborating letters from your doctor(s) regarding your disabling symptoms and how they affect you.
- State what you want at this point.
- Put the above in a memorandum and submit it to your supervisor or boss, and copy your human resources representative with a request to meet with them personally about the dismissal.

If you don't get what you want after taking the above steps and believe you have been a victim of discrimination, you should consult an employment lawyer with some knowledge of chronic illness employment law. If you cannot afford to hire a private lawyer, many communities have a disability law center offering low-cost or free advocacy.

REFUSED A JOB?

This is even more tricky than being fired, for two reasons. First, ask yourself if you want to work for an employer that didn't choose to hire you. The answer is probably "no." It simply is easier to work for someone who doesn't mind what your health condition is, as long as you can do your job. Second, it is very difficult to prove discrimination in hiring, although not impossible. It almost always requires legal help and could be a lengthy process. Is this job worth it to you?

On the other hand, let's imagine a scenario in which this is the best possible job for you, and other options you've explored aren't as good — or don't exist. The bottom line is that you must be highly motivated to pursue this position once you've been refused, because the process will require some form of legal action. Even if the claim doesn't go to court, you'll need a lawyer to represent you to make a discrimination claim. A terrific resource on this process is "Know Your Rights: A Handbook for Patients with Chronic Illness" (see Resources, back cover).

Sometimes, just a letter or call from an attorney will be enough to get an employer to review the situation again and make a different decision. If you intend to fight the job refusal, you should prepare your information before you speak with a lawyer. Here are some items to get started:

- Gather dates of interviews, names of those with whom you spoke, and a summary of what happened. Note anything that was said or seemed to be implied about your health or disabilities.
- Ask your doctor for a letter describing your current health (and recent health history) and how it impacts your functional abilities to work.
- Get a letter from your most recent employer regarding your work.

Decisions you make regarding your health and work should be based on what you believe is best for you. Do your best to make choices that enhance your well being, rather than sap your reduced energy and resources.

Good Luck and Good Health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Working with Multiple Sclerosis" was written by Rosalind Joffe, Founder and Principal of CIcoach.com, with assistance from Jennifer Prokopy, Founder and Editor of ChronicBabe.com.

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EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm
The Americans with Disabilities Act
The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodation, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications.

www.eeoc.gov
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
The EEOC enforces the Equal Employment Opportunity Laws prohibiting job discrimination.

www.jan.wvu.edu/media/MS.html
Job Accommodation Network
JAN is a service of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor. It's mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by providing employers, employment providers, people with disabilities, their family members, and other interested parties with information on job accommodations, self-employment, small business opportunities, and related subjects.

www.ssa.gov
Social Security Administration
The SSA oversees the federal disability social security disability (SSDI) program and the claims process.

www.dol.gov/odep
U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
This web site offers excellent job opportunity resources for the disabled.

NONPROFIT RESOURCES

www.acceleratedcure.org
Accelerated Cure Project for MS
A national nonprofit organization dedicated to curing Multiple Sclerosis (MS) by determining its causes. Accelerated Cure Project also conducts community-building and educational programs such as the production of this brochure.

www.advocacyforpatients.org/project.php
Advocacy for Patients with Chronic Illness
An organization whose mission is to provide free legal information, advice, and advocacy services to patients with chronic diseases, including how to get one's own medical records, health and disability insurance, educational equity, and support for other legal issues.

www.aclu.org
Disability Rights Resources
The web site of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) contains information about the ADA and the work the ACLU does to protect the rights of the disabled.

www.doua.org
Disabled Online Users Association
DOUA's sole purpose is to bring the online world of business to the disabled.

www.nosscr.org
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
NOSSCR is committed to providing the highest quality representation and advocacy on behalf of persons seeking Social Security and Supplemental Security Income.

www.bu.edu/stayemployed
The Staying Employed Program
Offers a free job counseling service to employed persons with chronic illnesses in Massachusetts.

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

www.chronicbabe.com
ChronicBabe.com
This online community is for young women with chronic illness who want to live their best lives. Check out all the fun resources that "Editrix" Jenni Prokopy finds for you.

www.CIcoach.com
CIcoach.com
Provides coaching, resources, and materials to people who live with MS (and other chronic illnesses) to stay successfully employed.

www.healthtalk.com/multiplesclerosis
HealthTalk
Helps people with chronic illness improve their quality of life, stay informed, and live with hope via webcasts that feature leading medical experts and patients.

www.kpmsfoundation.com
The Kelly Packowski MS Foundation
Provides financial assistance to families and individuals in New England struggling with MS. By changing one life at a time, the foundation strives to improve the quality of life of those battling the disease.

www.disabilitysecrets.com
Social Security Disability Secrets
The purpose of this web site is to provide information about Social Security Disability benefits that might otherwise be difficult to obtain.

BOOKS

I'D RATHER BE WORKING, A step-by Step Guide to Financial Self-Support for People with Chronic Illness, by Gayle Backstrom. Published by Amacom, 2002. A practical, hands-on guide to finding and keeping work while living with chronic illness.

The Chronic Illness Workbook, Strategies and Solutions for Taking Back Your Life, by Patricia A. Fennell, MSW. Published by New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2001. Offers a long-term coping model to navigate the physical, psychological, and social aspects of living with chronic illness based on the author's own experience with her patients and research.

Know Your Rights: A Handbook for Patients with Chronic Illness, By Jennifer C. Jaff, Esq., 2005. A thorough explanation of what people with chronic illness need to know when navigating the legal system.

Multiple Sclerosis, Your Legal Rights, by Lanny and Sara Perkins. Published by Demos Medical Publishing, 1999. An extensive source of basic information about the legal problems that often affect people with MS and the possible solutions to those problems.

YOU CAN ACCELERATE THE CURE FOR MS

The Accelerated Cure Project is primarily supported by contributions from individuals. We spend every dollar we receive supporting our programs — so a gift of any amount is immediately applied to our work of curing Multiple Sclerosis by determining the causes.

Contributions can be made by check, credit card, stock, vehicle donation, or in-kind gift. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit so your contribution may be tax-deductible.

Detailed information on giving is available at
www.acceleratedcure.org
Credit card contributions can be made in the Contribute section.

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Rosalind is passionate about giving people the tools they need to thrive in their work while living with chronic illness. In addition to over 30 years of personal experience living with chronic illnesses, including Multiple Sclerosis, Rosalind Joffe has 35 years of experience working internally and externally for organizations.

Rosalind has held management positions in small businesses and Fortune 500 companies and ten years ago, she founded her own, very successful small business. Her firm, CIcoach.com, www.CIcoach.com, is devoted to working with people who live with chronic illness who want to stay employed and thrive in the workplace.

Rosalind publishes an acclaimed monthly e-Newsletter, *Out in Front,* that focuses on the issues people living with chronic illness face in the workplace. She has produced *Chronic Illness, Employment and Legal Issues,* a series of CD's with interactive workbooks. She has also published, *7 Factors That Influence Success in the Workplace,* a booklet based upon interviews of fifty people who have lived with chronic illness. These resources are available on her web site.

A nationally recognized expert, Rosalind has been quoted in The Wall Street Journal and The Boston Globe and has been heard on National ABC Radio, Boston Business Radio, and Heathtalk.com, to name a few. She has published in disease organization, health, and organizational behavior journals.

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