



New Autism Diagnosis Roadmap

7 Practical Steps for Parents & Caregivers

Comprehensive Step-by-Step Educational Handbook & Printable Toolkit.

Created by [AutismHearts](#) | [Autism Resource Directory](#)

Notice: Educational guide — not legal or medical advice.

Welcome: Roadmap for the First Months

How to Use This Roadmap

You do not need to solve everything right away. Use these 7 steps to decide what to focus on today and what can wait.

- Read one step at a time
- Highlight ideas that apply to your child today
- Use the worksheets to track appointments

Step 1: Responding to the Diagnosis

A Note for Caregivers

You did not cause your child's autism. It is a neurodevelopmental difference, not the result of something you did.

Right now, as a parent, I feel:

My child's greatest strengths and joys:

Step 2: Understanding Evaluations & Reports

Provider Tip

Ask providers: "Can you explain this in everyday language? What are our top 2 priorities for the next 6 months?"

Diagnostic reports are typically 10-25 pages. Focus on strengths, developmental challenges, and actionable clinical recommendations.

Evaluation and Report Summary Worksheet

Top Strengths Highlighted in Report:

Main Challenges Described:

Recommended Priority Therapies (SLP, OT):

Questions I Still Need to Ask:

Step 3: Building Your Support Team

Collaboration Mindset

A strong team collaborates with you. Trust your instincts as a parent.

No family navigates autism alone. Over time you will connect with pediatricians, therapists, teachers, and peer support circles.

My Child's Support Team Contact Log

Role	Provider Name	Organization	Phone / Email
Pediatrician			
Speech (SLP)			
Occupational (OT)			
School Contact			

Step 4: Therapies and Services Overview

- Speech Therapy (SLP): Functional communication, AAC devices, gestalt language processing.
- Occupational Therapy (OT): Sensory modulation, motor coordination, daily living tasks.
- Neurodiversity-Affirming Support: Emotion regulation and replacement coping skills.

Choosing Where to Start

Quick Priority Guide

If communication is hardest, start with SLP. If sensory distress or motor skills are central, start with OT. Avoid over-scheduling your family.

Our Family's Top Priority Area for Support Right Now:

Step 5: School Support, IEP/504, and Rights

- IEP (IDEA): Specialized instruction, related services, and measurable goals.
- 504 Plan (Section 504): Equal classroom access through environmental accommodations.

School Meeting Preparation Checklist

Pre-Meeting Benchmarks Gathered clinical reports [] 1-page strength profile ready [] Top 3 priorities written down [] Support person invited []
Key Questions to Raise at Upcoming School Meeting:

Step 6: Everyday Life — Sensory Needs & Routines

Remember

Meltdown = involuntary neurological overload. Tantrum = goal-driven communication.

Predictable home routines provide cognitive safety. Autistic children feel sounds, lights, and textures more intensely.

Routines & Sensory Planning Worksheet

Sensory Triggers That Overwhelm My Child:

Sensory Tools That Ground My Child:

Our 3-Step Morning Routine Flow:

Step 7: Caring for Yourself and Finding Support

Caregiver burnout is common. Needing rest or emotional support is a biological necessity, not a personal failure.

- Take 10-minute micro-breaks daily
- Connect with peer-led autism parent groups
- Set boundaries around non-essential obligations

Caregiver Support Planner

Small restorative daily activities (10-15 mins):

Trusted friends or groups I can speak to freely:

One boundary I need to set this week:

Toolkit: Feelings & Strengths Review

My Emotional Reflections on the Diagnosis Journey:

My Child's Unique Passions and Brightest Moments:

Toolkit: Daily Routine Planner

Morning Flow (Wakeup -> Hygiene -> Breakfast -> Departure):

Afternoon & Arrival Flow (Decompression -> Snack):

Evening & Bedtime Flow (Quiet play -> Hygiene -> Sleep):

Toolkit: Sensory Triggers & Calming Grid

Auditory & Visual Triggers + Calming Adjustments:
Tactile Triggers & Movement Needs:

Taking Next Steps with AutismHearts

Visit autismhearts.com to locate diagnostic centers, find affirming therapists, and connect with verified local support groups.

AutismHearts Resource Directory Notice

Professional Disclaimer

Educational and advocacy roadmap. Always consult qualified physicians and educational advocates for individual diagnostic and legal plans.