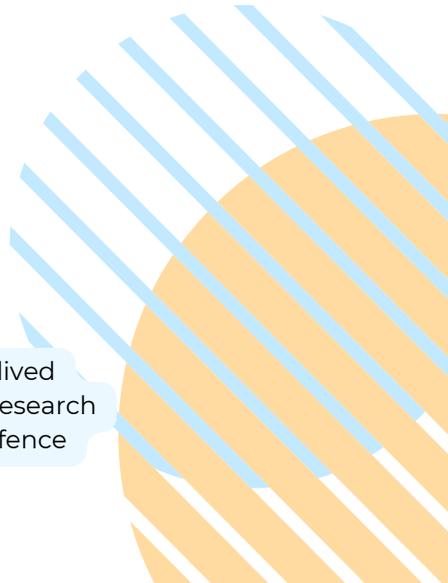


# MANAGING EMOTIONS AND ANXIETIES

A quick, positive guide that helps autistic teens and young adults understand anxiety, spot triggers, and use simple tools to feel calmer and more in control. It's supportive, practical, and designed to make everyday life feel a little easier.



The language and terminology used in this resource has been carefully co-produced with individuals with lived experience and are what we believe to be the most up to date terms at the time of production, based on our research and professional experience. This may not reflect everyone's experience but, we do not wish to cause any offence



# ANXIETY & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- **Anxiety** is a natural response to stress or perceived danger.
- Neurotypical anxiety is more likely to be about something that might happen.
- Autistic anxiety is often more of a direct response to unpredictability or tangible sensory or cognitive overload for example. Autistic people may have a higher baseline anxiety level than non-autistic people.
- Anxiety can make it more difficult to regulate emotions.
- **Emotional regulation** is the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in healthy and adaptive ways.
- Autistic people may experience differences in sensory processing, communication, and social interaction which can make it more challenging to identify, express, and manage emotions.
- It's important to remember that every autistic person is unique, and their experiences with anxiety and emotions can vary widely.



## HOW THEY ARE CONNECTED

Anxiety and emotional regulation are interconnected in various ways e.g.:

- Intense sensory experiences or a build up of sensory experiences e.g. a bright lights, very loud noises and crowded environments can lead to sensory overload (when the brain receives more information than it can process). This can cause considerable anxiety and can make emotional regulation very difficult. Sensory overload can trigger a meltdown or a shutdown.
- Impact of communication and social challenges - social situations can be anxiety provoking as they can be unpredictable, daunting and overwhelming for some. This can cause anxiety about entering social situations or communicating.



# UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS

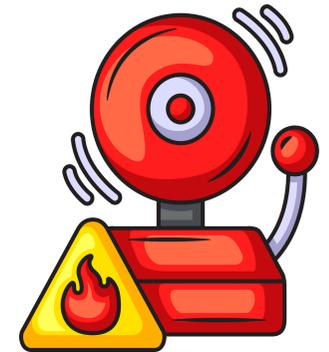
Triggers are events or situations that can lead to heightened anxiety or emotional distress. These can be internal (thoughts, feelings) or external (environmental factors).

## COMMON TRIGGERS

- Sensory overload (e.g., loud noises, bright lights)
- Unpredictable changes in routine
- Communication difficulties or misunderstandings

## EXAMPLES OF TRIGGERS

- A fire alarm going off unexpectedly
- A sudden change in plans without warning
- Difficulty understanding social cues in a conversation



# TIPS FOR ANXIETY AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION

- Create a plan- Whether that is simply how to get from A-B or what your going to have for lunch. Having a plan can make things easier for you.
- Have tools with you- Use headphones if load noises causes sensory overload, wear sun glasses if bright lights trigger you and have fidget toys with you if it helps you focus on tasks.

