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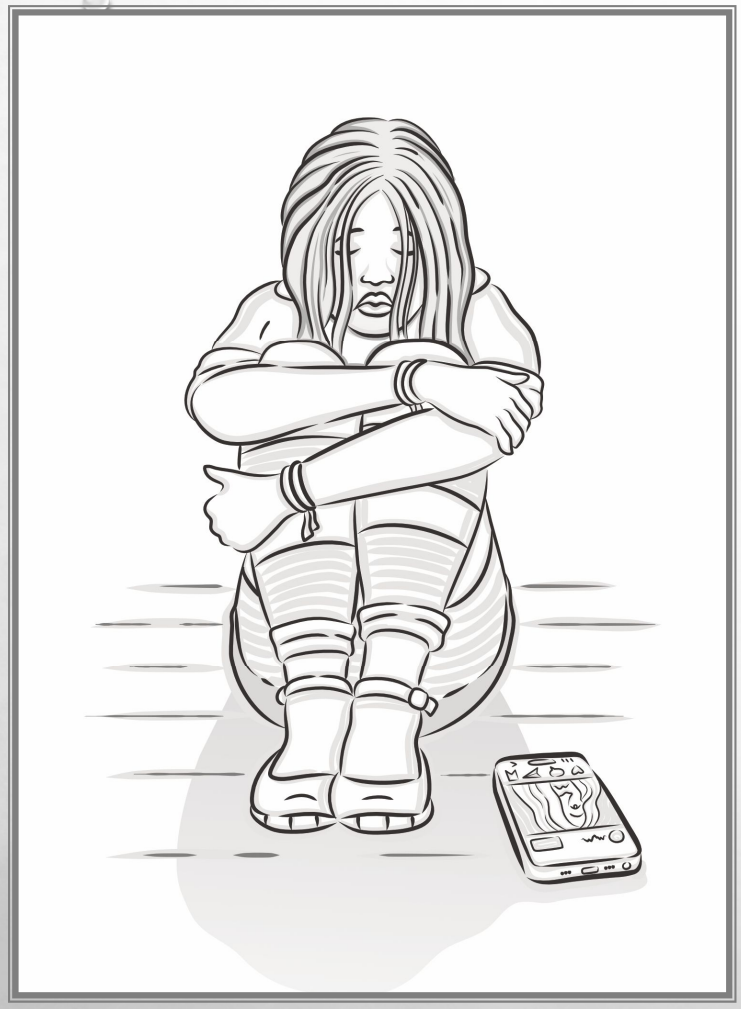
Leicestershire Partnership
NHS Trust

AUTISM AND DEPRESSION

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OVERVIEW



1. What are the common causes of depression?
2. How to spot the signs that an autistic teenager/young adult is depressed.
3. Talking to an autistic teenager/young adult about their depression.
4. Things you can do at home and at school to help.

ABOUT ALISON

SALT

DMU

Autism

Learning Disabilities



SALT

LPT

Adults

Mental health

ABOUT MICHELLE



Health

Psychology

Developmental

Social

Qual methods

Sociology

Children/childhood

Health & illness

NHS

CAMHS

Ethics

FYPC

DEPRESSION



There are many symptoms of depression, including low mood, feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, lack of energy, decreased pleasure in activities and problems with sleep. The more symptoms someone has, the more likely they are to be depressed.



(source: NHS)

AUTISM AND DEPRESSION

- While depression is often co-occurring with ASD, it is not necessarily a feature of ASD. You can be autistic and not depressed.

- Depression most common associated mental health condition with autism (and the general population)

ADOLESCENCE



Trend is for decreased difficulties in adolescence but new challenges can emerge;

e.g., physical changes, compulsive behaviours, transitions, behaviours that challenge and increased awareness of differences

POSSIBLE CAUSES

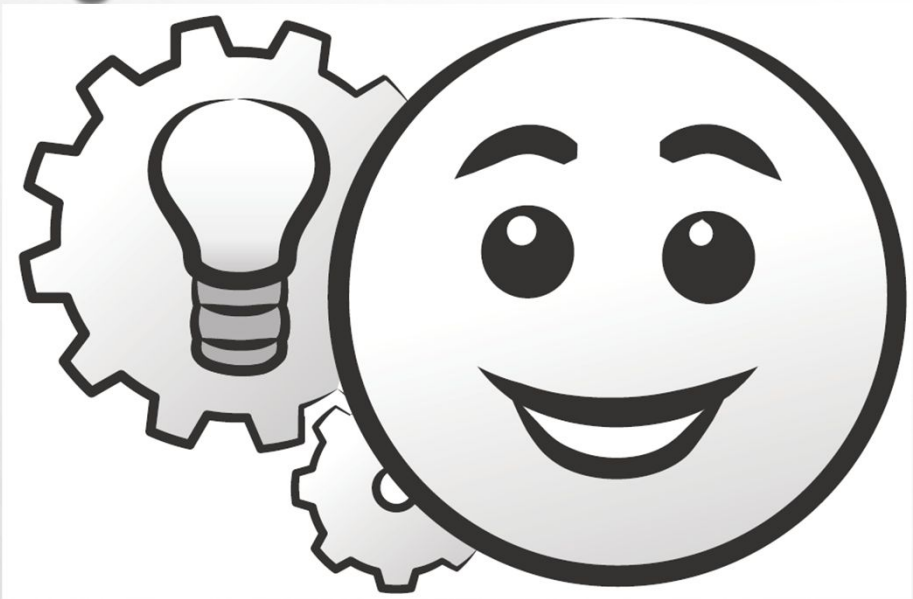
- Family history/genetics
- Challenges associated with school – academic demand, time pressure, demands on self-care and sensory issues.
- Peer issues, bullying and social isolation
- Gender - masking behaviours in females (consequences)
- Increased insight into differences to peers and norms
- Possible trauma, and adverse childhood experiences

SPOTTING THE SIGNS - CHALLENGING

- Reliant on expressive skills and ability to identify changes: non-verbal and verbal
- Parents, educators and the person: “knowing the child’s normal” and having a baseline
- Looking for changes in behaviour from their normal.
- Sleeping more

CONTINUED

- Less pleasure in special interests
- Increasing social withdrawal, increasing self-soothing activities that appear to be controlling the person rather than controlled by the person
- Changes in the level of functioning (e.g., personal hygiene)
- In some cases, unusual features, such as catatonia



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Talk or just sit with them regularly – ‘be with’ moments that are talk free.
- Teach self-acceptance
- Communicate using the style that works best.
- Know their normal – be aware of subtle changes especially in NVC.
- Access social groups for autistic people
- Use visual aids – timetable, planning, calendars
- Seek professional help if needed



CONTINUED

- Functions of behaviour if challenging – start ABC monitoring
- Protectors and triggers: know what soothes and what triggers for the person
- Structured activities – build in control over planned events
- Build in choices – for empowerment & autonomy
- Buddy the person with someone form a different same year group.
- Quiet/ time-out spaces – reduce stimuli



USEFUL SOURCES OF SUPPORT

- Autism groups – social groups for young people
- Carers/parents' groups – support for families of children & teens with autism
- Charities, for example the National Autistic Society
- On-line chat rooms and discussion forums for autistic individuals and their families.
- Social media forums, e.g., Twitter

CONCLUSIONS

Depression can come and go. It is not a necessary feature of autism.

If present, depression needs to be addressed separately (but understood within the context of autism)

There is help for depression; it does not have to be seen as permanent.

Adolescence is a challenging time for many autistic individuals, because of the changes in societal expectation.

The most valuable protector for autistic people is acceptance.


thanks