

Autistic Hoya's Emergency Disclosure Cards

These pocket-size cards are designed for use by autistic people in lieu of autism information/awareness cards available online that usually carry messages such as “I’m sorry about my child’s behavior, h/she has autism,” or “this person has autism; please call this other person for help right away because h/she doesn’t understand.” Those messages are often pathologizing (i.e. making autism a medical problem) and belittling (such as by assuming the autistic person must have the card handed over on their behalf, and cannot communicate themselves), but there are also a number of reasons why actually autistic people might want to have cards available that disclose status as autistic.

Some possible uses (by no means all!) for these cards might include:

- Disclosing in emergency situations, such as to police, emergency medical services, firefighters, or evacuation staff
- Disclosing in uncomfortable situations, such as to airport security, routine encounters with police, special event staff, or medical professionals on regular visits
- Disclosing if you do not normally communicate with speech, or if you can communicate with speech sometimes but can’t at a particular moment

These cards can be adapted to a wide variety of uses, though they are of course limiting. For example, they assume English literacy as well as privilege sighted people and those who can read smaller font sizes (unless read online, where they are accessible by screen readers and refreshable Braille devices), though in many emergency disclosure situations, the people to whom you might want to give this card are likely to be sighted. On the other hand, they are accessible to any deaf person who is literate in English, and can help you communicate if you don’t know ASL or are unable to sign at a particular time.

The cards have space on the back for you to write the name and phone number of a trusted friend, relative, or support person, which is intended to be used if you either indicate that you want this person to be contacted, or if you are completely unable to communicate, or if you are found somewhere unconscious and therefore physically unable to communicate and someone went through your pockets/wallet.

I also have these cards available printed on business card stock, but if you want to make your own, you or a friend with better fine motor skills can print the next page, cut along the lines below, and glue or tape the sides together. You can also glue the two sides to opposite sides of a piece of cardstock for a thicker, sturdier card. If you want to purchase cards from me printed professionally on business card stock, email lydia@autistichoya.com for questions. The money helps me cover costs.

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You or a friend with better fine motor skills can print this page, cut along the lines, and glue or tape the sides together (blank sides facing). You can also glue the two sides to opposite sides of a piece of cardstock for a thicker, sturdier card. If you want to purchase several cards from me printed professionally on business card stock, email lydia@autistichoya.com for questions/details. The money helps me cover costs.

I am autistic.

If I have given you this card, it is hard for me to communicate right now, but you can help!

Stay calm! I might...

- scream at loud noises or touch
- lash out if you touch me
- panic if yelled at
- rock, spin, pace, or flap my hands
- fidget with an object
- not be able to talk at all
- repeat things you say
- seem rude or tactless
- not reply to questions right away
- misunderstand what you say
- not make eye contact

To help us communicate...

- presume that I am competent
- give me extra personal space
- give me extra time to respond
- give me time to calm down
- turn down lights and noises
- let me write on a notepad
- only touch me if you HAVE to
- tell me if you have to touch me
- only touch me with a firm grip
- be specific and concrete
- avoid slang and sarcasm

I am autistic.

If I have given you this card, it is hard for me to communicate right now, but you can help!

My name is _____.

In case of emergency (if I am unconscious or can't communicate by talking or writing), please contact one of these people to help us communicate better.

1) _____ Phone: _____

2) _____ Phone: _____

Further information: lydia@autistichoya.com © 2013 Autistic Hoya