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# Research in focus

Bringing you news of the latest research into living and working with autism

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## Beating stress in autism

A new survey by UK charity Research Autism shows that stress is the single biggest factor affecting quality of life for autistic people and their families, causing significant impact across all key aspects of life including school, work, health and mental health, relationships and behaviour.

**The survey of 360 people living with autism** found that 98% of autistic people and their carers said stress is a significant issue for them, with 89% adding that it is difficult or impossible to find effective support for dealing with stress.

**A case study from the research,** 50-year-old autistic adult Maggie, said, "The struggle with stress has become worse the older I've become... Stress is crippling most every day. A huge chunk of my life is now unmanageable and I'm having to ask for help."

**Research Autism argues that stress** in autism is much more common, severe and disabling than in the general population and often has long-term and devastating consequences. Following from the survey results, they launched a campaign this summer to address the issue called *Beating Stress in Autism*.

"Our survey confirms that stress has a massive effect on health, especially mental health, relationships, education and work. Parents told us stress has led to family breakdown; autistic people



Autistic adults like Maggie say stress is an overwhelming part of life

told us it rules pretty much every aspect of their lives" says Richard Mills, Director of Research at Research Autism.

"It is very well known that stress is a big factor in autism and yet little investment has been made in research into understanding and responding to it. In fact, some of the ways autistic children and adults are treated seems to make matters worse.

"Current research has also done little to reduce the significant stress found amongst families and carers of autistic people."

Research Autism is organising an international Stress Summit in September to hear autistic people, their families, professionals, scientists and

researchers speak on the subject of stress.

**The aim is to better understand** the issues, explore the knowledge gaps and identify the research priorities which can inform decisions around research that builds on any promising approaches. The findings will be used to develop new practical strategies and tools to properly help all of those affected. ●

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● **Research Autism is the only UK charity dedicated to the production of quality, trusted information on autism treatments and other approaches. Find out more about the research at <http://researchautism.net/beating-stress-in-autism>.**