Clinician Support Series:

Preparing for an initial appointment



This guide is for clinicians meeting a neurodivergent person with an eating disorder for the first time. It covers guidance on what to find out before you meet, and how to introduce yourself in a way that builds trust.

1. Find out what the person needs before you meet

If you can, collect some information before the first meeting.
If not, use part of the first meeting to do this together.

The PEACE Communication Passport booklet can help, and there is a one page version of the passport if completing the full version does not suit the person.

2. Start building trust from the first contact

Building rapport with a neurodivergent patient can take time. A good place to start is to name the person's neurodivergence openly. Explain that you will work together to make sure their eating disorder treatment feels like a good fit for them.

4. Introduce yourself clearly

Tell the person your name, your role and what you can both expect from your sessions. Ask how they would like you to refer to them, which pronouns they use and anything else they want you to know. Filling in the Communication Passport together shows them that you want to support them as an individual.

If you can, give the person a single page listing the key people in their care, with photos. This helps them know who to speak to about different concerns.

5. Keep checking what helps

After your intital meeting check in regularly with your patient about how you are supporting them. If you made an adaptation, ask whether it still helps.

Some neurodivergent people find it hard to tell you when an adaptation is no longer helping. They may worry about seeming difficult, especially if they are used to masking. Masking means hiding neurodivergent traits to fit in or avoid negative reactions. Other people will tell you directly when something is not working. Add what you learn to their Communication Passport so future clinicians can use it.



Things to consider

- **Session plans and reminders:** Share a short outline of what you plan to cover in the sesion, before the meeting or at the start. Many people with ADHD also find reminders helpful, such as a text the day before an appointment.
- **Sensory barriers:** These are things that might make it hard for the person to focus or feel calm, such as bright lights, banging doors or strong perfume. Ask if they are aware of experiencing any sensory barriers like this and how you can help reduce them during the session.
- **Sensory enablers:** These are things that help the person feel settled or focused during your session with them, such as fidgets. Movement can help too, such as stimming. Stimming means repetitive movements or sounds that help a person regulate or focus. Encourage them to use these in sessions, especially if they become anxious or restless.
- **Communication style:** Ask how the person prefers to take in information. Some people like to take notes and process them in their own time. Others prefer visuals with less text, such as diagrams or social stories. Social stories are short, illustrated descriptions of a situation and what to expect. The communication section of the PEACE Communication Passport has more on this.
- **Other causes of anxiety:** Ask if or what feels most stressful about the situation and how you can reduce it together. It might be something small, like where the chairs are placed.