

Advice from Autism Advisory Service

What can we offer?

- Pupil profile –support to develop a ‘pen portrait’ of each child with autism in school
- A visit from one of us if visitors allowed / deemed necessary
- Telephone / Skype advice – see below for contacts and availability
- Email advice
- Specific strategy support eg Social Story review/edits

Why is specific advice important for children with ASD?

- Difficulty coping with change
- Heightened anxiety due to uncertainty/difficulty rationalising level of threat
- Out of routine
- Major changes to usual school set up
- Reduced staffing may mean children supported by unfamiliar people or those less experienced in working with children with autism

Anxiety in autism

According to Dean Beadle -

Brain sitting calmly in his head, a thought or idea comes into his mind, his brain starts to make logical links to all the possibilities until it spirals out of control and becomes overwhelmed. Then cannot find a way to ‘unthink’ or rationalise these thoughts. Literal understanding means if it can be, it is!

Once in this state of anxiety, there is little hope for rational thought or any reasoning with the person.

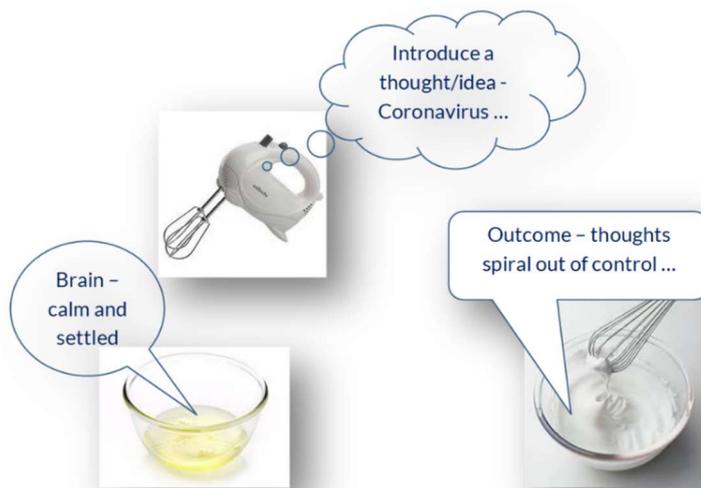
At the moment, many of the children who will be in school, will be in a heightened state of anxiety. Firstly, they will need calm and order around them. Then a way of rationalising their thoughts about the Coronavirus threat and what it means to them. Abstract language like, ‘wash your hands lots’, ‘maybe’, ‘probably not get it’, ‘about 3 months’, far from reassuring, can create more anxiety.

The following Social Stories are one way to try to give children some reassurance:

[PDF Pandemics and the Coronavirus](#)

I like this one for younger children:

<https://www.ppmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>



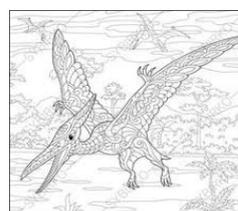
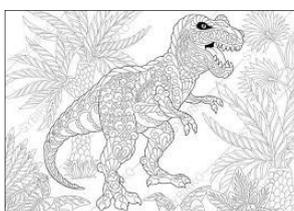
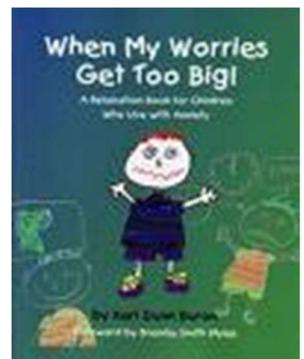
This rather useful chart appeared on Facebook



You could work through this with the child – or the whole class - and help them develop a chart of their own and/or think about useful things they could do or think about to help keep their anxiety in check.

Using a format like the 'When My Worries Get too Big' (Dunn Buron) could be useful.

'I can focus on my Dinosaur colouring to keep me calm.'



Key Issues to consider:

Language - In a heightened state of anxiety, many of us struggle with active listening, verbal processing and anticipating the speaker's intention. This is doubly the case for children with autism - *regardless of how articulate or verbally able they appear, spoken language can cause them huge problems.*

Language based instructions should be kept to a minimum - maximise visual supports to give: information, instruction, direction. This can be real objects, photos, symbols, written word; timetables, to do lists, flow chart, equipment list – anything that supports what you would deliver to another child verbally!!

Children with autism need:

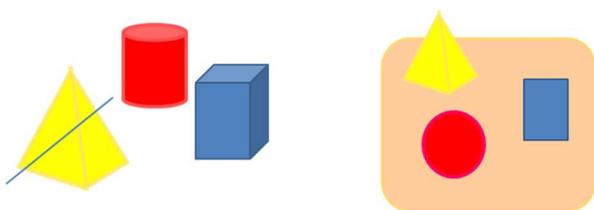
Structure, order, predictability and routine – aim to keep things as close to 'routine' as possible

Provide information about what is happening now, and what will happen next – visual/written plan for the day with 'sub plot'/within task schedule/ description of what will happen within each section. Include 'who will pick me up today', and 'what I'll do when I get home'!

Even the most able pupil will benefit from '*first>then*' principles – (First hall, then running/climbing/trampoline)

Being 'off curriculum' for most means opportunities for open ended, 'fun' activities, often involving social interaction with peers – this can be the very opposite of *fun* for the child with autism

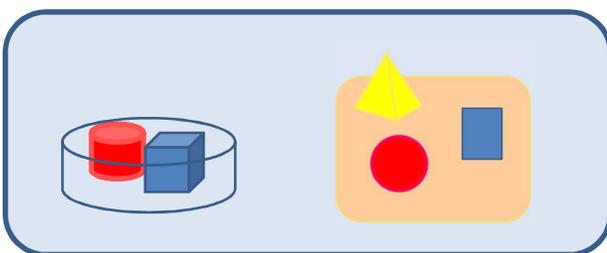
Gary Mesibov, co-founder of TEACCH, says for children with autism: play is work and work is play ie rather than a maths game with peers, they may prefer a sheet of calculator sums or a peg board with a pattern template to follow!! *Finite activities have more meaning and are predictable.*



Try to offer activities that are concrete, mechanical, visually clear, finite – think of a shape sorter:

Specific number of parts to sort, template for them to fit into. When all the shapes are in the template, the task is finished!

The concept of 'finished' can be highly motivating!



Placing the items to be sorted in a pot and pot and sorter on a tray, gives visual clarity by connecting all the parts and showing – *What I have to do? *How much do I have to do? * When is it finished. Followed with, *What's next? will help motivate the child to work through a series of activities.

These principles can be applied to *any* activity. The key principle is, can the child predict ...

*The purpose of the task - (sensory exploration / cause & effect / tied to special interests or real-life events)

*The sequence of activities - activity baskets, zippy wallets photo/picture schedules, written planner

*The steps within the activity – number of turns, count down strips, visual timers, written help box

*Their role in the activity - clear visuals indicate expectations, turn-taking, and roles

Help child access activities by:

Having something ready when the child gets to chosen area

- Form board with all the bits in except the last one
- 2 stickle bricks in a pot. Child sticks them together, job done!
- Parts of a Lego model and template to follow
- Presenting items on a tray frames the activity / or zippy wallet gives meaning to the parts – helps the child see why they go together
- Finite activities have more meaning and are predictable
- Can the child see what they have to do? – reduces the need for verbal instruction which can be distracting/cause frustration/resistance

5 key questions to ask yourself when setting up any activity:

1. Where am I going **
2. What am I doing – visually clear
3. How much involved – 5 shapes/5 slots
4. When finished – all shapes gone, holes filled
5. What next – back to timetable/choice board or free play**



'Predictable table'

1. *Identify where each activity will take place – classroom, hall, outside, Mrs Jones class – on the floor, at the group table, individual table. Include this information on the daily schedule / 'sub plot'/within task schedule

5. **Once the child has the idea of this 'work schedule', you can introduce 2 or 3 (no more than 5) activities with a motivating activity last eg colouring

Be Prepared!

If we show we are calm and organised, this really helps keep the child's anxiety down

- For this to work, you need to be well prepared in advance
- Have the target activity ready – on the table/floor etc or carry it with you to the chosen location



Structured Activities - dedicated to providing creative educational activities and opportunities for individuals with autism or disabilities who are 'learning how to learn'

100s of ideas for structured/easily accessible tasks you can create from everyday materials



<https://www.shoebotasks.com>

Think about setting up a game. The class discuss the rules and write them down. Identify the child's role within the game – keeping score, monitoring fair play. How to initiate, what to say. How many turns each – on countdown key ring, 5 tokens each, 'posting' a token for each turn. Look at 'Lego Therapy' set up.



Daily schedules

Giving children a schedule of events and activities as they will happen throughout their day really helps reassure and manage their anxiety levels. Below are 2 examples of the amount of information they may need to be able to operate with a level of independence and reduces the need for lengthy verbal explanations. These are examples of how things might be organised at home could be shared with parents to help them manage in this highly unusual situation. (Caution – for some, avoid exact timings as these can cause problems)

Morning Schedule

Before 9am	Wake up		Have breakfast Get dressed Brush your teeth Make your bed Tidy your room
9 – 10am	Exercise Time		If possible: morning walk or indoor exercise. Sensory Processing, Yoga, 'Wake and Shake', Star Jumps etc... See ' <i>Exercise Ideas</i> ' on page 3.
10 – 11am	Academic Time		<u>No Electronics</u> School work packs, reading/ sharing a book.
11 – 12pm	Creative Time		Lego, drawing, colouring, craft activities, singing, music, cooking/baking together.
12pm – 1pm	Lunch/Relax		<u>Controlled Electronics</u> iPads/tablets, computers and games consoles. Please remember online safety and supervise your children.

Afternoon Schedule

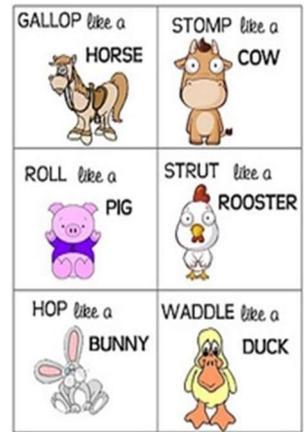
1pm -1:30pm	Exercise Time		See ' <i>Exercise Ideas</i> ' on page 3
1:30 - 2:30pm	Academic Time		<u>No Electronics</u> School work packs, reading/ sharing a book.
2:30 – 3:00pm	Quiet Time		Relax with a book, watch a TV programme or play a board game etc...
3:00 – 4:00pm	Fresh Air		Outdoor play or exercise indoors.
4:00 – 5:00pm	Electronics Time		<u>Supervised Electronics</u> Supervised educational games/apps. (see list of Websites and Apps on page 3).
5:00 – 6:00pm	Tea Time		Have tea and then relax and prepare for bed/story time.

Sensory considerations

Anxiety increases the need for regular sensory breaks. Build in regular opportunities to move around.

Provide a quiet, low arousal space if things get too much – remember, other children’s noise and excitement can lead to sensory overload – but the child may not say anything until they explode!

www.pinterest.com offers some great sensory ideas for you to try

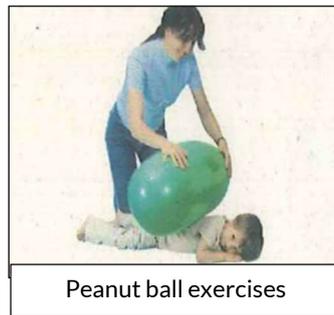


Calming activities could include

A small pop up tent with luminous creatures stuck to the sides. Child has a torch to shine on them.



Fiddle toys



Peanut ball exercises



Water beads in a sealed food bag

A bowl of set jelly with tiny ‘treasures’ embedded – try lying over a gym ball to



Self-Regulation

When I have to:

go to the lunch room

I can do these activities:

before	during	after
heavy work activities	listen to quiet music	deep breaths

www.YourTherapySource.com

Jobs and tasks

Giving a child a specific ‘job’ or task each day eg to help carry equipment for outdoor activity / check all the parts of classroom activities are complete.

Science 10am – 11am, Thursday 12th February
 _Discussion between and
 Who will write?
 Who will feed back to class?

Materials tested	Results
We concluded that ... (decided)	
Timeframe 10 - 10.15 - discussion with partner 10.15 - 10.30 - tell class your thoughts/ listen to others 10.30 - 11am - write up experiment in your exercise book 11 am - end of lesson - hand in your book as you leave class quietly	In your exercise book 1 Write date and title 2 Write objective of experiment (1 or 2 sentences) stating ' experiment is trying to find out 3 List equipment 4 Describe what exactly you did (8 - 10 sentences) 5 List results (3 - 4 sentences. 6 Re read objective of experiment and write what you found out (5 - 6 sentences)

Some more strategies that may prove useful in the coming weeks:

Comic Strip Conversations

Green Band

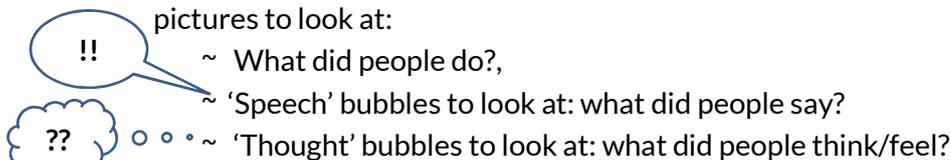
Social Stories

5 Point Scale

Comic Strip Conversation

A 'comic strip conversation' uses simple drawings to visually outline a conversation between two or more people who may be reporting the past, describing the present or planning for the future

- Comic strip conversations enable us to explain or review situation using pictures to look at:



- Helps them see others not thinking what they are thinking
- Can help child consider other explanations they would not see verbally
- Drawing can be done by teacher or child
- Can be done prior to writing a social story

For example: a child is in trouble for punching his teacher and breaking his glasses. The incident was reported that the child had approached his class teacher, grabbed his glasses and smashed them to the floor! Using Comic Strip, we were able to work out that John saw that his teacher had new glasses. He reached up to take them off his face with the intention of trying them on, thinking, Mr Jones will be happy that I want to try on his new glasses. However, the glasses were very thick lenses and when John put the on, he got a fright at how they distorted his vision. He snatched them off and dropped them.

Social Stories

- Provide accurate information about situations that a child may find difficult or confusing.
- Situation is described in terms of important social cues, information about what is happening, what is likely to happen next, what is expected of them and why
- Aims to increase understanding of situations and give strategies to help them follow appropriate course of action.
- They describe situation in detail, using child's perspective, to highlight what it is they find difficult or confusing.
- Once child understands what is expected, they can comply with appropriate behaviour or action.
- Rather than trying to conform to a behaviour imposed on them, Social Stories encourage the child to take responsibility for their own behaviour

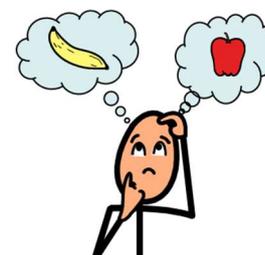
Example

Sometimes a person says 'I've changed my mind'.

This means they had one idea, but now they have a new idea.

They might say, 'I'll have a banana, no, I've changed my mind, I'll have an apple.'

I will try to stay calm when someone changes their mind



www.kansasasd.org is a great source of Social stories which tap into popular interests and characters

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx>

Introducing Green Bands

Children with Autism are not able to use the 'social judgment' that allows most of us to know when we are 'getting it right' or the 'social referencing' to know when to adjust our behaviour in response to others.

A green band can give constant visual reassurance of what is right or appropriate in social situations



How to start using Green bands with your student

- Wear the Green band yourself every day (always wear it on your dominant hand – it just makes it easier for your student to see it.) It will soon become a good habit to wear it.
- Begin by 'filling' your student with green experiences by referring to the band when she is happy, calm, enjoying herself, or anything that is her own 'green default position'. You can simply point to the band and / or use thumbs up with your green hand with no need for any language.
- For your student, her 'green moments' could be when she is playing with her puzzles, running in the garden, eating her favourite snack, looking a book or just sitting cuddling up with you.
- By pointing to the green band you are reassuring your student that she 'is getting it right' and this will help to reduce any anxieties.
- It will help her recognise her 'happy default position' and she will begin to link this to just being GREEN without the need for any complicated language.
- It will help her know the feeling she wants to get back to in times of stress so you can use this to help her identify, 'What will help me get back to green?'
- It will help your student to see that you share and understand her feelings and emotions.



5 Point Scale

www.5pointscale.com

A 5 point scale can really help a child to help them manage their anxiety and self-regulate.

- Teaches child to recognise own feelings of anxiety, then teaches strategies to control feelings
- Numbers, colours define different levels of stress helping child understand range of feelings
- Sets out personalized stress scale letting child define own levels and share how each feels
- Can introduce 5-point scale using 'When my worries get too big' (Dun Buron)
- Could use a social story format or bullet point intro
- Relaxation/calming sequence could be made into poster
- Small 5-point scale prompt cards can be carried by child/staff

5	I AM GOING TO EXPLODE!!!
4	I AM GETTING ANGRY
3	I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS
2	FEELING OK
1	CALM AND RELAXED

Contact details for the Autism Team

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