

Telling someone you're autistic

Telling someone that you are autistic is your personal choice and you are in control of when and if you tell someone you're autistic. There are many factors that can help you decide if you want to tell someone that you are autistic. In this advice sheet we have listed some things to think about before deciding to tell someone you're autistic, as well as autistic people's experiences of telling someone that they're autistic.

The possible benefits of telling someone you're autistic

- It will help the other person to understand you more and may prevent misunderstandings between you
- It can be a relief to share that you are autistic and know that you can be yourself around them
- You may have someone to go to when you need to discuss your autism
- The person should be in a better position to support you knowing that you are autistic
- It may help you if you choose to tell other people in the future
- It raises awareness of autism and educates others

Reasons that it may be difficult to tell someone you're autistic

- You may fear that people will judge you or treat you differently once you have told them you're autistic
- You may fear that people won't believe you
- You may fear people will reject you once they know you're autistic



Deciding to tell people that you are autistic

Explain how autism affects you

Being specific about how you may respond in different situations can help people understand you better.

Things like why you,

- are always very early, or late, to meet them,
- find busy and noisy environments difficult
- have difficulty in social situations.

These could be things that people have noticed before and will help them to understand your autism better. Emphasise that you are still you and nothing has changed since you told them you're autistic.

It could also be an opportunity to explain how things they do affect you, such as changing plans at the last minute or meeting in very busy environments.

Emphasise the positives for being autistic for you such as being able to focus and concentrate on one subject for a long time or being very accepting and open minded.

Learn as much as you can about autism and other people's experiences

It is very useful to know as much as possible about autism yourself. This will help as you may get a lot of questions about autism. It may also be useful to be able to direct people to information about autism so that they can find out more about it themselves.

Directing them to the <https://autismwales.org/en/> website is a great start.

“I decided to tell people that I'm autistic knowing people talk and judge. I wanted to own my story with my truth. I also recognised that many others share similar traits and difficulties and wanted them to know it's ok, and they are not alone.

You decide who you tell

Before telling someone you're autistic it is important to consider your relationship with the person, they may be family, a friend, employer or colleague. Think about how close you are to that person and what the benefits of telling them you're autistic could be. Think about how you would feel if they didn't respond positively and how that might affect your relationship going forward. Think about if you feel safe with this person.

Ensure that you explain to the person that you would like them to keep the information private if you don't want them to tell other people. This will make sure that you are in control of who knows.



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When to tell

The timing of when you tell someone you're autistic can be important. Following an autism diagnosis or self-identifying as autistic can be a very emotional time and you may need time to come to terms with it yourself before letting anyone else know.

Once you feel you are ready to tell someone else here are some things to think about.

- Do you have enough time to give a full explanation
- Are you likely to be interrupted
- Are they distracted and doing other things

It might be worth letting the person know that you have something to tell them and will need enough time to explain beforehand. This will mean that the person will ensure that they have enough time to receive your information.

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I told people I was autistic after my diagnosis. I figured it was good to make people aware as it should help me interact better with others, and perhaps people would be more patient with any perceived issues, or at least be a bit more sensitive in helping me get through challenges

How to tell

It can be difficult to find the words to tell someone you're autistic. Here are some suggestions around how to do this.

- Write down what you want to say to the person and keep it with you to read if you find it difficult when talking to the person face to face
- Write a letter to the person explaining your autism and how you feel about it
- Create a video for the person explaining your autism and how you feel about it
- Link your experience to autistic characters that the person may be familiar with and which may help to explain how you feel about your autistic identity

For some examples of wording that you could use to start the conversation please [click here](#)

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I didn't prepare before sharing that I'm autistic, I just did it, although this led to some people then accusing me of using it as an excuse.



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Give people time

It can be difficult to tell someone you're autistic but it is important to be patient with people and give them time to process the information. People may find it difficult to know how to react and what to say to you.

Most people will want to be supportive but may find it difficult to express this. People may say unhelpful things like 'you don't look autistic' or 'we're all a little bit autistic aren't we?'. Letting people know what autism means to you can help people to re-evaluate what they know about autism and be more open minded. Directing them to helpful resources such as the 'What is autism?' film can be helpful <https://autismwales.org/en/i-am-autistic/what-is-autism/> to aid their understanding.

It can be very disheartening when you tell people you're autistic and they do not respond in a way that you are expecting. It may take people time to process the information and also may make people reflect on their own experiences.



I felt a relief telling my sister that I was autistic. Beforehand I felt that I had this secret that I was keeping to myself and was very nervous to share it with her. I knew that she had some understanding of autism which helped. I think she was still surprised. She asked me how I felt about the diagnosis and I said I was glad I had it as it made me understand myself better. It was overall a positive experience although we haven't discussed it with her since.

Be kind to yourself

Telling someone you are autistic can make you feel vulnerable, especially if they don't react in the way that you would like or expect.

It can bring up a variety of feelings

Make sure that you make time to prepare and process the experience. Do something that helps you to relax and feel good.

This could be something like;

- Engaging in a hobby
- Reading a book
- Taking a bath
- Playing a video game
- Move your body- walking, yoga, running, kick boxing
- Sitting on your own in a quiet room
- Listening to music
- Eating your favourite meal