

BRISTOL AUTISM TEAM

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TOOLKIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

This toolkit has been produced by Bristol Autism Team to support Secondary schools to further develop their understanding of strategies for pupils on the Autism spectrum and with social communication & interaction needs.

These strategies are offered as a starting point. There are numerous further strategies that schools can use.

This toolkit has been produced by: -

- Frances Brooke
- Jackie Melksham
- Mary Murphy

For further information regarding local organisations, groups and advice, please see Bristol City Council “Local Offer”

www.findabilitybristol.org.uk





Source "Bristol Autism Team"

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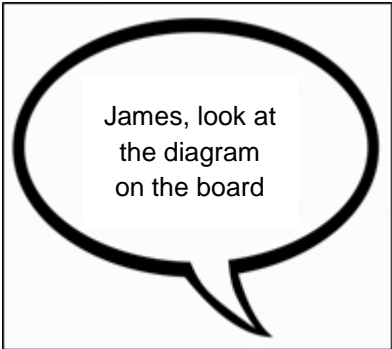
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Communication

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may have a wide range of communicative ability. It is very important not to make assumptions about an individual pupil's skills solely on the basis of their diagnosis.
- Verbal ability may well be ahead of their understanding e.g. using words and phrases that have been learnt or heard in one context.

Pupils


- may not understand the need for communication
- may not initiate communication
- may fail to communicate clearly what they want or need
- may have difficulty with attention and listening skills, particularly in relation to verbal communication
- may have difficulty understanding language
- may have difficulties processing language, especially when combined with maintaining eye contact and non-verbal communication (gestures, body language)




James, look at
the diagram
on the board

Attention and Processing

- Use the pupil's name and wait until they give you their attention (some pupils may not be able to look directly at you).
- Pupils may not recognise instructions given to the whole class. Give individual instructions.
- If you are pointing at the board or at a resource, make sure the pupil is looking at the right item – highlighting can help with this.
- Allow time to process verbal information – this can vary but may take up to 20 seconds.

"Put your home learning in the box on my desk labelled 752." 

rather than

"Give your home learning in" 

Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Use clear, non ambiguous language

- Language should be as concrete as possible.
- Say what you mean – and mean what you say.
- Put in pauses to regulate the pace of verbal delivery. Teacher nervousness may communicate itself.

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Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Supporting a pupil

- When supporting a pupil in class use MINIMAL language supported with the use of a mini white board, post its, mind maps, bullet points and visuals.
- Do not talk when the teacher is – model good listening behaviour.

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Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Sarcasm, humour, idioms

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can be very literal and phrases such as 'Put a sock in it', "That's cool" or 'I'll be back in a minute' may be interpreted in a different way.
- Sarcasm can be very confusing and pupils may not understand your intention.
- Analogies can be useful e.g. does it help if we talk about the brain as if it is a computer? You may need to explicitly explain this.

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Source "CCO Public Domain"

Facial expressions

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may not look directly at faces or correctly interpret facial expressions and body language. Don't assume they will know the names of others in their class or who different teachers are.
- This can be interpreted as rude behaviour.
- Pupils may not understand your subtle body language i.e. the look, tut, sighs.
- Make your expectations clear and explicit.



Source "CCO Public Domain"



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Other comments

- Poor language skills are not necessarily an indicator of ability across the wider curriculum.
- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can have a very uneven profile of skills.
- All pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs will have communication differences – they may also have additional language impairments.

Autism Friendly Environment

(Being aware of Sensory Issues)

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may find noisy, crowded spaces highly stressful.
- Some hotspots include stairs, corridors, canteen, changing rooms and toilets.
- Schools can make their environment autism friendly by using clear visual signposting.

**Please Keep Quiet
in the Library**



Source "Enokson CC BY2.0"

Reasonable adjustments

- Being allowed out early or late from a lesson to avoid crowds.
- Having an early or "avoid the queue" pass.
- Alternative changing arrangements for PE.
- A quiet area for break and lunch time
 - To eat lunch
 - Play structured games
 - Read books
 - Use ICT equipment



Source "CCO Public Domain"



BRISTOL
LEARNING CITY



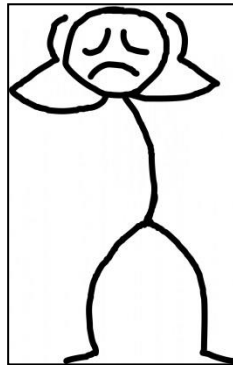
Source "CCO Public Domain"

Preferential seating

- Seating next to good role models.
- Give the pupil additional space if needed.
- Could be sat at the front or back – pupil may express a preference.
- May need their own desk/space.
- **Discuss with the pupil.**



Source "CCO Public Domain"



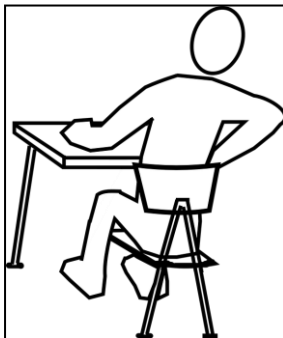
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Labels

- Label areas/equipment clearly.

Movement Breaks

- E.g. Walking across the classroom to hand out books, sharpen pencil, open a window or taking messages.



Source "Eric CC BY 2.0"



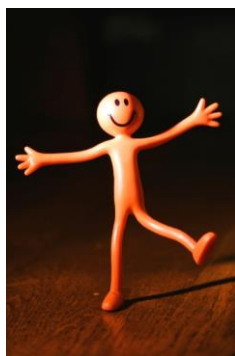
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Many pupils will have sensory challenges which mean they may:

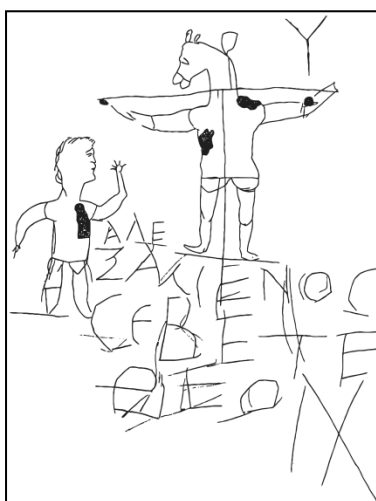
- Rock
- Fiddle with equipment (chew pen or taking things to bits)
- Hum, make repetitive noises (verbally or with equipment)
- Doodle



Source "Clive Darra CC BY2.0"



Source "Neala CC BY2.0"



Source "CCO Public Domain"



Source "Bill Ebsom CC BY SA 3.0"

Sensory Challenges cont.

- Give the pupil a doodle pad.
- Planned ignoring of low level/distraction behaviours.
- Move the student to a position against the back wall or give him/her a movement break.
- Make the pupil aware that they are disturbing others.
- Allow fiddle objects, this could be blue tack, wristbands.
- Some pupils will have 'Chewlery' (a specific chewy item).

Other comments

- Challenging behaviour which is driven by sensory need is best managed by using a graduated response i.e. finding a more appropriate replacement or modifying the environment.

Visuals

- Visual prompts can be used to help pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs. They are adaptable, portable and can be used in most situations.
- We see and use visual prompts every day, for example road signs, maps and shopping lists.
- Visuals help us understand the world around us, and provide us with valuable information.
- Many pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs are thought to be visual learners, so presenting information in a visual way can help to encourage and support communication, language development and ability to process information.



"How are you feeling" prompts

- A pupil on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs does not always understand the hidden meaning to facial expressions used by others.
- Prompt cards can help to support understanding their own and others emotions.
- Some pupils can manage to identify a range of emotions, whereas some may be ready to identify just a few emotions.

Source "Toddlatkins CC BY1.0"



Source "CCO Public Domain"

I NEED A BREAK

I really need to stop working for a few minutes and take a break. Once my body and brain calm down I can re-join the group and get back to work.

- During my break I can go to.....
- I can do the following things
.....
- I need to avoid.....

Source "Bristol Autism Team"



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Visual Prompts

(To remind about Expected Behaviours and Language)

- Let me think about that
Excuse Me
Sorry about that
- Key phrases for communicating with different staff ie: office staff
- Exit Card
- Take a Break Card
(These cards must always be rehearsed first when the pupil is calm. It should be part of a clear behaviour plan)

Visuals through an Interactive White Board

- Countdown Timer
- Noise Levels—colour change

RED = too noisy ORANGE = working noise
GREEN = silent

- Lesson outline - to show progress through the lesson
- Highlighter and coloured filters

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
08.00-11.00 FULL DAY EXCURSION EXETER	09.00-11.00 Free Time	09.00-10.30 English Study Skills	09.00-10.30 English Study Skills	09.00-10.30 English Study Skills	09.00-10.30 English Study Skills	09.00-10.30 English Study Skills	
		10.30-11.00 Break	10.30-11.00 Break	10.30-11.00 Break	10.30-11.00 Break	10.30-11.00 Break	
11.00-12.30 Discussion Group	11.00-12.30 History	11.00-12.30 Art	11.00-12.30 ICT	11.00-12.30 History	11.00-12.30 English Literature	11.00-12.30 English Literature	
12.30-1.00 PACKED LUNCH	12.30-1.00 PACKED LUNCH	12.30-1.00 Lunch	12.30-1.00 Lunch	12.30-1.00 Lunch	12.30-1.00 Lunch	12.30-1.00 Lunch	
1.00-1.30 FULL DAY EXCURSION EXETER	1.00-1.30 country walk / geocaching (modern treasure hunt)	1.30-2.00 English Literature	1.30-2.00 Drama	1.30-2.00 Drama	1.30-2.00 Art	1.30-2.00 Drama	
		2.00-2.30 Break	2.00-2.30 Break	2.00-2.30 Break	2.00-2.30 Break	2.00-2.30 Break	
		2.30-3.00 Sports / History of British Sport	2.30-3.00 Sports and Games	2.30-3.00 Sports and Games	2.30-3.00 Sports / History of British Sport	2.30-3.00 Sports and Games	
		3.00-3.30 Sports and Games	3.00-3.30 Sports and Games	3.00-3.30 Sports and Games	3.00-3.30 Sports and Games	3.00-3.30 Sports and Games	
		3.30-4.00 Dinner	3.30-4.00 Dinner	3.30-4.00 Dinner	3.30-4.00 Dinner	3.30-4.00 Dinner	
4.00-4.30 Sports group activity	4.00-4.30 1:1 tutorial & blog	4.00-4.30 Review through games	4.00-4.30 Supernatural 4 Homework	4.00-4.30 Review through games	4.00-4.30 Supernatural Homework	4.00-4.30 Review through games	
4.30-5.00 Team building	4.30-5.00 Free Time	4.30-5.00 Free Time	4.30-5.00 Onsite group activity	4.30-5.00 Onsite group activity	4.30-5.00 Free Time	4.30-5.00 Forward Gathering	
5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	5.00-5.30 Free Time	
		5.30-6.00 22.00 Lights Out	5.30-6.00 22.00 Lights Out	5.30-6.00 22.00 Lights Out	5.30-6.00 22.00 Lights Out	5.30-6.00 22.00 Lights Out	

Source "CCO Public Domain"

Timetables

(in addition to standard issue)

- Colour coded
- Pocket size and laminated
- Daily, weekly, fortnightly, depending on pupil



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Quote Id	Text
Page: " " " "	Page: " " " "
Page: " " " "	Page: " " " "

Source "CCO Public Domain"

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
PE Football <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shorts and top Football boots 	Library <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading book 	Gym <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor Gym kit trainers
DT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apron 	Maths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maths book 	Cooking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheese butter flour

Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Revision Calendar			
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
10.00	Maths		
11.00	TV		Blank
12.00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1.00	Blank	Computer	
2.00		English	

Maths Task

Nov 2014
Paper 1
Answer question 2-6

Blank

Catch up time
unexpected
interruption

English Task

Read chapter 3
of 'Of Mice and
Men'
Summarise Key..

Organisation

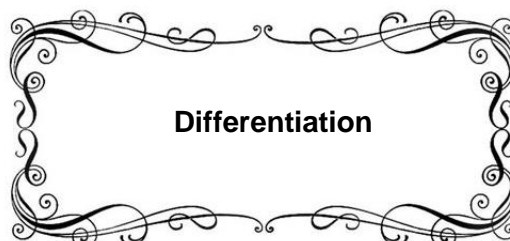
- Bag packing, equipment check list.
- Organising help with writing (graphic organiser), mind maps, templates, vocabulary boxes, sentence starters, focus questions.
- Task Breakdown (post It notes/white board).

Exams Revision and Homework

- It is useful to use visuals to show the time needed for revision. A pupil on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may find it hard to manage time and put the workload into perspective.
- It is necessary to show 'down time' and periods when the pupil can do their choice of activity.
- It is useful to plan in additional time for unexpected events (such as: being ill or mum taking me shopping).
- Using abstract terms like 'Revise' are not helpful.

Other comments

- It is important that school matches the level of visual used (symbols or words) to the pupil's age and understanding and preference.



Differentiation

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can have a very uneven profile of skills and challenges.
- Writing is often a problem and reducing demands may be necessary.
- Organisation of thoughts, ideas and seeing the purpose of the task can be difficult.
- Many pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs struggle with flexible thinking and being able to consider things from another's perspective.



Source "CCO Public Domain"

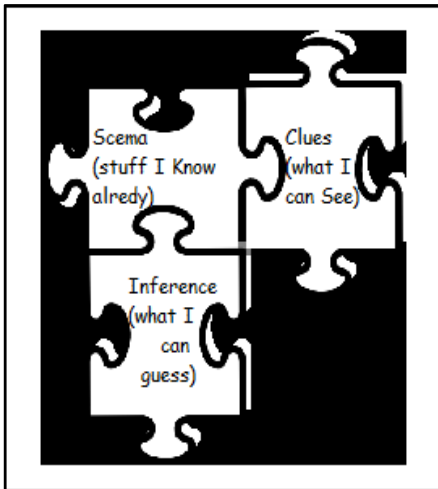
Questions

- Use questioning techniques such as think, pair, share.
- Allow thinking time.
- Avoid open-ended questions.
- Use mini white boards to write answers down on.

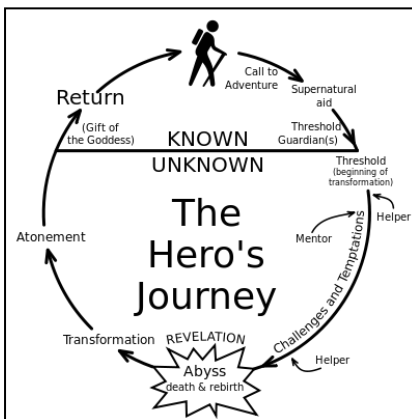
Using Structure

- It is helpful for teachers to show a written outline or overview of the topic.
- Show why the learning is important – relate to real life and the pupils interest.
- Have success criteria explicit from the start.
- Help pupils structure learning and writing using templates, writing frames, graphic organisers etc.
- When setting home learning/independent work ensure tasks are specific and larger projects are broken down into bite size chunks.

Example of Lesson Structure	
L.O	
Starter	Activity/Warm up
Teacher input (what you are going to teach – main task details)	
Follow up (details)	
Plenary + rewards	



Source "CCO Public Domain"



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Perspective

- Imaginative work will need much more scaffolding. Factual work will be easier.
- Pupils may find it hard to understand, infer and interpret emotions from text.
- They may find it hard to understand the whole story/picture and how parts of the narrative relate to each other.
- Use of character cards and plotting the story on a graphic organiser or mind map will help pupils make sense of the information.
- Actively teach the importance of showing your thinking.
E.g. Working out or planning stage in English
- Activate what the pupil knows about the subject.
- Look for clues.
- Make a guess (inference).
- Many pupils are perfectionists and hate to get things wrong, so are reluctant to make a guess and risk failure.
- Making a Mistake Social Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oh42WldyHUw>

Quality conversation standards

- **Listen to what others have to say**
- **Take turns in the conversation**
- **Speak (don't shout)**
- **Ask questions when it is your turn**
- **Offer suggestions and say what you think when it is your turn**
- **Try to say positive and kind words about other pupils' ideas.**

Source "CCO Public Domain"

Organising Group Work

- It is better for the teacher to choose all groups and allocate pupils roles.
- Visual role cues will help remind pupils what their role is and make the task specific.
- Quality conversation standards.




Source "CCO Public Domain"

Token System

- Earning time tokens to spend on a special interest can be an effective motivator.
- Consideration needs to be given to where on the timetable this can be given—some flexibility will be required but is usually worth it.
- This system can be linked to academic, social or behaviour targets.
- Some pupils are motivated by seeing a larger reward being built up in steps.
- Clear targets to be met are essential.
- You will need to consider how you might deal with disappointment if the pupil does not earn many tokens.

Targets

1. Arrive in school by 8.30am 

2. Have equipment for lessons ☐

3. Complete..... ☐

Source "CCO Public Domain"

My Targets

Name: _____
Class: _____

1. 

2. 

3. 

Source "CCO Public Domain"

Rewards

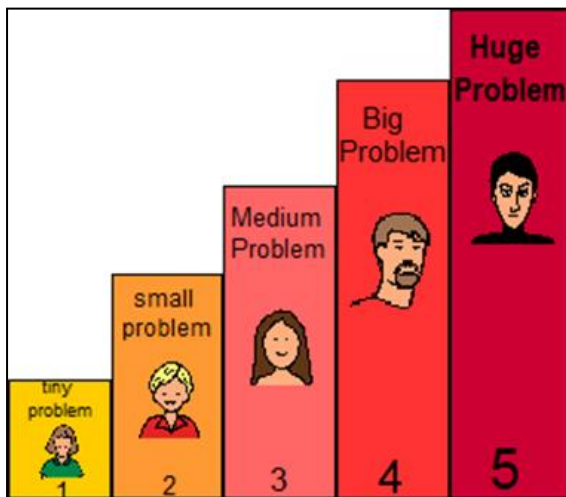
- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may not respond to or see the point of whole school motivators such as house points, positive points, certificates or praise.
- Linking a pupil's special interests to rewards can be highly motivating.
- Reward systems need to be reviewed frequently to monitor impact.

I am working for ☐

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- Social skill differences are a key challenge for pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs and will occur across the curriculum.
- Direct teaching of a social skill can occur within subject lessons, during specific social intervention, during tutor/form time, lunchtime clubs, around the school and through peer support.



Source "Bristol Autism Team"



Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Using a Scale

- A 5 Point Scale can be used to categorise behaviours and rate 1 - 5 according to seriousness and intensity.
- When used as a whole class or group activity it can show perspective i.e.: a pupil may rate a behaviour as a 2 when the rest of his peers would rate it as a 4.
- It can also show, the size of the problem should match the size of the reaction.
- It can be used to show hierarchy and describe levels of intimacy.



Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Using Speech and Thought Bubbles

To facilitate the understanding of perspective it can be extremely effective to add speech and thought bubbles onto drawings of stick people to show social situations in a range of contexts, for example:-

- Post incident debrief
- Understanding a pupil's perspective
- Correcting pupil's mistaken perspective
- Showing the thoughts/feelings of others
- Solutions and problem solving e.g. distinguishing between an accident and a deliberate act
- Showing that thoughts and beliefs lead to actions
- Can be used to gather information to write a social script

Social Scripts

- Aim to remind the pupil about social information they may not be using in their interactions.
Eg that it is the teacher's responsibility to deal with issues and decide when a situation is over.
- Can be used to help a pupil problem solve social issues.
Eg friendship issues.
- Can be used to prepare a pupil for change.
eg school trip, and remind them about routines.
eg handing in homework.
- Can show the perspective and thoughts of others.

Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Examples of social scripts

What does 'Being on time' mean?

Often when we are meeting someone we say, I'll meet you at 'such and such' a time.

We can be very specific about time and say 2.45pm or quarter to 3 or we can be more vague and say, for example, when I have finished my ice cream.

When we give an exact time to meet someone we usually mean we will see them close to that time. It is quite hard to be exactly on time.

It is polite to try and get there a bit earlier than the time rather than later.

HOWEVER

Sometimes things happen which make us late. These can be unforeseen things for example: **unusual traffic, an emergency call, the car breaking down, your watch or phone not saying the correct time or something else.**

If we are going to be late it is polite to call and let the other person know that you have been held up. It can be irritating when others are late but it is rarely deliberate or planned.

It is expected that if you are late you should apologise to the person who has been waiting. It is expected that the person who has been waiting accepts this apology and knows that it was not deliberate but that it is difficult to be on time sometimes.

What does "See you later" mean?

When friends or peers are saying goodbye they often use a phrase 'see you later' or 'catch you later'

Some people even shorten this to 'laters'

This means that they expect to see the person again sometime soon.

This can be later on in the day, the evening or even the next day or week after.

It is just a way of saying "I'll see you soon".

Source "Bristol Autism Team"

Both of these social scripts were written for a Year 10 pupil who could not cope with others not being exactly on time. If they said they would be there at a specific time, that's when she would expect to see them.

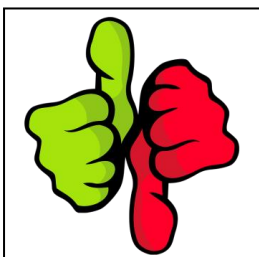
Pictures can be added to break the story up or add meaning.

Other comments

- Involving peers with social understanding can be beneficial for a pupil on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs e.g. transitions between lessons, modelling expected behaviours.
- Where peers have been educated about autism, social outcomes are more favourable both for pupils with autism and their peers.
- Whilst counselling services (i.e. a talking therapy) can be very helpful, it is important for the councillor to know the pupil has a diagnosis of autism spectrum. Pupils may not be able to self-refer and may take what is said very literally.

Emotional Understanding

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs often experience heightened stress levels in comparison to their peers. They may have reduced coping strategies and fail to recognise their anxiety before it becomes overwhelming.
- Pupils may need encouragement to:
 - Ask for help
 - Recognise their emotions and those of others
 - Talk about their feelings
 - Manage their emotions
 - Develop coping strategies and calming techniques



Source "CCO Public Domain"

Independent working cards

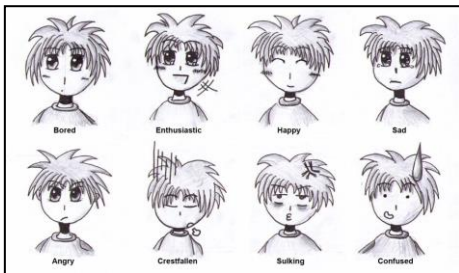
- These cards allow pupils to communicate their understanding/confidence of a task.
- Card is double sided and placed on desk where the pupil is working
- The pupil displays "ok" or "I need help".
- Adults can quickly check how the pupil is getting on without constant questioning.
- Make the cards so they are unobtrusive and discreet.
- The cards can also be used as a whole class resource for all pupils.



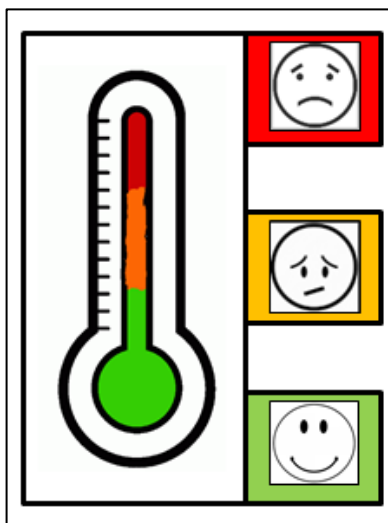
Source "CCO Public Domain"

Traffic Light systems

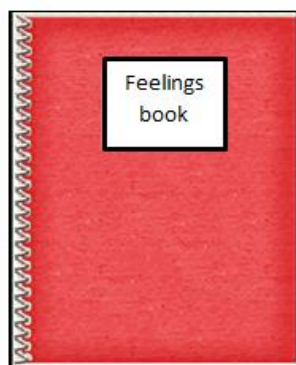
- These work in a similar way to independent working cards offering a visual way to communicate understanding or anxiety.
- **Green** = OK
- **Amber/Yellow** = I'm Unsure or I can give it go
- **Red** = Help
- An arrow or object can be placed on the colour to indicate how the pupil is feeling.
- Coloured pencil can also be used in a similar and more discreet way, with the pupil drawing on a piece of paper to indicate how they are feeling.



Source "Sympho CC BY 2.0"



Source "Public Domain"



Source "Pixabay"

Feelings board

- Feelings boards allows a pupil to communicate how they are feeling to others.
- They are particularly useful when discussing incidents that have occurred.

How to use:

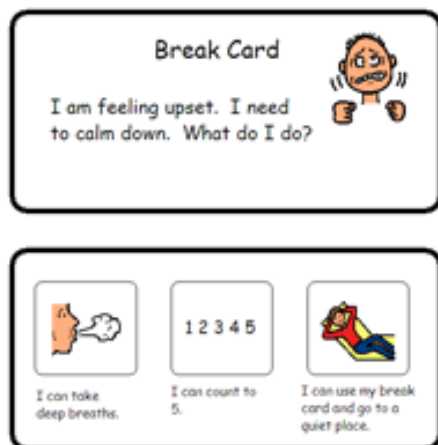
- Encourage the pupil to point to or verbalise the emotion which is relevant to them at the time using the board as a visual support.
- Use the board in conjunction with a feelings book (see below) to enable the pupil to increase their understanding of emotions.

An emotions thermometer

- These encourage a pupil to think about changes in how they are feeling.
- The pupil places their name or photograph on the thermometer as a visual indicator to show their level of emotion, or indicate the emotion that they are experiencing at that particular time.
- Ensure that the thermometer is accessible to the pupil at all times.
- It can also be used as a whole class resource.

Feelings Book

- Create a 'feelings' or 'emotions' book. Explore basic emotions first, such as happy, sad and angry before moving on to more complex ones.
- Focus on one emotion at a time. Take photographs of the pupil or other pupils showing a particular emotion in different situations and contexts, or cut out photographs from a magazine.
- Stick these in a book, exploring and recording how a pupil is feeling.
- Ensure that the pupil is also taught how to manage emotions, for example, ways to calm down if feeling "angry".



Source "Boardmaker – Bristol Autism Team licence"

I need a break cards

- "I need a break" cards allow a pupil to communicate that they need downtime or access to a safe haven/safe space.
- All staff need to know that a pupil has a "break card" and responses by staff to these needs to be consistent.



Source "Public Domain"

Safe and quiet place

- It is useful for pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs to have an agreed safe and quiet place for them to go to when they feel anxious or are overloaded by sensory stimuli.
- A safe haven room situated outside the classroom might be beneficial.

Other comments

- Visual tools help pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs to communicate their emotions and adults working with them to identify/recognise these emotions.
- A pupil's facial expressions may not reflect their true feelings and a change in behaviour may be mistakenly attributed to another cause, such as a sensory sensitivity, heightened anxiety etc.
- It does not always occur to pupils on the autism spectrum to talk to others about their emotional wellbeing, and therefore their responses to anxiety may be individual and unexpected.

Managing Anxiety

- Almost all pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs will experience anxiety in school and this should be regularly assessed using tools such as the 'stress in school indicator'.
(<http://www.do2learn.com/activities/SocialSkills/Stress/StressTriggers.html>)
- Where pupils present differently at school and home, schools need to be aware that the source of the stress is as likely to be from school as it is from home, even though the pupil may not show this.
- It is important that pupils have a healthy and balanced lifestyle.



Source "Public Domain"



Source "Public Domain"



Source "Public Domain"



Emotions Toolkit

- This is a collection of different strategies that aim to reduce levels of anxiety. Different tools can be used in a range of contexts. Each pupil will have different tools that work for them – their own personal toolbox.

Physical tools- Energy management 'letting off steam'

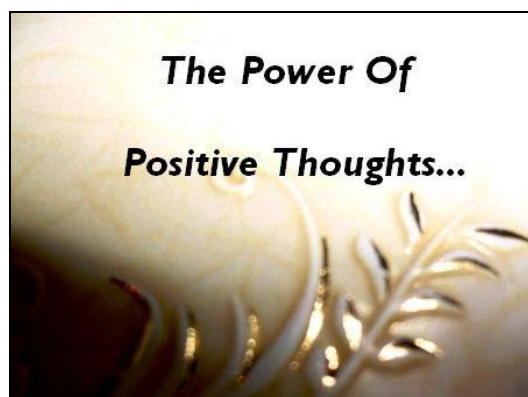
- Running, walking, fresh air
- Exercise, sport
- Punch bag or pillow
- Drumming

Relaxation tools

- Drawing, reading
- Music – listening and playing
- Solitude – a quiet space
- Repetition and routine (tidying and ordering)
- Visualising a calm, happy place
- Using picture cards, photos of family, cute animals,



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Source "Iqbal Osman CC BY 2.0



Source "bitesize inspiration CC" BY 2.0

Social tools

- Enjoyable interaction either with a key person, mentor, friend or animal.
- Playing cards, chess or a structured game.
- Going for coffee, tea or equivalent.

Thinking tools

- Positive affirmations
- Social scripts
- Positive thought cards e.g. (I can do it)
- Mantras

Special Interest tool – a quick way of preventing escalation and providing distraction

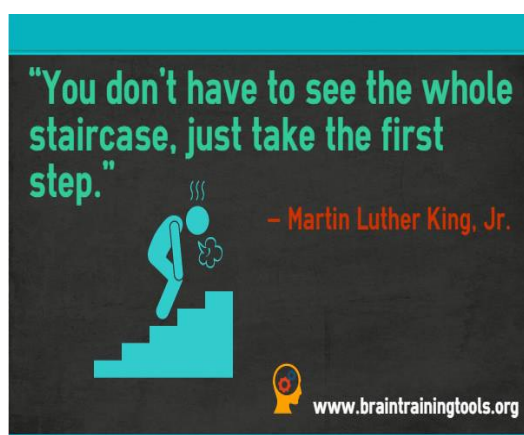
- Fan magazine/catalogue.
- Special box containing sensory objects (lavender, material, fabric, pictures, bands, koosh ball, feathers etc.)
- Timetabled period for special interest.

Common sources of anxiety

- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs can easily become overwhelmed and overloaded due to having academic work and social pressures.
- It can be easy to get things out of proportion (calendars, timetables and charts can help).
- Homework can be a point of major stress and anxiety. It helps to have time limited tasks that are well structured and scaffolded. Long term projects will be particularly challenging.
- Access to a supported homework club (not in lunch time) can help pupils to manage workload more easily.
- Having open channels of communication with parents regarding homework is useful.
- Timetabling in some 'down time' during the week is often necessary – remember that many pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs find unstructured break and lunch times most stressful.
- Frequent key working sessions including a check in and check out can pick up and monitor levels of anxiety avoiding possible meltdowns.

Tests and exams

- Use available exam and assessment concessions e.g. additional time, rest breaks, separate room.
- Ensure there is revision planning and make sure this is on a timetable that includes free time and rest breaks. Plan this well in advance.
- Ensure that revision is well explained and specific i.e. “Complete summer 2014 History paper 2 questions 3, 4 and 5” rather than “Revise some history”.
- Make exams part of the natural way of things so that GCSEs become thought of as “tests that year 11 do”.



Source “Public Domain”

	English	Maths	Biology	French	Geography	TOTAL
Mon.		Fractions (1 hour)			Settlement (1 hour)	2 hours
Tues.			Enzymes (1 hour)	Transport (1 hour)		2 hours
Wed.	Travel writing (1 hour)				Trade / Aid (1 hour)	2 hours
Thurs.		Vectors (1 hour)		Sport (1 hour)		2 hours
Fri.	Attending Open Day at Stonebridge FE College					0 hours
Sat.	Poetry (1 hour)	Triangles (1 hour)			Volcanoes (1 hour)	3 hours
Sun.			Disease (2 hours)	Holidays (1 hour)		3 hours
TOTAL	2 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	3 hours	14 hours

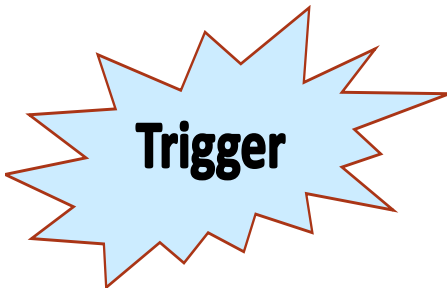
Source “Bristol Autism Team”

Other comments

- Some pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs may have unusual fears and phobias which can cause intense anxiety (e.g. fear of Ribena, tomato ketchup, getting wet). Ensure this kind of information is included on the pupil's profile.
- High levels of anxiety are often linked with poor sleep patterns.



- A meltdown is triggered by an overwhelming experience from which the pupil cannot escape, such as a confusing social situation, a change of plans or sensory overload.
- Pupils on the autism spectrum / with social communication and interaction needs have great difficulty regulating their feelings and working out solutions when things go wrong, and so can quickly escalate to a meltdown.
- Once a meltdown has been triggered, this is a complete system overload, which the pupil cannot control or manage, no matter what the consequences.



Note the Triggers

- Being aware of what triggers a meltdown is absolutely key to avoiding these in the future.
- Also key to helping the pupil learn how to identify the triggers themselves, so when a meltdown happens, try to identify the trigger or what appeared to be the starting point.

Keep a record

- ABC charts are a good way to record meltdowns, so that patterns can try to be identified.
- Once the meltdown has been managed, it is best to record it while the incident is still fresh in people's minds.

ABC Behaviour Diary				
Date	A (Antecedents) Setting/task/who else was around/other	B (Behaviour) What did he actually do? Describe without interpreting. Include duration of behaviour.	C (Consequence) How did you and other adults respond? What did you and they do?	Initials

Source "Bristol Autism Team"



Escalation

Source "Gnome icon artists" CC BY 3.0

Action Plan

- Once a "meltdown" has been triggered, a pupil can escalate rapidly into a full meltdown.
- It is important to have a clear Action Plan in place that all relevant staff have been made aware of, and which has been discussed with parent/carers in advance.
- The primary considerations should be:
 - Keep the pupil safe
 - Keep other pupil's safe
 - Keep yourself safe



Source "Public Domain"

Safe place

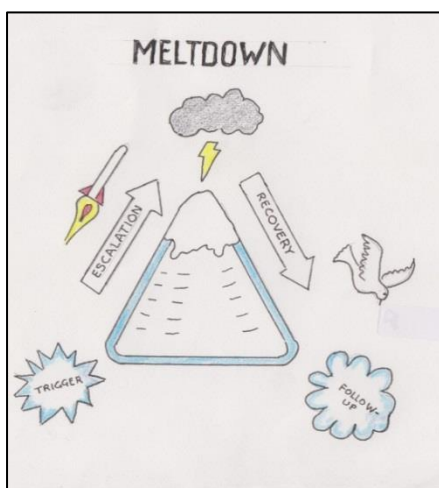
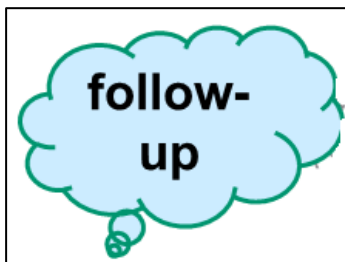
- Ideally, when experiencing the overwhelming physical and emotional symptoms of a meltdown, the pupil needs to be removed from the situation, and taken to a safe place where they will feel enclosed and sheltered, and can begin to recover.
- This should be an already established and familiar place to the pupil, and needs to be clearly identified in the Action Plan.
- It may not be possible to safely move the pupil, in which case you should create a safe place where s/he is. You may need to remove other pupils from the situation.



Source "Pixabay"

Give it time

- Meltdowns have a huge impact, both physically and emotionally, and the pupil will need time to recover.
- The amount of time needed will vary depending on the individual pupil and the severity of the meltdown – it can be as little as 30 minutes or as much as the whole day.
- The pupil will not be ready to talk about what happened when they are feeling emotionally and physically drained. Recovery may include any of the following :-
 - Time in their safe place
 - Time spent engaging in a low-level classroom activity
 - Re-joining peers but with reduced expectations and with support



Source "Bristol Autism Team"

After the "Meltdown"

- The pupil will experience a variety of complex feelings after the "meltdown".
- They may not be able to tell you why the meltdown happened, and it is for adults to reflect on the triggers, and to put in place strategies to help the pupil avoid or manage that situation better/differently in future.

Remember

- When a pupil has escalated to a meltdown:
 - keep them safe
 - give them time
 - reflect on the trigger
 - decide how to support the pupil in future

Other Comments

Dos	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a deep breath and remember that however hard this is for you, it is hard for the pupil too. • Make sure other members of staff have been informed of the situation, so that the pupil can be monitored and supported by adults during the period post meltdown. • Stay quietly with the pupil, and use short, soothing phrases that offer reassurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't get angry and raise your voice. It just adds to the noise and stress. The pupil is not being naughty or trying to get his/her own way. • Don't attempt to deal with the "meltdown" on your own, but also don't have too many adults in close proximity as this may cause further distress to the pupil. • Don't try to reason with the pupil, issue reprimands or ask what's wrong while they are in the grip of the meltdown. Their system is in shutdown and they will not be able to respond.



- A one page profile is a summary of what matters to the pupil and how best to support them.
- It can capture important information about a pupil's strengths, challenges and interests as well as detailing specific support.
- One page profiles can also include targets and data such as reading age and attainment levels in core subjects.
- They are a way for the pupil to have a voice in how they might be supported in school.
- They are a highly effective way to share information between staff and in particular at times of transition.

- A one page profile is developed using contributions from parents, carers, teachers, support staff and other professionals but most importantly the pupil themselves.
- Profiles need to be updated at different points throughout the year.

Freddy B

What do others like and admire about me?

- I'm good fun to play with at playtimes – I make up imaginative games
- My maths and counting skills
- My reading – I use great expression
- My sense of humour, I like making people laugh
- My drumming
- My typing skills – I can type 80 words per minute

What is important to me?

- My home
- My family: My Mum, Dad and My Brother
- Minecraft
- My iPad
- My friends – particularly Luqman
- My Music – I love listening to music and playing the drums & harmonica
- My fiddle toy, this might be a straw or soft toy.
- My whiteboard and pen
- I love reading Asterix books
- If you frown I will think you mean you are angry with me

Photo here

How can you support me?

- I like to know what is happening each day by using my timetable
- I like to be first into the classroom in the mornings
- I like to be first in line or the 'back of line leader'
- When I feel anxious I like to draw on a whiteboard, build with a Lego set or play with dough.
- I like to get to know key adults so they are familiar to me.
- I like to sit next to a friend who makes me feel safe
- I like to have a treat when I've finished my 1, 2, 3 work.
- I like to be spoken to in a calm voice.
- I like to know about changes to the daily routine – use my change card
- I like to have a fiddle toy and my electronic timer close to hand.
- If I'm upset or angry sometimes I take myself outside the classroom to have some calm time – no less than 30 minutes.

Source "Bristol Autism Team"



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Example of a one page profile

What other's like and admire about me?

- Kind and caring, good with younger children
- A good and loyal friend
- Truthful
- Hardworking



Source "Public Domain"

What's important to me?

- Getting to know the school quickly
- Knowing where to go if I need help
- Having time to just be with friends and relax
- Access to a phone to call mum when stressed
- Taking classes that are fun but also help me to work toward a career in child care
- Getting through compulsory courses
- Help with maths when I need it – it's my weak spot
- Staying away from situations where I may be influenced to make poor choices
- That both of my parents are involved in my education
- I have a consistent person to go to for emotional, stress management
- Learning good study habits

How best to support me?

- I don't like to ask for help; please offer it if you feel I need it
- After a visit to my dad's house, it takes me some time to get into the swing of things, be patient and offer your support
- If I get overwhelmed I tend to give up, please help me to stay on track
- I like to write stories or in my journal when I am frustrated or sad, sometimes I need the freedom to do this
- I like to be a leader but sometimes get caught up in the drama of a situation; I might need a motivational reminder
- In primary school I did not have a lot of homework. This will be a huge adjustment to me, please support me developing good strategies
- Stress is not my friend. My anxiety raises and I need reassurance or comfort from someone I love or am comfortable with
- Public speaking makes me physically ill, my anxiety level rises until I am physically sick and cannot function. Please limit that where possible.

Further reading and useful websites

About Autism

- Asperger Syndrome – a practical guide for Teachers by Val Cumine.
- Can I tell you about Asperger Syndrome? by J Welton
- Asperger's Syndrome: a guide for parents and professionals by Tony Attwood
- Ten things every child with Autism wishes you knew by Ellen Notbohm
- Understanding and Managing Autism by Andrew Powell
- Why Do I Have To?: A Book for Children Who Find Themselves Frustrated by Everyday Rules by Laurie Leventhal - Belfer
- Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders by Elizabeth Verdick



Source "Pixabay"

Emotional regulation

- The Incredible 5-point Scale: Assisting Children with ASDs in Understanding Social Interactions and Controlling Their Emotional Responses by Kari Dunn Buron
- A 5 is Against the Law by Kari Dunn Buron
- Exploring Feelings – A CBT programme to manage anxiety by Dr Tony Attwood
- Comic Script Conversations by Carol Gray
- The Asperkid's (Secret) Book of Social Rules: The Handbook of Not-So-Obvious Social Guidelines for Tweens and Teens with Asperger Syndrome by Jennifer Cook O'Toole

Social thinking

- Social Thinking: Thinksheets for tweens and Teens by Michelle Garcia Winner
- Social Fate or Social Fortune by Michelle Garcia Winner

Learning

- Literacy Enhancement Strategies for Pupils with High Functioning Autism by Thomas Daly

Websites we find useful

- www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk (Autism Education Trust)
- www.autismteachingstrategies.com
- <https://jilkuzma.wordpress.com>
- www.autism.org (National Autistic Society)



Source "Pixabay"