



I think I might be autistic

How do I know if I am autistic?

Autistic people are all different but there are some broad areas of experience that we share. These include differences in social communication, patterns of behaviour, interests or activities and sensory sensitivities.

Social communication differences might involve:

- Differences in understanding verbal instructions and information
- Differences in communication that may impact on initiating conversations, turn taking in conversation or making small talk
- Scripting or planning out what you might say in a conversation prior to it occurring
- Feeling exhausted after socializing

Differences arising from patterns of behaviour, interests or activities, might include:

- A preference for routines, and discomfort when routines are interrupted
- A preference for similarity and consistency
- Anxiety in unfamiliar situations
- All encompassing interests that can be followed to the detriment of other activities
- Stimming (repetitive physical movements, sounds, or repetitive movement of objects)

Sensory processing implications might include:

- Distress/anxiety/avoidance in response to overwhelming stimuli
- Seeking sensory experiences that are positive or pleasurable (e.g. deep pressure, touch, sounds or smells)
- Seeking strong physical and proprioceptive input from your environment (including other people) through exercise, deep pressure and other movement
- Strong reactions to certain smells, textures, light or sounds
- Differences in motor coordination which may include bumping into things, or an atypical gait

remember that the lists above do not describe all autistic people.

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I think I might be autistic, continued

should I seek a formal diagnosis?

A diagnosis of autism may mean that you are eligible for a range of supports that may assist you, as well as an opportunity to enhance self awareness and connection with the autistic community. Formal diagnosis can be expensive. Some people choose not to pursue a diagnosis and instead are content with self identification.

how do I self-identify?

There is a wealth of information to assist you to learn more about autism from autistic adults. Here are a range of resources to assist you:

- Musings of an Aspie: <http://musingsofanaspie.com/about>
- Nerdy, Shy and Socially Inappropriate by Cynthia Kim: <http://a.co/7EXzRbe> (Amazon)
- I think I might be Autistic by Cynthia Kim: <http://a.co/fC4TCMO> (Amazon)
- Aspergirls by Rudy Simone: <http://a.co/8ui0W6u>
- Splines Theory: <http://www.lunalindsey.com/2013/10/splines-theory-spoons-metaphor-for.html>
- Some people find internet “tests” useful. These can be found by using an online search engine.

if I want to get a formal diagnosis, what is the process involved in finding out if I am autistic?

The process may vary somewhat depending on your location. The first step is to arrange an appointment with your GP or Primary Care physician and ask for a referral to a clinical psychologist who is experienced in working with autistic adults. Be aware that not all GP's are knowledgeable about autism and you may need to be assertive in requesting a referral. The psychologist will likely see you over several appointments, may ask you to complete a range of clinical tests and invite you to include your partner or other family members in the process in some way, if appropriate. They will diagnose you using DSM-5 criteria (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and will usually link you to some services that may assist you if you require support.