




Why Exploring Autism *Can Feel Emotional*

Realising that autism might explain some of your lifelong experiences can bring a mix of emotions. There is no right or wrong way to feel, and everything you are experiencing is valid. 


 Relief, grief, anger, confusion, validation, exhaustion, hope... these feelings can all exist together. Your emotional response is a normal part of self-understanding. 

Exploring autism is not just logical – it is deeply personal.


It can stir up emotions as you begin to connect the dots, reflect on your past, and imagine different possibilities for your future.



RELIEF AND GRIEF CAN EXIST TOGETHER

You might feel a deep sense of relief that there may be an explanation for lifelong struggles. At the same time, you may grieve:

- ♥ the understanding you didn't have earlier
- ♥ the support you didn't receive
- ♥ the exhaustion of coping alone
- ♥ years of feeling different or misunderstood


 Both relief and grief are valid. They are two sides of the same realisation.



REPLAYING PAST EXPERIENCES

You may find yourself looking back and making sense of moments from your life, such as:

- ♥ school or education
- ♥ friendships and relationships
- ♥ sensory overload
- ♥ burnout and shutdowns
- ♥ feeling "too much" or "not enough"
- ♥ being misunderstood or judged


 This can be eye-opening... and emotionally heavy.



ANGER OR SADNESS ABOUT BEING MISSED

It can be painful to realise that your struggles were overlooked, minimised, or misunderstood. You might feel:

- ♥ angry that no one noticed
- ♥ sad about the impact it had on your life
- ♥ frustrated that you had to figure it out alone


 These feelings are valid responses to being missed or misunderstood.



OVERWHELM FROM RECOGNITION

Suddenly, so many pieces can start to fit. This can lead to:

- ♥ emotional overwhelm
- ♥ feeling mentally "full"
- ♥ wanting to take breaks from researching
- ♥ needing time to process and adjust


 It is okay if it all feels like a lot. Take things at a pace that feels safe for you.



HYPERFOCUSING ON AUTISM INITIALLY

It is very common to dive deep into researching autism when you first start exploring. You might find yourself:

- ♥ consuming lots of content
- ♥ analysing past experiences
- ♥ seeking answers and clarity
- ♥ connecting many dots quickly


 This is a normal part of the process. It often settles as you find more clarity.



IDENTITY SHIFTS AND UNCERTAINTY

Exploring autism can shift how you see yourself and your life experiences. You might feel:

- ♥ a changing sense of identity
- ♥ uncertain about what this means for you
- ♥ excited about self-discovery and growth
- ♥ unsure about the future

 You are allowed time and space to explore and figuring things out.



EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION


Exploring autism can be mentally, emotionally, and physically draining, especially if you are also masking, working, parenting, studying, or dealing with other responsibilities.

 Rest is not a luxury. It is essential.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Many autistic people describe these same emotions when they first begin exploring or understanding their autism. You are not "too sensitive" or "overreacting". You are having a very human response to a big realisation.

 You deserve compassion, understanding, and emotional safety.



There is no 'correct' emotional response to understanding yourself differently.

Give yourself permission to feel whatever comes up — and to take your time. 

WAYS TO SUPPORT YOURSELF THROUGH THE EMOTIONAL UPS AND DOWNS



Pace yourself. Take breaks when you need them.



Ground your body. Breath, movement, sensory supports can help.



Journal or write things down to help process your thoughts.




Talk to someone you trust or seek support from professionals.



Be kind to yourself. You are learning, healing, and growing.

Things to Remember

- ♥ There is no rush.
- ♥ Your experiences are valid.
- ♥ You are allowed to question, change your mind, or take breaks.
- ♥ Self-understanding is a journey, not a straight line. 

Thinking About an Autism Assessment?
 A Reflective Guide For Self-Exploration

Want To Explore Things Further?

If you are beginning to reflect on your own experiences, you may find our [Thinking About an Autism Assessment?](#) reflective guide helpful as a gentle starting point for self-exploration and understanding.

This resource is designed to support thoughtful reflection around sensory experiences, masking, communication, routines, overwhelm, and everyday life experiences — without pressure or expectations.



The emotions you feel do not define you. You are allowed to explore, feel, rest, learn, and grow in a way that feels right for you.

You are not alone. 

Your experiences are valid. Your feelings matter. You are not alone. 