

### ***I have concerns about my mental health, or I am concerned about the mental health of my child with autism. What should I do?***

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience the same life stressors as everyone else. In addition, they are also more likely to experience social isolation, peer rejection, difficulties understanding and expressing emotions, unpleasant sensory experiences, and restricted interests and/or repetitive behaviors. Any of these experiences can interfere with the individual's participation in social contexts. As a result, individuals with ASD are more prone to developing mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and eating disorders. Some adolescents and adults who are experiencing mental health problems may be at risk for self-harm or suicide. Youth with ASD are similar to other adolescents in their desire to experiment with smoking, alcohol, and drugs. Becoming addicted to these substances, gambling, and/or other risky behaviors can be even more dangerous and problematic for an individual with ASD due to social isolation and naivety.

If you are concerned that you, or your child, may have a mental health problem, speak to your family doctor as soon as possible.

- It is important to disclose the ASD diagnosis to the professional you are seeking help from because mental health problems can be difficult to diagnose in individuals with ASD.
- Counselling can be very beneficial for individuals with mental health issues (as well as their family) as it can provide coping strategies and other ways to manage stress and anxiety. A combination of medication and counselling may be recommended as the combination of the two are often the most effective form of treatment.
- Interview potential counsellors to ensure that they have experience working with clients with ASD and that they utilize interventions that have demonstrated success in addressing mental health issues.
- In addition, you can request a copy of the document, "Private Practice Psychologists Specializing in Autism" from a Resource Ambassador at The Ability Hub: 403.210.5000, [ambassador@sinneavefoundation.org](mailto:ambassador@sinneavefoundation.org)
- Talk to your doctor about medications that may be helpful to address issues such as anxiety, depression, attentional problems, aggressive behaviour, and issues with sleeping and eating. Be clear with your health professional about what problems you are, or your child is, experiencing, including when and where the symptoms are most severe (e.g., school, home, the shopping mall). Also make sure to ask about any potential side effects of the medications.
- It is important to take all medications as directed or they may not be effective.
- It may take several weeks for medications to take effect so it is helpful to keep track of any changes that occur when starting a new medication.

## RESOURCES

The Resource Centre (a Sinneave Family Foundation initiative) does not endorse or guarantee the exhaustive, complete, accurate or up-to-date nature of information provided and does not assume any risk for the outcome of information or referrals provided.

### **ASD Mental Health Blog**

The aim of this blog is to share research regarding mental health and ASD with a diverse audience.

**Phone:** 416.736.2100 Extension 22987

**Address:** York University, 4700 Keele Street, BSB 250, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3

**Email:** [tablonp@yorku.ca](mailto:tablonp@yorku.ca)

**Website:** [asdmentalhealth.blog.yorku.ca/](http://asdmentalhealth.blog.yorku.ca/)

### **Alberta Health Services - Access Mental Health**

Assists members of the community to navigate the addiction and mental health system and ensure the clients get to the right service at the right time.

**Phone:** 403.943.1500, Ext 1 (Child & Adolescent Services), 403.943.1500 Ext 2 (Adult & Senior Services)  
**Email:** [mental.health@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:mental.health@albertahealthservices.ca)  
**Website:** [albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=2381&serviceAtFacilityID=1019446](http://albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=2381&serviceAtFacilityID=1019446)

### **Anxiety Canada**

An online educational resource with information regarding anxiety and mental health and various treatments including cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), tools and tips.

**Phone:** 604.620.0744  
**Address:** 311 - 409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2  
**Website:** [anxietycanada.com](http://anxietycanada.com)

### **Arnika Centre**

A community based mental health service for persons 16 years and older with an intellectual disability and a mental health concern. A referral from a family doctor is required.

**Phone:** 403.943.8301  
**Address:** Ground Floor, 3465 - 26 Avenue, Calgary AB T1Y 6L4  
**Website:** [albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1060552&serviceAtFacilityID=1095165](http://albertahealthservices.ca/findhealth/Service.aspx?id=1060552&serviceAtFacilityID=1095165)

### **Calgary Distress Centre**

Provides crisis support, professional counselling, and referrals to social services at no cost.

**Phone:** 403.266.HELP (4357) - (24 hour crisis line), Administration 403.266.1601 Youth Program 403.264.8337  
**Address:** 300, 1010 - 8th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2P 1J2  
**Email:** [info@distresscentre.com](mailto:info@distresscentre.com)  
**Website:** [distresscentre.com](http://distresscentre.com)

### **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**

Offers mental health interventions, education, and support for caregivers. Fees based on a sliding scale, and no one is refused due to financial reasons. They also have an 8-week Capable Careers Group (psycho-educational) for family and friends of adults with a mental illness.

**Phone:** 403.297.1700  
**Email:** [info@cmha.calgary.ab.ca](mailto:info@cmha.calgary.ab.ca)  
**Website:** [cmha.calgary.ab.ca/](http://cmha.calgary.ab.ca/)

### **Dr. Katelyn Lowe, Registered Psychologist**

*MindBalance for ASD* is a program that was developed to help individuals and their families learn to identify and manage anxiety using effective strategies such as cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness-based interventions.

**Phone:** 403.968.3012

**Email:** [katelyn.lowe@livingasd.ca](mailto:katelyn.lowe@livingasd.ca)

**Website:** [livingasd.ca](http://livingasd.ca)

### **Psychologists Association of Alberta**

Professional association for psychologists working in Alberta. Offers a referral service and assistance in selecting psychologists with specialization in a variety of issues.

**Phone:** 780.424.0294 or 1.888.424.0297

**Address:** Unit 103, 1207 - 91 Street SW, Edmonton, AB T6X 1E9

**Website:** [psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/](http://psychologistsassociation.ab.ca/)

Last Updated January 2019