

# Sharing differences with peers



If you are thinking about telling friends that you are neurodivergent, such as having autism, dyslexia or ADHD, it can be helpful to pause and reflect on a few important considerations first. Sharing this information is a personal decision, and there is no “right” time to do so. Some people choose to share early, while others prefer to wait or to tell only certain individuals.

The most important thing is making a decision that feels safe, comfortable and right for you. Taking time to think about who you trust, what you want them to understand and how sharing might help you, can make the choice feel more empowering. Sharing a diagnosis is your choice. You deserve to share your story in a way that feels safe and respectful to you. Use the prompts and questions below to help guide your choice:

## 1. Your reason for sharing

Ask yourself:

- Why do I want to tell my peers?
- Am I hoping for understanding, support or accommodations?
- Do I want to explain certain behaviors or needs?

Knowing the purpose can help guide who you tell and how much you share.

## 2. Who feels safe to tell

Not everyone needs to know. Consider:

- Which friends are supportive, kind and trustworthy?
- Who has responded well to personal information in the past?

Sometimes young people start by telling one trusted friend first.

## 3. What you want to share (and what you don't)

You get to decide:

- How much information to give
- Whether you use the diagnosis label or just describe experiences

Examples:

- *“Sometimes my brain processes things differently, so I may need extra time.”*
- *“I’m autistic, which means I sometimes get overwhelmed by loud environments.”*

Both approaches are valid.

## 4. How peers might respond

Peers may react in different ways:

- Supportive and curious
- Unsure what to say
- Misinformed about neurodivergence

It can help to think about how you might respond to questions or misconceptions.

## 5. Possible benefits

Disclosure can sometimes lead to:

- Better understanding from friends
- Less pressure to mask or hide struggles
- Peers being more supportive in difficult situations

## 6. Possible challenges

Young people should also consider that:

- Some peers may not understand neurodivergence
- Personal information can spread beyond the intended group
- It may take time for others to learn and adjust

Talking with a trusted adult, counselor or therapist beforehand can help prepare.

## 7. Your boundaries

It's okay to set limits such as:

- “I’m happy to answer some questions, but not everything.”
- “I’d prefer if you didn’t share this with others.”

Practicing these responses ahead of time can make disclosure feel easier.

## 8. Timing and setting

Think about:

- Choosing a calm, private setting
- Avoiding times when people are distracted or rushed

A thoughtful setting can make the conversation more comfortable.

# Should I share my neurodivergent diagnosis with friends?



## A decision-making checklist for teens

There is no right or wrong choice. This checklist is meant to help you think through what feels right for you.

### 1. My reasons for sharing

Check any that fit for you.

- I want my friends to understand me better
- I want to explain some of my behaviors or needs
- I want support when things feel hard
- I don't want to feel like I have to hide this part of myself
- Someone asked me questions and I want to answer honestly
- Other reason:

#### Reflection:

Do I feel ready to share right now?

### 2. Who might I tell?

Think about people who feel safe and supportive.

- I trust this person to respect my feelings
- They have kept personal information private before
- They are usually kind and understanding
- I feel comfortable talking with them about personal things

Person I might tell first:

### 3. What do I want to share?

You get to decide how much or how little to say.

- I want to share the name of my diagnosis
- I only want to explain how my brain works differently
- I want to share how friends can support me
- I want to keep some parts private

What I might say:

### 4. How might my friend respond?

People react in different ways.

Possible responses might include:

- Supportive and curious
- Unsure what to say
- Asking lots of questions
- Not understanding at first

If someone reacts in a way I don't like, what could I do?

- Change the subject
- Set a boundary
- Talk with another trusted person
- Take a break from the conversation

### 5. My boundaries

I can decide what feels comfortable.

- I'm okay answering some questions
- I don't want to answer personal questions
- I want them to keep this private
- I only want to tell a few people

*My boundary statement:*

*Example: "I'm happy to share this with you, but I'd like it to stay private."*

### 6. My support system

Before or after sharing, it can help to talk with a trusted adult.

- Parent or caregiver
- School counselor
- Therapist
- Teacher or coach
- Another trusted adult

Person I could talk to:

### Final check-in

Check the statement that feels closest to how you feel right now:

- I feel ready to share with someone I trust.
- I might share later, but not right now.
- I'm not sure yet and want to think more about it.
- I've decided I'd rather keep this private for now.

*Remember:*

*You are the expert on your own story. Sharing is always your choice.*

Common  
Thread

by  Wolfson Children's