



Being diagnosed on the autism spectrum as an adult

Why you might choose to seek a diagnosis.

Until the last few decades, it was thought that autism only affected children – but now we know that it’s a lifelong condition. This means there are many adults who were not assessed when they were younger, but are Autistic.

In this fact sheet, we explore some considerations in receiving an autism diagnosis later in life. If you’ve been thinking about seeking a diagnosis, this one’s for you!

First of all, how does an autism diagnosis work?

There’s no medical test (such as a blood test) that can diagnose autism in adults (the same goes for children). Instead, medical or allied health professionals will generally want to meet in person and ask individuals questions about their life and experiences.

Assessments aren’t always easy to access due to lengthy waitlists, so some adults may choose to self-identify. Self-identification is helpful for connection with their identity and the Autistic community, and may lead to seeking formal support when possible.

**Our purpose
a different brilliant®**

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.



How can a diagnosis help?

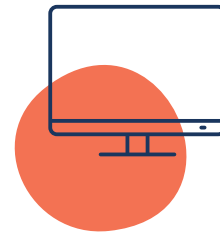
According to those who have been diagnosed as adults, receiving their autism diagnosis was positive in a number of ways.

- **Greater self-awareness.** For many adults, an autism diagnosis can explain past challenges and differences, providing a sense of relief and validation. In the words of one such adult: "I understand there's a reason why I am the way I am ... the more I learn about autism, the more it explains me." Identifying as Autistic can even bring a sense of pride, improving self-esteem and self-image.
- **Realising you're not alone.** An autism diagnosis can be the gateway to connecting with the broader Autistic community, which fosters a sense of belonging, so Autistic people feel seen, heard and understood. It also opens avenues to accessing resources and information.
- **Tapping into a support network.** A diagnosis can lead to a range of different supports, from disability services to work accommodations and tailored medical and mental health care.
- **Feeling empowered to self-advocate.** With an autism diagnosis, adults are better equipped to understand their own needs, and express these to others. Individuals may find it easier to bring up certain topics (such as sensory needs) when there's a reason to validate them.

Is there a downside to an adult autism diagnosis?

The assessment and diagnosis process itself can be time consuming and expensive.

Post-diagnosis, individuals may struggle to find adult-specific services and supports – and they may feel a conflicting mixture of emotions, such as relief, confusion, sadness or empowerment. However, any difficulties involved in getting diagnosed tend to be outweighed by benefits.



Useful Resources

Web

reframingautism.org.au/service/i-am-newly-diagnosed

autismawareness.com.au/diagnosis/adults/getting-a-diagnosis

amaze.org.au/understand-autism/assessment-and-diagnosis

thespectrum.org.au/autism-diagnosis/adults

Seeking formal diagnosis?

The first step is to chat to your GP to get a referral to a clinical or neuropsychologist or psychiatrist with experience in assessing autism in adults.

Aspect offers a comprehensive approach, based on the idea of a **different brilliant**[®], that:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.