

# Digital Mental Health for Autism

## WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a lifelong, neurodevelopmental condition, impacting social interaction, communication, interests, behaviours, and sensory sensitivity. Hallmarks of autism include an impairment in social communication and interactions that are ongoing and exist across different settings, as well as restricted interests and patterns of behaviour.

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## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF AUTISM

### Physical

- Lack of body language or limited use of facial expressions.
- Limited eye contact.
- Incorrect use of gestures like waving or pointing.
- Limited understanding of non-verbal communication of others.
- Limited use of speech or language.
- Lack of back-and-forth conversation.
- Under- or over-reactive to sensory input, such as distress with particular sounds or textures.
- Unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment, such as an excessive fascination with movement or lights.
- Seeming indifference to pain or temperature.

### Psychological

- Rigid thinking patterns.
- Extreme distress at small changes in routine.
- Difficulty with transitioning from tasks.
- Difficulties adjusting behaviour to suit the situation.

### Behavioural

- Difficulty making friends.
- Lack of interest in making friends.
- Reduced sharing of interests or emotions with others.
- Limited initiation or response to social interactions.
- Limited use of imaginative play (role playing or acting) in children.
- Stereotyped or repetitive use of objects, such as lining up toys or flipping objects.
- Stereotyped or repetitive use of speech such as repeating or echoing phrases or use of idiosyncratic phrases.
- Excessively restricted or repetitive interests, for example, highly fixated with unusual objects.

## HOW CAN DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH HELP?

Autistic people can experience a wide range of challenges relating to making and maintaining personal relationships, day-to-day functioning, and study or occupational demands. A number of medical, neurological, genetic and psychiatric conditions are also known to co-occur with autism at higher rates. Common co-occurring conditions include anxiety (including OCD), depression, bipolar affective disorder, ADHD, gender dysphoria, intellectual impairment, and learning difficulties. There is a range of digital mental health resources available to provide information, advice, and mental health support for people with autism and their support people.

## Digital Mental Health Gateway

### Head to Health

#### Head to Health

A website that links Australians to online and phone mental health services, information and resources.  
<https://www.headtohealth.gov.au/>

## Information Sites



#### Dad Film

A documentary following the experiences of twelve Aussie dads as they navigate the world of parenting and autism.  
<https://dadfilm.com.au/>



#### Raising Children Network

Information and tips for parents about autism in children.  
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism>



#### Better Health Channel

Autism tips for parents.  
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/autism-spectrum-disorder-tips-for-parents>



#### Sleep Health Foundation

Information and tips on autism and sleep in children.  
<https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/autism-in-children-and-sleep.html>



#### Autism Hub - Queensland Government

Resources for educators to improve the engagement and education achievement of students with autism.  
<https://autismhub.education.qld.gov.au/>



#### Positive Partnerships

Resources for parents and carers and school staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and CALD people on autism.  
<https://www.positivepartnerships.com.au/>



#### Bullying. No Way!

Resources and activities for a proactive approach to bullying education and prevention.  
<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>



#### Planet Puberty

Provide parents and carers of children with intellectual disability and/or autism with the latest strategies for supporting their child through puberty.  
<https://www.planetpuberty.org.au/>



#### Autism Awareness Australia

"What Next?" digital tool to navigate the first year after diagnosis with autism for adults and parents with children.  
<https://www.autismawareness.com.au/>



#### Autism Launchpad

Website to support young Australians with autism and their family through their transition into adult life, providing information, strategies, and personal stories on coping with stress, social life, and maintaining good health.  
<http://www.autismlaunchpad.org.au/>



#### Autism Apps

Catalogue of apps and website supporting parents, teachers and individuals with autism on how to effectively use technology to support someone with autism.  
<https://www.autismapps.org.au/>



#### Livewire

A safe, secure, online community to help young people (12-20 yrs), and their siblings, cope with the impacts of a serious illness, mental illness, chronic health condition or disability.  
<https://livewire.org.au/>



## Phone Services

#### Autism Connect

National autism information helpline supporting autistic people, their families, carers, health professionals, and the broader community.  
<https://www.amaze.org.au/>  
1300 308 699



#### Pregnancy, Birth and Baby

Information and phone support on caring for a child with autism.  
<https://www.pregnancybirthandbaby.org.au/caring-for-a-child-with-autism>  
1800 882 436

## Apps



#### The Allen Adventure

App for young people aged 0 to 8 years. The new kid in class whose name is Allen. He's an alien from another planet and wants to fit in and make friends, but he discovers it's not always that easy!  
<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/resource/early-childhood-to-year-2>



#### Sunny

1800RESPECT's support app for women with disability who have experienced violence and abuse.  
<https://www.1800respect.org.au/sunny>

## Online Programs



#### Triple P - Stepping Stones

Specially-tailored positive parenting to help parents manage problem behaviour and developmental issues common in children with disability. For parents of children aged 2-12 years.  
<https://www.triplep-parenting.net.au/qld-ukn/get-started/triple-p-courses-for-parents-of-a-child-with-a-disability/>



#### Secret Agent Society

Free service, providing small group social skills and emotion training for families. Facilitator costs might be covered under various types of funding for some families.  
<https://www.sst-institute.net/SAS-SG>



#### MindSpot

Self-guided or therapist supported online courses for adults for chronic physical health conditions, depression, anxiety, and OCD.  
<https://www.mindspot.org.au/>



#### Healthy Mind

An online Easy Read tool by Black Dog Institute designed to help people with intellectual disability to recognise and regulate their thoughts and feelings.  
<https://www.healthymind.org.au/#>