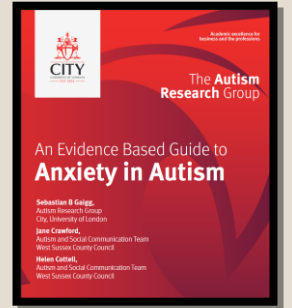


MY AUTISTIC CHILD IS ANXIOUS – HELP!

FEB 23



Love Autism



What is anxiety?

- The NHS describes anxiety as '*a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear that can be mild or severe. It becomes a clinical condition when experienced for a prolonged period of time and when it has a significant impact on a person's life.*'
- Keeps us safe
- Everyone experiences anxiety!
- Normal and necessary
- VERY common in autistic adults and children – 40% compared to 3% (Autistica)
- Prevalence & intensity
- Life + autism

8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE



ANGER

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



DIFFICULTY SLEEPING

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



AVOIDANCE

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



NEGATIVITY

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.



DEFIANCE

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



CHANDELIERING

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



LACK OF FOCUS

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

OVERPLANNING

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.

Follow [@gozenlove](https://www.instagram.com/gozenlove)


How do you know your child is anxious?

What can you try that might support your anxious child?













Remember they're autistic

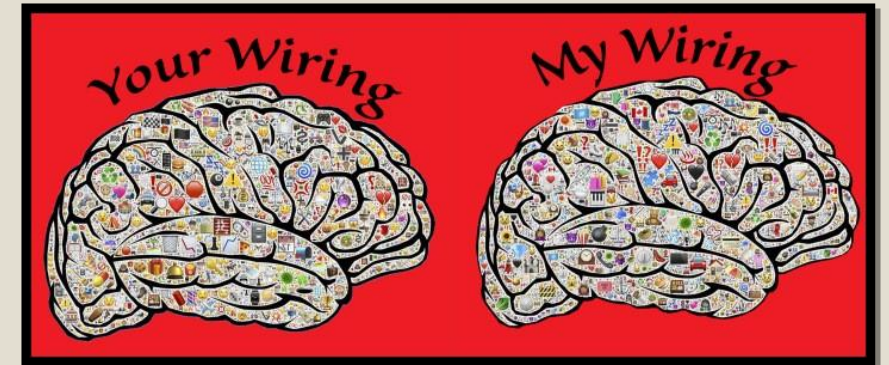
Being autistic in a world designed for non-autistic people is hard!



What is autism?



<p><u>What it is</u> ✓</p> <p> A neurodevelopmental difference (different brain wiring), a natural variation</p> <p> Affects every aspect of a person's being: how they perceive, experience, interact with and interpret the world</p> <p> A minority neurology</p> <p> Lifelong</p>	<p><u>What it isn't</u> ✗</p> <p> A learning disability</p> <p> An illness or disease</p> <p> Bad behaviour/willful defiance</p> <p> Bad parenting</p> <p> Affects only children</p>
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- Understanding and expressing emotions
- Understanding other people/social situations
- Sensory Differences
- Uncertainty!!!





Try to work out what makes them anxious; their stressors/triggers ...

Identify Your School Triggers

Page 1 of 4

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read each item and answer honestly. Take your time as you complete this. Ask for help if you do not understand an item.

Rate each item from 1 – 5.

- 1 = Does not bother me at all
- 2 = Makes me feel a little uncomfortable
- 3 = Makes me feel stressed
- 4 = This upsets me
- 5 = I'm going to explode!



1



2



3



4

	1	2
A teacher gives me feedback / constructive criticism.		
Someone or something interrupts me while I am working.		
A teacher tells me to correct a mistake.		

Identify Your School Triggers

Page 2 of 4

Getting a lower grade on a test, quiz, or paper.					
When someone points out a mistake I made.					
Greeting people.					
Taking tests.					
When I make a mistake.					
Reporting to school on time.					
Writing papers.					
Wearing specific clothing (i.e. long pants, coat)					
School bells or loudspeaker announcements.					
Fire drills.					
When a classmate disagrees with me.					
Surprise quizzes (pop quizzes).					
Tornado drills.					
When I am late to work / school.					
When I have to do something new or different.					
Hearing other people's music /radio.					
When others touch me (i.e. handshake, pat on back).					

Remove or reduce the source of the anxiety



Understand (and help them understand) and manage sensory differences ...

THINGS THAT CAN TRIGGER SENSORY OVERLOAD

- Sudden change in light
- Things that are itchy
- Loud music/sounds
- Strong smells
- Food that's too hot or cold
- Crowds of people or packed spaces
- Sudden physical contact
- Group conversations



NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

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Joining in with Sensory Differences

Everybody's sensory systems develop at different rates, and some people are more sensitive to certain sensory information than others

calm box/ sensory toolkit /sensory activities

Understand their social capacity – likely need lots of alone time

An autistic person's socialising capacity is unique; one person may be the size of a teacup, but for others, a thimble is more precise.



MY SOCIAL BATTERY



2 PEOPLE



3 PEOPLE



4 PEOPLE

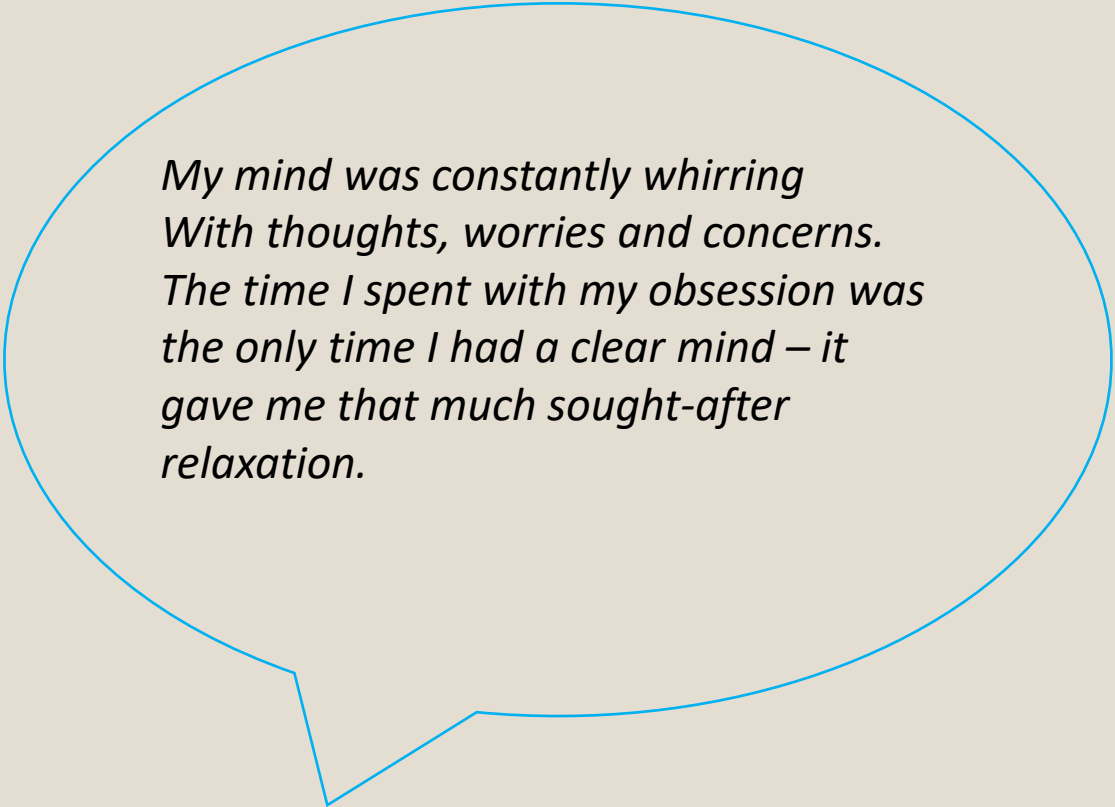


5 PEOPLE

'It can take me 2 days of alone time to recover and recharge after just a few hours of intense social interactions, even when that socialising is "happy".'
Nan Thompson



Plenty of time to engage with their special interest and whatever makes them feel calm, relaxed, happy, chilled ...



*My mind was constantly whirring
With thoughts, worries and concerns.
The time I spent with my obsession was
the only time I had a clear mind – it
gave me that much sought-after
relaxation.*

Think about your communication

Use their name first and try to remember ...

Anne,

I've been coming along to your parent sessions and wanted to share a success with you. I managed to get Emily to be changed and ready to leave after swimming within 7 minutes! Simply using say less and stress, and using her name before every instruction.

Thank you so much!! We usually end up in a terrible mood and take about 20 minutes.



The Four "S"s

Say Less	and Stress
Go Slow	and Show

R Repeat often!

The Hanen Program
www.hanen.org

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Help them understand (their)autism

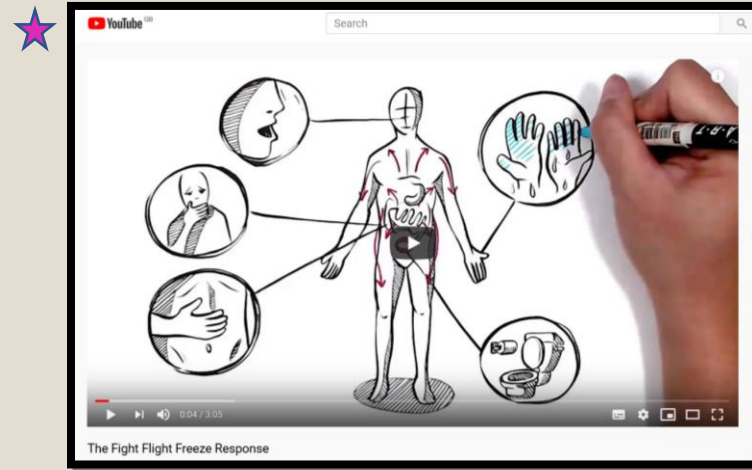


Talking to children about Autism



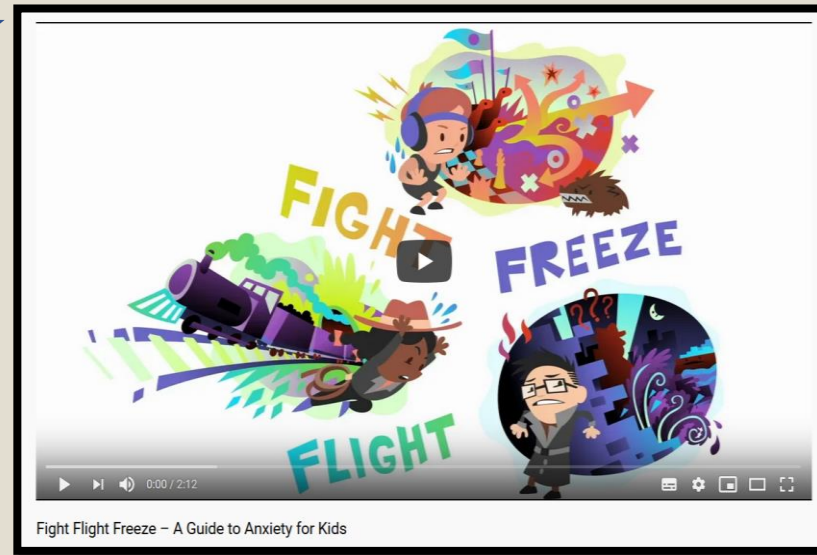
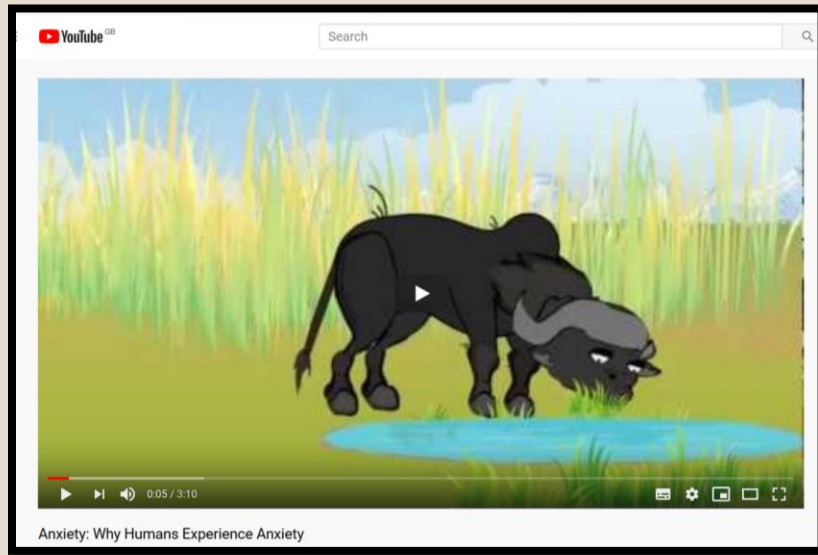
Understand anxiety yourself

Sometimes our brains get it wrong!

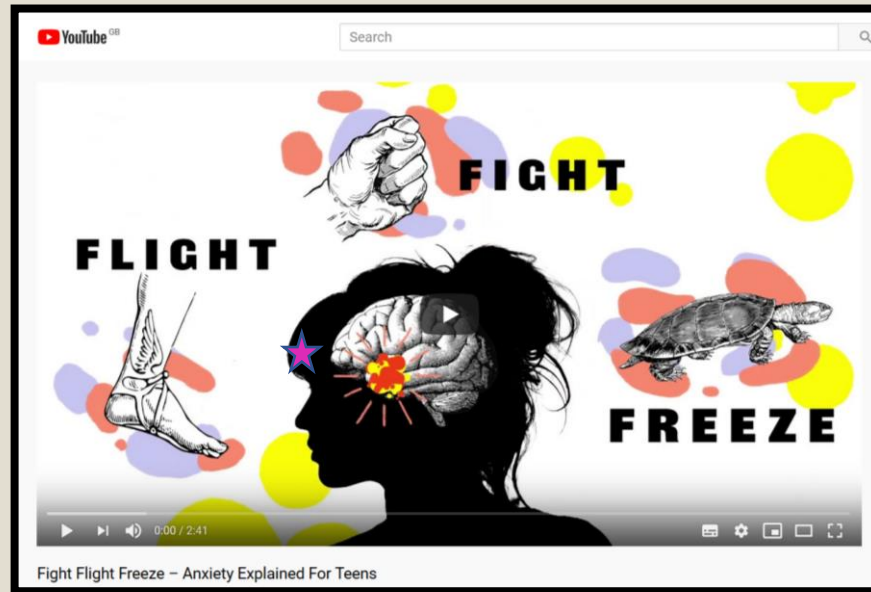


Help them understand what anxiety is too

You may need to explain that some people call this stress or ...



More appropriate for teens ...





Anxiety looks different in different people.



Sometimes when I am anxious you may not know because I...

 smile	 laugh	 joke	 argue	 swear
 slam door	 bang on things	 pace	 run away	 go to the toilet
 distract others	 become unkind	 cannot start tasks	 make up excuses	 slow down

Communication Friendly @SchoolsNlc

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Anxiety looks different in different people.



My brain has to work harder than usual when I am anxious, so things I can usually do may take me longer, or seem more harder, or I may be unable to do them.



When I am anxious I may need...

 time	 to talk	 support from staff	 support from friends	 support from family	 more processing time
 less questions	 fewer instructions	 time for things I enjoy	 more brain breaks	 less demands	 more visuals
 reduce words	 clear routine	 more sleep	 reminded to eat and drink	 help getting organised	 something else

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Teach them what anxiety feels/looks like ...



- **Label** and interpret how you think your child/young person might be feeling
- Appropriate level for child/young person

'I can see you're getting a wee bit anxious/worries/upset because you're picking your fingers/squeezing your face/hitting the table'

Help them understand we all feel anxious ...



Model to normalise anxious (and other) feelings. It can feel very odd to begin with but persevere!

- Think out loud (positive, concrete, literal language)
- Share your own thoughts and feelings to help them understand everyone experiences a range of emotions

'I spilled juice on this drawing and my tummy feels squidgy/in a knot/tight. I'm really upset 'cos you drew it for me'

'my train was late today and my head felt like it was going to explode because I was going to be late for my meeting'

Acknowledge their anxiety








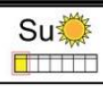
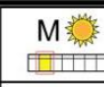
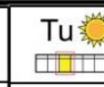
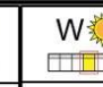
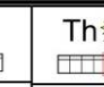

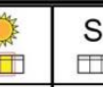


Dealing with Anxiety

Reduce uncertainty. Explain what's going to happen (use visuals)









What?
Why?
Where?
When?
How?

This week I have:

Su 	M 	Tu 	W 	Th 	Fri 	Sa 
						

 Daily Routine	
	Get up, get washed, have breakfast, get dressed (uniform?) <i>(This will help separate days & weekends)</i>
	Exercise Family walk, play in garden or Cosmic Yoga on YouTube
	Task Time Use activities provided by school. <i>(No phones during this time)</i>
	Break Time Children could have a healthy snack & get outside if possible. <i>(don't forget to wash your hands before/after!)</i>
	Creative Time Lego, drawing, crafting, play music, cook, bake, construct
	Lunch Time something to eat & drink <i>(don't forget to wash your hands before/after!)</i>
	Task Time Use activities provided by school. <i>(No phones during this time)</i>
	Joy Time Do something you enjoy for 10 minutes as a reward for all your hard work today

Getting ready for the day

	Wake up!	
	Wash your hands	
	Brush your teeth	
	Get dressed	
	Make your bed	
	Eat your breakfast	
	Check what you need today	
	Get your bag ready	



No surprises!

- Plan
- Prepare
- Practise

No Surprises!
Plan A, B & sometimes C
Let them know what's happening



Plan for my day...

Where.. we are going..


What.. we will do there..


Who.. will be there..


When.. we are going..


  © Worcestershire Speech and Language Therapy 2016



after school club 	art 	assembly 	brush teeth
calm time 	choose 	church 	circle time
computer 	computer suite 	construction 	craft



FREE! - Visual Timetable for Home

★★★★★ (158 member reviews) Free

 breakfast	 brush teeth	 computer	 lunch	 play outside	 milk the dog
 cooking	 dinner	 get up	 painting	 prayers	 bedtime

ink saving Eco

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Communication Friendly Environments

We are here to help you adapt your environment to ensure it is communication friendly. There are lots of ways to do this. We will focus mainly on the use of visuals. Find us on twitter @SchoolsNlc

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excited

Exercise, mindfulness, yoga, relaxation ...

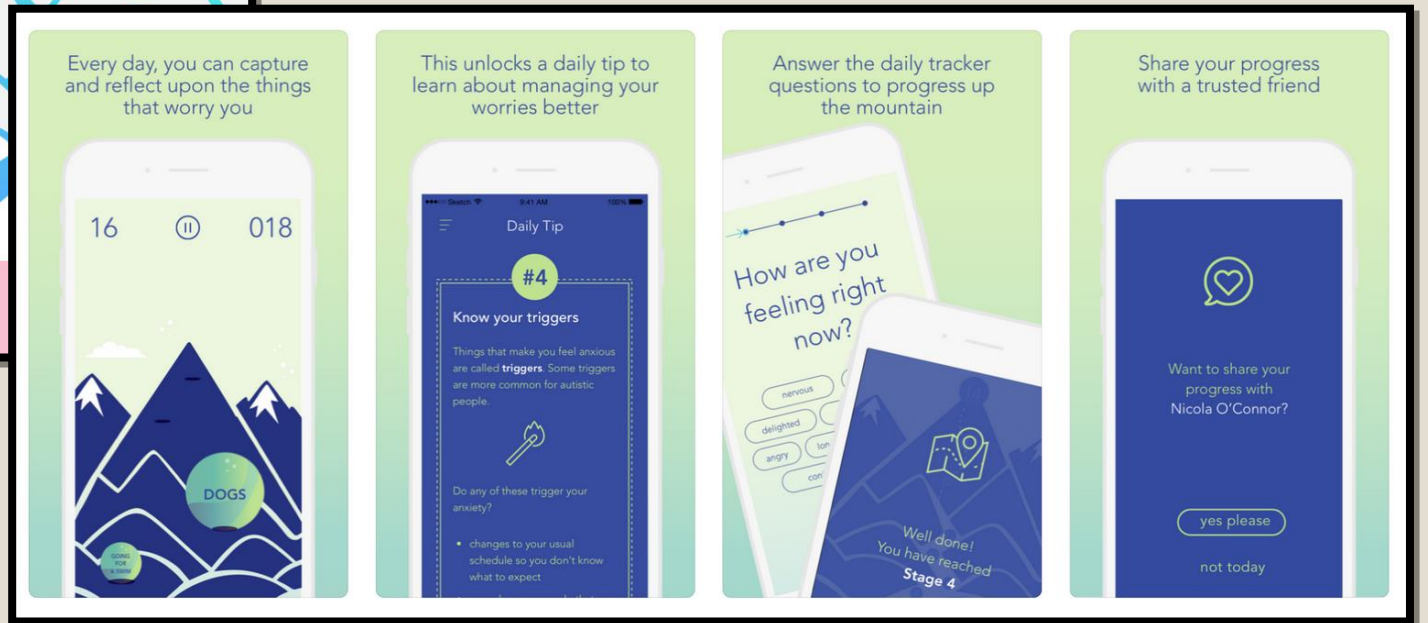
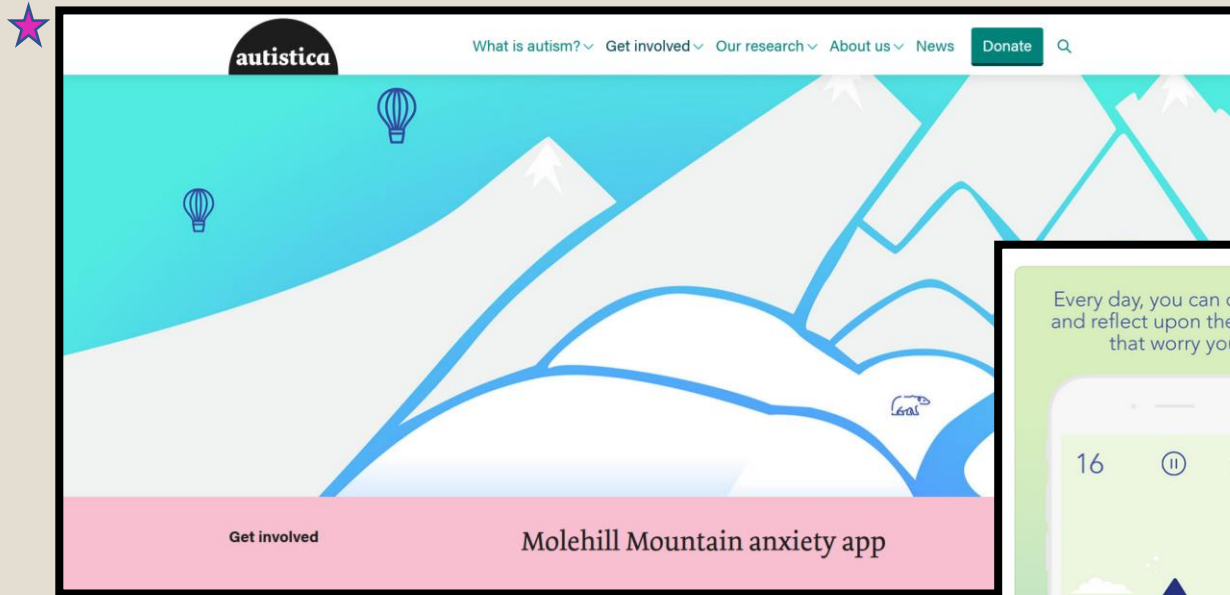
- Exercise helps use up excess adrenaline – yoga, walking, dancing around the room, helping with gardening, housework etc.
- Yoga – more aware of inner feelings/sensations?
- Mindfulness/relaxation – a technique that can help those with anxiety. It's about listening to and accepting your thoughts and feelings. Again, may help interoceptive difficulties.

Keep a diary (you/them)



- Helps you notice patterns
- May help them understand their anxiety and manage it better
- Writing/drawing about situations and how they make them feel helps identify the causes and symptoms of their anxiety
- A daily routine can make the world a more predictable place and reduce anxiety

Use apps



Great (but a 45 min.) watch ...



The screenshot shows the National Autistic Society website. The header includes the organization's logo, navigation links (Community, Work for us, News, Shop, Accessibility options), a 'COLOUR MODE: Vivid' selector, and a 'Sign in or Create account' link. Below the header is a secondary navigation bar with 'Advice and guidance', 'What we do', 'Who we are', and 'How you can help', along with a search icon and a 'Donate' button. The main content area has a purple header with the word 'Anxiety'. Below this, there is a paragraph of text explaining that anyone can experience anxiety, but autistic people may feel more anxious due to social and sensory environments. At the bottom, there are two columns of blue links: 'What is anxiety?', 'How do I know if I am anxious?', 'Why might autistic people experience anxiety?', 'Counselling and therapy', 'Medication', and 'Advice and tips'.

Read about autistic people's experience of anxiety:

- Jamie Knight (2015): [Medication is Scary](#)
- Me Decoded (Helen Needham) (2019): [Facing anxiety - understanding and working around triggers](#)
- Musings of an Aspie (2013): [My Anxiety is not Disordered](#)
- Neurodivergent Rebel (2020): [Autism & Mental Health - My Autistic Anxiety](#)
- Aspergers from the Inside (2016): [Dealing with Anxiety](#)
- Purple Ella: content from [Purple Ella](#) about her life with autism

Finally ... remember all the strengths!



Next sessions

- 7th March
 - 8th May
 - 6th June
-
- What actually is autism?
 - Raising confidence & self-esteem
 - My child struggles to go to school – What can I do?
 - Preparing for transitions
 - Coping during the summer holidays