



## **Tips for parents of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder**

### What is stress and anxiety?

- Stress is the name for the physiological response that our bodies give when we are in an uncomfortable situation. This stress can cause anxiety.
- Anxiety is a normal, human feeling of fear or panic.
- When we face stressful situations, it can set off our brain's in-built alarm bell system, which tells us something isn't right and that we need to deal with it.
- Our brain wants the difficult situation to go away, so it makes us feel more alert, stops us thinking about other things, and even pumps more blood to our legs to help us run away.
- It is only if our anxieties stop us from doing things that we want or need to do, or the stress response in our body overdevelops, leading to things like panic attacks that we need to start to look at this as an issue.

### Practical tips to help pupils who have stress and anxiety:

- Encourage your child to discuss or write down what is going through their mind when they are in a situation that they find difficult. Keeping a diary can help.
- Try some relaxation techniques – breathing exercises or a technique called visualisation can help, where they imagine a relaxing place and try and calm their thoughts.
- Break down situations that they feel challenging into smaller parts and work on each small part separately.
- Try and help them to keep a healthy lifestyle. Getting enough sleep, eating healthily and doing exercise can all have a positive effect on our brain and help keep our stress levels down.
- Remind your child that everyone will feel some stress and anxiety at some point and that this is completely normal. Feeling stressed or anxious can help us to focus when it is important – such as when we have our GCSE exams.

### Where to find more help and guidance:

- NHS website - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/anxiety-disorders-in-children/>
- MIND - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>
- Young Minds - <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-health-conditions/anxiety/>
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