

# Neurodivergence & Depression

This factsheet is for neurodivergent adults, parents & carers and professionals who would like to know more about why neurodivergent people are likely to experience depression.



Depression can have wide ranging impacts on the life of a neurodivergent (ND) person, and ND people are more likely to suffer from depression than others. ND people with depression may become very withdrawn and neglect their self-care, but the condition can be managed in many ways.

## What is Depression?

Depression is a mental health condition that leaves sufferers feeling down and unhappy for long periods, often for no obvious reason or trigger. As with mental health conditions, the effects and severity of depression vary hugely between different people.

## Why do ND people experience depression?

Neurodivergent people are particularly likely to suffer from depression. There are many reasons for this, including being aware of being different and struggling to fit in and be accepted, a tendency to over analyse and focus on negative experiences, difficulty in managing their own emotions and perhaps having been bullied.

Depression has a wide range of possible effects on the life of the sufferer. It can be closely linked to anxiety and leave you feeling helpless and worthless. Depression can make it hard to motivate yourself to do anything, even essential self-care like washing and eating. Combined with possible neurodivergent inertia, a condition common among ND people that makes it hard to get started on tasks, an ND person with depression can easily fail to take proper care of themselves, leading to other health conditions. Neurodivergent people with depression may also withdraw from social situations (which anyway many ND people such as autistic people find very difficult in any case) and become more prone to repetitive actions. In severe cases, neurodivergent people with depression may attempt to self-harm.

## What are the strategies to combat depression?

Just as depression may exhibit itself differently in different people, what works to help overcome depression also varies from person to person. Strategies that can help include:

### Medication

Sometimes an imbalance of chemicals in the brain can enhance depression, and this can be addressed with anti-depressants.

### Therapy

Sometimes having a non-judgmental person to discuss concerns and strategies with can be helpful, but be sure that the therapist has an understanding of autism.

### Pleasure

Exercise, routines, fidget toys, time doing things you enjoy and that relax you and being kind to yourself can all help.

