



Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety is common for individuals with autism and can look very different depending on the person and the situation. This resource provides information to help you recognize signs and symptoms of anxiety for individuals who have autism.

Asking repetitive questions or being preoccupied about one subject.

- The person may ask questions over and over. These questions might not be related to the current situation. The questions may or not make sense to the listener. This person is checking to make sure things have not changed.

Attempting to elope or wander away

- The person may go to a place that feels more comfortable.
- The person may try to get away from a person, place or situation that is uncomfortable.



Increase in stimming behaviors

- “Stimming” (self-stimulating) behaviors are things the person does to try and change the way they feel.
- Some of the common stimming behaviors in autism are rocking back-and-forth, spinning in circles and flapping their hands.
- If a person is doing these behaviors more than usual, it might be a sign that they are anxious.

Decreased abilities

- The person might have a harder time talking or telling people how they feel.
- The person might have a harder time doing things they already learned how to do.

Increase in self-injurious behavior

- The person might pull on their hair or eyelashes.
- The person might scratch himself/herself until they bleed.
- The person might bang their head against hard surfaces.
- The person might cut or burn himself/herself on purpose.



Increased irritability

- The person might refuse to do things or go places they used to enjoy.
- Even when the person does their favorite activity, they don't appear to enjoy it as much as they used to.
- The person might try to spend more time away from other people.



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