

About : Autism Spectrum Disorders

Diagnosing Adults with Asperger Syndrome

From [Lisa Jo Rudy](#),
Your Guide to [Autism Spectrum Disorders](#).
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Do I Have Asperger Syndrome?

Asperger Syndrome (AS) is a pervasive developmental disorder at the highest end of the autism spectrum. People with AS develop language normally, but likely have difficulty with social interactions, fine and gross motor coordination, and eye contact. They may be extremely passionate about just one or two topics, with little patience for small talk. They may also have great difficulty in handling typical daily activities such as organizing time, managing conflict, or even facing the sensory overload presented by malls and grocery stores.

Adults with AS may appear painfully shy, or they may be extremely outgoing - sometimes to the point of being "in your face." That's generally because people with AS are in the dark relative to the unwritten rules of social interaction. How far away do I stand from another person? How long can I talk about my favorite subject? What's the right answer to "how are you?"

If these are the types of questions that puzzle you on a regular basis, you may already have considered the possibility that you have AS. And - "if you think you have Asperger Syndrome, you probably do," says Michael John Carley, Executive Director of [Global and Regional Partnership for Asperger Syndrome \(GRASP\)](#).

I Think I DO Have Asperger Syndrome - What Do I Do Now?

AS is in no way life threatening, and while there are therapies available to alleviate symptoms and build new skills, there is no treatment which will cure it. That means you are under no obligation to seek a professional diagnosis, or to act on a diagnosis once you have it.

If you do decide to seek a diagnosis, Carley recommends seeking out individual therapists, neurologists and autism centers that can test for AS. The most critical point is that you choose a therapist, neurologist or center with significant experience in diagnosing adults with AS. Since it is relatively new to the DSM IV (diagnostic manual), many practicing doctors will not have been trained in or have expertise in AS.

Appropriate diagnosis will involve a variety of tests, which focus on intelligence, "adaptive" social and communication skills, and personal developmental history. An experienced professional can help distinguish between true AS and other disorders which have some of the same or similar symptoms (social phobias, anxiety, etc.).

I Have an AS Diagnosis. Now What?

Again, the decision is yours. The information may simply be interesting to you alone, and you may choose to keep it that way. Knowing that you have AS can help you plan for and manage potentially difficult settings or situations, and behavioral therapy geared to helping you build social/communications skills may be helpful. If your medical practitioner feels that you have other, related disorders (such as anxiety, depression, or obsessive compulsive disorder), medication may be appropriate. Carley also recommends seeking out books and websites about life as an adult with Asperger Syndrome.

On the other hand, you may choose to share your AS diagnosis with friends and family. If you grew up with undiagnosed AS, your unusual social interactions may have created friction, and even bad feelings. By sharing your diagnosis, you may open the door to better understanding and closer relationships.

Are There Others Out There Like Me?

Absolutely! GRASP is only one of several large organizations dedicated to supporting teens and adults with AS. Others include [Neurodiversity.org](#), [Asperger Foundation International](#), [Wrong Planet](#) and more. The purpose of these organizations is to provide adults with AS with support, social contacts, resources, treatment, and a sense of community. If you're interested in learning more about these groups, click around the sites... join in the forums... and, if you can, attend a local group meeting.

Sources:

[Asperger's Syndrome Fact Sheet, National Institutes of Neurological Disorders.](#) Prepared by: Office of Communications and Public Liaison National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD 20892 Publication date January 2005.

Interview with Michael John Carley, Executive Director of the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership. April, 2007.

[Online Asperger Syndrome Issues and Support \(OASIS\) Website.](#) "Adult Issues, Resources and Contributions From and For Individuals with AS and Autism."

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