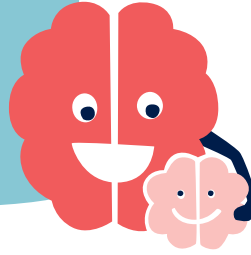


Could This Be Neurodiversity?

A parents guide to the signs.



Parent Resource

This resource has been developed in collaboration with clinical neuropsychologist, Hannah Korrel.

Most parents arrive at this question the same way. Not with a checklist, but with a feeling. Something about your child seems harder than it looks for other kids, and you cannot quite put your finger on why. This resource will not tell you whether your child is neurodivergent, and it is not a diagnostic tool. What it can do is help you put words to what you have been noticing, so that if you decide to take a next step, you can walk in able to describe it clearly.

A special thanks to Dr Hannah Korrel for her collaboration on these resources. Dr Korrel is a clinical neuropsychologist and the founder of Sydney Neuropsych, where she and her team assess children, adolescents and adults across the neurodevelopmental spectrum.

For more information, visit sydneyneuropsych.com.au

Please note: This resource has been developed in collaboration with Dr Hannah Korrell and is intended for general information purposes only. It's not a substitute for professional advice. Gotcha4Life does not offer counselling or crisis support.

If you have concerns about your child's wellbeing, please speak with your GP or a qualified health professional. You can also explore a range of free, trusted supports and information at gotcha4life.org/help-resources.

For direct support, Kids Helpline offers free, confidential counselling for young people aged 5 to 25. Call 1800 55 1800 or visit kidshelpline.com.au.

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Signs that might point to autism

- Change is hard, even small change (a different route home, a relief teacher, the wrong cup)
- Deep, passionate interests they can talk about for hours, and know an enormous amount about
- Notices what nobody else notices: the hum of a light, a tag in a shirt, a smell, a texture, a sound
- Takes language literally, so jokes, sarcasm or vague instructions can confuse or upset them
- Social rules other kids seem to absorb have to be worked out consciously, one at a time
- A strong, uncompromising sense of fairness
- Holds it together beautifully all day at school, then falls apart the moment they get in the car
- Eye contact feels uncomfortable, or they look away in order to listen better

Signs that might point to ADHD

- Loses the thread of instructions, especially anything with more than one step
- Homework takes three times longer than it should, and starting is the hardest part of all
- Extraordinary focus on things they love, and almost none for things they do not (this is how the attention system works, not laziness)
- Hats, jumpers, drink bottles and readers disappear, over and over
- Blurts, interrupts, finds waiting for a turn genuinely painful
- Big emotional reactions that arrive fast, burn hot, and pass quickly
- A busy body, or a busy mind that will not switch off at bedtime (not all ADHD looks hyperactive)
- Appears to hear the instruction, and still does not do the thing

Signs that might point to a specific learning disorder

Specific learning disorders affect reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) or maths (dyscalculia).

- Reading is slow and effortful, or they will do almost anything to avoid reading out loud
- Guesses words from the first letter, or muddles words that look similar
- Spelling does not stick, no matter how much practice happens
- Handwriting is laboured, messy or uncomfortable, and getting ideas onto paper is far harder than saying them out loud
- Times tables, telling the time or number facts do not embed the way they do for classmates
- A bright, articulate child whose written work does not match the way they speak
- Stomach aches on days with reading, writing or maths
- Clowning around, avoiding, or talking like “I’m just dumb” whenever schoolwork appears

Why this so often shows up as anxiety or big behaviour?

When a brain is working harder than everyone else's to do the very same task, that effort has to go somewhere. It usually comes out as worry, anger, school refusal, tummy aches, or shutting down completely. This matters because those are the things that get noticed and treated first. If your child has had support for anxiety or behaviour and it has not quite worked, that is not a failure. It is useful information.



A few things worth holding onto

- These signs overlap. Plenty of children have features of more than one. Only a qualified professional can sort out what is actually going on.
- Every child has some of these on some days. What matters is whether it is persistent, showing up in more than one setting, and getting in the way.
- Girls and quiet kids are missed most often, because they cope by watching, copying and blending in.
- None of this is caused by your parenting. You had exactly as much say in how your child's brain is wired as you did in the colour of their eyes.
- A different brain is not a broken brain. These are often the most creative, funny, loyal, detail-loving, outside-the-box thinkers in the room.



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What to do next

- Start with your GP, and bring examples rather than worries. Specifics are what let them act.
- Your GP can advise on the right next step. Depending on what they hear, that might be a paediatrician, a psychologist, a speech pathologist, or a neuropsychologist for a formal assessment.
- A good assessment does more than hand over a label. It explains how your child's brain works, what they need, and what to ask their school for.
- You do not have to wait until things are bad. Earlier simply means more time to build the right supports around them.
- If you are feeling lost and have tried the above without success, you can reach out to a neuropsychologist like Hannah to discuss your concerns in more detail.



Take Action: Two weeks of noticing

Open a note on your phone. For the next fortnight, whenever one of those moments happens, jot down four things:

- What happened
- What came immediately before it
- How long it lasted
- What helped, or what made it worse

Why it works

- It turns a vague worry into concrete examples a GP or clinician can actually work with.
- Patterns appear that are invisible day to day, like Thursday afternoons, or always before sport.
- You often discover you already know what helps your child.
- It is something practical to do while you are deciding what to do.

