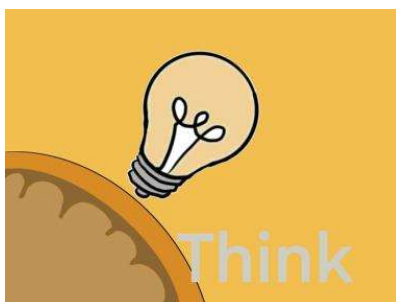


Suicidal Thoughts

Autistic people think about suicide and die by suicide at higher rates compared to their non-autistic peers. Depression or other underlying mental illness, social isolation, trauma and difficult life events can be triggers for suicidal thoughts. Autistic people may face additional challenges that increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or suicide, such as the physical and mental costs of masking their autism, the experience of stigma, delays in receiving a diagnosis, poor physical health, difficulty finding employment and difficulty accessing support services.



Autistic people may or may not share their suicidal thoughts with others. Sometimes Autistic people find it difficult to let go of thoughts and ideas that are going round in their head. This can increase their sense of overwhelm and decrease their ability to focus on anything else. Autistic people may process emotions differently and may feel or describe emotions in unexpected ways.



Talking about feelings can be difficult. Autistic people may find it especially difficult to describe how they feel. Some Autistic people may find it difficult to speak when they are distressed. Given that suicide is a major cause of premature death among Autistic people, it is important to take an Autistic person seriously if they express suicidal thoughts.



Listen to the Autistic person without judging or trying to fix their situation. Give them plenty of time to process and express how they feel without interrupting them – don't feel pressurised into filling the silence. Reflecting that thoughts and feelings may be distressing but do not have to be acted upon may support the individual to manage their distress. If someone is expressing suicidal thoughts, contact 999 if there is an immediate risk or contact their GP or services such as The Samaritans (tel. 116 123) or the National Suicide Prevention Helpline (tel. 0800 689 5652). Both these services are open all day, every day.