

ANM SUPPORT PACK

Autism

A plain-language starting point for autistic people, families, educators, employers and allies.

This is general information, not a diagnosis or individual medical advice. Local services and pathways vary.

Start here

Autism is a form of neurodivergence. Autistic people may communicate, interact, process sensory information, move through routines or focus their interests in ways that differ from what is expected. Autism is a spectrum: strengths, support needs and experiences vary widely from one person to another.

Signs to notice - not a checklist

- Differences in social communication or interaction, including preferred ways of connecting and communicating.
- A strong need for predictability, familiar routines or time to adjust to change.
- Focused interests, repetitive movements or ways of regulating that help the person cope or concentrate.
- Sensory differences, such as finding noise, light, textures, smells or crowded spaces overwhelming or under-stimulating.

What can help today

- Ask what makes a task, space or conversation easier - and listen to the answer.
- Give clear information, notice before changes and allow extra processing time.
- Offer more than one way to communicate: speaking, writing, pointing, drawing or taking a break.
- Treat sensory access as practical support, not a reward for coping.

A list of traits cannot diagnose autism. If assessment or additional support is wanted, speak with a qualified local health or education professional who can consider the full picture.

Sources and further reading

World Health Organization. Autism fact sheet (2025).
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>

ANM works for understanding, acceptance and practical inclusion across Africa. Different minds. United Africa.