

Getting Help:

“The way my depression manifests makes it easy to hide from others, I spent many years not getting help. But getting help gave me coping skills I didn’t have before. I still struggle to talk about my feelings, but I know when I do they will be heard. If you are struggling with depression you should seek help. It might surprise you.”

Asking for help when you’re experiencing depression can be hard! Here is some info and tips from autistic youth about getting mental health support:

I need help; where can I get it?



Family doctor (GP) or walk in medical clinic

(<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner>)



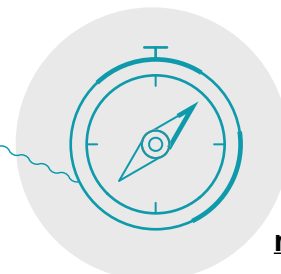
Youth Wellness Hubs

(<https://youthhubs.ca/en/>)



Crisis supports

(<https://helpahead.ca/resources/?services-for&service-type=crisis-line&service-area=&search=#library-form>)

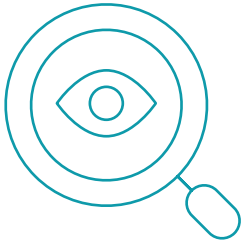


Service navigators

Provide information and make connection with resources

mental health service navigation
(<https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=family-navigation-project>)

Autism service navigation
(<https://dev.autismontorio.com/programs-services/under-18/service-navigators>)



Who can you see?

There are many different types of mental health professionals that can support you, including:

Family Doctor (GP) – medical doctor who can diagnose mental health problems and prescribe medication. Sometimes they will refer you to a mental health specialist.

Psychiatrist – medical doctor who specializes in mental health. They can diagnose mental health problems, prescribe medication, and some provide talk therapy.

Psychologist – can diagnose mental health problems and provide talk therapy.

Counsellor, Social Worker, Psychotherapist – can provide talk therapy. There are other helpful options too, including: peer support, life coach, etc.



Remember:

All healthcare providers should treat you with kindness and respect.

Sometimes, autistic youth need to meet with a few mental health professionals before they find a good fit.

You need to feel safe and comfortable working with your mental health professional.

If you do not feel this way, you can ask to see someone else.

Not everyone can express or communicate their feelings and experiences. Caregivers may need to be involved and help by communicating what they see.



Who will be at your appointment?

At the visit, you may meet with a mental health professional and/or a trainee.

It's often helpful to have people who know you well, like your family/friends, come with you to help you describe your experiences and/or help with communicating with the mental health professional.

It's your choice if you would like to have other people involved in your mental health care.



What will a mental health professional do?

Your mental health professional will ask you questions about your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Ask you to complete medical testing, like a physical exam and/or bloodwork. This is done to help understand what may be causing your depressive symptoms and the best way to help you.

May ask you to complete questionnaire(s). This information will help them decide what treatment may be most effective for you.

May ask about whether you feel safe and if you have had any thoughts about harming yourself or others. These are standard questions that are part of the mental health assessment. These questions can help you develop a plan to keep safe during a crisis and identify supports.

Discuss different treatment options with you. This may include talk therapy, peer support groups, and/or medication.

You may hear about a commonly used form of talk therapy called cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). In CBT, you find out how the way you think about things is impacting how you're feeling.

Tips from Youth for Youth:



Tips to help you prepare:

It can be hard to remember everything you want to tell the mental health professional during the session.

You may find it helpful to bring written notes, audio recordings, or other augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices with you.

It can also be helpful to write down ways that you like to communicate with other people and other important information that will allow your mental health professional to best help you.

Some questionnaires ask if you hear noises that other people do not hear and/or if you see things that other people cannot see. These questions are to let the mental health professional know if you are experiencing symptoms of psychosis.

Lots of autistic people notice aspects of their environment that other people do not notice. If you are unsure if you are experiencing psychosis and/or autistic sensory sensitivities, let the mental health professional know that you're unsure so that your experiences can be accurately represented.



Tips that may help during your appointment:

Sometimes youth have a hard time recognizing or explaining what they're feeling. If that happens to you, you can say: "It is hard for me to answer open-ended questions like: 'How are you feeling?'" It is easier to answer specific questions like: 'What made you happy this week?'

Filling out forms might be helpful if it is hard to talk about things face to face. Completing some questionnaires can also be challenging and/or frustrating because experiences do not always fit neatly into the boxes they give you.

If you're having a hard time answering some of the questions, you can leave them blank and write or tell your answer to the mental health professional instead.

When the mental health professional speaks with you about different options, it can be useful to ask them to tell you what the advantages and/or disadvantages of each option are. This can be a helpful strategy to work together to think through what may be the best option for you.