

Post-Assessment Guide: Emotional Processing, Identity Shifts & Next Steps

TL;DR · QUICK SUMMARY

- Strong, mixed emotions after assessment (whatever the outcome) are completely normal.
- A diagnosis (or the absence of one) can shift how you see your past and your identity.
- There's no timeline for processing this. Give yourself as long as you need.
- Practical next steps can wait until you're ready; there's no rush.

A Note Before You Read On

This resource offers general guidance and reflects common experience, not professional, legal, medical or financial advice. It is not a substitute for employment law, HR policy, occupational health guidance, or individual professional assessment. Every person's experience of neurodivergence is different, so please adapt anything here to your own situation. The Uniquely Wired Network does not accept liability for decisions, actions or outcomes arising from the use of this material. If you need advice specific to your circumstances, please consult a qualified professional (e.g. HR, legal, medical, or financial advisor).

Why This Matters

The period after an assessment is often underestimated. Whether the outcome confirms, surprises, or complicates your expectations, it deserves real space to process, not just a jump straight into next steps.

What This Might Look Like

- Relief, grief, anger, validation, or numbness, sometimes all in the same week.
- Reframing memories of childhood or past jobs in a new light.
- Feeling unsure how to introduce this new understanding to others, or to yourself.

Emotional Processing

- It's common to grieve for time lost, or for support you didn't get earlier.
- It's equally common to feel relief and validation, sometimes at the same time as grief.
- A diagnosis you weren't expecting (or the absence of one you expected) can be genuinely disorientating. Give it time.

Identity Shifts

- Many people re-read their whole life story through this new lens; that's a normal part of the process.
- You might feel closer to ND communities, or unsure how you relate to them yet; both are fine.
- There's no requirement to identify strongly with any label, even after a formal diagnosis.

Practical Next Steps (When You're Ready)

- Deciding whether, when and how to disclose at work. See our companion guides.
- Exploring reasonable adjustments if relevant.
- Considering coaching, therapy, or peer support if it would help.

Helpful Phrases You Can Borrow

You don't have to use these exact words. Take what fits and leave the rest.

"I've recently had some news about myself that I'm still processing. I might need a bit of space this week."

"I got my assessment results and I'm feeling a lot of different things. I don't need advice right now, just to talk it through."

Quick Tips

- There's no "correct" emotional reaction to a diagnosis, or to not receiving one.
- Give yourself permission to feel relief and grief at the same time.

- You don't have to make any decisions immediately after assessment.
- Peer support communities can be validating during this period.
- If low mood or distress persists, it's worth speaking to a GP or counsellor.
- Revisit practical steps (disclosure, adjustments) only when you feel ready.

Want to Know More?

- See our companion guides on disclosure and workplace adjustments when you're ready to explore them.
- Peer communities (see our "Support Groups" guide) can be a helpful space to process alongside others with lived experience.
- A counsellor experienced with neurodivergent clients can help with identity and emotional processing.

Before You Go

However you're feeling right now, it's a valid response to genuinely significant news.

You don't need to have this all figured out yet. Understanding yourself is an ongoing process, not a single event.