

# Autism and Mental HealthCare

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GCA 4TH ANNUAL ADULT AUTISM SYMPOSIUM

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## Objectives

- Describe mental health and wellness
  - Protective Factors and Risk Factors
  - ASD specific risk factors
- Identify various types of mental health supports and interventions
- List barriers to accessing supports
- Tips and resources for accessing supports

# Mental Wellness

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## MENTAL WELLNESS/ MENTAL HEALTH

According to the World Health Organization, mental wellness is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

<https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/intervention/definitions/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health,to%20his%20or%20her%20community.%E2%80%9D>


# Mental Wellness

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## What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

Centre for Mental Health 

### Mental health spectrum

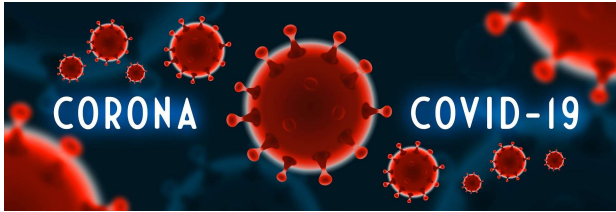


healthy coping struggling unwell

© Centre for Mental Health 2017 [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk)

<https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/mental-health-among-children-and-young-people>

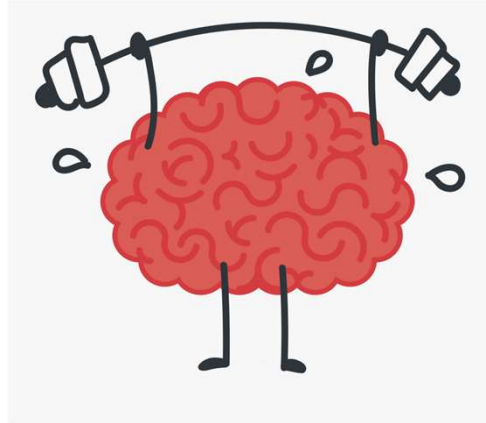
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CORONA COVID-19

## Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events.



<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>

## Protective Factors

- Biophysical
- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual



<https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/prevention/risk-and-protective-factors/>

# Mental Health

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## Adapting to adversity

Resilience is the ability to adapt to difficult situations. When stress, adversity or trauma strikes, you still experience anger, grief and pain, but you're able to keep functioning — both physically and psychologically. However, resilience isn't about putting up with something difficult, being stoic or figuring it out on your own. In fact, being able to reach out to others for support is a key part of being resilient.

## Resilience and mental health

Resilience can help protect you from various mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. Resilience can also help offset factors that increase the risk of mental health conditions, such as being bullied or previous trauma. If you have an existing mental health condition, being resilient can improve your coping ability.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/in-depth/resilience/art-20046311#:~:text=Resilience%20can%20help%20protect%20you,being%20bullied%20or%20previous%20trauma.>

# Mental Health

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Risk factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.



<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>

## Risk Factors

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- Biophysical
- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual

<https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/prevention/risk-and-protective-factors/>

## Risk Factors

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### *Co-occurring Diagnosis*

**Bipolar disorder: 7.3% in individuals with ASD and just 0.9% in controls**

**Depression: 54.1% and 28.9%, respectively**

**Anxiety disorder: 50.0% and 22.2%, respectively**

**Patients with ASD were fully nine times more likely than controls to have clinically diagnosed bipolar disorder (hazard ratio, 9.34) and roughly three times more likely to be diagnosed with depression (HR, 2.81) or anxiety (HR, 3.45).**

*Kirsch AC et al. JAMA Pediatr 2019 Dec 2*

<https://www.watch.org/na/0475/2019/12/16/autism-spectrum-disorder-and-comorbid-mood-and-anxiety>

# Risk Factors

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## *Co-occurring Diagnosis*

Until recently, suicidality in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was rarely discussed. A cluster of recent articles, including an article by Culpin et al.<sup>1</sup> in this issue, has highlighted not only that suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts can occur in adolescents and young adults with ASD, but also that suicidality is likely more common in ASD than in the general population.

The emerging studies indicate that the increased risk of self-injurious behavior in younger and less cognitively able children with ASD<sup>3,4</sup> is matched by an increased risk of suicidality in those at a more advanced developmental level.

[J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry. 2018 May;57\(5\):302-303. doi: 10.1016/j.jaac.2018.03.003.](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.03.003)  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29706156>

# Mental Health

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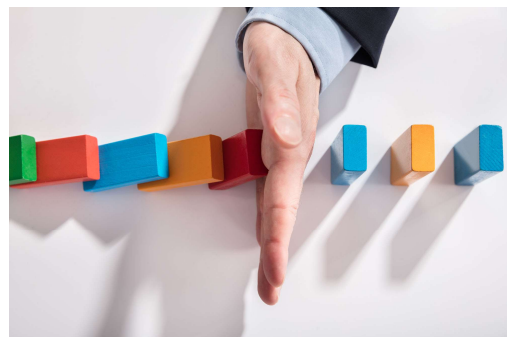
# Mental Health Interventions and Supports

TYPES OF SUPPORTS & INTERVENTIONS

## Interventions and Support

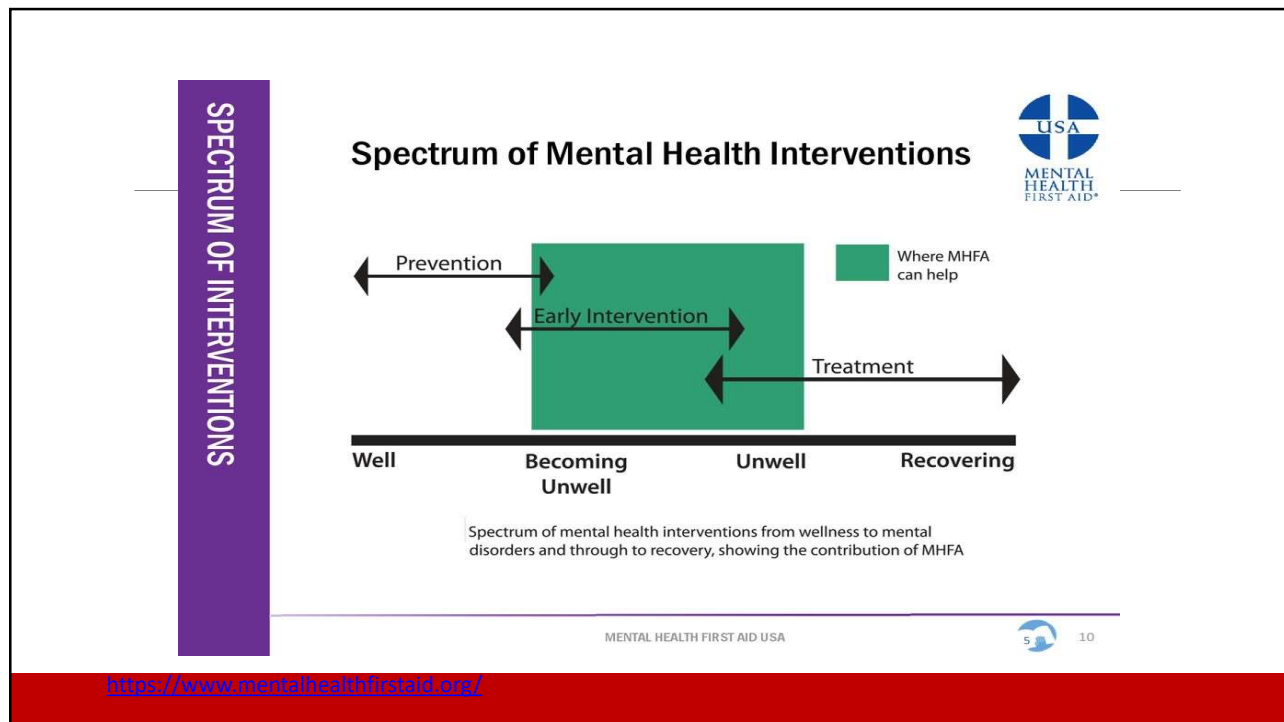
### *INTERVENTION*

Intervention is the act of recognizing a problem and doing something to stop the problem from becoming worse and to begin the act of being well/recovering.



<https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/intervention/definitions/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health,to%20his%20or%20her%20community.%E2%80%9D>





## Intervention and Supports

### Self Help/Self Management

- Coping Skills
- Apps
- Leisure Activities
- Boundary setting
- Peer groups
- Community or social involvement





## Intervention and Supports

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- Support Groups
- Social/Life Skills Training
- Psychotherapy or Talk Therapy
- Medication Management
- Outpatient Services
- Hospitalization
- Partial Hospitalization
- Crisis Intervention

<https://www.americanmentalwellness.org/intervention/definitions/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20World%20Health,t%20this%20is%20the%20community%20is%20>

## Intervention and Supports

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- Most interventions are most successful when paired with other interventions and supports
- Mental Wellness is a spectrum and is not linear
- We may require different supports during different parts of our lives depending on what is going on

## Interventions and Supports

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### Common needs of individuals with ASD

- Risk factors or lack of protective factors specifically in due to biopsychocial and social factors
- Organic or psychiatric diagnosis
- Support with anxiety or need for additional coping skills
- Support with romantic and personal relationships
- Advocacy skills
- Need for skills training
- Employment, financial security and basic needs
- Discrimination, lack of inclusion or accommodations

## Barriers to Accessing Supports

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## Barriers to Accessing Supports

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- Lack of trained professionals
- Funding/Insurance
- Lack of education on the needs of individuals on the spectrum
- Exclusionary policy
- Lack of preventative and support services



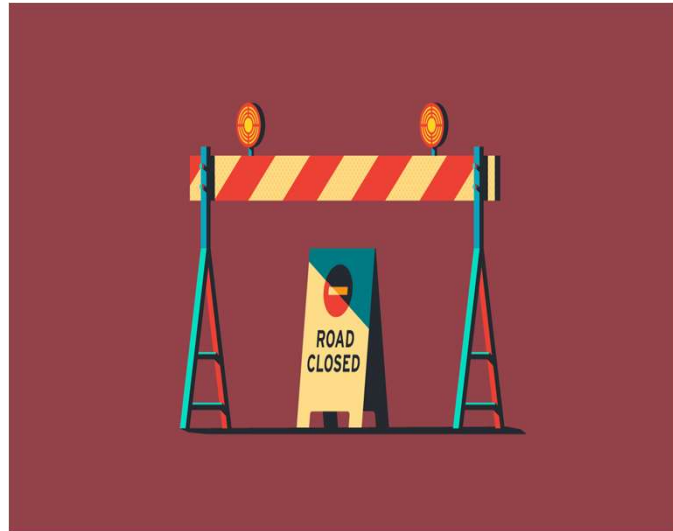
## Barriers to Accessing Supports

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- Adverse outcomes when crisis intervention is needed
- Under or Misdiagnosis of mental health needs
- Stigma
- Challenges navigating service systems



What are some  
other barriers  
to accessing  
services?



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# Accessing Services and Supports

TIPS AND RESOURCES

## Accessing Services and Supports

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- Check with your insurance provider
- Ask friends and peers
- Ask current providers
- Directories for Mental Health Providers
  - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists>
  - <https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>

## Accessing Services and Supports

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- Local Community Service Boards or county/state mental health providers
  - GA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Peer or Support Groups
- Local autism groups or centers
- Local National Alliance on Mental Illness ( NAMI) groups

## Accessing Services and Supports

- Mobile Applications
- Telehealth Services
- State or National Crisis Lines

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## Accessing Services and Supports

**A CRISIS HAS NO SCHEDULE**



Help is available 24/7 for problems with developmental disabilities, mental health, drugs, or alcohol.

Provided through the Georgia Collaborative ASO

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-8255





## Accessing Services and Supports

### • Ask potential provider questions

- How often would you anticipate seeing me? For how long?
- How do you set up counseling goals? What are they like? What is success for you?
- What is typical session like? How long are the sessions?
- What kind of homework/reading do you give patients?
- How do I prepare for my first session?
- What are your strengths and limitations as a counselor?
- What is your general philosophy and approach to helping? Are you more directive or more guiding?
- Have you been in therapy yourself? How recently?
- How often do you seek peer consultation?

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2016/03/03/the-14-questions-you-must-ask-a-therapist-before-your-first-appointment/>

## Accessing Services and Supports



1. What are your Autistic clients' common treatment goals?
2. Tell me about your office space.
3. I'm not sure I can tolerate talking to a new person for 45 minutes. What can you do to help me get comfortable?

<https://reifpsychservices.com/find-a-therapist-for-autistic-adults/>

## Resources

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### The Center for START Services

- <https://www.centerforstartservices.org/>

### The National Association of Dual Diagnosis

- <http://thenadd.org/>

### Mental Health America

- <https://www.mhanational.org/>

### National Alliance on Mental Illness

- <https://www.nami.org/Home>

### Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC)

- <https://iacc.hhs.gov/>
- [https://iacc.hhs.gov/meetings/working-group-meetings/2019/health-outcomes/workshop/may21/materials\\_052119.pdf](https://iacc.hhs.gov/meetings/working-group-meetings/2019/health-outcomes/workshop/may21/materials_052119.pdf)

## Resources

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### Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)

- <https://www.aane.org/misdiagnosis-co-occurring-condition/>

### Chattanooga Autism Center

- <https://www.chattanoogaautismcenter.org/>

### American Association of Suicidology

- <https://suicidology.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Autism-Crisis-Supports-FINAL.pdf>

### National Suicide Prevention hotline

- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



## Contact

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<https://www.synergybehaviorconsulting.com/>

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