

FAMILY, PARTNERS AND LIFE ADMIN · 10.10

Looking After Your Mental Health Post-Diagnosis

A diagnosis in adulthood is information. It is not, in itself, treatment for the years of unrecognised difficulty that preceded it. The mental-health picture afterwards is genuinely mixed: some flourish, many do well, a meaningful minority need active support.

FOR

Adults post-diagnosis

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

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PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Looking After Your Mental Health Post-Diagnosis

What the evidence shows

- **The picture is heterogeneous.** Many adults experience the diagnosis as relief and a usable frame. At population level, both autistic adults and adults with ADHD carry elevated risk of certain mental-health outcomes. Both are true at once.
- **For autistic adults specifically.** Around three quarters meet criteria for at least one co-occurring mental-health condition over their lifetime (Lai 2019). Cassidy 2014 reported markedly elevated suicidal ideation. Hirvikoski 2016 found elevated all-cause mortality. The risk is real, named, and treatable where recognised early.
- **For adults with ADHD specifically.** Anxiety, depression, substance use, eating disorders and financial distress all run higher than the general population (Faraone consensus 2021, Beauchaine 2020). Effective ADHD treatment reduces but does not eliminate this risk.

What helps

- **Get the right treatment where indicated.** For ADHD, a properly titrated medication trial if not already done; the evidence base is among the strongest in adult psychiatry. For autism, environment fit, sensory accommodation and burnout recovery are the main levers.
- **NHS Talking Therapies is the first NHS step.** Self-referral in England via your local service. Free, widely available, effective for many people. Ask if the team has experience with autistic clients or adult ADHD.
- **ND-literate therapy where you can afford it.** Standard counselling can miss the structural picture. A therapist who understands masking, RSD, autistic burnout and the post-diagnostic identity work is in a different category. Ask explicitly before booking.
- **The physical baseline is part of the package.** Sleep, exercise and food affect mental health more than most adults like to admit. Talking-therapy work does not land as well on top of three nights of poor sleep.
- **Peer support is consistently useful.** ADHD UK, AADD UK, the National Autistic Society and Autistica all run peer-support spaces. The "I'm not the only one" recognition is often the most useful single intervention for late-diagnosed adults.

How we can help

- **GP for any persistent shift.** Low mood lasting more than two weeks, anxiety interfering with daily life, sleep disruption that has not responded to standard changes, eating-pattern change, increased substance use, or any thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- **Crisis routes are clear.** Samaritans 116 123, 24 hours, free. NHS 111 now offers a mental-health option. 999 or A&E for immediate risk. Shout (text 85258) is useful when speaking is hard.
- **NeuroFX is not a crisis service.** We offer adult ADHD assessment, prescribing and shared-care handover where appropriate, and can issue clinical letters for patients we have assessed. For acute mental-health crisis, use NHS routes.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to your GP for any persistent low mood, anxiety interfering with daily life, sleep disruption that has not responded to standard changes, eating-pattern change, increased substance use, or thoughts of self-harm or suicide. NHS Talking Therapies (self-referral in England) is the right first NHS route for anxiety and depression. For ND-literate therapy, ask explicitly about therapist experience before booking. NeuroFX offers adult ADHD assessment and prescribing where appropriate; we are not a crisis service. For immediate risk, the Samaritans are on 116 123, 24 hours, and 111, 999 or A&E are the urgent routes.

SOURCES

Cassidy 2014 Lancet Psychiatry; Hirvikoski 2016 BJP; Lai 2019 Lancet Psychiatry; Faraone consensus 2021; Beauchaine 2020 Sci Adv; NHS Talking Therapies; Samaritans

NEXT STEPS

Speak to NeuroFX

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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