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**Website:**

Tourette Syndrome • OCD • ADHD  
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*Nix Your Tics! Eliminate Unwanted Tic Symptoms:  
A How-To Guide for Young People*

## **Disinhibited Thoughts #16**

I mentioned last time a situation where an employer sat me down to have a frank discussion about my TS.... yet rather than being upset I snatched at the opportunity. While I myself may be confident that, once I’m through the threshold, I’ll be able to demonstrate my value as a member of his/her staff, the trick is to find someone who won’t presume whether I should even be offered the door.

Having now established myself well “on the other side”, a lot of good stuff has stemmed from the many fortunate relationships I’ve subsequently developed. Over the next couple of installments I want to share with you what I’ve learned so far:

We might as well “begin at the beginning”, and talk about pointers suggested to me for what to do in an initial job interview

-Start by broaching the topic yourself: inevitably there comes a point in that first meeting where you are invited to ask any questions you may have. Say something like, “I would like to discuss my Tourette Syndrome and how it might influence my work here”. If you are applying for a position for which an application precedes the interview stage, you may choose to not mention the fact that you have Tourette Syndrome until you are physically sitting in front of the hiring body – both my training and my experience tells me that people are more likely to succumb to preconceived notions (and toss your application aside) when there is no contrary evidence TO those preconceptions (when you are not in the room to demonstrate your obvious competence and to defend yourself). When applying for clinical internships, I did disclose in my applications that I had Tourette Syndrome – given that my entire curriculum vitae (academic resume) burgeoned with TS involvement, research, presentations, and clinical work it seemed sensible. Of course, out of 12 carefully crafted (and strong) applications only 3 sites even bothered to interview me never mind rank me....

-Another valuable tidbit imparted to me: think about what the job you are applying for entails and what therefore would be the SPECIFIC areas of concern your employer would have regarding the TS. Perhaps the mistake I made in my clinical applications is that I was too general. I wrote “*Concerning my diagnosis with Tourette Syndrome, I recognize that you would be remiss in your duties to uphold the caliber of your institution if you did NOT question the impact my disorder might have on my successful tenure as an intern....In this spirit I very much encourage you to approach me with any concerns you may have*”. I then wrote a bit about how the disinhibited energy that TS provides helps rather than hinders me, but what I failed to do is get concrete. For example, my plans were to work with youth – not just youth, but youth who have been traumatized and/or have their own disinhibition problems to deal with. HOW DO CHILDREN REACT TO ME? I never said. Months into my rotations now, my advisors and colleagues see that I easily establish strong rapports with kids: a Speech and Language Pathologist told me just yesterday that this is a testament to how comfortable I am with my symptoms. Yet by not explicitly speaking to this issue in my initial applications, maybe I got put aside by more internship sites than I should have. Another example is the ability to suppress, at least partially, in situations where doing so is appropriate. PEOPLE DON’T KNOW WE CAN DO THAT!! My co-workers are astonished that not only does it “go away” when I’m deeply involved in something, but I can resist “scratching the itch” for short periods of time when necessary. It never even occurred to me to mention suppression, yet my current employer tells me this information is vital, and urges me to inform future employers of this.

Ok, so maybe we’ll take THREE installments to cover all of this..... ☺

Until next time, my friends!  
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