

CENTER FOR Autism Spectrum Disorders

www.childrensnational.org/CASD



Children's National.

CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

I Just Found Out my Child is Autistic. Could I be Too?

As a clinician who primarily does Autism evaluations, there are a lot of questions I'm used to getting from parents who find out a new and important piece of information about their child. "What does this mean for my child?" "What does this mean for their future?" "How can I best help them?". There is one question, though, that doesn't get a lot of attention in parenting articles- "Could I be Autistic too?" As a clinician, I hear this question a lot from parents of a newly diagnosed child- especially when they feel like they've always had a lot in common with their child, or experienced similar struggles. Let's talk about what to do if you're wondering about an Autism diagnosis for yourself after the diagnosis of your child.

The Broader Autistic Phenotype

There is shockingly little research so far on Autistic parents raising Autistic children, (and even less on Autistic parents raising non-Autistic children) but there is a small body of research on something called "the broader Autistic phenotype." This is a term that basically means that when one member of a family is Autistic, there are likely other family members who have milder forms of some (or even many) traits of Autism, without meeting full diagnostic criteria. This is part of why so many parents sit in meeting with their child's provider, hearing that the behaviors they've noticed about their child are related to Autism and maybe thinking, "wait, but I do that..." Just because you do some things that an Autistic person might do because of their Autism, it doesn't necessarily mean that you have Autism yourself. Plenty of people without Autism struggle with social nuances, sensory sensitivity, changes in routine, and other behaviors seen in Autistic individuals. For example, a 2022 study found that mothers of Autistic children with language difficulties were more likely than other mothers to have pragmatic communication difficulties. These mothers didn't have Autism themselves (at least as far as the study was able to identify) but they did have common difficulties with their Autistic children.

[Broad Autism Phenotype Traits in Parents of Children with Language Impairments: A Comparative Study - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9780333/)

Autistic People Can Be Great Parents

Some of you reading this may be thinking- "no, it's not that I have some traits similar to an Autistic person or I have some commonalities with my child - It's more than that. After learning about Autism at my child's evaluation I feel like it describes me so well." or "It would make so many things make sense." or "It was like a lightbulb went off."- or any number of other similar statements! If you're thinking these things, it's certainly not outside the realm of possibility that you're right and you are Autistic

yourself. We know that Autism, although not 100% genetic, is highly heritable and Autistic parents are probably more likely to have Autistic children. So, what do you do with your question? First, if no one has told you already, then let me be the first to clarify that Autistic people can be great parents! For more reading on this, I love the letter from the Autistic Women and Non-Binary Network on Autistic Motherhood (the link can be found at the end of this article, and much of the contents are relevant for Autistic fathers and non-binary parents as well). It's important not to overlook that there can be many benefits to having shared experiences with your child. For example, another 2022 study found that when Autistic parents sat down to talk with their child about Autism, they were generally more positive, less likely to feel like they needed professional help to guide the conversation, and they felt more confident relying on their lived experiences and insight. Being an Autistic parent to an Autistic child means that you'll understand your child's lived experience in a way that few other people will and in a way that you wouldn't if you were not Autistic. You are also an example of a successful Autistic individual, which will empower your child.

[Autistic parents' views and experiences of talking about autism with their autistic children - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

So How Do I Know? What Do I Do Now?

The next questions parents often have after wondering if they may be Autistic is how to find out for sure, and what the next steps to take should be. Unfortunately, when it comes to the question of how to find out if you are Autistic, it remains very difficult for many adults in our community to access evaluations and diagnoses for Autism. If this is something you want to pursue, start with your primary care physician, explain your concerns, and ask for referrals for testing (feel free to show them this article if you have a hard time voicing your concerns). If your primary care physician doesn't know who to refer you to, don't get discouraged. You can try to look up providers through your insurance website or ask the clinician who diagnosed your child if they have recommendations for an adult seeking an evaluation for Autism.

However, there are often long waitlists for evaluation with providers who are trained in evaluating Autism in adults, and testing can be prohibitively expensive. For this reason, don't wait until you have an official diagnosis before learning more about Autism, getting connected to the Autistic community, and learning more about resources. Adults in the Autistic community understand the issues around diagnostic access and are welcoming to those who think they may be Autistic but have not been able to access formal diagnosis. If you can identify a local group, members may be able to offer guidance on providers in your local community. The Autistics Association of Greater Washington DC serves autistic adults in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia and the surrounding area. There are some excellent online groups to start with like The Autistic Self Advocacy Network (autisticadvocacy.org) or the Autistic Women and Non-Binary Network (awnnetwork.org) to begin to gather resources for yourself and your child and connect with Autistic adults. If you're tech-savvy, there's also a thriving Autistic community on Twitter- try the hashtags #ActuallyAutistic, #AutisticParent, or #AskingAutistics.

Below is the link to the article I like on Autistic Motherhood/Parenting:

[Motherhood: Autistic Parenting - Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network \(AWN\) \(awnnetwork.org\)](#)

Whatever your neurological landscape, if you're reading this article, it means you're already engaged in the work of understanding yourself and your child. You're already going above and beyond as a parent. We here at Children's National see you and are

honored to support parents like you every day. (This article was developed by Ashley Muskett, Ph.D., CASD Clinical Psychologist with the assistance of Andrea Lopez, B.S., CASD research assistant).

Profiles Celebrating Neurodiversity



Our featured self-advocate this month is **Dr. Monique Botha!**

Dr. Botha is an Autistic adult and a research fellow at University of Sterling in Scotland.

Dr. Botha describes themself in their own words on their website
(<https://www.moniquebotha.com/>)

"I am a Community Psychologist with a focus on autism, social psychology, equality, and mental health. I am passionate about producing research that can help autistic people of all ages to live equitably in communities. My approach to research, training, and service design is "Nothing About Us Without Us". Everything should be done from a participatory, or group-led approach, where the expertise of the community is appreciated and embraced. Research and services should aim to be interdisciplinary, rigorous, and accessible.

My PhD thesis investigated the role of autistic community connectedness in buffering against the effects of minority stress (such as stigma and discrimination) on mental health in the autistic community.

Prior to entering Psychology, I studied for a BA in Social Care Practice at Athlone Institute of Technology (2011-2015). During this time, I worked as a Social Care Practitioner within a care-providing service, where I worked with autistic children and their families for four years. My background in Social Care Practice has allowed for an interdisciplinary psychology with a focus on impact and application."

2022 Calendar of Events

Free Parent Support Group

Where: Virtual

When: Every Monday at 1 PM EST

Dr. Dan Shapiro, friend of CASD, will be offering a free parent support group, every Monday at 1 PM EST. To register, [click here](#).

Dr. Shapiro is offering new courses for parents of different age groups. To learn more about these courses, please visit his website: <http://www.parentchildjourney.com/>

Dr. Shapiro also offers parent-child excursions: stand-alone courses on common topics in developmental and behavioral pediatrics: ADHD, anxiety, autism, social success, sibling relationships, eating, sleeping, violence, adolescence, gender, sexuality, and more. These in-depth seminars are for parents of children with challenging temperaments or developmental differences. Each Excursion starts with a review of background concepts then

dives deep into specific strategies. As with all Parent Child Journey courses, the emphasis here is on individualizing the approach for each child. Choose the topics that interest you. Real-life challenges. Real-life solutions.

Pathfinders for Autism (<https://pathfindersforautism.org/calendar/>) provides a list of programs for all ages including video group for spouses/partners of adults with Asperger's; Transitioning services and Job skills; Baby and Family Navigator programs, and new this month, Autism from the Autistic Perspective and free Pediatric Occupational Therapy Screening and more!



Unstuck & On Target Research Project

Children's National and Georgetown University are recruiting for an exciting new research study looking at how kids with autism spectrum disorder learn. We are looking at how *Unstuck and On Target: High School* impacts learning in kids 14-18 years old with autism. This intervention is designed to promote executive functioning skills including flexible problems solving, self-advocacy, and planning. Participation involves MRI scanning, cognitive assessments, and the treatment program. If interested, please contact Andrea Lopez at alopez4@childrensnational.org. See below for more info.



Participate in an Autism Research Study

What is the goal of the study?

We are looking at how adolescents learn key skills for adulthood. Your child will receive *Unstuck and On Target: High School*, a proven group therapy that builds skills for adult success like flexibility, setting goals, making plans, and organization.

Understanding Your Thinking Style & Getting What You Need

How Flexible Thinking Gets You Power, Self-Advocacy, Neurodiversity

Preparing to Achieve Your Goals

Big Picture Goals, Time Management, How to Handle Stress, Staying Motivated,

Tools for Efficient Planning

Goal Setting, Planning, Reputation, Compromise

Planning Your Goal and Putting Your Plan Into Action

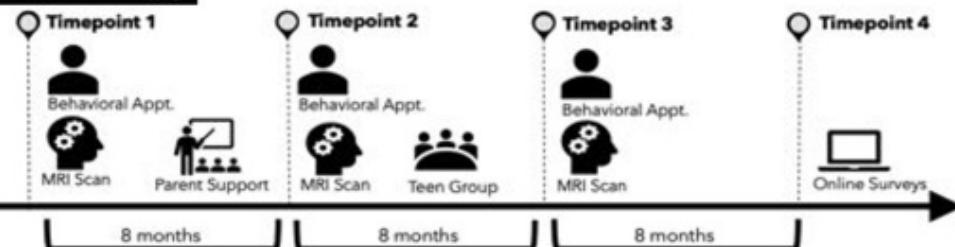
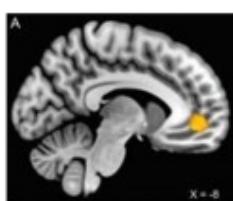
Planning Dangers, Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D

Who can participate?

14-18 year olds with autism, earning a standard high school diploma with average cognitive abilities who are willing and able to participate in the group and MRI scanning (no neurological conditions or metal embedded in the body).

What are the benefits?

Your teen will participate in a treatment group with other teens conducted by a licensed psychologist, and you will receive parent support. Teens will receive a picture of their brain after their MRI scans and families can earn up to \$300 for their time spent outside of the group sessions.



What are participants asked to do?

There are three parts to this research study. **Each part will begin with an MRI scanning and behavioral assessment appointment:**

1. Parent Information Sessions with Experts (Pre-intervention)
2. Unstuck and On Target: High School Group Therapy (~25 weekly lessons)
3. Post-Intervention Follow-up Online Surveys

I'm interested! How do I participate? Please email Andrea Lopez at alopez4@childrensnational.org.

ASD Research Study

Please see below for a flyer regarding a study of brain development and autism. If you're interested, please contact Chelsea Armour, aarmour@childrensnational.org.

THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC



Website



@gwandilab



@TheGwANDInstitute

Do you want to help us study brain development and learn about autism?

Earn up to \$90 in our developmental studies at The George Washington University!

Is your child between 5-17 years old and has an autism diagnosis?

Have a fun family day!

We would like to invite you and your child to play child-friendly computer games while we track their gaze and their brain function.

Andi Lab
andi@gwu.edu

Resources

We want to highlight *Ivymount School Resource Guide* which provides information on a wide range of resources in the community:

www.ivymount.org/resourceguide2022

20+ free resources available to view anytime, anywhere!

Enjoy these information-packed free webinars on your own or make them a powerful group learning event with your colleagues, friends, and family members. Topics include:

- Working/learning in groups
- Face-to-face communication
- Social anxiety
- Executive functions
- Children's stress
- Self-regulation
- Individual webinars on 10 core Social Thinking Vocabulary

Hosted by Social Thinking

- **Free, asynchronous, online educator training**
- **First 600 to sign up will get 3.5 free CE credits**

Unstuck
Elementary is a
Tier 2 executive
functioning
curriculum

Click
here

"One student had three
meltdowns per day, and
Unstuck reduced her
outbursts to two a
quarter."

- Free, online supports for parents with children with executive function challenges

Created by parents, educators, and experts

- 15 3-5 min videos
- 5 also in Spanish
- Tip sheets

Click here

"The videos made me feel less alone...and hopeful that there are more things I can try to help [my son]."

The *Unstuck* author team has created short videos to help parents of children with executive functioning difficulties. Please click the playlists below to view the videos in both English and Spanish! **We have added new videos to address feedback from parents. Please click on our playlist to view our new 3-part video series on "troubleshooting."**

Playlist of all videos

Recursos para padres

New Free Videos
 **UNSTUCK**
AND ON TARGET

The Talk—Black, Autistic, and Male: One Family's Experience
We would like to share an interview with a family of a college-bound autistic young adult and an accompanying reflection by Tawara



[Click here for the video](#)

Goode, Director of the National Center for Cultural Competence and Director of the Georgetown University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Yetta Myrick, Executive Director/President of DC Autism Parents (DCAP) and CDC's Act Early Ambassador to the District of Columbia has multiple resources to share with families to support mental well-being.

Yoga Tranquilo: Para familias que hablen español

[\[drive.google.com\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uY6kdp3trF2liwON9KAf4I1GtPuY9DC_/view?usp=sharing)

[\[drive.google.com\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c6hjvrnfb17gHvl90hMxCK7zQwwEeaCC/view?usp=sharing)

Rest and Restore:

[\[drive.google.com\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O9VgOISEtUw5Ed0TYINfuU3kNWQb5G_K/view?usp=sharing)

[\[drive.google.com\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qq7KhCRh-igwZ-DpD6JonYxydjp5kp55/view?usp=sharing)

Tips to Help Parents Keep Calm Every Day:

[\[drive.google.com\]](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NDflt9y7HA8nrHICILWpO2_6P78DOBZI/view?usp=sharing)

Advocacy Resources

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network-Navigating College: A Handbook on Self Advocacy](#)

Resources on Anti-Racism

[Spectrum Support's Social Stories on Racism](#)

[ASAN's What is Police Violence?: A Plain Language Booklet](#)

[@TheMorganCruise Worksheets for Black Children](#)

COVID-19 Safety Resources

[Behavioral Directions LLC's Safety Teaching Protocol](#)

COVID-19 National and Local Government Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[DC Department of Health](#)

[Maryland Department of Health](#)

[Virginia Department of Health](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part C Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)

[U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Part B Dispute Resolution Procedures](#)



If you have feedback or
suggestions, please scan the QR
code and complete the survey!
Thank you!