



Talking About a Diagnosis

After a child or young person receives a diagnosis from the paediatrician, or other relevant professional, it is common for parents to have questions or concerns about how to share this information with their child.

There is no one set way to introduce a diagnosis and it can differ vastly between families.

Some families choose to tell their child soon after the diagnosis is received and learn about the condition together, whilst others decide to wait until they feel they have a good enough understanding to answer questions their child may have.

When asked about being told of their diagnosis, many young people and adults express that when it was done in a positive way, it gave them a sense of relief and allowed them to begin to understand more about themselves, their strengths and also why they may have certain differences from their peers.



Often a good place to start can be to talk about differences in general, looking at how everyone is unique, why that is positive and how that makes us good at different tasks and skills. Help your child think about what life would be like if everyone was the same. You could even turn it into a game of identifying things that makes people special, interesting or unique.

This gives you a starting point, when you are ready, to speak about to your child about their diagnosis.

Things to Consider

- Are you able to explain things in a way appropriate for your child to understand?
- Are there some visual resources that could help? Such as books or videos?
- Was your child an active part of the assessment - did they have questions about why that was happening? Could this help you start the conversation?
- Are there other people with the same/similar diagnosis that your child can relate to? - Friends, family, famous people, characters.
- Do you know of some reliable sources of information if your child asks you a question that you are unsure of the answer?
- Are both you and your child in a positive, calm mood?
- Is it a day/time when you don't have to cut things short or rush off to an activity or school?
- Would it be easier to have the conversation whilst doing something else, such as going for a walk, doing some colouring, or making something simple? This can sometimes take the feeling of pressure off both the child and parent and the need for eye contact or immediate response.
- Your child might find it easier if given information in small chunks, or being given the choice whether they would like to have more information at that initial stage.



Talking About a Diagnosis

One example of how you could plan to structure the conversation:

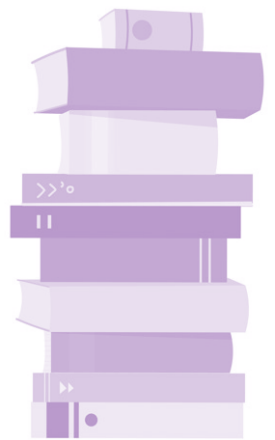
- Talk to your child about the assessment - do they remember it?
- Explain that following the assessment the professional you saw identified that they have "X condition"
- Give a brief overview of what the condition means - try to begin with positive aspects then why things may be different for them - try to avoid saying phrases such as "this means you can't/won't" .
- Reassure them that there are other people in the world with the same/similar condition (naming some if you know)
- Ask if they have any questions and would like to find out more at the moment, or if they would like to have some time to think.

This is just *one* way out of countless possibilities, so it is important to be lead by the specific needs of your child and do what you feel most comfortable with.

It is difficult to know exactly how your child will respond and some may have mixed emotions or lots of questions. Others may take time to process the information and have questions at a later stage. It is important to always take the time to try and answer them the best you can, and if you are unsure of the answer explain that you can find out.

Providing resources aimed at children and young people means they can access them of their own accord too.

SNAP has specific information sheets with resources for children, young people and family members on autism and ADHD, and we also have information and links to resources for other conditions. Contact us on familyteam@snapcharity.org to find out more.



Summary

- **Ensure you and your child are in a calm, positive headspace before starting a conversation about difference or diagnosis**
- **Consider where and when you have the conversation, make sure to give yourself time and privacy**
- **Explain using language or resources your child/young person will understand**
- **Be positive**
- **Keep it factual**
- **Be open to questions**

The contacts and links given via this SNAP information sheet have been shared as a starting point for your own research. We believe the information to be genuine and correct at the time of publishing, however no responsibility for loss occasioned by any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein can be accepted by SNAP.

Images courtesy of [freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com)