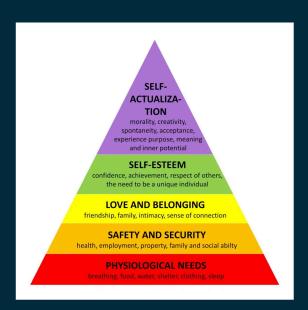
# >>> AUTISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

Why might autistic people be at greater risk to poor mental health? Autistic people:

- can struggle to fit in or make sense of the world, leading to feelings of depression or anxiety
- may face difficulties in getting their mental health needs diagnosed or met
- are likely to face stigma and discrimination
- are likely to be misunderstood about their ambitions, needs and desires
- are less likely to find appropriatre support (Group therapy might not be suitable and therapists might not know how to adapt their approaches)
- have different neurocognitive processes



## Heirachy of needs

The hierarchy of needs for each person is unique and for an autistic person it may look very different to what you expect.

'Good mental health is when you can: cope with the normal stressses of life, learn and work productively, use your talents and abilities'.



#### 8 things that can reduce anxiety



- •Find a safe space
- Use different communication
- Sensory strategies

Deep touch

Fidget toys

Sensory box

Whatever works

- Use technology to assist (communication, diversion or selfmanagement)
- •Try self-soothing strategies
- Cognitive therapies

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•Focus on passions and interests

#### **Belonging**

The need to belong is an intrinsic motivation and primal instinct of humanity. Belonging is the experience of being at home in the social, environmental, organizational, and cultural contexts of one's life.

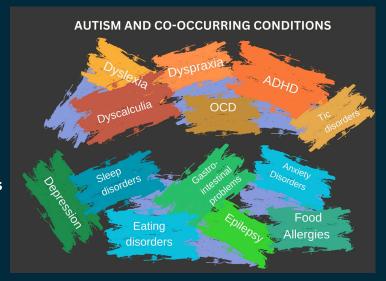
An individual can chose to belong to some groups or identities and other belongings are a result of birth, health or history.

### Who/What do you belong to?



## Anxiety in autism: Why?

- Lack of predictability or sudden, unexpected changes in routine.
- Sensory differences. Certain environments are more stressful for some autistic people than for non-autistic people. (bright lights, strong smells or multiple sound sources).
- Communication differences between autistic people and non-autistic people can fuel social anxiety.
- The need to 'mask' autism.
- Difficulty in understanding your own emotions, (alexithymia).
- Anxiety about specific distressing situations, such as crowds.







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