

How do parents come to the point of seeking an ASD Assessment for their teenager?

It can happen in a number of ways:

- One of your teenager's teachers might recognise that your teenager is exhibiting signs of ASD, and suggest to you that you seek a diagnosis.
- Your teenager's GP, or another medical professional who attends upon your teenager, might recognise that your teenager is exhibiting signs of ASD, and suggest to you that you seek a diagnosis.
- If your teenager is seeing a psychologist, they might notice that your teenager is exhibiting signs of ASD, and suggest to you that you seek a diagnosis. However, not all psychologists can perform ASD assessments/diagnose ASD. It's quite likely that you will have to take your teenager to a different psychologist/clinic/service for an ASD assessment/diagnosis.
- You might notice that your teenager is experiencing 'certain issues', as described on the title page of this website (OR your teenager might tell you that they have been experiencing 'certain issues', or that they think they might have ASD), and you might seek help to find out what is causing these 'certain issues', by taking your teenager to see a relevant professional, such as their GP, or a psychologist, or a psychiatrist. One of these professionals might recognise that your teenager is exhibiting signs of ASD, and suggest to you that you seek a diagnosis.

However, not all teachers, GPs, other medical professionals, psychologists, or psychiatrists have a great level of knowledge or understanding of ASD. Not many of them will be specialists in what I sometimes call Aspergers*, especially in the most up-to-date knowledge or understanding of this area, including the differences between males and females with ASD/Aspergers, and how different each person with ASD/Aspergers can be. **They might NOT recognise that your teenager is exhibiting signs of ASD, and none of them might suggest to you that you seek a diagnosis.**

*(*I explain my use of the term 'Aspergers' under the section on my website called, "What do I mean by 'Autism Spectrum Disorder, or what some people call Aspergers'?")*

Some teenagers with ASD/Aspergers, especially females, are very good at ‘masking’. I explain ‘masking’ in more detail in my [‘Handbook for Teenagers with ASD/Aspergers, and their Parents’](#) (*which is available for free on this website*), under the section called “**Social Issues (& Communication Issues)**”, at pages 86-88. They might be in the habit of controlling and/or hiding some, or all, of the ASD traits they have that might be noticeable to other people, whenever they are out in public, e.g., at school, or even at appointments with their GP or psychologist. They might only feel able to let out all of the ASD traits they have that might be noticeable to other people, and/or express their true feelings, when they are in the safe space of their own home.

Therefore, it might only be you, their parents, who witness the obvious difficulties, or ‘certain issues’, that your teenager is experiencing. The most important message I have for parents, and I cannot stress this strongly enough, is:

Trust yourself.

You know your teenager better than anyone else.

You know when something is wrong.

My website contains information that could help you to figure out if it’s possible that your teenager might have ASD, especially in my [‘Handbook for Teenagers with ASD/Aspergers, and their Parents’](#).

If you suspect that your teenager might have ASD (whether or not you’ve read some, or all, of the information on my website and/or in my Handbook), I recommend you take a look at the Autism SA website (autismsa.org.au), which contains a lot of helpful information, including checklists of signs of Autism. However, NOT ALL of these checklists will be very relevant or helpful for teenagers with ASD/Aspergers, who have not been diagnosed as a young child. I provide ratings/recommendations of these checklists in the section of my website called “[Autism SA](#)”, which is under the section of my website called “[How to Obtain a Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD for short\) for Your Teenager, in South Australia](#)”.

If you have researched your teenager's 'certain issues', e.g., online (and/or read some, or all, of the information on my website and/or in my Handbook), and you suspect they might have ASD, even if you are not sure, and even if you find the broad range of information online to be confusing, I strongly recommend you seek a diagnosis.

If you seek help for your teenager from professionals, but none of them seem to be able to provide you with satisfactory answers, or anything that really seems to help your teenager, I strongly recommend you seek a diagnosis of ASD.

You do not necessarily need a referral from anyone in order to seek an ASD assessment for your teenager.

If you wish to seek a diagnosis of ASD for your teenager, **you** will have to take charge, and be direct and determined.

You will most likely need to seek out a psychologist, clinic or service that specialises in ASD assessments, and book an ASD assessment directly yourself, rather than wait to be referred by a 'general' medical or mental health professional. I explain how to do this under the section of my website called "[How to Obtain a Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD for short\) for Your Teenager, in South Australia](#)".

If you are unsure, and prefer to take your teenager to see a 'general' medical or mental health professional to start off with, make sure that you describe their symptoms in as much detail as possible, stress the severity of those symptoms, and also **stress that you think that your teenager might have ASD**. If you simply describe your teenager's symptoms, and don't mention ASD, then wait to see what the 'general' health professionals suggest, they most likely will not immediately mention ASD to you (not in South Australia, anyway).

Instead, they will most likely explore every other possible cause of your teenager's symptoms first, and it will take a long time before they mention ASD. Even if they are thinking that your teenager might have ASD, and are trying to rule out other possible causes of your teenager's symptoms first, they most likely will not tell you that this is their plan.

If you don't know that this is their plan, you might understandably come to the conclusion that their approach is not working, and that they are not the best person to be able to assist your teenager. Your teenager will most likely resist continuing to attend a person who does not seem to be understanding or helping them. Therefore, you might understandably stop taking your teenager for treatment/therapy with that particular medical or mental health professional, before they have even mentioned ASD to you.

This means that you will not have the chance to think about the possibility that your teenager might have ASD, or explore your possible options for seeking an ASD assessment for your teenager, and take this step into your own hands, as soon as possible.

You will not have the chance to decide if you can afford a one-off payment for an ASD assessment through a private clinic, in order to get a diagnosis sooner, rather than later. Many parents, even if they have limited funds, are more than willing to do this, in order to:

- Obtain answers as to the cause of their teenager's difficulties, and be able to educate themselves accordingly, so that they can better understand, communicate with, and support their teenager on a personal level;
- Be able to consider and work out what sort of ASD specialised support/ treatment/ therapy their teenager actually needs;
- Be able to apply for, and obtain National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding, so that they can afford the correct (and often private), ASD specialised support/treatment/therapy that their teenager will need for the long term, and the sooner, the better.

Many parents, even if they have limited funds themselves, have family or friends who are willing to pay for, or help pay for, an ASD assessment through a private clinic, or lend them the money, or they might be able to sell some of their belongings, or simply save up to afford it. Not all parents will want, or be able, to do this, but all parents should be given the chance to make the choice for themselves, sooner, rather than later.

The sooner the correct, ASD specialised support/treatment/therapy is in place, the sooner the mental health of a teenager with ASD is likely to improve, and the sooner a parent might be able to step back a bit from having to personally try to provide their teenager with all the support/care they need. This might mean that the parent will be able to go back to work, or increase their work hours, and improve their financial situation. Without the correct, ASD specialised support/treatment/therapy in place, if the parent is the only one trying to provide the support/care that their teenager needs, they might find it very difficult to work in a paid job. Most likely, their teenager's mental health will continue to worsen, the parent's financial situation will continue to worsen, and the parent's own mental and physical health will likely worsen.

Some teenagers with Aspergers might not need or want any formal support and/or treatment. They might prefer to find their own ways to cope in life. However, obtaining a diagnosis of ASD can still be well worthwhile for them.

It can give them a great sense of relief and/or validation, because it provides a reason for certain aspects of their emotions, thought processes and personality that they might find confusing and/or distressing. It can point them (and/or their parents) in the right direction, to be able to educate themselves about their 'condition'. This can help them to understand themselves, to feel less alone, and to discover techniques to help them to cope in life.

It can also lead them to seek out social or support groups, either online, or in person, where they can connect with other teenagers who have Aspergers (if they are interested in doing so). It can help them feel that they have permission to be themselves, and to find friends who appreciate them for who they are (even if those friends don't have ASD themselves), rather than feeling that they always have to try to 'fit in' with neurotypical ('mainstream') society.

If a teenager has a diagnosis of ASD, it does not mean that they, or their parents, have to tell everyone, or anyone, about their diagnosis. Parents and teenagers can, and should, discuss what would be most beneficial for their particular situation, with regards to whom (if anyone) they should inform of their ASD diagnosis.