



ANXIETY AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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WHAT IS ANXIETY DISORDER?



Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can be beneficial in some situations. Anxiety arises from anticipation of a future concern and is often associated with muscle tension, digestive issues and avoidance behavior.

In general, for a person to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, the fear or anxiety must:

1. Be out of proportion to the situation or age inappropriate
2. Hinder ability to function normally

Although anxiety is not considered a core feature of ASD, 40% of young people with ASD have clinically elevated levels of anxiety.

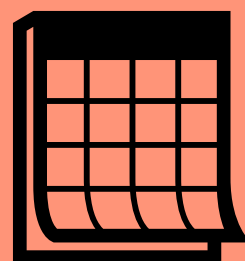


SPECIFIC TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDER COMMON IN ASD

1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder: a constant feeling of anxiety
2. Social Anxiety Disorder: persistent panic about social situations
3. Fears and phobias: fears of specific things and situations
4. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: repetitive behaviours designed to prevent those obsessive thoughts from coming true

WHEN ANXIOUS, YOUR CHILD MIGHT:

1. Insist even more on routine and sameness
2. Have more trouble sleeping
3. Have meltdowns or temper tantrums
4. Avoid or withdraw from social situations
5. Rely more on obsession and rituals, like lining up or spinning objects
6. Do things to hurt themselves. Examples include: head-banging, scratching skin or hand-biting



POSSIBLE ANXIETY TRIGGERS

1. Change in routine: For example, a snow day
2. Change in environment: For example, rearranging the furniture
3. Unfamiliar social situations: For example, going to a new place
4. Sensory sensitivities: For example, an unexpected noise, light, flavour or textures
5. A specific fear: For example, sleeping alone

Tip: Create a list of all the triggers and find possible strategies to help minimize these triggers and reduce anxiety.

6 OF THE BEST APPS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

1. Proloquo2Go
2. Find my Family, Friends - life360 Locator
3. Children with autism: A visual schedule
4. Birdhouse for Autism
5. Choiceworks
6. DayCape - Daily visual planning



RELAXATION AND CALMING STRATEGIES

1. Counting slowly to 10
2. Taking 5 slow and deep breaths
3. Doing 20 jumping jacks
4. Drinking water
5. Going to a quiet and safe place
6. Mindfulness training

VISUAL TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES

1. Create a daily calendar with images of what they will be doing throughout the day
2. Find out about upcoming school events and their daily routines
3. Give your child prior warning when something is going to change and be as empathetic as possible
4. Create and organize a portable visual schedule for your child to keep
5. Try your hardest to keep predictable routines



If behavior prolonged or harmful, seek professional help.

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