Chris Rock Diagnosed With Nonverbal Learning Disorder

The actor and comedian says his inability to understand nonverbal signals proved problematic in his one-on-one relationships.

September 22, 2020 By Alicia Green

When one of Chris Rock's friends suggested he might have Asperger's syndrome, the comedian sought help. But what nine hours of cognitive tests revealed was that Rock in fact had a condition called nonverbal learning disability (NVLD), according to his recent interview with The Hollywood Reporter.

According to the NVLD Project, people with nonverbal learning disability struggle with a range of conditions that include social and spatial disabilities. People with NVLD can experience trouble with organization, attention, executive functioning, nonverbal communication and motor skills.

"All I understand are the words," said Rock, age 55, who explained that he has trouble with nonverbal signals, which make up almost 80 percent of communication.

According to Rock, his condition causes him to take what people say literally. It also causes him to suffer from an all-or-nothing mentality. But he believes these attributes help him to be a great comedian.

"By the way, all of those things are really great for writing jokes—they're not just great for one-on-one relationships," he said. "And I'd always just chalked it up to being famous."

In the past, when a person responded to him negatively, Rock assumed that they were responding to who they thought he was as a celebrity. But, he said he has come to realize that "a lot of it was me."

With the help of two therapists, the actor has been working on determining his limitations and how childhood trauma affected him. Although Rock joked about his childhood for years—especially through the sitcom Everybody Hates Chris—he said he never actually dealt with what he went through. "The reality was the pain and the fear that that brought me, I was experiencing it every day."

This is the same man who used to joke about therapy and discussing feelings with friends. Now,

the comedian is able to talk about these issues from a different point of view—one his close friend Neal Brennan says includes “a bit of empathy for himself.”

Rock’s growth is also reflected in the variety of roles he’s taken on. Fans can watch him star in season four of Fargo, which is set to premiere September 27. The latest season of the black comedy/crime drama series follows two crime syndicates in 1950 Kansas City.

In addition, Rock also said he’s interested in returning to Broadway. (He previously starred in The Motherf***er With the Hat.) Currently, though, he is focused on generating new material for his upcoming Netflix special, which will cover everything from politics to the pandemic to racism.

“Even though I talked about it, and I joked about it, there’s a part of me that’s ashamed at how much of it I just accepted,” he said, referring to systemic racism and police brutality.

Click here to read about how mental health therapy helped Chicago rapper G Herbo address the negativity that trauma caused in his life.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/chris-rock-diagnosed-nonverbal-learning-disorder