



# FIRST STEPS

## After an Autism Diagnosis

A quick start guide for parents

Practical information.  
Real support.  
You're not alone.

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## What to expect in this guide

- 1 Understanding autism
- 2 Communication differences
- 3 Sensory processing
- 4 Managing big feelings
- 5 Anxiety, anger & overwhelm
- 6 Why friendships can be difficult
- 7 Managing big feelings
- 8 Repetitive behaviours & patterns
- 9 Quick strategies that help
- 10 Reputable resources
- 11 You are not alone

Every child is unique.  
You know your child best.  
Trust that. We're here to support  
you with knowledge and understanding.

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## 1 UNDERSTANDING AUTISM

### The basics

Autism is a difference in how the brain processes information.  
It affects how a person:

- Communicates and understands others
- Experiences the world (sights, sounds, textures, tastes, smells)
- Thinks, learns and solves problems
- Shows their strengths, personality and potential

It is not caused by bad parenting and it is not something that can be "cured".  
It is a lifelong, natural variation of the human experience.

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## 2 COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

### It's more than just talking

Communication is how we share and receive information.

Your child might:

- Use fewer words – or many!
- Take time to process and respond
- Prefer to communicate in their own way
- Miss social cues or sarcasm
- Find changes in routine hard

Connection comes in many different forms. Listen, watch and learn what works for your child.

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## 3 SENSORY PROCESSING

### The world can feel intense

Autistic children often experience sensations more strongly.  
They might be:



This might look like:  
Covering ears, avoiding touch, loving deep pressure, being drawn to movement, or strong reactions to textures or noise.

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## 4 MANAGING BIG FEELINGS

### Help, not fix

Big feelings are real. Our job is to help our child feel safe enough to ride them out.

- Ways to help:
- Stay calm – your calm helps their nervous system
  - Offer a safe space (quiet, cozy, low demands).
  - Use simple words and gentle tone
  - Validate their feelings. I see you. I'm here.
  - Teach tools for self-regulation (breathing, movement, breaks)

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## 5 ANXIETY, ANGER & OVERWHELM

### What you might see

Many autistic children experience high levels of anxiety. This can show up as:

- Worrying about changes
- Avoiding situations
- Meltdowns or shutdowns
- Anger that seems out of the blue

Remember:  
Behaviours are communication.  
They are not trying to be difficult.  
They are trying to cope.

Safety, predictability and understanding reduce anxiety.

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## 6 WHY FRIENDSHIPS CAN BE DIFFICULT

Social rules aren't always obvious.

Your child might:

- Struggle to start or keep conversations
- Prefer one-to-one or parallel play
- Not notice unspoken rules
- Feel lonely or left out

They want connection – they may just need support finding their way.

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  - Use simple words and gentle tone
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  - Teach tools for self-regulation (breathing, movement, breaks)

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## 8 REPUTABLE RESOURCES

You don't have to do this alone



Middletown Centre for Autism  
Practical guides and training for parents and professionals.  
[middletownautism.com](http://middletownautism.com)



National Autistic Society (UK)  
Information, advice and resources for families.  
[nas.org.uk](http://nas.org.uk)



ASIAN Irish Autism Advocacy Network  
First-hand resources and advocacy from autistic people.  
[autisticadvocacy.org](http://autisticadvocacy.org)

See full list on the next page!

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You don't need to figure this all out at once.

You don't need to follow every recommendation on the report right now.  
One small step today is enough.



You and your child are enough.  
We're learning, together.



Side by Side.  
Every step. Every day.





## FIRST STEPS After an Autism Diagnosis



A quick start guide for parents  
You don't have to do this alone.  
We're here, side by side.



### YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Every family's journey is  
unique. We're in this  
together.



## 7 Reputable Resources



Trusted support.  
Evidence based. Autistic-led.



These organisations provide reliable information, practical tools and lived experience.

### IRISH SUPPORTS



#### ASIAM

(Irish Autism Advocacy Group)

Ireland's national autism charity and  
advocacy organisation.

- ✓ Information and guides
- ✓ Advocacy and rights support
- ✓ Training and awareness
- ✓ Resources for all ages and stages

 [asiam.ie](http://asiam.ie)



#### MIDDLETOWN CENTRE FOR AUTISM

Excellent evidence-informed training,  
webinars and resources for parents,  
schools and professionals.

- ✓ Practical guides and webinars
- ✓ Online learning and conferences
- ✓ Research-informed information

 [middletownautism.com](http://middletownautism.com)

### GLOBAL RESOURCES



#### NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY (UK)

Practical information, advice,  
resources and support  
for families.

 [nas.org.uk](http://nas.org.uk)



#### AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK (ASAN)

Resources, articles and advocacy  
created by and for autistic people.  
Great for understanding lived  
experience.

 [autisticadvocacy.org](http://autisticadvocacy.org)



#### NEUROCLASTIC

Brilliant autistic-led publication  
sharing honest, thoughtful articles  
on life, identity, communication  
and acceptance.

 [neuroclastic.com](http://neuroclastic.com)



#### WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

The WHO defines autism  
in the International Classification  
of Diseases (ICD-11).

 [who.int](http://who.int)



*Please remember...*

**You don't need to figure this all out at once.**

You don't need to do every recommendation in your child's autism report right now.  
One small step today is enough.



*Every autistic child is different. Not every piece of advice will fit your family.*



*Take what helps, leave what doesn't, and trust that you know your child best.*

