

Coping with Your Child's Diagnosis

When your child is diagnosed with autism, it is important to have some strategies to help you cope and move forward with the diagnosis. Here are some suggestions.

Feel your feelings

- It is normal to experience different stages of grief, including shock, anger, denial and acceptance. Express how you are feeling to those who care about you!

Share the diagnosis

- Wait to share the diagnosis until YOU are ready. Share with whomever you are comfortable and be prepared that they may not understand right away. Use examples to help the person understand what ASD looks like in your child.

Find your support system

- It is important to have support as you support your child. Find the support system that works for you— whether it's family, support groups, or online groups.

Take time for yourself

- As your child's biggest advocate, it is important to take care of yourself. Take a break when you need it. Do a pleasant activity every day, whether it is taking a walk or enjoying a cup of coffee in the morning.

Remember that the diagnosis is just a label

- Your child is still the same child they were before the diagnosis. They have the same gifts, strengths and wonderful qualities that you love about them. This diagnosis is a tool to understand your child's needs and access the resources that can help your child reach their fullest potential.

First Steps after an Autism Diagnosis

After your child receives an autism diagnosis, it is normal to feel overwhelmed about where to begin. Here are five first steps that will help you understand the diagnosis and be proactive in helping your child.

1

Process Your Child's Diagnosis

Spend some time reading your child's diagnostic report. Use the resources in the blue folder to help yourself understand what an ASD diagnosis means. It is normal to feel different emotions as you process your child's ASD diagnosis.

2

Enroll in Early Intervention

Enroll your child in Early Intervention services if your child is younger than 3 years old. If your child already receives EI services, talk with your EI provider about beginning ASD-specific services.

3

Children Older Than 3: Start Special Education Process

Children 3 years and older can access special education services through their public school system. Contact your school district to start the process. Be sure to have a copy of the diagnostic report.

4

Access Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

ABA is a service offered through EI that helps children with ASD develop communication and social skills. Talk to your EI provider about beginning ABA services. Children younger than 3 years old can access in-home ABA through their insurance.

5

Apply to Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

DDS offers autism support resources to families, including family support groups and autism support centers. Apply to DDS to access these resources.