

New guide to help manage anxiety in autism

April 26 2019, by Shamim Quadir



Credit: City University London

Around 40% of autistic children, young people and adults are believed to have one or more anxiety disorders, compared to 10-15% of the general population.

Less known is the fact that anxiety is not simply a part of autism - it is an independent disorder that can be treated in its own right.

Heightened and intensive feelings of fear can often be hard to identify as

anxiety in individuals with autism. This is because it can present in an unusual way, such as excessive fear of very specific objects or unusual worry about a change in routine. Such expressions of anxiety might be dismissed as part of autism, rather than co-occurring anxiety. However, when this distinction is identified and addressed it can lead to major improvements to an individual's quality of life.

With this in mind City, University of London and West Sussex County Council's Autism and Social Communication Team have joined forces to produce a unique and concise guide to help teachers and other professionals make informed decisions about how to promote and protect the mental health of autistic [children](#).

'An evidence based guide to anxiety in autism' launched on 24 April 2019 and is being delivered to every school in West Sussex. It pulls together the latest research and practice for improving emotional well-being in autistic children.

Dr Sebastian Gaigg of the Autism Research Group at City, University of London said: "Research is beginning to tell us what the likely causes are of anxiety in autism, and the experience of schools highlights many strategies that can be effective in supporting the emotional well-being of children."

"The aim of our guide is to help teachers and other professionals better understand why certain strategies are often effective in helping children manage their emotions, why the same strategies might not always work, and what other strategies might be explored. Ultimately we want to help professionals make informed decisions on how best to support individual children"

The new guide outlines the recent progress that has been made in identifying some key causes of [anxiety](#) in [autism](#), such as sensory

processing differences and difficulties in understanding and regulating one's own emotions. These differences can often make the world more uncertain and unpredictable for autistic children, and thus more frightening and unnerving.

The guide outlines established ways of helping [autistic children](#) manage their emotional well-being, based on the latest research literature as well as the experience-based practices established in many schools.

Richard Burrett, Deputy Leader of West Sussex County Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, said: "Every primary and secondary [school](#) in the county will have the chance to benefit from this exciting joint piece of work and engage in the new ideas presented in it. I hope it can help teachers to help [young people](#) manage their anxieties and live fulfilling lives."

The guide will form the basis for talks in schools by the council's Autism and Social Communication Team.

More information: Download an electronic copy of the guide in PDF format: [An evidence based guide to anxiety in autism](#)

Provided by City University London

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