

Working With MS

Your Rights, Disclosure Decisions, and Accommodations



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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Thursday, April 18

JUMPSTART

Strategies For Success When Working With MS

Tuesday, April 23

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Working With MS

Wednesday, April 24

MS MOVES MEETUP



[CANDO-MS.ORG](https://cando-ms.org)

MS COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



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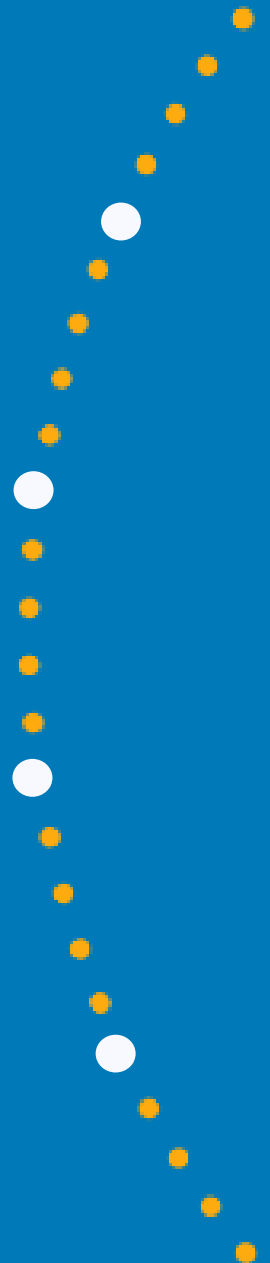
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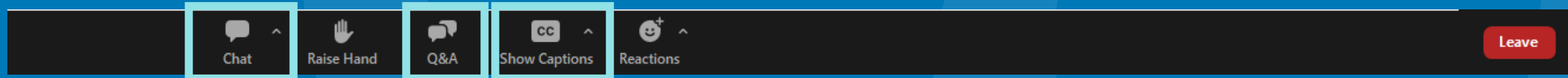
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Type in your questions using the Questions Box



Provide comments and engage with the speakers and audience using the **Chat Box**



NEW! Closed captioning



YOUR SPEAKERS



Roz Kalb
Psychologist

Maine



Jamie R. Hall, Esquire
Attorney

Pennsylvania

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- 1 Your rights under the ADA
- 2 The importance of careful and informed decision-making around disclosure
- 3 The most common reasons people leave the workforce
- 4 When and how to ask for accommodations



POLLING QUESTION

What is your current employment status?

- a) Employed Full-Time
- b) Employed Part-Time
- c) On Medical Leave
- d) Retired on Disability
- e) Seeking Employment
- f) Other – Put in chat!



POLLING QUESTION

Have you disclosed your *MS* in the workplace?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Thinking about it now



POLLING QUESTION

Have you requested an accommodation from your employer?

- a) Yes, I was successful
- b) Yes, I was unsuccessful
- c) No



POLLING QUESTION

**Have you ever considered a
career change because of your
MS symptoms?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

MS and Employment: The Stats



As of 2022:

- Jobless rates average around 60%; at any given time, fewer than half of people with MS are employed
- Within 5–17 years after diagnosis, only 20–30% remain employed
 - Impaired cognition
 - Fatigue
 - Job stress
- People in professional, technical, and managerial job are more likely to remain employed.

Meet George

- Age 37
- On-site unit supervisor for a mid-size construction firm
- Diagnosed 2 years ago with RRMS following a bout of optic neuritis
- Current Symptoms:
 - Heat sensitivity
 - Mild leg spasticity and weakness
 - Extreme fatigue
 - Occasional balance problems
- Has not disclosed his MS to his employer for fear of losing his job

Steps for George To Take Now



Work with his healthcare team to manage his symptoms

Consult with a disability attorney to learn about his rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to learn about:

- The legal protections provided by the ADA
- The pros and cons of minimum vs. maximum disclosure in the workplace

Contact the Job Accommodation Network – askjan.com to learn about possible accommodations to help him do his job

- The ADA requires the employee and employer to exchange accommodation strategies

Possible Accommodations for George

- Modify his work schedule
- Use intermittent Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) for days off
- Do on site work early, before fatigue sets in
- Shift to more completed worksites to avoid ambulatory risks
- Transfer to an indoor position



What George Can Do if the Job Accommodations Are Not Enough



- Consider talking with his state's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
 - State VR offices can provide guidance about career options that might be possible, and other training programs that might be available
- If George thinks he may need to retire on disability, he and his MS care provider need to make sure that his medical record accurately reflects his increasing disability over time

Continuing To Work – Should He or Shouldn't He?



- George has always loved his work – the challenges, projects, and teamwork.
- His work has always been key part of George's identity and self-esteem
- The work has paid the bills and supported his family.
- He knows, however, that the job has begun to sap his energy. When he gets home, he has little left for his wife and kids, and no ability to participate in the recreational activities he used to enjoy.
- George is waiting to see how the accommodations work out and what other options he might have before making a final decision.

Meet Kanisha

- Age 29
- Works as a high school chemistry teacher
- Diagnosed 5 years ago following an episode of blurred vision, numbness, and tingling in arms/hands
- Current Symptoms:
 - Problems with executive functioning
 - Memory and word finding challenges
 - Fatigue and heat sensitivity
- Knows she will need accommodations to continue the career she loves, but doesn't know how to navigate that with the school system

Steps for Kanasha to Take Now



Request referral to a neuropsychologist for a *complete neuropsychological evaluation* (required for a disability application based on cognitive disability). A baseline testing will be helpful for later comparisons

Request referral to an occupational therapist to discuss work accommodations that would address her cognitive issues, fatigue, and heat sensitivity in the classroom

Consult with a disability attorney to better understand her rights and the pros and cons of disclosure

More Steps for Kanasha

Consult with JAN about possible accommodations

- Classroom aide
- A/C in the classroom
- Morning classes
- Parking spot near the school entrance
- Excusal from extra-curricular activities
- Less intensive teaching position



More Steps for Kanasha

Consult with her union rep about how best to negotiate accommodation with the school officials

- Learn about possible sabbatical options, other less-demanding teaching opportunities, disability insurance options for future reference



Key Take-Aways



- The work you do helps to define you and support you financially
- Having MS isn't a reason to stop working; the time to leave the workforce is when you need to or when it becomes the best option
- Making informed decisions is essential
 - Understanding the pros and cons of disclosure
 - Consulting with the experts who can guide you – a disability attorney, JAN, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, your healthcare team
- Partnering with your MS care team to ensure that your medical records accurately reflect your disability over time

Q+A



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05.08.2024

The Realities of Mental Health and MS

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