

Dilemma:

“Should I tell people that I’m autistic?”

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

Host guide As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question (“What if they ...?”).

Try to be curious (“Why do you think that?”) and investigative (“What if they react differently than you assume?”).

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

The dialogue is divided into two parts.

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

Dilemma:

Maria is working her second year at DTU. And she is struggling a bit. Not because of the working hours, but mentally. As an adult, she was diagnosed with autism, but her workplace doesn't know. When she started working there, she chose not to say it because she was afraid that it would affect people's perception of her, both personally and professionally.

Maria knows how to hide her autism from the untrained eye. However, that means that her special needs are not met, and the needs that are met need to be constantly negotiated. She mainly needs rest and breaks during the day.

Her colleagues have accepted that she sometimes uses headphones during the day because she has said that it helps her concentrate. But there are moments where it would be great if her workplace knew about her diagnosis. For example, it would be easier if her colleagues knew how her autism affects her in group work or meetings, or that she sometimes needs to eat lunch by herself, which she is currently too afraid to do because she fears that her colleagues will think she is upset or uninterested in them.

Maria is good at her job and cares about her colleagues. However, masking her autism drains her energy.

She asks: "Dear panel, what do I do? Should I reveal my autism, and if so, to whom and how? Is there a risk that they will think less of me and that I'm being difficult?"

1

What advice does the panel give?

Dialogue one:

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- "What negative consequences could being open about her autism have?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

65,000 people, or 1.1 per cent of the Danish population, have been diagnosed with autism. The figures from public authorities and registries, such as the Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing and the National Patient Register, do not include persons who have only been registered by private specialist doctors. A high number of unreported figures should therefore be expected.

(The Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing)

Autistic people experience the world differently than neurotypical people. This means that autistic people use up their energy faster. In order to preserve their energy at work, they need strategies for handling sensory input, e.g.:

- Noise-cancelling headphones
- A private office or a shared office with a few familiar colleagues
- A break room for quick power naps or just some alone time
- The possibility to work from home on low-energy days

(Specialisterne (the specialists), a social enterprise that builds bridges and finds talented employees for businesses)

2 Dialogue two:

What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Is there room for special considerations in your unit? If yes, how is this evident?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"