

Peer Support Handout: Autism, Exercise & Mental Health

1 Autistic experience and exercise



Autistic people can have universal and unique experiences relating to exercise and physical movement. Exercise can help us meet sensory and stimming needs as well as support emotional regulation.

Produced by:



**Mental Health
Equity Project**

2 Barriers



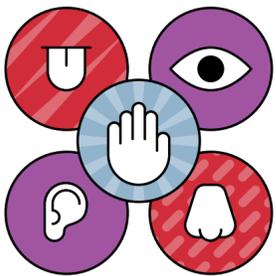
There are multiple barriers autistic people may face with exercise, such as: co-occurring conditions, impacting mobility and energy accounting, nutrition challenges, the gym environment and making time for new activities.

3 Mobility



Autistic people are more susceptible to co-occurring conditions that can decrease energy levels, limit mobility during exercise, or increase injury risk. It is important to understand your own energy and mobility limits.

4 Sensory needs / aids



You may also wish to use certain sensory aids in exercise environments to support you. These might include: headphones, loose clothing, waterproof headphones, or using facilities in off peak / accessible hours.

5 Adjustments



Autistic people have rights to support access to reasonable adjustments to support exercise. These include: quiet warm ups and cool downs, regular breaks, early access to exercise space, and alternative contact methods.

Signposting and Support Resources

Local Organisations, Support, and apps:

- LGBTQ+ events, including yoga, Pilates and ballroom dancing can be found on: <https://leeds-lgbtqcc.co.uk/events/>
- Active Leeds leisure center provide low sensory gym sessions, more information can be found on: <https://active.leeds.gov.uk/classesandactivities/gyms/accessibility-gym>
- Bramley Baths run LGBTQ+ swimming sessions
- Volunteer at Hollybush and take part in their health walks or gardening days. More information can be found at: <https://www.tcv.org.uk/hollybush/volunteer/>
- ACTIVE leeds run accessible classes, such as chair based yoga.
- Horse riding for disabled people: <https://rda.org.uk/>
- Holt Park Active, Mondays 3.45-5.15 - disability gymnastic class
- Find more disability friendly / adapted sports at: <https://active.leeds.gov.uk/classesandactivities/sports/disability-sport>
- Useful Apps include: Sociability, Flaredown and Visible.