

Stress, anxiety and depression are common challenges many of us face. The people you support deal with these challenges as well, though the triggers and expressions may look different at times. As you learn more about autism from your training and your important work with those you support, watch carefully for things like sensory and social stressors, challenges with schedule and routine changes, task anxiety, or other factors that might play a role in the comfort of the person you serve. Understand that people with autism may process stressful situations differently, but there is much you can do to be a positive support to them.

STRESS



Sensory or social overload can increase stress. Stressing over task completion, work concerns, relationships or other challenges can be frequent and intense. Your role is to help individuals recognize and cope with stress as much as possible.

ANXIETY



Anxiety can develop from a variety of factors. Sensory or social challenges, sudden changes in routine, recent or past events, relationship difficulties, and schedule changes are just a few of the triggers that may create anxiety. Remember that a person may be experiencing intense anxiety on the inside while not showing it outside.

DEPRESSION



Depression can occur for many reasons. The signs vary, but a person may experience shutdown, a decrease in activity and communication or increased irritability. Learn as much as you can about the symptoms of depression from the person, fellow staff or family members.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW?

1. Consider how you can support an individual in learning the potential signs of anxiety, stress or depression. Can they identify signs in themselves and seek assistance when they need it? Reach out to others you work with whenever you feel in over your head.
2. Breaks are a necessary part of self-care for us all. Our friends with autism are no different. Look carefully at your support strategies and routines to determine if you are allowing someone you support to take breaks when they need to.
3. Learn about any medication or calming supports a person uses as part of their personal self-care plan. Find out how often they would like to take breaks.