RUTGERS

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

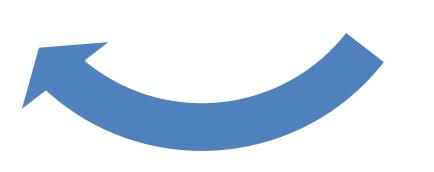
Anxiety in ASD:

What is the connection? **Anxiety overlaps the core** symptoms of ASD, so it often goes undiagnosed





Anxiety



Effectively treating anxiety

may decrease the

core signs of ASD

Socialization Problems

Decrease in social connectedness such as making less eye contact or acting more withdrawn.

Sleep Disturbances

Common Anxiety Triggers in Children with ASD:

• Sensory Over-Responsivity For example: loud noises (fire alarms, school bells) or sensory stimuli (hair cuts, fabric tags)

Anxiety of Uncertainty For example: changes in their routine or environment or visiting new places



The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program

Anxiety in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Guidance for Parents and Caregivers. Melanie Niederhauser, MSN, RN, CPNP-PC, CCRC

Separation Problems

"Clinginess"

Not wanting to separate from mom or dad.

Gastrointestinal Symptoms

Stomach aches constipation, nausea or diarrhea. **Feeding difficulties.**

Bedtime resistance, trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.

Recognizing Anxiety in Children with ASD

Troublesome **Behaviors**

Defiance, aggression, tantrums, or disruptive behavior.

Aches and Pains

Somatic complaints such as headaches, chest pain, a "racing heart" or fatigue.

Repetitive **Behaviors**

Rituals, skin picking, pulling out hair, or hand flapping.





Anxiety: Best Practices for Parents and Caregivers

PREPARE

Social stories may be helpful to decrease anxiety of uncertainty.

- the doctor or a trip.
- Scan the QR code for more information and examples of social stories:
- Calendars or schedules may be useful for older kids to prepare for changes or events

PRACTICE

Prepare in advance for upcoming stressful situations.

- While you are there, explain what will happen during the actual visit.

Deep breathing exercises can help to decrease anxiety and only take about a minute. Scan the QR code for more information on deep breathing exercises:

Other coping strategies include:

- Listening to relaxing music.
- **Practice positive self-talk.**
- Playing with a familiar toy.

TREAT

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- CBT is talk-therapy that is delivered by a trained health care professional.
- realize how their thoughts affect their feelings and behaviors.
- Parents can learn CBT strategies to help their kids manage anxiety.
- Some schools offer CBT-based therapy.



Social stories are printed narratives containing pictures or details of an upcoming event like a visit to

For example, if going to the dentist causes anxiety, ask to visit on a day when it's calm and quiet.

COPE

• CBT is a first line treatment for anxiety because it helps create life-long coping skills that help kids to





