

Module 7: Anxiety and Autism

How People with Autism React When They Are Anxious:

- They may shut down or withdraw from human contact.
- Overt physical agitation due to an inability to cope with a given situation.
- It may become extremely difficult to communicate with the person.
- Anxiety may drive a verbal or physical outburst.
- They may return to a familiar self-calming routine.
- The person with autism may become so distressed that they experience a meltdown resulting in a total loss of behaviour control. This should not be confused with a tantrum which is often thrown to achieve a specific goal.
- In the case of people with higher functioning autism where “social anxiety” is an issue, they may overcompensate for their lack of natural social skills or may withdraw completely from that social situation.