



Autism Support Team
Tîm Cymorth Awtistiaeth

Many of our children and young people with autism can experience high levels of stress or anxiety. For some of those children and young people this time away from school may have helped lower that stress, but for others this pandemic and not being in their usual school routine could have made their stress or anxieties much worse. There are many strategies that parents and schools can support children and young people to use to help lower that stress or anxiety. The Autism Support Team have put together some examples of good resources and strategies that you may wish to try with your own child or children.

Understanding emotions

Children and young people on the autism spectrum can experience difficulties in identifying and regulating their emotions. An important first step in self-regulation is correctly labelling their internal state. Once this has been practised and embedded we can begin to introduce strategies that will help regulate the child/young person so they experience more positive outcomes.

The Autism Support Team have put together some printable resources (page 4) to help teach your child/young person to start to understand their emotions.

Relaxation

This should stop the nervous system from going into a state of panic. If we can interrupt this reaction with relaxation exercises we can redirect the nervous system from anxious arousal towards a state of calm.

The Autism Support Team have put together some printable relaxation resources (page 7).

Breathing

When a child/young person feels anxious their breathing may become rapid and shallow. This can lead to feeling of panic. Teaching the child/young person to take slower deeper breaths can help stop this and help the child/young person to feel calmer.

The Autism Support Team have put together some printable breathing resources (page 11).

Calming the mind

The mind can worsen anxiety and panic. Using meditation based techniques can often help quiet the nervous system and therefore return children/young people to a calmer state.

The Autism Support Team have put together some printable calming the mind resources (page 12).

Advice for parents/carers

During this time of uncertainty it is important for parents/carers to look after themselves, both physically and emotionally. The increased pressure of working from home as well as supporting learning and promoting the well-being of your child/young person can be overwhelming. It is a good idea to set realistic goals and expectations as roles within the family change.

Many parents/carers are expressing feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed and worried, among other emotions at this time. You might want to consider using some relaxation techniques regularly throughout the day. This could be something you wish to consider trying as a family.

Below are some app that you may find helpful:



Mind Yeti.

Mind Yeti is an app that provides mindfulness instruction and meditative scripts for a variety of moods and needs.



Aura.

Aura is the world's most loved mindfulness app, with thousands of meditations for stress, anxiety, sleep, and more - personalized just for you.



Happify.

Happify's science-based activities and games can help you overcome negative thoughts, stress, and life's challenges.



Relax Melodies.

Can't sleep at night? Relax Melodies is designed to be the most efficient Sleep-Aid App to make you fall asleep quickly and wake up refreshed. Relax, take a deep breath and join us on a restful journey to sleep!



Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame

This app aims to provide tools to help children build skills for resilience, and overcome everyday challenges and more stressful situations and transitions.



ThinkUP

An app that enables you to record and store positive affirmations in your own voice to help boost your mood and self-esteem.



Stop, breathe and Think.

This app allows you to check in with how you're feeling, and recommends short guided meditations and mindfulness activities, tuned to your emotions. Whether you're anxious, sleepless, hopeful, angry, or anything in between.



Smiling Mind

This app has great body scan meditations to help children develop the awareness of what's happening in their bodies. Learning about what's happening in your body is one of the first steps of an authentic mindfulness practice.



Headspace (for Kids)

This app teaches parents and children together about meditation for different age levels. They focus on Calm, Kindness, and Bedtime.



Calm

This app provides mindfulness and sleep stories for children of varying ages.



Three Good Things: A Happiness Journal

This app is simple and easy-to-use, helping children focus on the positive and recognizing what went well today. (Ages 6 and up.) Every child gets to list three things daily that went well, which begins to train their mind to look for things to appreciate and begin a gratitude practice.

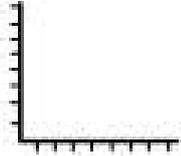


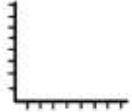
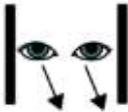
Insight Timer

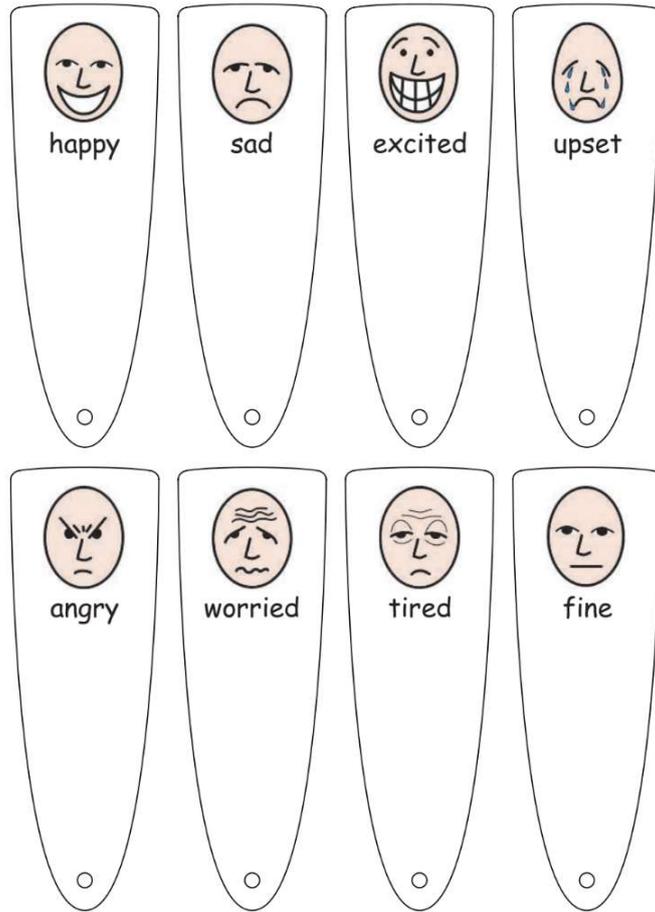
This app is free with meditations for parents and children. They focus on relaxation, managing stress, concentration, and sleep, as examples.

Understanding Emotions

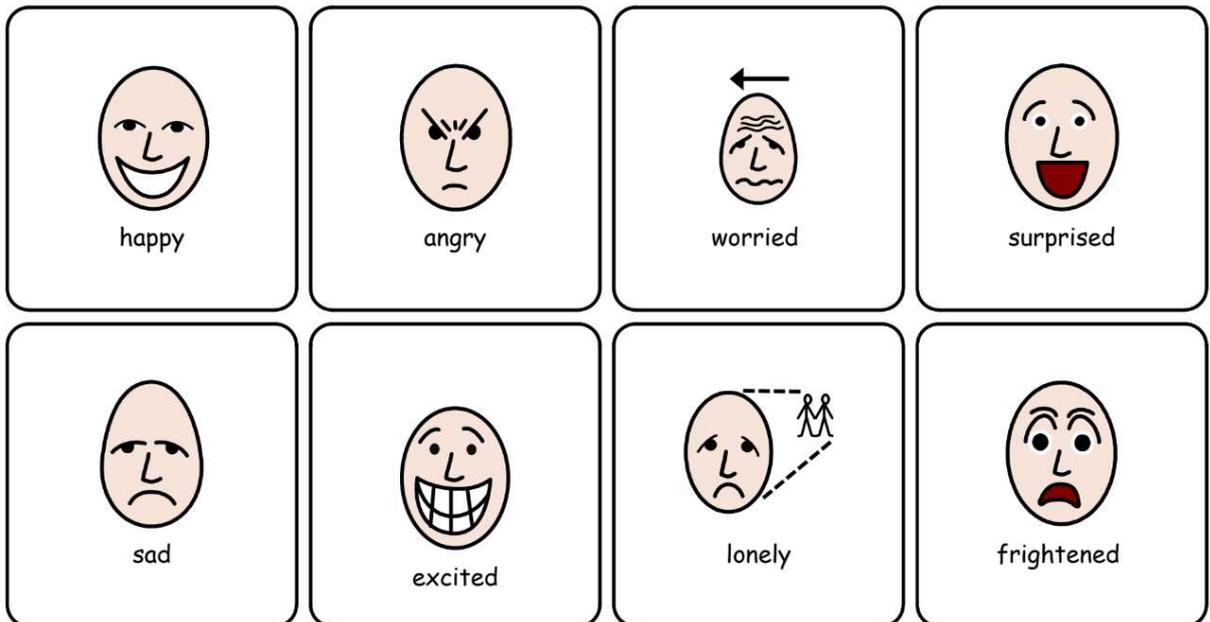
Examples of 5 point scale using Widgit symbols

 5 point scale	 what it looks like	 what it feels like
5 five		
4 four		
3 three		
2 two		
1 one		

 5 point scale	 what it looks like	 what it feels like	 how you can help
5 five			
4 four			
3 three			
2 two			
1 one			




 Feelings



Relaxation Exercises



Yoga Cards

Preparation and Safety

Time Can be adapted to any setting or time frame.

Preparation Session to happen on a carpeted floor or mats with enough space to stretch out arms and legs. If possible, have a bag with animals, pictures and stories inside to promote discussion.

Safety Session to happen on a carpeted floor or mats with enough space to stretch out arms and legs. Hold each pose for at least two breaths and always change sides when instructed to. Keep breathing, move slowly into the pose, never overstretch and if any pain is felt stop immediately.

Yoga Cards

Mountain Pose - Tadasana

Benefits Improves posture, strengthens core, muscles and legs.

- Stand tall with your weight balanced evenly on your feet.
- Firm your thigh muscles and pull in your tummy.
- Press your shoulders back and hold your arms out straight, a little way from your body.
- Breathe deeply and hold as long as needed (at least two long breaths).

Yoga Cards

Frog Pose - Bhekasana

Benefits Tones legs; increases hamstring flexibility.

- Squat on the floor, balancing on your toes, knees spread wide, hands on the floor between your legs.
- Look up and inhale.
- As you exhale, straighten your legs and lower your head toward your knees.
- Return to squatting position, then repeat.

Yoga Cards

Butterfly Pose

Benefits Calms the body and mind, helps relieve stress, headaches and fatigue.

- Begin by sitting with soles of feet together.
- Touch fingers to the side of your head like antennae.
- Gently bounce your knees to flap your butterfly wings.
- Exhale, and slowly lower your hands back to your lap.

Yoga Cards

Cat Cow Pose - Marjaryasana Bitilasana

Benefits Stretches torso and neck, gently massages spine and internal organs.

- Start by kneeling on hands and knees. Make sure hands are below shoulders, and knees are below hips.
- Inhale, look up to the ceiling, and allow your belly to sink toward the floor.
- Exhale, round your back towards the ceiling and look at your belly.
- Repeat.

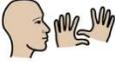
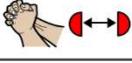
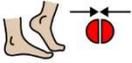
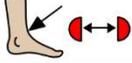
Yoga Cards

Child's Pose - Balasana

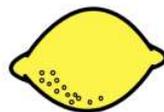
Benefits Stretches the hips, thighs, and ankles; calms the mind; relieves stress and fatigue.

- Kneel on the floor, touching your big toes together.
- Sit back on your heels and separate your knees hip-width apart.
- Exhale, bringing your head down, and rest it on the floor in front of you.
- Place your hands wherever they are comfortable by your head, your knees, etc.
- Relax and breathe, holding this pose.

Clenching Muscles 3 to 5 seconds

Clench teeth	
Frown	
Push head on hands	
Turn head side to side	
Clench fists	
Push hands together	
Grip hands and pull	
Push legs on floor	
Push feet together	
Cross ankles and pull	

Lemon Exercise



Pretend you have a lemon in your left hand
Squeeze it hard
Feel the tightness in your arm and hand

Now drop the lemon
feel your arm and hand relax

Pretend you have a lemon in your right hand
Squeeze it hard
Feel the tightness in your arm and hand

Now drop the lemon
Feel your arm and hand relax



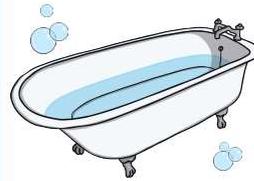
Creative Calming

Do something creative, such as painting a picture or making a collage. It doesn't matter if you think you can't paint – just go with the flow and enjoy the process.



Time Out

Find a calm space in your house where you can sit quietly and relax.



Brilliant Bubbles

Enjoy a relaxing bubble bath. There is nothing better than warm water to help you relax.



Magical Mindfulness

Try being mindful. This means focusing your attention on things that are happening right now, such as your own breathing or the sounds that you can hear.



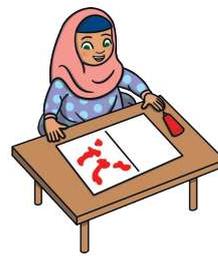
Nurturing Nature

Go for a walk. Being outside in the fresh air will make you feel a lot better.



Disco Fever

Have a dance party! Play your favourite music and get your whole family to join in.



Write for Wellbeing!

Write a journal or a poem about how you are feeling.



Let Go!

Lie on the floor and close your eyes. You are going to tense and relax all of your muscles one by one, starting with your toes. Stretch the toes out on one foot for a few seconds and then relax them. Then tense your whole foot and relax it. Repeat this for all the parts of your body. This is also a useful exercise to help you fall asleep.



Magical Music

Listen to your favourite song. Use headphones if the music will disturb others.



Relaxing Reading

Find a comfortable place to relax and read your favourite book.



Singing Sensation

Sing along to your favourite song – even if you can't sing!



Refresh and Relax

Enjoy your favourite drink! It might be creamy hot chocolate or refreshing icy lemonade.



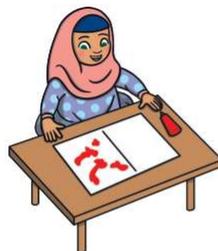
Run for Fun

Go for a jog or a run to clear your head and get some fresh air.



Useful Yoga

Try some simple yoga exercises, such as 'downward dog'.



Calming Colouring

Relax with the calm, mindful activity of colouring in a beautiful picture.



TV Time

Snuggle up on the sofa and watch your favourite film or TV show.

Butterfly Exercise



A butterfly has landed on your nose

Try to get the butterfly off without using your hands
Wrinkle up your nose as tight as you can

The butterfly has gone relax your nose

The butterfly is back
Wrinkle up your nose again tightly, notice how your
cheeks nose forehead and mouth all wrinkle
Hold it tight

The butterfly has gone you can relax and let your
face go smooth

Breathing Exercises

Relaxation Breathing

Smell the flowers.



Breathe in.

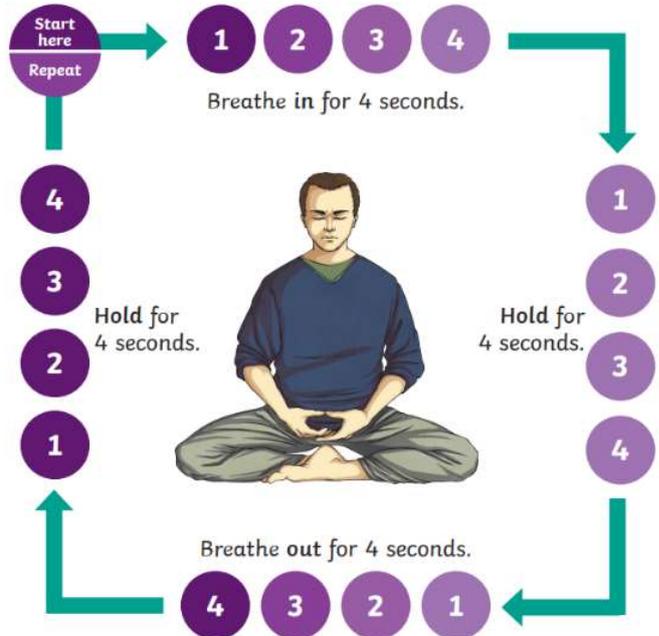
Blow out the candles.



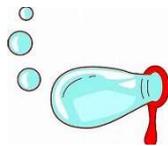
Breathe out.

twinkl.com

Square Breathing



Bubble blowing



Blowing bubbles is a fantastic way of learning how to breathe when you are feeling tense. Remember you might feel tense when you are angry, scared, worried or upset. Blow the bubbles gently with your lips pursed. If you blow too hard you will not see any bubbles as the mixture will not form any bubbles. If you blow too gently then the bubble mixture will not leave the wand. It takes practice to blow lots of bubbles. This is the breathing you need to do when you are feeling angry, scared, worried or upset. It will help to calm you down. Next time you feel angry, scared, worried or upset imagine you are blowing bubbles. Blow 5 sets of bubbles. Breathing out through pursed lips, long and slow and then taking a breath in through your nose before blowing some more bubbles long and slow.

Worry bubbles



If you are worrying about things then use bubbles to take your worries away. Imagine a worry as you blow your bubbles. Fill the bubbles with your worries and watch them float away. You will now feel calm and relaxed. You don't need to carry these worries around with you.

Calming the mind



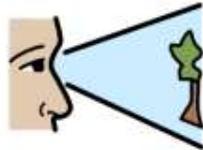
With your eyes closed take 4 deep breaths in
hold your breath before releasing
Without opening your eyes I want you to
concentrate on what you can feel
Maybe the clothes you are wearing, the feel of
the chair or the shoes on your feet



With your eyes closed take 4 deep breaths in
hold your breath before releasing
Without opening your eyes I want you to
concentrate on what you can hear
Maybe birds chirping , cars driving past or the
sounds of family members in your house

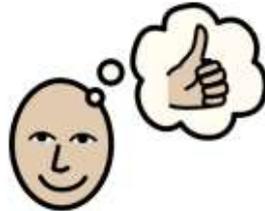


With your eyes closed take 4 deep breaths in
hold your breath before releasing
Without opening your eyes I want you to
concentrate on what you can smell
Maybe the washing powder on the clothes you
are wearing , a family pet or newly cut grass



With your eyes closed take 4 deep breaths in
hold your breath before releasing
Now open your eyes I want you to concentrate
on what you can see
Maybe the texture of your clothes , the pattern
on wallpaper or an object in the room

Positive Thinking



Try to think of 3 positive things everyday
maybe you like the sound of the rain on a window
or a family member smiling at you
or playing with the family pet
or the taste or smell of your favourite food



Relax your Mind
Picture a peaceful happy scene
Concentrate on the scene
What can you see?
What can you smell?
What can you feel?

Grounding technique to help during an anxiety attack

Look around you...

5

Look for 5 things you can see.
Say their names out loud.
Which one is nearest to you?



4

Find 4 things you can touch. Touch them.
How do they feel under your fingertips?



3

Listen for 3 things you can hear.
Can you identify what is making the noise?



2

Sniff 2 things that you can smell.
Do the smells remind you of anything?



1

Taste 1 thing in your mouth.
What did you last eat or drink?

