

## Training

Autism NI offers a range of free online and in person training courses to support parents and carers pre and post diagnosis. Our interactive courses aim to enable families to increase knowledge and understanding, and learn practical skills to support autistic people reach their full potential.

Our training courses are co-created with autistic people. We cover important topics such as exploring the fundamentals of autism, sleep, anxiety, sensory, behaviours growing up, and supporting your teen.

## Useful Resources

Autism NI Helpline: 028 9040 1729 (option 1)  
Amazing Things Happen: Autism (Youtube)  
Rainbow Resource Kit: Download from [www.autismni.org](http://www.autismni.org)



Autism NI is Northern Ireland's main autism charity and works to provide life-changing services for over 35,000 autistic people currently living in Northern Ireland.

Our work wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Your donation can help us continue to provide invaluable autism services, and build an inclusive society where autistic people can reach their full potential.

To make a donation, please visit [www.autismni.org](http://www.autismni.org) or call us on **028 9040 1729**.

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# Autism and a recent diagnosis

A guide for Parents and Carers



## Receiving an autism diagnosis for your child may feel overwhelming. You will experience a range of different reactions and thoughts. Everyone's experience is unique and there is no one way to react.

We are all different, and how a diagnosis is dealt with will vary from family to family, and person to person. Some families may know very little about autism, and no matter how prepared you are, you can still find yourself thinking about the future and wondering where to turn next.

It is important to understand your own family's journey with autism, and find ways for everyone to feel supported and move forward together.

### Support for your child

Your child is the same person they have always been, and it is likely that there is not one specific reason why your child is autistic. Now that you know they are autistic, you can better understand their needs, access and arrange support, and help them reach their full potential.

Autistic children can benefit from appropriate early support, and finding out more information on autism, strategies, education and future planning will help you on this journey. It can be both interesting and challenging but it is important to remember that this is a lifelong journey, not a race.

Reading and listening to information about autism from every source is not always helpful, and can sometimes lead to frustration or confusion. You know your child best, and the aim is to enhance what you already know about your autistic child, and what appropriate support you and your child need.

### The uniqueness of autism

Autism affects the way a person relates to people, situations, and the immediate environment and many autistic children have difficulty processing sensory information including sight, smells, touch, tastes and sounds.

It is important to remember that every autistic person is unique, because we are all different. Not every autistic child reacts in the same way to the same situation, so helping your child understand how they experience the world and its affect on them can be very beneficial. Understanding why your child is reacting the way they do may help identify areas for change or cause of the reaction, and may help identify areas of strength.

Acknowledging that you are doing your best will make a difference, and will empower you to advocate for your child.

### Dual diagnosis

Autism can often be diagnosed alongside other conditions, such as ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Tourettes Syndrome.

It's important to support your child in a way that meets all their needs, while recognising that the needs that arise from being autistic are distinct. Understanding each diagnosis, how they interact, and what strategies can be implemented to support each of them will make a positive difference.

### Sibling and carer support

Often when a child is diagnosed, you can spend a lot of time attending appointments and seeking the best support available.

It is important to recognise that you need a balance in your life, spreading your time between your other children and trying to find time for yourself.

When possible:

- help siblings to better understand their autistic brother or sister and their needs.
- make time for siblings and do some activities separately.
- allow siblings to have time to themselves, for example, have a sleepover at a friend's house.
- listen to their worries and concerns and the things that are important to them.

### Interventions

Autistic children can benefit from appropriate early intervention, and a diagnosis can help your child get autism specific support.

Talk to professionals who know you and your child, ask for information and advice, and trust yourself to know what early support fits with your child's needs and what you can manage as a family.

### Looking to the future

Throughout the assessment and diagnostic process, you will have received appointment letters and reports so it is good practice to get an information system set up to keep all information together.

As your child grows and develops you may see a range of different professionals and it is helpful to remember how to contact each of them, and keep all information organised to avoid possible confusion, and to ensure you can contact them in the future.

Every autistic child has potential, they will grow and develop, and we should never underestimate their potential. Some parents/carers worry about areas such as speech and academia, but tapping into your child's potential is key to helping them achieve in the future and will help them celebrate what they can do!