



Stress and the young person with ASD

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Up to 56% of young people with ASD have a co-morbid diagnosis of Anxiety (Manion Leader & Healy, 2013; Strang et al, 2012). This is more than double the rate of anxiety disorders in their neuro typical peers. This statistic does not take into account the generally high levels of undiagnosed stress that are experienced on a daily basis by young people with ASD.

Young people with ASD often believe that they do not have the time, experience or resources to cope with an activity or situation. This can cause extremely high stress levels. Prolonged exposure to stress can result in anxiety, depression, poor emotional regulation, non-compliance and exacerbation of the autistic presentation (Kim et al., 2000; Sofronoff & Russell, 2005).

With the increasing pressure schools are under to support the young person with ASD to better manage their stress, careful planning needs to be done to ensure adjustments and adaptations are made on a daily basis. With careful consideration, schools can make adaptations within the school environment, the daily routine and structure to better support the highly stressed young person with ASD. With thoughtful planning, schools can begin to identify the early signs of stress and in turn help the young person begin to identify them as well.