

What is... Autism?



Autism is a lifelong neurological variation that shapes how a person experiences, interacts with, and perceives the world. Autistic people experience the world in unique and valuable ways. Autistic people may think, feel, communicate, connect, and experience their environments differently.

No two autistic people are the same. Each person has their own way of seeing the world, which makes them interesting and unique. Autistic people bring individual strengths, qualities and expertise to the community around them, but often experience difficulties and barriers in their everyday lives, particularly if they are not understood, respected or able to access the right supports or environments.

Autism Characteristics:

Every autistic person is different, but some common characteristics include:

Sensory experiences:

Autistic people may engage with or respond to sensory input such as sounds, lights, tastes, smells and textures in different and unique ways. Sensory experiences may be meaningful and enjoyable; they may also be uncomfortable or create barriers to participation in daily life.

Communication & social interaction:

Autistic people communicate and connect with others in different ways, such as using spoken language and alternative communication methods, including visuals or communication devices.

Autistic individuals often value direct, honest communication and can bring refreshing sincerity to interactions.

"Our identities make us who we are, and all aspects of our identities are important, including (maybe even specifically) our disabilities."

–Chloé Hayden
(Australian actress & author).

Autistic communication is diverse and valuable and can include characteristics such as:

- Being literal and using precise language.
- Having a preference for direct communication.
- Potentially different non-verbal communication approaches (e.g. use of gestures, facial expressions, and differences in use of eye contact).
- A preference for communicating in detail around individual interests.
- A preference for deep one-on-one conversations or structured interactions.

Thinking & processing information:

Autistic people may process information in different ways. For example:

- Ability to sustain intense focus on particular tasks and areas of interest.
- Different cognitive approaches often leading to innovative problem-solving.
- Differences in memory and attention to detail.
- Quickly noticing patterns.
- Preference for structured and predictable routines.

Autism is a different way of being...

Whilst we acknowledge autistic people may face barriers to participation in their communities, we also emphasise their strengths, talents, and perspectives. Society is enriched by neurodiversity, and creating inclusive spaces benefits everyone.

By harnessing autistic people's strengths, talents, and perspectives, we can support challenges and barriers in an affirming way and work towards building a more inclusive society.

Support & acceptance:

Autistic individuals thrive in environments that:

- Respect communication styles and preferences.
- Acknowledge and respect varying sensory experiences.
- Focus on strengths and interests.
- Promote inclusion, self-advocacy and empowerment.
- Allow for flexibility and autonomy.
- Show acceptance of neurodivergence.

"I believe Picasso was right. I believe we could paint a better world if we learned to see it from all perspectives... Because diversity is strength."

–Hannah Gadsby
(Australian comedian & writer).

Autistic voices matter

The best experts on autism are autistic people themselves. Listen to and uplift autistic voices in conversations about autism acceptance, inclusion, and accessibility.

Autism is a valuable part of human diversity...

By embracing neurodiversity, we create a world where all minds are valued and supported. Autism is not something to cure or fix; it is a way of experiencing the world that deserves respect and understanding, and at times, support. Every autistic individual is unique, with their own constellation of strengths, challenges, and potential.

Want to learn more?

Follow autistic advocates, read books and articles by autistic authors, and support neurodiversity-affirming organisations, such as **Autism Queensland**.

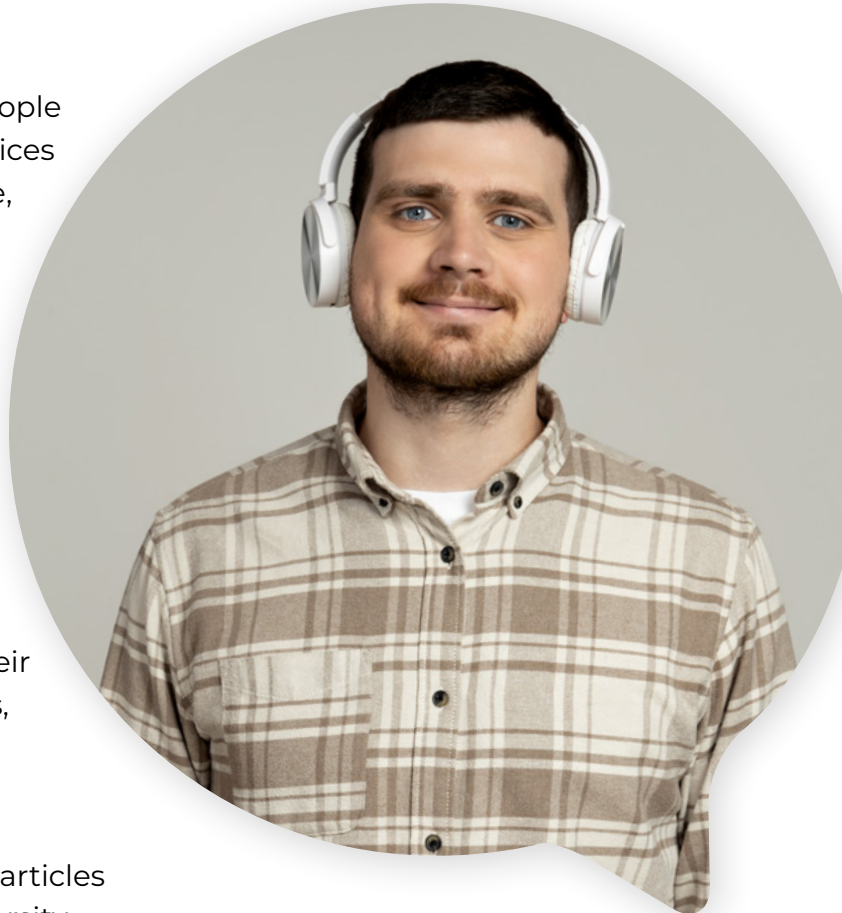
Seeking a diagnosis

Autism can be diagnosed at any age. If you think you, your child, or another loved one might be autistic, speak with a therapist or general practitioner (GP).

A GP can refer you to an allied health professional for diagnosis and support. A diagnosis can bring clarity, access to support, and help with self-advocacy.



Scan QR code to view other resources, services and supports offered by Autism Queensland.






"Neurodiversity means I am incredibly creative, and I don't have this invisible, socially constructed box that most of the population has decided on."

—Chloé Hayden
(Australian actress & author).

Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:



 **Email:** css@autismqld.com.au
 **Phone:** (07) 3273 0000
 **Website:** autismqld.com.au