

# Peer Support Handout: Anxiety & Mental Health

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## Anxiety



Anxiety is a common experience with 40-50% of autistic people receiving a formal diagnosis (NAS, 2023). Anxiety can be experienced in different ways e.g. brain fog, restlessness, disturbed sleep.

Produced by:



**Mental Health  
Equity Project**

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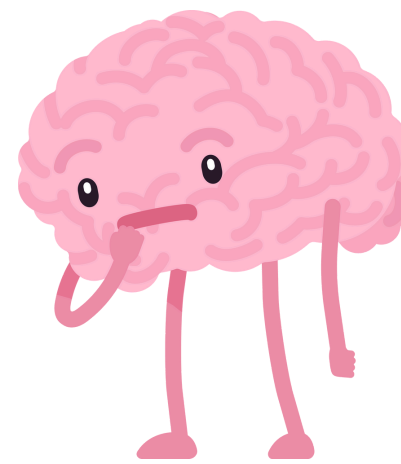
## Sensory Tools



Sensory regulation and meeting our sensory needs can help to alleviate some anxiety. For example, weighted lap pads, familiar smells, breathing exercises.

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## Demand Avoidance



Anxiety can lead to demand avoidance:

- Task paralysis
- Inability to keep routine
- Autistic shutdowns
- Cancelling plans

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## Routine & Change



Routine change can add additional stress and anxiety. Key ways to address routine change anxiety might be:

- 'Worry Time'
- Planning & planned exit
- Familiarities for grounding

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## Unmasking



Taking time to unmasking and engage in special interests, explaining your needs and stimming can help reduce anxiousness and the frequency of burnout.

## Signposting and Additional Resources

**Leeds Recovery College** – An NHS service that runs courses where you can learn more about mental health.

**Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service** – Offer a range of services and support for people struggling with mental health, such as anxiety.

**Live Well Leeds** – Provide a range of services to people with mild to moderate mental health needs, including 1-to-1 support and groups.

Further sources of support can be found in **Leeds Autism AIM's Mental Health Guide:**

<https://leedsautismaim.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/04/Leeds-Autism-AIM-Mental-Health-Guide-v6-April-2023.pdf>

