

# What is Autism?

Autism changes the way an individual sees, experiences and understands the world.

Autism is a different way of thinking, a neurological developmental difference that changes the way a person relates to the environment and people around them. Put simply, autism changes the way that a person sees, experience and understands the world.

There is not one way that an autistic individual experiences the world, this is why the term 'spectrum' is used- this is to reflect the fact that every individual's lived experience of autism is different.

Individuals on the spectrum may have skills in particular areas, while finding other aspects of life challenging. How skills develop across a life span varies as much as autism itself and can vary significantly from person to person.

There are no physical differences between a person with an autism diagnosis and a person without an autism diagnosis as it is a neurological disability, classifying it as an "Invisible" or "Hidden Disability".

Autism can be characterised by differences in social communication, social interaction and engagement in restricted or repetitive behaviors and interests, which can include sensory stimuli.

In South Australia, more than 15,000 individuals across all ages have received a diagnosis of autism, with the greatest prevalence in the school age years. More than 205,000 Australians, or 1 in 100 people, have an Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis.

**Each person on the autism spectrum is an individual with unique qualities, strengths and support needs.**

The age at which characteristics of autism can begin to be recognised will vary from person to person. The manner in which characteristics present themselves will differ too. Age, gender and cognitive ability can also influence rates of development and the way in which characteristics of autism present. This means that there are different signs and characteristics of autism that are likely to be evident depending on a person's age, as well as common characteristics that may be present in a person on the spectrum regardless of how old they are.

## Common strengths and challenges

Some of the common strengths identified in people on the autism spectrum are:

- Being particularly good at detail orientated tasks
- Noticing details in their world that others often miss
- Being logical and factual thinkers
- Enjoying and following routines and structure
- Seeing things from a different perspective.

There are also challenges that people on the autism spectrum may face, these include:

- Difficulties in communicating their needs and wants to others
- Social interaction and interpreting other people's behaviour
- Processing sensory information
- Learning academic and functional skills.

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## Do you want to know more about Autism?

We have a range of resources that can be easily accessed for more information. These include:

- The Spectrum - [thespectrum.org.au](http://thespectrum.org.au)
- The Autism Friendly Charter - [autismfriendlycharter.org.au](http://autismfriendlycharter.org.au)
- Autism SA Website
- Live Chat and Infoline
- Resource Library and Online Bookshop
- Post Diagnostic Support

## Autism SA supports and services

We provide an extensive range of support and therapeutic services for individuals on the autism spectrum, as well as for parents, carers and families. Our staff understand all things autism having experience with a wide range of contemporary strategies and practices in the autism field.

Our My Pathways team can guide and support you in creating a personalised plan of supports and services, working towards your individualised goals and can support you in any stage of your journey.

### Contact Us

Please contact My Pathways on [1300 288 476](tel:1300288476) or [mypathways@autismsa.org.au](mailto:mypathways@autismsa.org.au)

“If you’ve met one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism.”

- Dr. Stephen Shore, autistic advocate



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