

Church For Everyone – Autism Community

Autism and Anxiety: Part 3 – Q&A
Stewart

April 2024

Agenda

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| 1. 11.00 – 11.05 | Welcome and introduction |
| 2. 11.05 – 11.45 | Anxiety – Part 3 – Q&A |
| 3. 11.45 – 11.55 | BBC Service |
| 4. 11.55 – 12.00 | AOB |
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| 12.00 - 12.30 | Social time for those who wish to stay on. |

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Challenges in
recognising, expressing,
describing emotions

What can help people who suffer from anxiety yet also have alexithymia? (Sue)

- It helps me to sit and, as it were, to sit outside myself and ask myself, "What's going on here?"
- Sometimes I figure out what I'm feeling after a long discussion with my wife – or about a week after the event.
- What I find helpful is noticing physical 'signals' in the body that 'something is going on inside me'. You can actually get blood pressure monitors quite cheaply – e.g. from Boots and other pharmacies.
- I take my own blood pressure and then work out some response strategies.
- Two questions: 1) how do we deal with anxiety? and 2) is medication helpful?

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Is CBT an effective way of managing anxiety - if so, is there a best approach? (Piers)

- CBT on its own was actually making me more anxious – better using some CBT with other approaches also – do much less CBT more recently.
- Have had 2 courses of CBT: 1) pre-autism diagnosis – not too good – rather like ‘conversion therapy’; 2) later course on PTSD – was incredibly helpful – I think CBT works best if you have a specific issue to focus on, rather than just a general approach.
- Hospital staff in recent medical procedure were great, but GP was terrible.
- Some people find DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy) is more effective than CBT. Here is a link to some information on DBT* <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/talking-therapy-and-counselling/dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt/>
- Another take on CBT is focussing on a picture and using this to refocus.
- CBT seeks to get us to ‘re-frame’ our thought patterns, beliefs and assumptions – on the assumption that it is these that drive our behaviour.

* Sue sent me a workbook on DBT, which I’ll look at and see if it would be a useful resource to put on our website.

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Is there any view or research on the use of cannabidiol (CBD) and anxiety? Piers
<https://www.healthline.com/health/your-cbd-guide>

- Quite a few autistic people have strange reactions to such drugs – so it's advisable to get medical advice.
- There is some evidence that it can be helpful – but under supervision.

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Is there a particularly 'strong' emotion connected with anxiety and autism, for example, uncertainty? Piers

- Anxiety is huge. I've had a recent situation where I was given vague information – more specificity would have been helpful.
- It's important in a situation to work out what we can control and what we can't.
- Uncertainty explodes for autistic person – everything is connected to everything else.
- One way of cutting down the level of uncertainty can be to create rules for us.
- The serenity prayer is helpful: what is important and what is not important. It helps to tell yourself "some things don't matter."
- There are often 'reasonable' reasons for being anxious.

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Others experiences - coping mechanisms. How do others cope (or not)? Any specific tips that help`?
Rebecca

- Two areas that autistic people struggle with are 'catastrophising' and 'black and white thinking' – here we can often be creating possibilities for ourselves.
- Some times it is reasonable to be anxious – sometimes it just keeps escalating.
- Often past experience is often that things go badly – so we dwell on that.
- If things go well I don't have to find strategies, but if they go wrong I do - often I have to have a contingency plan – and a contingency plan for my contingency plan!
- Recently in hospital – staff worked to involve me and explain things – they new I was autistic – my GP just made things worse.
- Can come down to how professionals are trained.
- You often have to mention things to professionals up front.
- Sometimes you have to endure things – then go home and punch the pillow!

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

When you feel the triggers going off etc. What do others do? Communicating our anxiety to others - approaching ach? What are the experiences of different members of the group? Rebecca

- Sometimes you can parachute out – the nasty one is when you are trapped.
- Going for a long walk or run – exercise to release the pent-up energy.
- Breathing exercises, rest, and distractions can help.
- Using prayer to force myself to concentrate can help.
- There is often a need to anticipate when we need to 'build in' recovery time following an intense period or event (even a pleasurable one – they are also draining!) – and to learn 'what is recovery for me'.
- Sometimes, comedy helps to break my state of mind.

Anxiety Q&A (5 min per Q → bigger discussion?)

Notes from Sarah:

- “Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is the therapy of choice for autistic people in Australia (who tend to be a bit ahead of us here in that respect). It’s a fairly well-known approach here in the UK too but not going to be on offer in primary care services. You can find some resources from one of the best communicators on the approach, Dr Russ Harris, here: <https://www.actmindfully.com.au/> and especially on the ‘free stuff’ page: <https://www.actmindfully.com.au/free-stuff/>

- I highly recommend his videos. I think the approach resonates with many autistic people as it’s much more realistic than CBT for example and it places a lot of emphasis on living according to our values - something that also resonates for me as a Christian.”

SR Note. There was mention of Autism from the Inside – a good website. Here is a link:

<https://www.youtube.com/@autismfromtheInside>

(NB Note their webinar from 24 April: Managing Anxiety and Meltdowns. I assume this will be available on YouTube following the live event.)

BBC Sunday Worship Service Update - 1

- Planned broadcast date: 21 July 2024 (though may be 'bumped' if BBC want to broadcast celebration from Liverpool Cathedral. Recording date – still tbc, but late June or sometime in July.
- Service duration 36 min – looking for 40% music (15 min).
- Music – BBC happy to do something with Christopher Duffey – not so convinced about Autistic Adult Choir - needs more discussion with BBC (including someone musical!)
- Format/Content:
 - Okay with theme of Body and Belonging (1 Cor 12) - will need to firm up title.
 - Hosting: can we have both woman & man? (Sue and me? – for discussion)
 - Keen to get a group of us in studio – possibly Media City (Salford) or London – Broadcasting House. BBC happy to put one or two up in hotel to facilitate this.
 - Some contributions can be pre-recorded (reading, prayer etc) – ideal for those in more remote geographical locations.
 - Keen to bring out experience of autistic people and to give some indication of the 'signs' of being on the autistic spectrum – how might people tell?
- Need a session to discuss – and then to meet with Philip Bilson from BBC: let me know if you are interested – w/c 22 April (just us) then w/c 29 April (with Philip Bilson, BBC producer) .

BBC Sunday Worship Service Update - 2

Meeting planned
for 24 April

This is just an idea for discussion

Time	Item	Location
2 min	Welcome and Introduction	Host in studio
5 min	Music 1	Pre-recorded
2 min	Reading	Pre-recorded: Location flexible
4 min	Reflection 1	Pre-recorded: Location flexible
5 min	Discussion	Group in studio
5 min	Music 2	Pre-recorded
4 min	Reflection 2	Pre-recorded: Location flexible
3 min	Prayer	Pre-recorded: Location flexible
5 min	Music 3	Pre-recorded
1 min	Blessing & Close	Host in studio
36 min		

BBC Sunday Worship Service Update - 3

- Studio group - 2 options: Media City, Salford or BBC Broadcasting House in London.
- How does the geography work?

This is just a 'brain dump' by me on the basis of which of us might be near to, or within easy travelling distance to, the studios.

No commitment is implied! This is for discussion.

London (Broadcasting House)

- Sue?
- Piers?
- Susan (Hammond)?
- Rebecca?
- Franceska?
- Peter?
- Venessa?
- Chris (Barber)?
- Hannah?

Media City Salford

- Stewart?
- Sarah?
- Ann?
- Catherine?
- Neil?
- Abi?
- Philip?
- Louise?
- Elliott?
- Chris (Barber)?

Discussion Schedule

DATE	CFE-Autism DISCUSSION TOPIC	LEAD
20 Apr 2024	Anxiety 3: Q&A	Stewart
18 May 2024	Anxiety 4: Q&A Extra + link to Depression	Stewart
15 Jun 2024	A God of Order	Hannah
20 Jul 2024	Frustration	Neil
August 2024	No discussion – Summer Break	