

Parent/Carer Autism Toolkit

A resource for parents & carers, to help support their child or young person to understand autism

STEP (Swindon)

Nythe Centre
The Drive
Swindon
SN3 3RD

Phone: 01793 714042

Email: swindonstep@aol.com



About this toolkit

We will explore autism and how it affects young people, provide resources and techniques to help parents and families and also discuss the how a young person with autism may feel and express themselves differently to others.

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong neuro-developmental difference. This means it is a condition that affects the development of the brain. Autism affects the way a person communicates and interacts with others, how information is processed and how the person makes sense of the world.

The human population is highly diverse. Neurodiversity is a term that describes this normal variation across all people. Within the autistic population, there is also a great deal of diversity and autism manifests differently from person to person.

For children and young people, there is a reciprocal relationship between the autistic learner and the environment - this includes the physical environment and the people around them. With appropriate understanding and adjustments, autistic people can flourish.

Autism often co-occurs with other neuro-developmental differences including;

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) also referred to as Dyspraxia
- Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)
- Epilepsy
- Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
- Intellectual Disability
- Tourette's and Tic disorders
- Specific Learning Disorder/ Differences e.g. Dyslexia, Dyscalculia

Autism is not a linear scale running from 'high functioning' to 'low functioning', which are unhelpful terms. Instead, autism is defined in several different ways - sensory differences, levels of anxiety, social skills and executive functions all vary both from person to person and from time to time.

Autism

Around 4% of children, who are referred for autism assessments because they have similar presentations, do not receive a diagnosis of autism, however they are still entitled to and require their needs to be met.

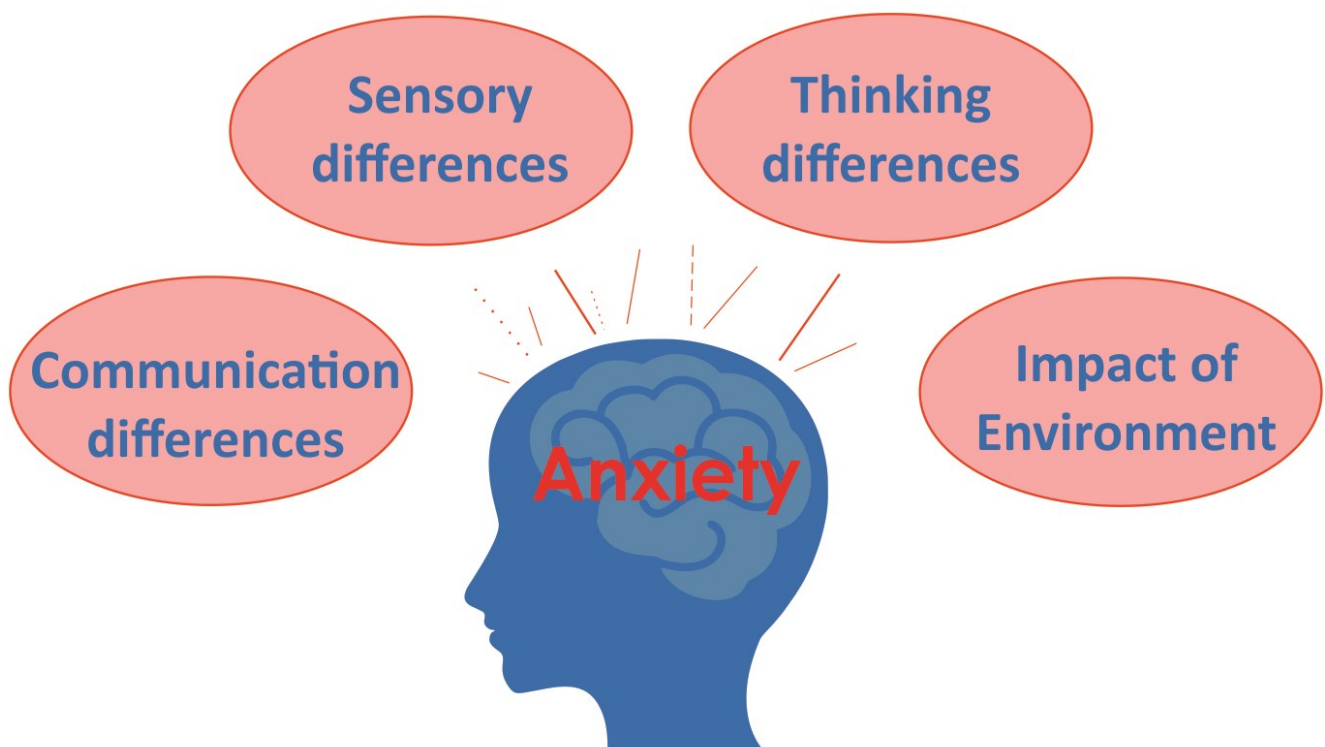
What causes autism?

For most individuals, the cause of autism is not identified. Autism is generally thought to have a genetic basis and research is ongoing.

What is core to autism?

- Communication differences
- Sensory differences
- Thinking difference
- Impact of environment

When the above four aspects are not supported appropriately, this can lead to increased anxiety for the autistic person.



What types of difficulties may a primary school aged child have?

Communication Impairments

- Abnormalities in language development, including muteness
- Odd or inappropriate prosody (information given beyond a sentence's literal meaning. Eg, rhythm, stress, tone of speech).
- Reference to self as 'you', 'she' or 'he' beyond three years
- Unusual vocabulary for child's age/social group
- Limited use of language for communication and/or tendency to talk freely only about specific topics.

Social Impairments

- Inability to join in play with other children, or inappropriate attempts at joint play (may manifest as aggressive or disruptive behaviour)
- Lack of awareness of classroom 'norms' (criticising teachers, overt unwillingness to cooperate in classroom activities, inability to appreciate or follow current trends)
- Easily overwhelmed by social and other stimulation
- Failure to relate normally to adults (too intense / no relationship)
- Showing extreme reactions to invasion of personal space and resistance to being hurried.

Impairments of interests, activities and/or behaviours

- Lack of flexible cooperative imaginative play / creativity
- Difficulty in organising self in relation to unstructured space (e.g. hugging the perimeter of play-grounds, halls)
- Inability to cope with change or unstructured situations, even ones that other children enjoy (school trips, teachers being away, different routine etc).

Other Factors

- Unusual profile of skills / deficits
- Any other evidence of odd behaviours, including unusual responses to sensory stimuli.

Early Signs of Autism

Inability to relate to others



Hyperactivity or Passivity

Oversensitive or Undersensitive to sound



Unusual Behavior or Body Movements

Poor Speech or Lack of Speech



Spinning or Running around in a Circle Regularly

Strange Attachment to Objects



Avoids Eye Contact

Difficulty Dealing with Change



Lacks Awareness of Danger

Inappropriate Laughing or Crying Fits



Unusual Play or Repetitive Play

What types of difficulties might an adolescent have?

Language and communication

- Problems with communication, even if wide vocabulary and normal use of grammar
- May be unduly quiet, may talk at others rather than hold a 'to and fro' conversation, or may provide excessive information on topics of own interest
- Unable to adapt style of communication to social situations, e.g. may sound like 'a little professor' (overly formal), or be inappropriately familiar
- May have speech peculiarities, including 'flat' un-modulated speech, repetitiveness, use of stereotyped phrases
- May take things literally and fail to understand sarcasm or metaphor
- Unusual use and timing of non-verbal interaction (e.g. eye contact, gesture and facial expression).

Social problems

- Difficulty making and maintaining peer friendships, though may find it easier with adults or younger children
- Can appear unaware or uninterested in peer group 'norms', may alienate by behaviours which transgress 'unwritten rules'
- May lack awareness of personal space, or be intolerant of intrusions on own space
- Long-standing difficulties in social behaviours, communication and coping with change, which are more obvious at times of transition (e.g. change of school, leaving school)
- Significant discrepancy between academic ability and 'social' intelligence; most difficulties in unstructured social situations, e.g. in school or work breaks.

Rigidity in thinking and behaviour

- Preference for highly specific interests or hobbies, or may enjoy collecting, numbering or listing
- Strong preferences for familiar routines; may have repetitive behaviours or intrusive rituals
- Problems using imagination, e.g. in writing, future planning
- May have unusual reactions to sensory stimuli, e.g. sounds, tastes, smell, touch, hot or cold.

Autistic learners and children with neurodevelopmental differences may process and experience sensation differently in unique and sometimes complex ways. For example, they may be:

- very sensitive and avoid, unable to ignore or become overwhelmed by sensations, sometimes to extremes where they 'shut down', show extreme anger, fear and/or attempt to escape (sometimes referred to as "fight, fright or flight, adrenaline fuelled reactions).
- very sensitive to some things, but don't show this, or strongly seek other sensations to block out "unpleasant" ones, reduce anxiety and feel calmer.
- under sensitive and may not register or react to even very powerful sensations. Can seem quite passive and slow to respond to sensations.
- under sensitive, and may seek intense input from one or many senses.

What we might see:

Children **may cover their ears or eyes, retreat, or become intensely upset.** This can happen when settings get busy, or 'simply' because they expect or think they detect a disliked sound, smell, taste, sight, or when an internal sensation becomes unbearable. They may feel the need to **rock, flap, chew, jump, run, hide, be squeezed or hugged, make their own sounds, or focus on one thing** to help themselves feel better. If they can, they may learn to suppress these feelings, but suppression has costs and there will still be signs they are struggling such as **avoiding being near others, difficulty seeing objects or text, staying on task**, etc. It is worth noting that they will react differently and cope more or less well, depending on prior events.

Children might seem **'tuned out', or 'dazed'; slumping in their seat, or lying down.** They may not notice obstacles, how much force they're using, if they are in a mess, hurt or hurting others. They may seek prolonged intense movement, including banging, chewing or hitting hard, spinning or swinging. They may have an irresistible fascination and urge to touch, smell, taste, hear or see something. Some children may learn and try to do this more subtly – reading, watching video or persisting in talking about the sensations they seek.

All these 'behaviours' are not intended to upset, challenge or provoke others. Fundamentally, **they are signals that a child is trying to keep calm and cope with internal and external sensations that may be extremely and overwhelmingly unpleasant.**

Visual supports

Visual supports are a communication tool that can be used with autistic people. They can be used in most situations, are adaptable and portable.

Visual supports can help to:

- provide structure and routine
- encourage independence
- build confidence
- improve understanding
- avoid frustration and anxiety
- provide opportunities to interact with others.

They can make communication physical and consistent, rather than fleeting and inconsistent like spoken words can be.

Types of visual support

A wide range of items can be used as visual supports. For example:

- **tactile symbols/objects of reference e.g. swimming trunks, packaging, food labels**
- **photographs**
- **short videos**
- **miniatures of real objects**
- **coloured pictures**
- **plain squares of coloured card**
- **line drawings**
- **symbols**
- **written words**


These can be real objects, printed images, or on a smartphone, tablet or computer.

Examples of Visual Aids

"I Feel..."



thirsty



hungry



a need to use
the bathroom




tired



hot



cold



mad



glad



clean teeth



brush hair



get dressed



bath



shower



school

Communication tips

Getting and keeping your child's attention:

- Always **use their name** at the beginning so that they know you are talking to them.
- **Make sure they are paying attention** before you ask a question or give an instruction. The signs that someone is paying attention will be different for different people.
- **Use their hobbies and interests, or the activity they are currently doing, to engage them.**

Processing information

An autistic person can find it difficult to filter out the less important information. If there is too much information, it can lead to 'overload', where no further information can be processed. To help:

- **Speak concisely and slowly**
- Use **specific key words**, repeating and stressing them
- Pause between words and phrases to **give the person time to process what you've said**, and to give them a chance to think of a response if they want to
- **Don't ask too many questions**
- **Use visual supports** (eg symbols, timetables, Social Stories) if appropriate
- **Be aware of the environment** (noisy/crowded) that you are in. Sensory differences may be affecting how much someone can process.

Avoiding open-ended questions

- **Keep questions short**
- Ask only the most necessary questions
- Structure your questions e.g. **offer options or choices**
- Be specific. For example, ask "Did you enjoy your lunch?" and "Did you enjoy maths?" rather than "How was your day?"

Communication tips continued on next page.

Ways to ask for help

If appropriate, give the person with autism a visual card to use to ask for help.

Being clear

Avoid using irony, sarcasm, figurative language, rhetorical questions, idioms or exaggeration as autistic people can take these literally and they may cause alarm. Always be clear about what you really mean to say to ensure the right message is understood.

Distressed behaviour

- Use a **behaviour diary** to work out if the behaviour the person with autism is displaying is a way of telling you something
- **Offer other ways for them to express 'no' or 'stop'** e.g. hold up a colour card, time out zone, ear defenders or something to wear that others are aware means they are uncomfortable

Reactions to "no"

- **Try using a different word or symbol**
- **Autistic people may be confused about why you said no. If it's an activity that they can do later on that day or week, try showing this in a timetable.**
- 'No' is often used when someone is putting themselves or others in danger. If it's a safety issue, **look at ways of explaining danger and safety.**
- If you are saying 'no' because someone is behaving inappropriately, you may want to change your reaction to their behaviour. **Try not to shout or give too much attention**, a calm reaction may help to decrease this behaviour in time.
- **Set clear boundaries and explain why and where it is acceptable and not acceptable to behave in certain ways.**

Anxiety

Everyone experiences anxiety at points in their life, usually in response to difficult or stressful situations. When such situations pass, anxious feelings usually reduce over time. Anxiety becomes problematic when it gets in the way of the person's everyday functioning, seems disproportionate to the situation or continues for a long time.

We know that people with autism experience anxiety more than the general population. In 2017, a review of a number of studies found that children with autism had higher anxiety levels than typically developing peers: this difference increased with cognitive ability.

Autistic children and young people experiencing anxiety may have **difficulty sleeping and concentrating** and may have a **sense of losing control** or have **repetitive thoughts about perceived threat**. They may feel **worry, irritability or distress**. **Physical symptoms might include a tightness in the chest, a pounding or irregular heartbeat, light-headedness, a churning feeling in the stomach or feeling sick.**

Some children and young people with more advanced language and social awareness may be able to express how they are feeling with words. Other children and young people, with limited language or even with advanced language, express their anxiety through behaviours. These behaviours should be interpreted as a sign of distress rather than thought of as 'challenging' i.e. they are expressing an underlying feeling that is manifesting itself as the behaviour.

Anxious signs and behaviours

Some common signs of anxiety and distress might include noticeable **physiological signs (e.g. pale, sweating, trembling, restlessness); communication changes (e.g. increased or decreased chatting) or reports of physical symptoms (e.g. stomach ache, headache, nausea or muscle pain).**

Those around the young person may not pick up the signs that they are anxious until they see the more obvious signs listed below.

Children and young people, particularly those who cannot use meaningful words, may communicate through actions and behaviour:

- Crying or screaming (tantrums)
- Hitting out or kicking
- Self-harming such as hitting head on an object, pulling hair, biting
- Withdrawing or refusal to take part
- An increase in repetitive movements, play sequences or phrases
- Flight (running away)
- Increased rigidity of routines/topic
- Directing/trying to control the behaviour of or interactions with peers to make play predictable

Children and young people using language may also:

- Refuse to attend school
- Avoid unpredictable situations or those requiring social interaction
- Seek reassurance (possibly in an unusual way)
- Be concerned about how they appear to others
- Argue
- Regress to previous habits e.g. repetitive questions or phrases that they no longer normally use

The above listed behaviours may look different in a younger or older child (e.g. a 4 year old hitting out is very different to a 15 year old hitting out) but the behaviour may serve the same communicative purpose.

Ways that you can help your child with their anxiety

- **Make a note of what triggers** the anxiety including what symptoms you observe
- Have **structure** to your child or young persons day, this will help minimise stress and can help for planning ahead when routines may change: using **social stories** to explain what is going to happen, with alternatives if appropriate. There is more on social stories on the next page.
- Your child's energy levels may be affected by social interactions and other situations leading to them experience overload, **spending some time enjoying their hobbies or interests** can help them recharge.
- Making adaptations to the child or young person's home and surroundings can minimise sensory overload. Parents could speak to the child's school about the provision of **quiet spaces** to access if they need to, as well as considering the schools environment and potential sensory triggers.
- Make available **sensory toys** which your child can use to self-soothe to enable them to concentrate and keep calm.
- **Relaxation activities** can help to reduce anxiety during stressful situations. We have attached some examples in the resource section of this toolkit.

Social Stories

A social story is a pictorial timeline, usually with a written narrative, made to illustrate certain situations, problems and challenges to help children deal with them by knowing what to expect. They help people with autism, and other special educational needs and anxieties, to understand social norms and learn how to communicate with others appropriately. There are lots of situations where a social story could help, such as transitioning from one activity to another, visiting the dentist, having a haircut, illness in the family, travelling etc.

The goal of a social story is not to change the child's behaviour, but to share information in a way that makes perfect sense to them and help them cope with the situations they're in.

There are many benefits to social stories, including:

- Helping children learn self-care and social skills and reduce anxiety.
- Allowing children with special needs to understand their behaviour as well as others' behaviour.
- Helping anxious children to understand emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness, and how to address them, and how to empathise and have compassion for others.
- Helping children cope with various changes in routine and everyday life transitions.
- Encouraging children to work on developing relationships, and providing rewards for accomplishing social tasks.
- Reinforcing accepted behaviours.
- Teaching autistic and anxious children how to join in activities, use their imagination, and play with others.
- Providing the tools to help children with anxieties and special needs to make and maintain friendships, as well as to join in with group activities.
- Building self-esteem, with praise written into every story.

Parents, who often understand their child far better than anyone else, are well placed to write social stories to support their communication and understanding. Use the following link for guidance for how to write a social story:

<https://www.theschoolrun.com/social-stories-explained>

Friendships and Peers

Friendships are important for children and young people because it helps them to develop socially and emotionally as well as improving self-esteem and confidence. Peer interactions enable your child to experience managing emotions and responding to feelings of others, negotiating and problem solving

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) tend to have a harder time developing friendships. This might be because they have trouble with:

- starting and keeping conversations going
- working out what other people are thinking and feeling
- taking part in other children's activities
- understanding facial expressions and body language
- adjusting to new social situations
- solving social problems, like how to sort out disagreements.

Children with ASD might need help developing skills in these areas. You can't make friends for your child, but you can give them the chance to meet peers and work on their social skills.

Making Friends: How you can help your child

Knowing what your child's interests and strengths are and help them connect with others who like and enjoy similar things. This can be done through either a specific interest club, school club or playgroup.

Find out who your child shares interests with at school and invite them to your home play or maybe go out to play. Plan things that they can do that are fun, this can encourage cooperative play. If you have children round to you home, it might be worth considering putting away certain toys or favourite things that your child may not want to be touched by others.

Find out what clubs that are available in your local area, structured groups such as Guides or Scouts can often work well for children with ASD.

Social Interaction: Ways you can help your child to learn positive social skills

Modelling - your child will learn key social skills from observing you positively interacting with others. Skills that you can model are: listening, showing empathy, problem solving and working through conflicts.

Practicing social skills at home - play games with your child; it helps if you describe to your child the skills you're modelling. For example, to encourage sharing and turn-taking, you might say, 'I'm going to be friendly and share my toy car with you', or 'I'm going to have a turn on the swing. Your turn next'.

Bullying, peer pressure and autism spectrum disorder










Children with ASD are more likely to be the target of bullying than their peers. This is because children who bully tend to pick on children who are quiet and shy and lack friendship skills. They also tend to pick on children who behave differently, or who have different interests, trends and styles from themselves and other children the same age.

Also, children with ASD might not know how to join in a group and might act in inappropriate ways, like wrestling, being 'attention-seeking' or dominating. Other children might find this annoying, and it can end up in physical or verbal clashes with peers.

Children with ASD might have trouble working out who are the 'good guys' and who are the 'bad guys'. This means that they might be less likely to avoid children who bully in the playground. They might also believe what they're told – for example, 'If you do this, I'll be your friend'.

To help your child avoid bullies and being bullied, try talking about why bullying happens and what they can do to look after him/herself at school and in other situations. A Social Story™ can also be a good way to explain this information to your child. Please contact STEP if you would like more information on ways to deal with bullying.

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/communicating-relationships/connecting/friends-peers>

If someone is hurting me	 
1. If I feel upset because someone has hurt me.	
2. I will stop	 
3. I will move away from the person who is hurting me.	
4. I will go and tell a someone what has happened.	
5. When I feel calm and happy I will go back and play with the other children.	 

Safe friends do this....	
	
touch gently	Work so I have time to play
	
stop when friend says "stop"	Use nice words & voice
	
Smile at others	share toys
	
Work next to others	Keep hands and feet to self
	
take turns	Clap for others
	

Not safe friends do this....	
	
bite	kick toys
	
take from others	hit others
	
Yell at others	kick others
	
run away from others	tell others to go away!
	
grab others	pinch
	

Camouflaging / Masking in Autism

Camouflaging: Finding ways to hide autism or make it less visible to other people, even if the autistic person is not aware of doing this.

Masking: Hiding aspects of yourself or pretending to be like someone else. For example, a person might mask their autism by pretending to join in a game even if they do not understand the rules.

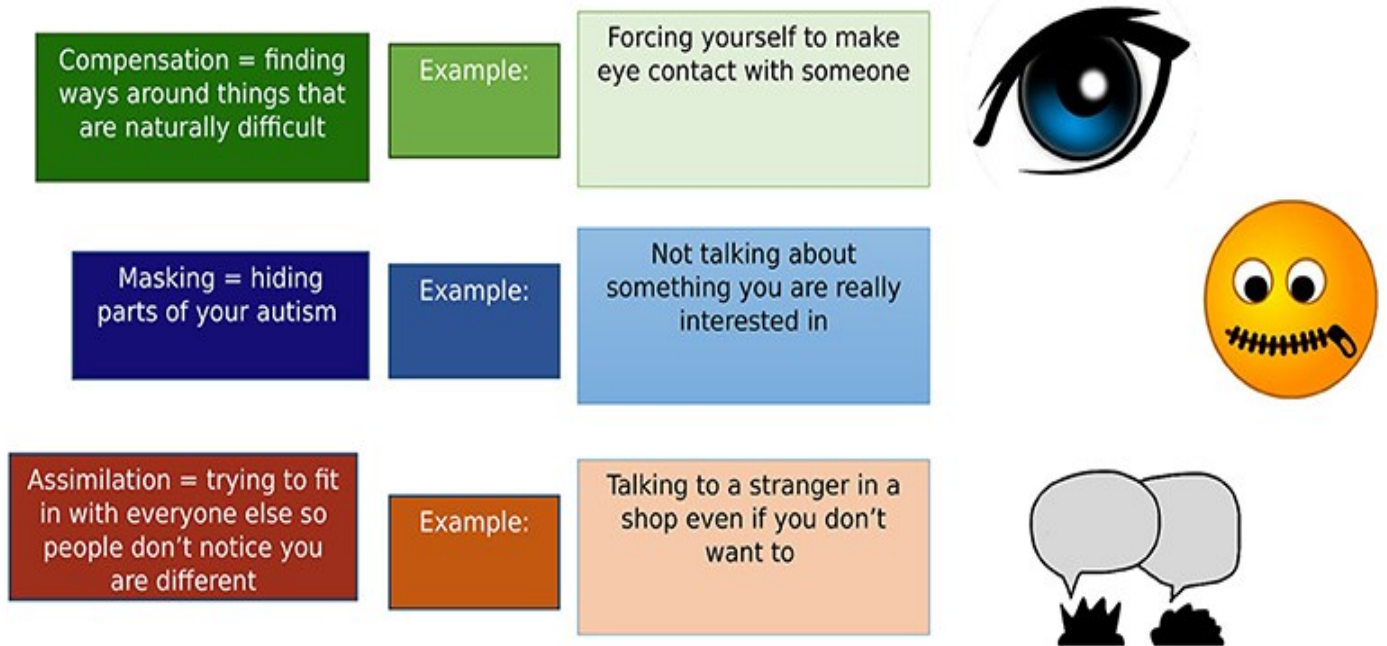
Some autistic people feel very different from everyone else, and might feel like they have to hide their autism or try to find ways to cope with the things they find difficult. We call this “**camouflaging**,” because it is a bit like a chameleon changing the patterns on its skin to fit into the surroundings. The chameleon is still there, but it is trying to blend in and look like everyone else. Examples of camouflaging in autism include forcing yourself to make eye contact with other people even if you do not want to, or thinking of a list of questions to ask every time you meet someone new, so you do not run out of things to say.

Autistic people have talked about camouflaging for a while, but doctors and researchers still do not know very much about it. No one really knows whether camouflaging can help people or if it actually causes more problems.

Some people report that they camouflage their autism because they want to make friends and form connections with people, so it is useful to them. Some people might camouflage their autism when they are at school or work, so that people do not treat them differently and they can concentrate on what they have to do. Some people camouflage their autism when they meet new people, so that they can make a good impression and become friends. Some people will stop camouflaging when they get to know someone very well, if they think the person will accept them when they reveal their autistic traits.

Studies have found that those with autism use several different strategies to camouflage. For example, some people might practice making friendly faces in the mirror because it doesn't come naturally in social situations. We call this “**compensation**” because people with autism are compensating for a difficulty they have compared with non-autistic people. Another strategy, for “**masking**”, might be the person copying what someone else is talking about if they do not know what to say.

Some autistic people also use strategies to try and fit in with others so they are not bullied or treated differently; we call this “**assimilation**.” For example, these people might stand near other children in the playground, without playing with them.



Why it is important to understand Camouflaging

Autistic people have lots of different feelings about camouflaging. For some children and young people, camouflaging is helpful as it allows them to talk to people and go to school, without being treated differently because of their autism. But many other autistic people would like to be able to be themselves, and to make friends, without having to hide their autism.

Camouflaging takes a lot of effort. Hiding parts of yourself and pretending to be someone else can be really tiring. Many autistic young people say that if they spend a whole day camouflaging at school they need to come home and sit by themselves for a while to recover. Some autistic people also feel like they are being fake versions of themselves, and they want to be able to stop camouflaging so that their friends can get to know the “real” them.

Taken from : <https://kids.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/frym.2019.00129>

Resource Section

In this section you will find:

Useful Worksheets

Breathing Techniques

Mindfulness Activities

ANXIETY TRIGGERS



An anxiety trigger is something that happens to make you feel anxious or nervous. Go through this list and, on a scale of 1-10, identify how anxious each of the triggers makes you feel.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CALM		A LITTLE ANXIOUS			ANXIOUS			EXTREMELY ANXIOUS!		

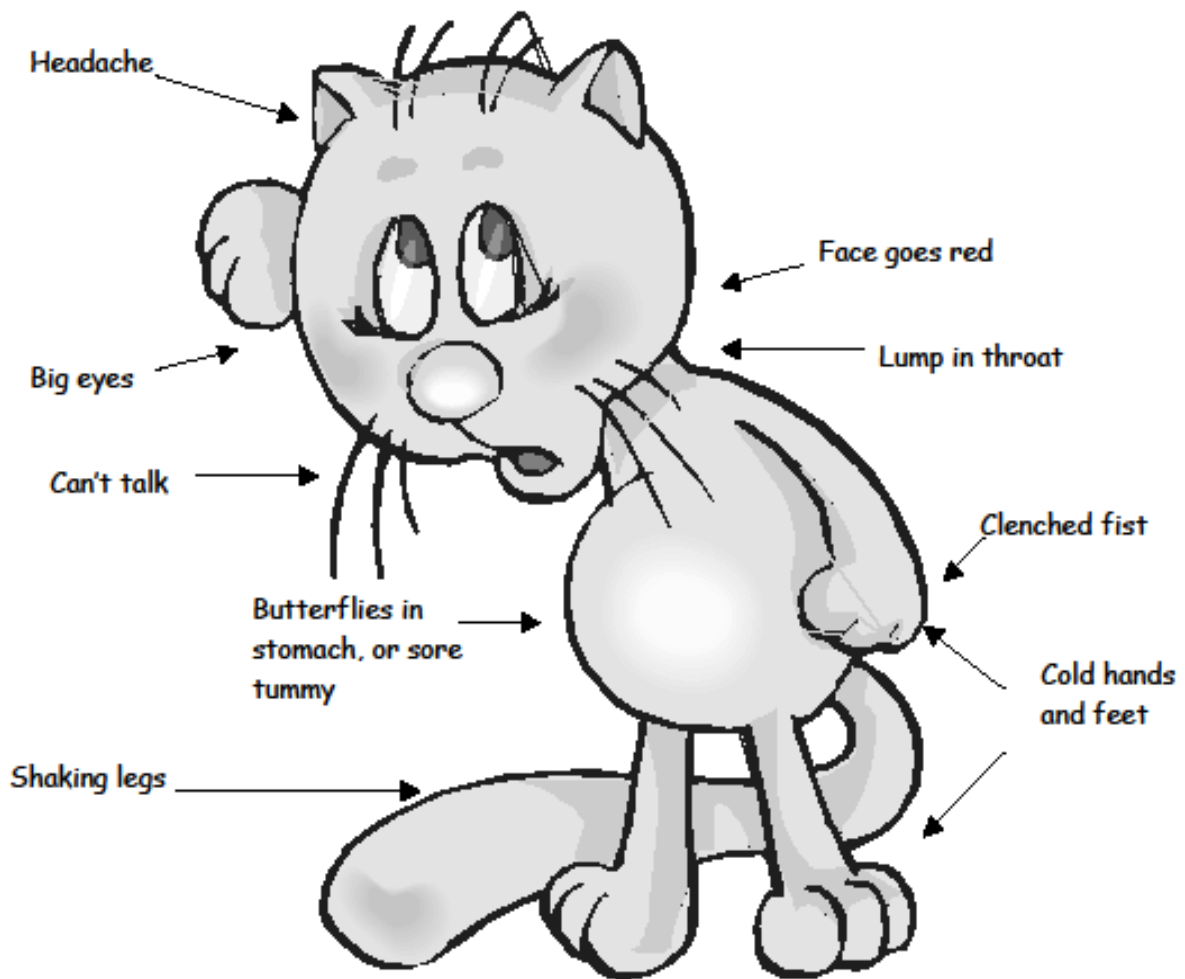
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict or drama in relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Not feeling prepared |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being in a large crowd of people | <input type="checkbox"/> Being in tight spaces, like an elevator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting new people | <input type="checkbox"/> Being in wide open spaces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going to a new place for the first time | <input type="checkbox"/> Being around certain people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having to confront someone | <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with someone I have a crush on |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting on social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Not knowing what is going to happen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having too much to do | <input type="checkbox"/> Not having enough money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving a presentation in front of the class | <input type="checkbox"/> Not knowing what career I want to have |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working as part of a group | <input type="checkbox"/> School violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure to act or behave a certain way | <input type="checkbox"/> Family stress (divorce, finances, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performing in front of other people | <input type="checkbox"/> A sick friend or family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Things not going the way I planned | <input type="checkbox"/> Rumors about me spreading around school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having to change up my routine | <input type="checkbox"/> My job, boss, or co-workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grades or stress from schoolwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Other people's expectations of me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having too much time by myself | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking about college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being away from my phone for too long | <input type="checkbox"/> Having to be the one to make decisions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends not texting me back | <input type="checkbox"/> Making new friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud noises or raised voices | <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in my body or my weight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other people being disappointed in me | <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with a certain family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watching the news | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling left out by my peer group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having conversations with peers or adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming an adult with more responsibilities |

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER THINGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL ANXIOUS?



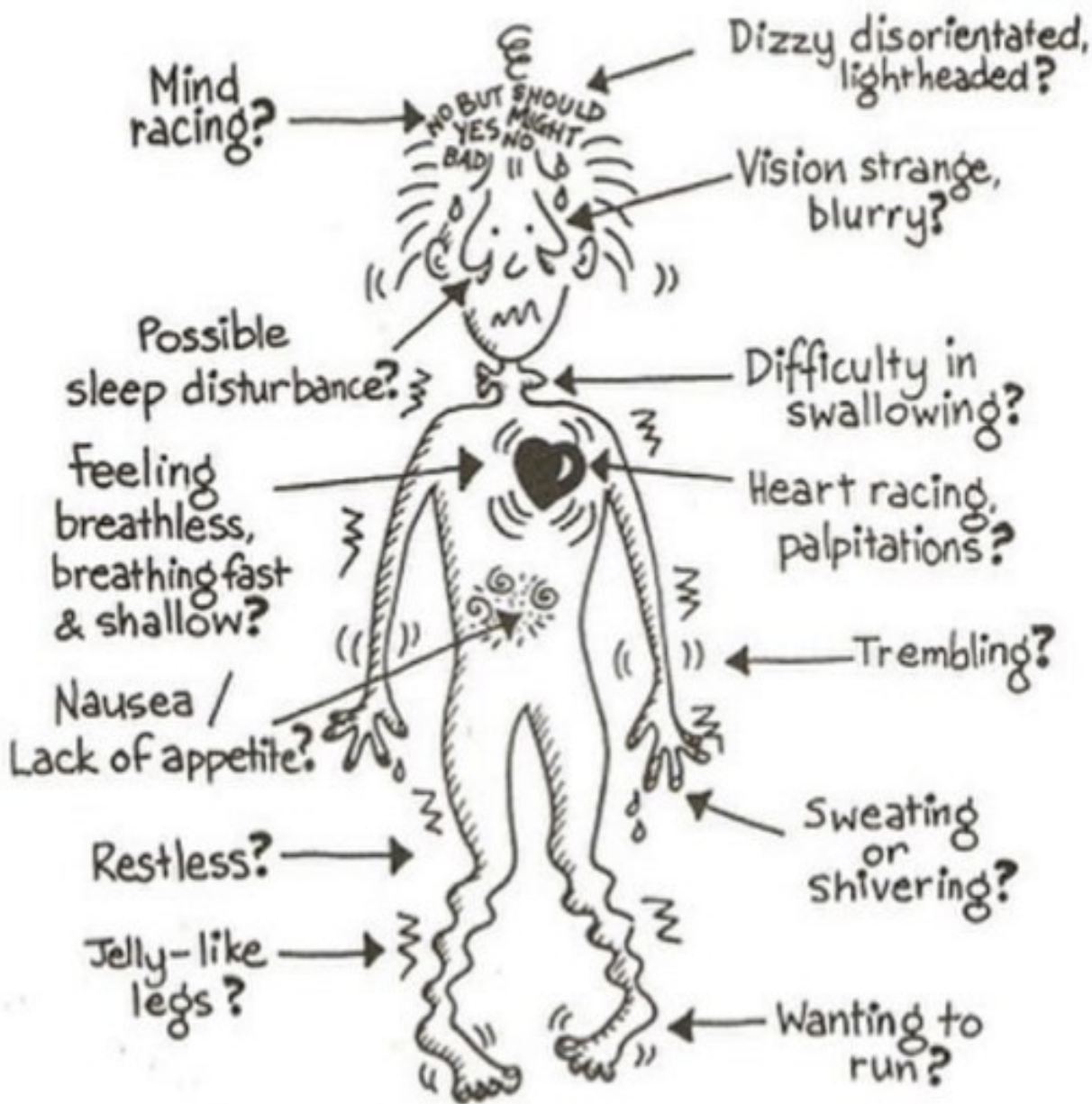
For younger children -Talk through all the symptoms of anxiety Chester feels in his body and ask your child to circle the feelings they experience when they feel anxious.

Chester the Cat feels anxious! How does Chester feel anxiety in his body?

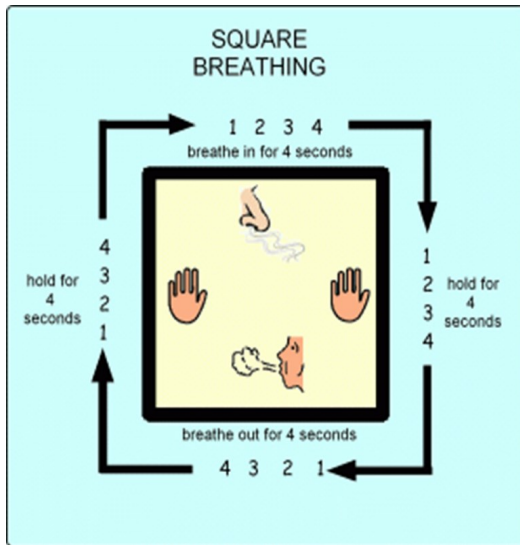


Older children can use this diagram to highlight which symptoms they feel when they are anxious or they can draw their own. Have a conversation with them about how often they experience these feelings and in what situation so you have a better idea of how much anxiety is affecting them.

DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?



Deep breathing techniques can be used to manage stress, anxiety and panic. It takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere. Below you will find a few different techniques you can teach your child to use, why not try and learn them together.



1. Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out.
2. Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
3. Hold at the top of the **breath** for a count of 4.
4. Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
5. At the bottom of the **breath**, pause and hold for the count of 4.

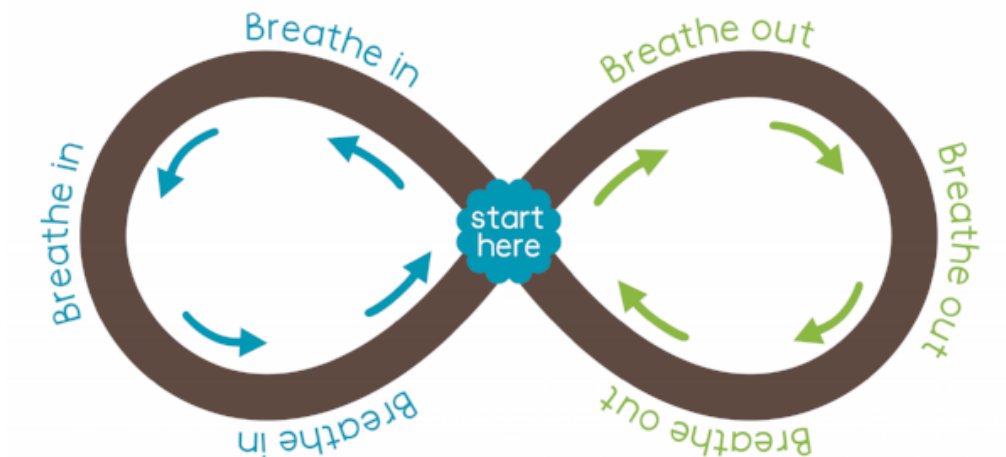
Star Breathing

Trace your finger around the star and follow the instructions.

Breathe in **Hold** **Breathe Out**



Lazy 8 Breathing



Mindfulness Activities Suggestions



Mindfulness colouring can help lift your mood, decrease anxiety and stress. Free printable sheets and mindfulness colouring books can be found online. We have included one colouring sheet for younger children and one for an older child in this resource.

Mind jars or glitter shakers are a great way of distracting your mind away from anxious thoughts. You can also use old plastic bottles instead of jars, just make sure the lid is on tightly!



Examples of Self-soothing using the 5 senses



Sound:

Listen to soothing music, have a conversation with someone who cares, listen to an online meditation exercise



Sight:

Look at pictures that bring up good memories, take a walk and enjoy your surroundings, look up places you want to see online or in a travel magazine



Taste:

Cook and taste your favorite meal, chew a piece of gum, make some green/herbal tea



Touch:

Pet your dog/cat, give someone you care about a hug, carry around a small stress ball or soft trinket to squeeze, take a bubble bath



Smell:

Light a candle (your favorite scent), sit outside and take in the fresh air, buy some fresh flowers

Here are some ways your child can use their 5 senses, focusing on the present moment rather than worrying or anxious thoughts .

Using the five senses — sight, sound, smell, taste and touch — can help you take in the world around you. They can be of great help in slowing down and living in the moment.

Stay Grounded Using Your 5 Senses

Relax Your Body, Take a Few Deep Breaths and Focus on the Following...

 **5 Things You Can See** 

 **4 Things You Can Feel** 

 **3 Things You Can Hear** 

 **2 Things You Can Smell** 

 **1 Thing You Can Taste** 

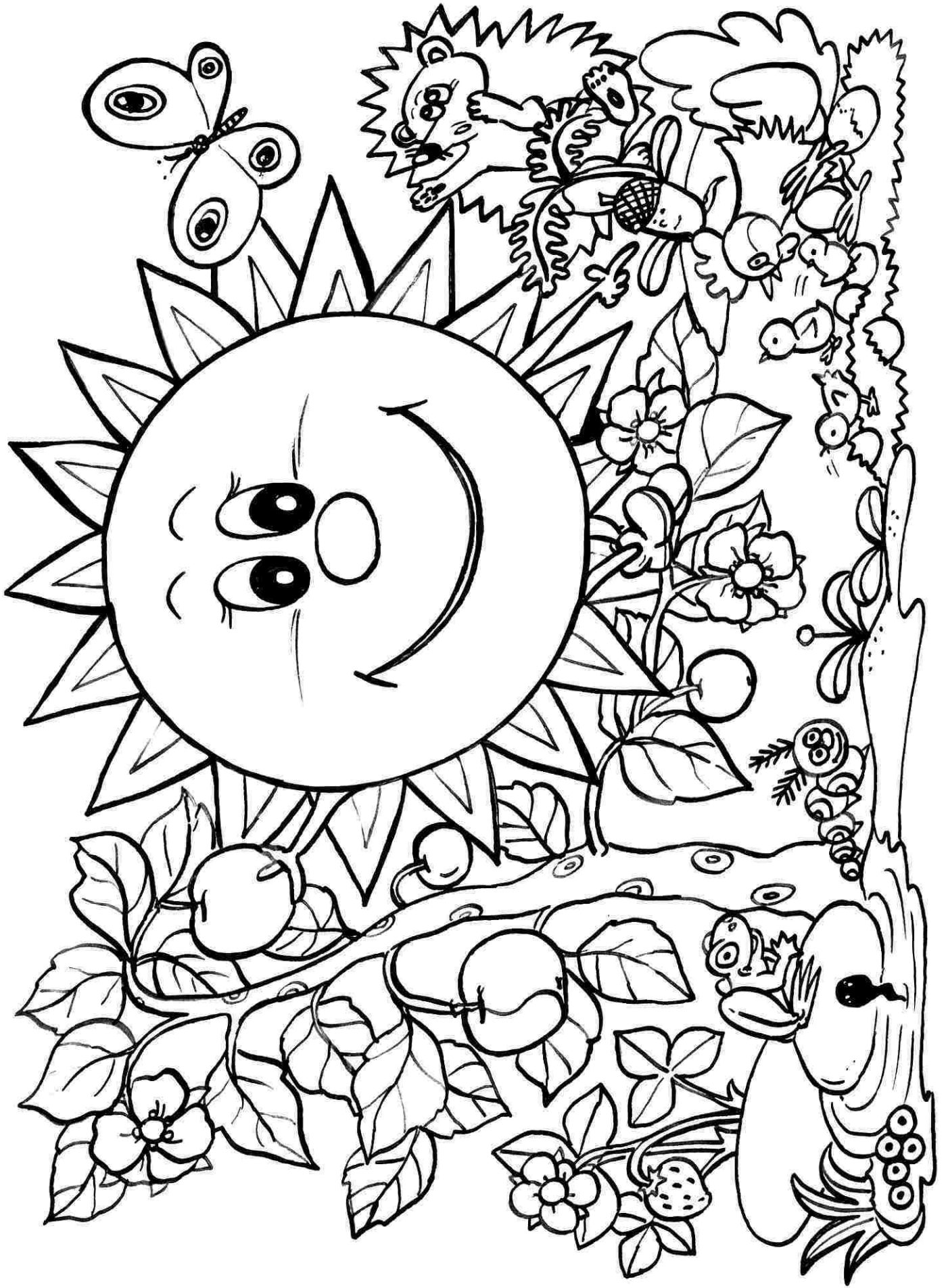


WHAT TO PUT IN A CALM DOWN BOX

www.andnextcomesL.com

<p>Items that provide proprioceptive support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weighted lap cushion or weighted stuffed animal • Weighted vest or pressure vest • Stretchy resistance bands • Sensory tunnel • Mini massager • Body sock • Small blanket 	<p>Items for auditory sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise cancelling headphones • MP3 player with music • Audiobooks
<p>Items to squeeze & keep hands busy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fidgets like Tangle Jr. or puffer ball • Rubik's Cube • Play dough or silly putty • Pipe cleaners • Stress balls • Bubble wrap • Bag of tissue paper to rip • Scarves or fabric scraps • Spinning top 	<p>Items for oral motor sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chew toy or chew necklace • Chewing gum, hard candies, or lollipops • Snacks with a variety of textures • Whistle, harmonica, party blowers, or similar • Rescue Remedy Spray
<p>Items to support breathing & relaxation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottle of bubbles • Pinwheels • Straws and cotton balls or pom poms 	<p>Items that give kids a brain break</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzle • Books to read • Blank notebook and writing utensils • Coloring books • Scratch art doodle pad • Small chalk board, Magna-Doodle, Etch-a-Sketch, or Boogie Board • Activity books • Photo album
<p>Items for olfactory sensory support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calming essential oil spray • Smelling bottles • Scratch and sniff stickers 	<p>Items to visually calm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual calm down cards • Sensory bottle or calm down jar • Light up toys • Flashlight • Plastic snow globe • Kaleidoscope • Hourglass • Eye mask
<p>Items to get kids moving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of yoga poses or yoga activity cards • Skipping rope 	





Useful local and national links for information and advice

www.swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk

www.facebook.com/SwindonSENDfamiliesvoice/

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20045/family_support_services/71/supporting_children_and_families_affected_by_autism

www.autism.org.uk

www.childautism.org.uk

www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/support/

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/anxiety-in-children/

www.resourcesforautism.org.uk/

www.helpguide.org/articles/autism-learning-disabilities/autism-spectrum-disorders.htm

youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/autism-and-mental-health/