

Autistic children struggle with emotional control. It's even harder for girls, study says

Emotion control eludes more girls than boys with autism, according to a new study of young people hospitalized for [psychiatric issues](#).

The analysis does not account for what may be driving these differences, which are small but significant, says lead investigator [Carla Mazefsky](#), associate professor of psychiatry and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania. It does, however, highlight the importance of treating emotion-control problems in autistic children and teenagers.

"We need to be really paying attention to emotional dysregulation, screening for it and targeting it in treatment," Mazefsky says.

Autistic children have more trouble controlling their emotions than their typical peers do, and few existing therapies address the [issue](#). Previous research suggests that impaired emotional regulation in childhood [predicts poor social skills](#) later in life.

Emotion-control problems also influence a range of quality-of-life issues for autistic adults, including [depression](#), [anxiety](#) and social difficulties, says [psychologist] [William Mandy](#).

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Mazefsky and her team are analyzing data from a larger sample of autistic people, and the preliminary findings corroborate the new study: Men report lower scores on measures of emotional reactivity and unease than women do.

Therapies to address emotion control, such as mindfulness-based treatments, could be adapted to help autistic children regardless of gender, Mandy says.

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