

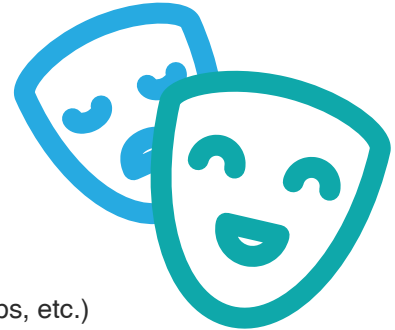


# Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide in Autistic Individuals

## Risk Factors

**These factors increase the risk of someone attempting suicide:**

- Previous suicide attempts
- Misuse and abuse of alcohol or other drugs
- Mental disorders, especially anxiety, depression and other mood disorders
- Knowing someone who died by suicide, like a family member
- Feeling lonely, being alone a lot, feeling a lack of belonging
- Having a life-long disease and/or disability
- Lack of ability to receive mental health care
- History of trauma or abuse
- History of being bullied
- Difficulty with social communication\*
- Having unmet needs (examples: housing, education, employment, relationships, etc.)
- Masking/Camouflaging\*
- Late autism diagnosis\*
- Female\*
- Experiencing autism burnout\*



*Items marked with an \* are more true in the autism population compared to neurotypical individuals.*

## Protective Factors

**Protective factors don't *erase* a person's risk for suicide. They simply *lower* the person's risk. Research on protective factors in the autism community is limited. However, the factors listed here are considered helpful in lowering a person's risk for suicide in the general population:**

- Receiving mental health care, particularly from professionals trained to support autistic individuals
- Strong connections to family, caregivers, friends and other resources close by
- Life skills (including problem solving skills and coping skills, ability to be flexible)
- Feeling good about yourself
- Beliefs that killing yourself is wrong

## Supports

**If you're concerned someone may be considering suicide or is a danger to themselves you can:**

- Talk to the person about your concerns, and see if they're willing to get help
- Remove sharp objects, weapons, and medications from their home. If that is not possible, at least try to lock them up. Also be aware of areas where a person could hang themselves.
- Develop a safety plan with the individual. Include a list of individuals they can call for help, phone numbers for County Crisis Intervention, National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and Crisis Text Line. You can also include reminders about preferred calming strategies, ways to purposefully distract from stressful thoughts and other sources of comfort (pets, interests, objects).



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The ASERT Collaborative  
is funded by the Office of  
Developmental Programs,  
PA Department of Human Services.