

Tips for Testifying at Your Social Security Disability Hearing

By Sharon A. Christie, Esq.

Most applicants for Social Security disability benefits are denied at the initial application stage, and many people at this point just give up. Failing to appeal a denial can be a big mistake, however, because claimants who appeal their decision through at least the hearing level win benefits more than 60 percent of the time. You can improve your chances even further by hiring an experienced disability lawyer to help you prepare.

Tips for Testifying

Because the hearing is the first opportunity for the Social Security Administration to interact with you on a close, personal level, it is important to make a good impression during your testimony. Answer the judge's questions directly. You want to give details about your symptoms that make you unable to perform the activities that would be required in a normal workplace setting. Be honest. If you have good and bad days, say what you are able to do on each type of day.

Your testimony is especially important if you are claiming that stress or another mental impairment contributes to your disability. Though you may have medical tests or a doctor's diagnosis supporting your claim, you are in the best position to explain exactly how your stress affects your daily activities.

What Are Your Symptoms?

Different people experience stress in different ways. For some, it causes panicky feelings or feelings of terror or impending doom. For others, it can cause flashbacks, hallucinations, or a fear of dying or going crazy. Let the judge know how *you* experience stress, which may include one or more of the following symptoms:

- Trembling
- Shaking
- Increased heart rate
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sweatiness
- Nausea
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Inability to concentrate

If you have been denied Social Security disability benefits but you have a physical or mental condition that makes you unable to work, you should appeal your denial at least through the hearing stage.

***Sharon Christie is a nurse and attorney
in Timonium, Maryland who will fight
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Call or email today for help. Order a FREE copy of her book, *Sharon Christie's Unofficial Guide to Social Security Disability Claims* at www.SharonChristieLaw.com