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To Reveal or Not to Reveal: How Disclosure of a Speech or Mental Disorder Affects Impression Formation and Employability

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TO REVEAL OR NOT TO REVEAL: HOW DISCLOSURE OF A SPEECH OR MENTAL DISORDER AFFECTS IMPRESSION FORMATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

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The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that disclosure of a speech disorder (i.e., stuttering) or a mental disorder (i.e., bipolar disorder) has on impression formation and employability. Participants viewed photographs and heard recordings of an individual applying for a university work-study job. They saw one of six scenarios which manipulated the type of disorder (speech or mental) and level of disclosure (none, visually implicit, or verbally explicit). The participants then rated the personal characteristics of the applicant and gave their own affective reactions and hiring recommendations. The disorder strongly affected the participants' view of the applicant's personal characteristics as well as the type of jobs that the applicant appeared to be capable of doing. Furthermore, disclosure of the disorder differentially affected the manner in which participants viewed the applicant's personal characteristics, the way that the participant felt towards the individual, and the applicant's employability: disclosure of an overt, speech disorder was looked upon more favorably than disclosure of a covert, mental disorder. The results may be helpful for those who have speech or mental disorders who are trying to decide whether or not to disclose them to those in their daily lives.