

Mood and Interests in Williams syndrome

Mood:

It is estimated that over 80% of individuals with Williams syndrome experience emotional or behavioural problems that result in some degree of distress or disruption to daily life. These include anxiety, fears and phobias, distractibility, hallucinations and compulsive behaviour.

Clinical diagnoses of mental health problems are common, with anxiety disorders being the most prevalent disorder. Approximately half of all individuals with Williams syndrome have a diagnosable anxiety disorder that requires treatment. The most commonly reported anxiety disorders include generalised anxiety (anxiety that occurs across multiple situations and contexts and does not have a specific trigger) and phobias such as fear of loud noises, injections/blood and thunderstorms.

Although low mood in Williams syndrome is less well researched, there are indications that clinical depression diagnoses may be present in approximately 10% of individuals. As in the general population symptoms of depression often occur alongside symptoms of anxiety for people with Williams syndrome.

For a summary of recent research exploring the profile of mental health difficulties in Williams syndrome, [click here](#). The full paper can be downloaded below.

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[Royston et al. \(2019\) - Original research article](#)

In the video below, Dr Rachel Royston discusses some useful strategies that may be helpful in reducing anxiety in individuals with Williams syndrome

You can also find a Cerebra guide about anxiety in neurodevelopmental disorders on our [Guides for Parents](#) page.

Interests:

Compared to typically developing children and children with other intellectual disabilities, people with Williams syndrome express greater liking of music and a greater range of emotional responses to music. Some research suggests that increasing duration and skill in playing musical instruments is associated with lower levels of anxiety and fear in people with Williams syndrome compared with other developmental disabilities.

There is also evidence to suggest that music may have a positive therapeutic effect on enhancing wellbeing and reducing anxiety in people with developmental disabilities, as well as in the typically developing population. Whilst further research is needed, music may be a useful tool to help with anxiety management for people with Williams syndrome (e.g. listening/playing relaxing and soothing music).