Twitter Thread by Emily■

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To the person who thinks that they might be autistic. - a thread. /1

I imagine you have gone your entire life wondering why you are different, why you can't seem to understand things the way that others can and why everything just seems so hard. I'm proud of you for getting this far. /2

Part of you might be thinking:
"But if I was autistic, surely it would've been noticed when I was a kid? So maybe I'm making this up."
So many autistic people aren't diagnosed until they are adults, if diagnosed at all. You would not be the first and you won't be the last. /3

"My family and friends don't think that I could be autistic."
People's understandings of autism tend to be based off of the media, which doesn't show every possible presentation of autism, or based off of someone they know, and all autistic people present differently. /4

People's perceptions of autism can also be based off stereotypes, for example, "autistic people can't make eye contact, so you can't be autistic." While this is true for some, it isn't for all, so you can begin to see how one presentation of autism can't possibly fit everyone. /5

There is a reason that the thought that you might be autistic is stuck in your head. Don't ignore that, just because other people tell you that you're ridiculous. You may have spent your life not believing your instincts and trying to conform. It's time to put yourself first. /6

Of course, you may experience the opposite. People you know may be encouraging you to be assessed for autism. This could bring up a whole load of different and conflicting emotions. But what is important to remember is that what you decide to do is your choice, no-one else's. /7

"Do I have to get diagnosed?"
Of course you don't. Although it may be harder to access more formal support, you can still access informal support groups, the #ActuallyAutistic twitter community, and get involved with autism charities such as @Autism. /8

Many autistic's are supportive of others being self-diagnosed. We know the barriers to getting a diagnosis, especially for marginalised groups. We also know that not everyone wants a diagnosis on their records. If you identify as autistic, then

you're welcome in our community. /9

I know that getting a diagnosis meant a lot to me. It almost gave me permission to stop beating myself up for not understanding things the way I thought I was supposed to and for not fitting in. It gave me permission to be kinder to myself. And it helped me understand myself. /10

"How would I get diagnosed if I wanted to?"
There are two routes for this. The first is through the NHS. This would begin with you going to your GP and asking for a referral for an autism assessment. Due to some having a limited understanding of autism, I would be prepared. /11

Take a list of reasons why you think you're autistic to talk about. If you're an autistic woman, maybe show them some sources on autism in women if they are reluctant to believe you. This should all go smoothly, but you are always entitled to a second opinion. /12

The waiting list for an NHS assessment can take a year or two unfortunately. Additionally, the screening and assessment they use may not be enough to pick up on autistic traits that present differently to the biased white cis-male model that it is based off of. /13

In which case, you can go for a private assessment. You may choose for this to be a place which specialises in autistic women for example. Or a place which uses an alternative assessment model, such as the DISCO model used by the Lorna Wing Centre. /14

Your assessment may be more comprehensive and will be done a lot faster, but unfortunately it is very expensive, and hence inaccessible to a lot of people. Some argue that your diagnosis won't be taken as seriously because you have "bought" your diagnosis, but most never... /15

...have a problem with this. I have never been asked where I was diagnosed and my diagnosis has always been accepted straight away. Really they have no right to not accept your diagnosis just because it's private, so you can always ask to see someone else if that happens. /16

I would recommend that alongside this process, you read or watch as much as you want to around autism, and chat to other autistic people. This will help you to understand the way your brain works, get to know your sensory needs more and work out what helps you manage! /17