

# Talking to Your Child About Their Autism Diagnosis: Questions to Ask Yourself

It can be hard to know when or how to talk with your child about their autism diagnosis — or even to decide if you are ready to talk about autism at all. Here are some questions you can ask yourself, as well as some tips for “disclosing” your child’s diagnosis. These questions can help guide your decision-making, but it’s critical to remember that each autistic person is unique. You know your child best, so you will know if they are ready.

## Questions to ask yourself (or discuss with co-parent or supportive friend or family member):

How do you want to explain autism, and what words do you want to use?

What will the impact be on you as the parent or caregiver?

Can you cope with the potential stress of this conversation?

Will your child understand the diagnosis? Do they already know what autism is?

Do you have a support system that can help you or be there for you?



This is just the beginning. Your child may have questions as they develop and grow. It can be helpful to access resources and information on autism over the lifespan to support your child in the way they need. For more information on 'How to Talk About Autism' check out [autismontario.com/programs-services/children-youth/new-diagnosis-videos-and-resources](https://autismontario.com/programs-services/children-youth/new-diagnosis-videos-and-resources)

# Talking to Your Child About Their Autism Diagnosis: 6 Tips for Talking to Your Child <sup>1</sup>

## Think about your child

Introduce autism at your child's developmental level and add information over time. As a parent, you know your child best and can best judge how much they can understand at this time.

## Validate their feelings

Let them know it's OK to feel sad, confused, or even angry. These are all normal emotional responses to big news.

## Be positive

Choose a time that feels right for your family when you and your child are having a good day. You both need to be in an emotional place where you are ready to talk and listen. <sup>2</sup>

## How to Support Yourself

Raising a child with autism can be stressful, and parents with autistic children report higher mental health concerns than parents of neurotypical children.

It can be frustrating to navigate the system, and you may feel like you're not "doing enough," but you are!

There are ways for you to access support: [Caring for the Caregiver Guide](#)

## Identify strengths

Explain that people's brains work differently, which means that some people are great at things that others may struggle with; they may know other kids who are good artists or athletes, and they may know other kids who are good friends and are very kind.

## Encourage curiosity

This can be in the form of role models, like explaining to them that there are many famous people with autism. This also means encouraging them to learn about autism and neurodiversity, ask questions, and think about what it will mean to them.

## Ask for help

Another option, if you want support with this discussion, is to have a social worker or counsellor join you. They can help navigate your child's feelings and offer some help at the moment if you need it.

1. Woods, S. (2020). Ten tips for talking to your child about their autism diagnosis. University of Washington: Autism Center. [depts.washington.edu/uwautism/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ten-Tips-for-Discussing-Autism-with-Your-Child.pdf](https://depts.washington.edu/uwautism/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ten-Tips-for-Discussing-Autism-with-Your-Child.pdf)

2. National Autistic Society. (2020). Diagnosis: Telling a child about their diagnosis. [autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/diagnosis/disclosing-your-autism/parents-and-carers#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20ways%20some.and%20what%20they%20find%20difficult](https://autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/diagnosis/disclosing-your-autism/parents-and-carers#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20ways%20some.and%20what%20they%20find%20difficult)

3. Karp, E. A. & Kuo, A. A. (2015). Maternal mental health after a child's diagnosis autism spectrum disorder. JAMA, 313(1), 81-82. [jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2088834](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2088834)