

for Adults Recently Diagnosed with Autism

So You Just Found Out You Have Autism...

FIRST THINGS FIRST: IT'S NOT A BAD THING

Finding out you're autistic as an adult can bring a mix of emotions, including relief, confusion, or even worry. But here's the thing: autism isn't a flaw or something that needs to be "fixed." It's simply a different way of experiencing the world. Many people go undiagnosed for years because autism can present differently in each person, especially in adults.

It is also common for autism to be mistaken for ADHD or other neurodivergent conditions since there is a lot of overlap in symptoms like executive dysfunction, sensory issues, and social difficulties. If you have ever felt like you didn't quite fit in or struggled with things that seemed easy for others, this diagnosis might just be the missing piece that helps you make sense of your experiences.

WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person thinks, communicates, and interacts with the world. While it is often diagnosed in childhood, many adults go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed for years. If you have ever felt different from your peers or struggled with social interactions, sensory overload, or rigid routines, you might be autistic.

Autistic adults often experience challenges in three key areas:

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

such as struggling to read social cues, feeling left out, or avoiding eye contact.

COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

like taking things literally, info-dumping, difficulty understanding sarcasm, or overuse of sarcasm.

REPETITIVE BEHAVIORS AND SENSORY ISSUES

such as needing routine, stimming (like hand-flapping or fidgeting), or being hypersensitive to sounds, textures, or lights.



DIAGNOSIS:

DO YOU NEED ONE?



Getting an official autism diagnosis can be validating, but it is not required to self-identify. Some benefits of diagnosis include access to workplace accommodations, legal protections, and certain therapies. If you are interested, start by speaking to a healthcare provider familiar with autism in adults. The process usually includes interviews, questionnaires, and cognitive assessments.

COMMON CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS

Autism often comes with additional challenges, including:

ADHD

which can cause difficulty focusing, staying organized, or managing impulses.

DEPRESSION

which can result in low energy, loss of interest in hobbies, or difficulty identifying emotions.

AUTISTIC BURNOUT

which is mental and physical exhaustion from masking (hiding autistic traits) or trying to navigate a neurotypical world.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

which may lead to extreme worry, panic attacks, or social anxiety.

SENSORY PROCESSING DIFFERENCES

which make some people sensitive to lights, sounds, or textures that others don't notice.

If you relate to these, a mental health professional can help with tailored coping strategies.

FINDING SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Support looks different for everyone. Some autistic adults thrive with therapy, medication, or support groups, while others benefit from simple accommodations.

Here are some ways to make life easier:



- **Workplace accommodations** like noise-canceling headphones, written instructions, or remote work options.
- **Self-advocacy**, which means learning how to communicate needs effectively to employers, teachers, or healthcare providers.
- **Routine and structure**, such as using planners, checklists, or timers to stay on track.
- **Community support**, including online groups, autistic-led organizations, and therapy, which can provide validation and advice.

NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Autism can affect friendships, dating, and family dynamics. Some key points to keep in mind:

SOCIAL SCRIPTS HELP

and many autistic people learn expected social responses and practice conversations in advance.



BOUNDARIES MATTER

so understanding personal space, communication preferences, and social energy levels can make interactions smoother.



THE AUTISTIC COMMUNITY IS HERE

and finding like-minded people, whether online or in real life, can be a game changer.



WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

If you suspect you are autistic, exploring your identity and support options at your own pace is key. Whether you pursue a diagnosis or not, understanding yourself better can help you build a life that works for you, not against you. Consider connecting with autistic-run resources, social media and online platforms, therapists familiar with autism, or even just journaling your experiences to track patterns.

Being autistic is not a problem. It is a different way of experiencing the world. The more you understand and advocate for yourself, the easier it becomes to navigate life on your terms.