

Anxiety and Autism

Information taken from <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/mental-health/anxiety>

Autism is...

When someone finds it difficult to sort out information their brain gets from the world around them or inside them.

This information might be:

Noise

Sights

Taste

Touch

Smells

Feelings inside their body

What other people are thinking or feeling



Anxiety

People with autism sometimes feel extra worried. They might feel like this a lot of the time.

This might be because:

Different people and places can increase the amount of work our brain has to do.

They feel misunderstood or not accepted by other people.

To 'fit in' and not be seen as different, autistic people might feel they have to hide their feelings. This can make them tired and sad.

Of changes to routine, particularly an unexpected change.

People with autism might find it hard to know what they are feeling and how to cope with strong feelings.



n fact...

about half of people with autism, also suffer with anxiety.

That means out of every two people with autism, one will have anxiety.



How do I know if I am anxious?

Signs that you might be anxious include:

- feeling restless or worried
- a churning feeling in your stomach
- a fast, thumping or irregular heartbeat
- faster breathing
- sweating or hot flushes
- feeling sick
- problems sleeping
- panic attacks



Advice and tips

Below are some general tips and guidance from autistic people and professionals that you might want to try.

Keep a diary to help identify when you are anxious, and what might make it worse.

Be aware of your energy levels after being with others, like at school, and other events/situations that you may find tiring or difficult. Relax and calm by taking time for yourself and doing things you enjoy.

Make changes to the places you spend time, for example have calming lighting.

Try noise-cancelling headphones to reduce noise overload.

Use sensory tools (fidget toys, weighted blankets) and stimming (movement) to reduce anxiety levels, if that works for you.

Try relaxation methods such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga and exercise. You might like to do art and crafts or take a walk outside.

Use visual timetables to help structure the day so you know what is happening during each day.

