

# Social Stories

## The journey to understanding

### Alex

#### Noticing I am different

I'm Alex, and I've always felt a little different from other kids. Sometimes, things that seem easy for them feel really hard for me. Loud noises can feel painful, changes in plans make me anxious and talking to others can be confusing. I love learning about space and could talk about it all day, but sometimes, people don't seem to understand why it's so exciting to me.

At school, I noticed that I got tired faster than other kids. The bright lights, busy classrooms and constant talking made my head feel full. My teacher said I needed to work on my social skills, but I felt like I was already trying so hard. At home, I often felt overwhelmed and needed quiet time alone. My parents started to wonder if there was a reason for my struggles. They decided to talk to my teacher and then a doctor to find out what might be happening.

#### Seeking help

The doctor asked me lots of questions about how I feel at school and home. They wanted to understand what makes things difficult for me and what helps me feel comfortable. I met with different people, including a psychologist, who played some games with me and asked me about my thoughts and feelings. Some parts of the process were long, and I had to wait for answers. That was really frustrating, but my parents reminded me that understanding myself takes time. I started to feel hopeful that I would get some answers soon.

#### Getting a diagnosis

After a lot of meetings my parents told me that they had some news: the doctor confirmed I am autistic. At first, I wasn't sure how to feel. The word sounded a little scary. But my parents explained that autism isn't bad – it just means my brain works in a different way. It's why I notice small details others don't,

why I need routines to feel safe, and why I get really focused on topics I really, really like! I learned that being autistic isn't something to be fixed – it's just a different way of being. Some things are harder for me, but some things are also really special about me. I am still the same person I was before I was told I am autistic, but now I understand myself better.

#### Finding support

After my diagnosis, my parents and teachers worked together to help me. I got some help at school, like wearing noise-cancelling headphones, having more access to learning support and having a quiet space to go when I felt overwhelmed. My teachers learned more about autism so they could support me better, and I joined a club outside of school to meet other autistic kids just like me. At home, my parents let me take breaks when I needed them and made sure I had a schedule so I knew what to expect each day. I started to feel less uncertain and more confident in who I am.

#### Embracing my neurodiversity

Now that I know I'm autistic, I see myself and the world around me differently. I am proud of all my knowledge about space. I love how I notice patterns and details that others don't. I appreciate my routines because they make me feel safe. I have learned that my brain isn't wrong or broken – it's just unique, and that's a good thing.

Being autistic is part of who I am, and that's something to celebrate. I still have challenges, but I also have strengths. With the right support and understanding, I can thrive just like anyone else. I am learning to be proud of myself exactly as I am.

