

Understanding Autism, ADHD & AuDHD

A supportive introduction to neurodiversity

Wherever you are right now...

You might be:

- Questioning whether you could be autistic, ADHD, or both
- Recently diagnosed and trying to process what that means
- Looking back on your life with a new perspective
- Supporting someone you care about
- Wanting to understand yourself (or them) more clearly



This can bring up many different feelings—relief, validation, confusion, grief, curiosity, even doubt. All of these are valid.

You don't need to have everything figured out. This is a starting point.

What is neurodiversity?

- Neurodiversity is the understanding that brains naturally vary.
- Autism and ADHD are forms of neurodivergence—meaning your brain processes, responds, and experiences the world differently from what is considered "typical."
- Rather than being something to fix, these differences can be understood, supported, and worked with.



Understanding Autism

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference that affects how someone experiences the world, processes information, and connects with others.

Common experiences may include:

- Strong, focused interests or passions
- A preference for structure, routine, or predictability
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g. sounds, lights, textures, smells)
- Feeling overwhelmed in busy or unpredictable environments
- Differences in communication (e.g. being more direct, needing processing time)
- Deep thinking, pattern recognition, or attention to detail



Internal experiences can include:

- Feeling different or "out of sync" with others
- Needing more recovery time after social interaction
- Masking (hiding or adapting traits to fit in), which can be exhausting

- A strong need for clarity, fairness, or honesty

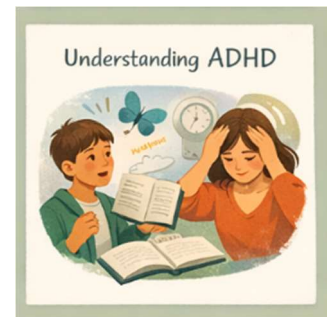
Autism is not one-size-fits-all. It can present very differently from person to person.

Understanding ADHD

ADHD affects attention, regulation, and how the brain manages tasks, motivation, and energy.

Common experiences may include:

- Difficulty starting or finishing tasks
- Inconsistent focus (struggling with some things, hyper-focusing on others)
- Forgetfulness or losing track of time
- Restlessness (internal or physical)
- Impulsivity or acting quickly without thinking things through
- Challenges with organisation, planning, or prioritising



Internal experiences can include:

- Feeling frustrated with yourself for not doing things “easily”
- A busy or fast-moving mind
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Periods of high productivity followed by burnout

ADHD is not about laziness or lack of intelligence—it’s about how the brain regulates attention and motivation.

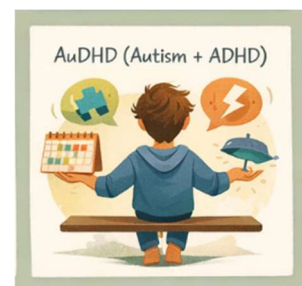
Understanding AuDHD (Autism + ADHD)

AuDHD describes people who are both autistic and ADHD.

This can sometimes feel confusing because the traits can interact in complex ways.

You might experience:

- Wanting structure but struggling to maintain it
- Craving stimulation but also becoming easily overwhelmed
- Switching between hyperfocus and difficulty focusing at all
- Feeling both detail-focused and scattered
- A strong need for rest, alongside difficulty slowing down



Many people find that understanding both aspects helps things make more sense.

Masking and burnout

Many neurodivergent people learn to “mask” their natural ways of being to fit into expectations.

This might look like:

- Forcing eye contact
- Copying others' behaviour
- Hiding sensory discomfort
- Pushing through exhaustion

Over time, masking can lead to:

- Burnout (mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion)
- Loss of identity or sense of self
- Increased anxiety or low mood
- Difficulty accessing emotions

Recognising this can be an important step toward self-understanding and change.



Strengths and differences

Neurodivergence also comes with strengths, which can include:

- Creativity and original thinking
- Deep focus and passion
- Strong problem-solving skills
- Empathy and sensitivity
- Attention to detail
- Seeing patterns or connections others may miss

Not everyone will relate to all of these—and that's okay.



What might help?

You don't need to change who you are. The focus is on understanding what works for you.

Some supportive approaches:

- Creating routines that feel flexible, not restrictive
- Reducing sensory overload where possible
- Breaking tasks into smaller, manageable steps
- Using reminders, lists, or visual supports
- Allowing rest without guilt
- Learning your limits and needs

Self-understanding takes time. There is no rush.



Making sense of your experience

You might be:

- Reframing past experiences

- Noticing patterns in your life
- Feeling relief at finally understanding yourself
- Grieving what felt difficult or unsupported before

This is a process. It's okay for it to take time. Support can make a difference. You don't have to navigate this alone.

Neurodivergent-affirming therapy can offer a space where:

- You are understood, not judged or "fixed"
- Your experiences are taken seriously
- You can explore your identity safely
- You can find ways of living that work for you

Support can also help you communicate your needs to others and build a life that feels more manageable and authentic.

A gentle reminder:

- You are not broken
- You are not failing
- Your brain works differently—and that difference matters
- Understanding yourself is not the end of the journey
- It's the beginning of a more compassionate one



If you want to go further

You might choose to:

- Learn more about autism, ADHD, or AuDHD in depth. I offer online courses that you can do in your own time, in the comfort of your own home. Go to: www.claireparkercounselling.com/neurodiversity
- Explore practical strategies for daily life.
- Seek supportive spaces or communities.
- Access therapy or guided support – if you would like to book with me, you can email me at claireparkercounselling@proton.me

Take what feels helpful and leave the rest.