

- Below are some suggestions for parents when talking to a child about their autism diagnosis. (**Advice taken from the National Autistic Society**):

There isn't one 'right' way or 'right' time to tell your child about their diagnosis. It is a parental decision. However, below are some points to consider.

- *Some parents/carers find it helpful to attend a course about autism before discussing the diagnosis with their child as this helps them feel more confident in raising the subject.*
- *Consider who the best person in the family is to help bring up the subject. If your child is comfortable with a grandparent or aunt, it might be a good idea to get them involved too.*
- *Choose a moment when you're both in a calm mood and in a familiar place where you both feel comfortable. Autistic children can find it difficult to process new information, especially if they're feeling anxious, stressed or are in an unfamiliar environment.*
- *Try to make sure you won't be interrupted. Your child may need time to think about what you're saying or to ask questions.*
- *Give a little bit of information overtime rather than just having one big conversation about autism – small steps.*
- *Adapt the information given according to the child's age and development.*
- *One of the ways some parents start a conversation about autism is to talk first about individual strengths and differences. For example, you could write a list of family members' strengths (what they are really good at) and difficulties (what they are not so good at) and see if there are any patterns. You could then talk about what your child is good at and what they find difficult. You could point out that there is a name to this pattern of strengths and difficulties. You could explain that finding things tricky such as social interaction or social communication, or sensory difficulties has a name, and this is called autism. Explain that there are many people in the world and there may be children even in their school.*
- *Your child may have met other autistic people. You could explain that although autistic people have some things in common, they are all different. Explain that we all have differences (we all have strengths and difficulties).*

- *You may need to emphasise that autism is a life-long condition but with the right support, autistic people can thrive. It may be that your child needs some additional support. For example, your child might have some support at school with tasks they find difficult. You could also point out that your child is good at some things at school which other children need help with.*
- *Keep the conversation about Autism positive and supportive. Explain that it gives them a bit of a difference which is positive and there might be areas they struggle with, but there are lots of people who can help them, and it is a part of their identity.*
- *Be there if your child wants to talk or ask questions. Some children may not want to ask questions face to face. You could have a question box, diary or even email as this can make it easier for some children to ask personal questions. It also gives them more time to process your answer or think of other questions. They may not ask questions immediately but may ask you later.*
- *At some point, you may want to talk to siblings separately about your child's diagnosis. You will probably explain things differently depending on their age. The National Autistic Society has resources that may be of help. I have also made reference to a book in the resources section below which may of use.*

Recommended Resources:

There are lots of information available. You could use visuals, videos and books to support with the conversation or talk to others.

Ideas of resources are available from the National Autistic Society's website.

Below are some resources which might support when sharing the diagnosis. Some of the books may be available from the library. If sharing resources with child, I would advise that parents check them out first to assess their suitability.

- **Amazing Things Happen** - by Alexander Amelines - YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwRrVw-CRo>
- **“What is Autism?”** <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism> (Film narrated by Alan Gardner, the Autistic Gardener)
- **Autism: talking about a diagnosis** by Rachel Pike (Available from the National Autistic Society).
- **Talking with your child about their autism diagnosis** – Raelene Dundon.

- **The Little Book of Autism FAQs: How to Talk with Your Child about their Diagnosis and Other Conversations** by Davida Hartman.
- **My family is different** by Carolyn Brock – a resource to support siblings understand Autism.
- **The National Autistic Society** - <https://www.autism.org.uk/>. There are recommendations about how to facilitate the conversation about autism, and links to website and resources.
- **The Centre for ADHD and Autism Support** - <https://adhdandautism.org/>. Their address is Television House, 269 Field End Road, Eastcote, HA4 9XA.

Below are some suggested activity ideas that can be used to support your child understand their diagnosis.

Activity ideas:

- Watch Youtube video – ‘**CBBC Newsround - My Autism and me**’. In this Newsround Special, 13-year-old Rosie takes viewers into her world to explain what it's like to grow up with autism and she introduces other children who are Autistic. Following the video, you could think about similarities and differences with Rosie.

For example:

I am like Rosie because....	I am not like Rosie because....

- Create an “**About Me**” poster or write a poem or a song and include individual strengths and difficulties. This helps children to explore what they are good at and what they might find tricky. They can then look out for the patterns and see that autism is part of their identify.
- Draw pictures of different family members and friends. Write words around the picture to represent things specific to that individual. Use the concept of ‘ingredients’ to explain differences. What are the ‘ingredients’ of a person? What makes them unique and special? Include the word ‘autism’ for your child’s words.

- Research positive neurodiverse role models. One well known neurodiverse role model is Greta Thunberg, the schoolgirl climate activist. She has described her autism as her “superpower”. Your child could research other neurodiverse role models and find out what their “superpower” is. Your child could then reflect on what his own “superpower” is, and with support, continue to channel his talents in effective ways so he can apply his natural strengths in ways that will enable him to grow and realize his potential to the full.
- Read fictional and non-fictional books about autism together. There are lots of books available Below are some suggested books. These may be available from the library.

Suggested books (Parents are advised to check their suitability and interest level before sharing):

- All Cats Are on the Spectrum – Kathy Hoopman
- All My Stripes: A Story for Children with Autism – Shaina Rudolph
- Andy and His Yellow Frisbee – Mary Thompson
- Dude, I’m an Aspie! – Matt Friedman
- My Awesome Autism: Helping children learn about their autism diagnosis – Nikki Saunders
- The Curious incident of the dog in the Night-Time