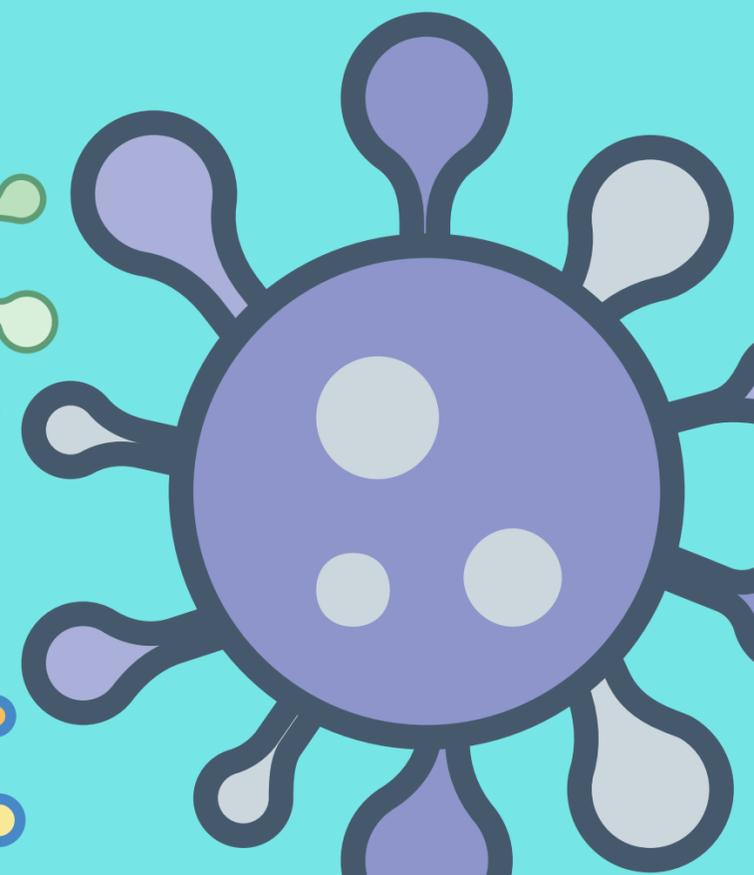
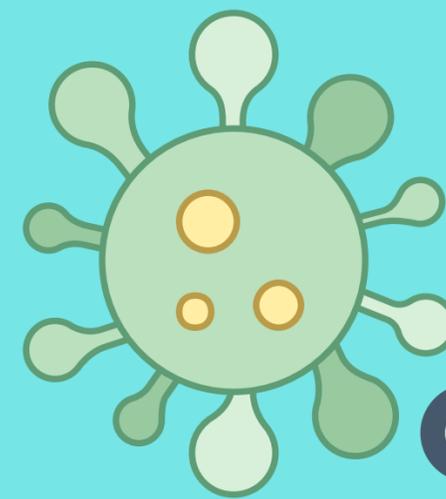
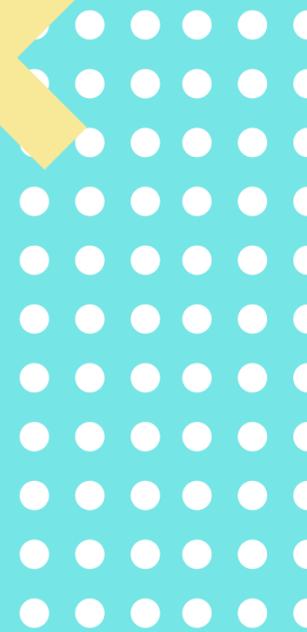
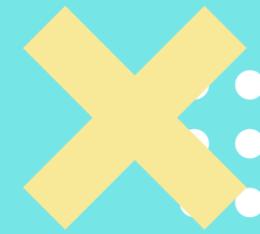


# Coronavirus

## (Covid-19)

A helpful resource pack full of information to help support your family during this difficult time.



# Overview

The next few weeks (and possibly months) will be a particularly difficult time for children and families, whilst schools are closed and we are advised to self-isolate or socially distance ourselves from our friends and family. Although social distancing is absolutely the right thing to do during this uncertain time it will undoubtedly be challenging for some.

This information pack aims to support parents of children with autism during this tricky time and will hopefully make things a little more manageable.

Within this document you will find:

- How Coronavirus may impact on children with autism
- Maintaining a structure and routine
- Activities to do at home
- Looking after your mental health during the pandemic
- Self-care techniques
- Staying safe online
- Apps and links to resources

**STAY AT HOME** 

**PROTECT  
THE NHS**

 **save  
lives**

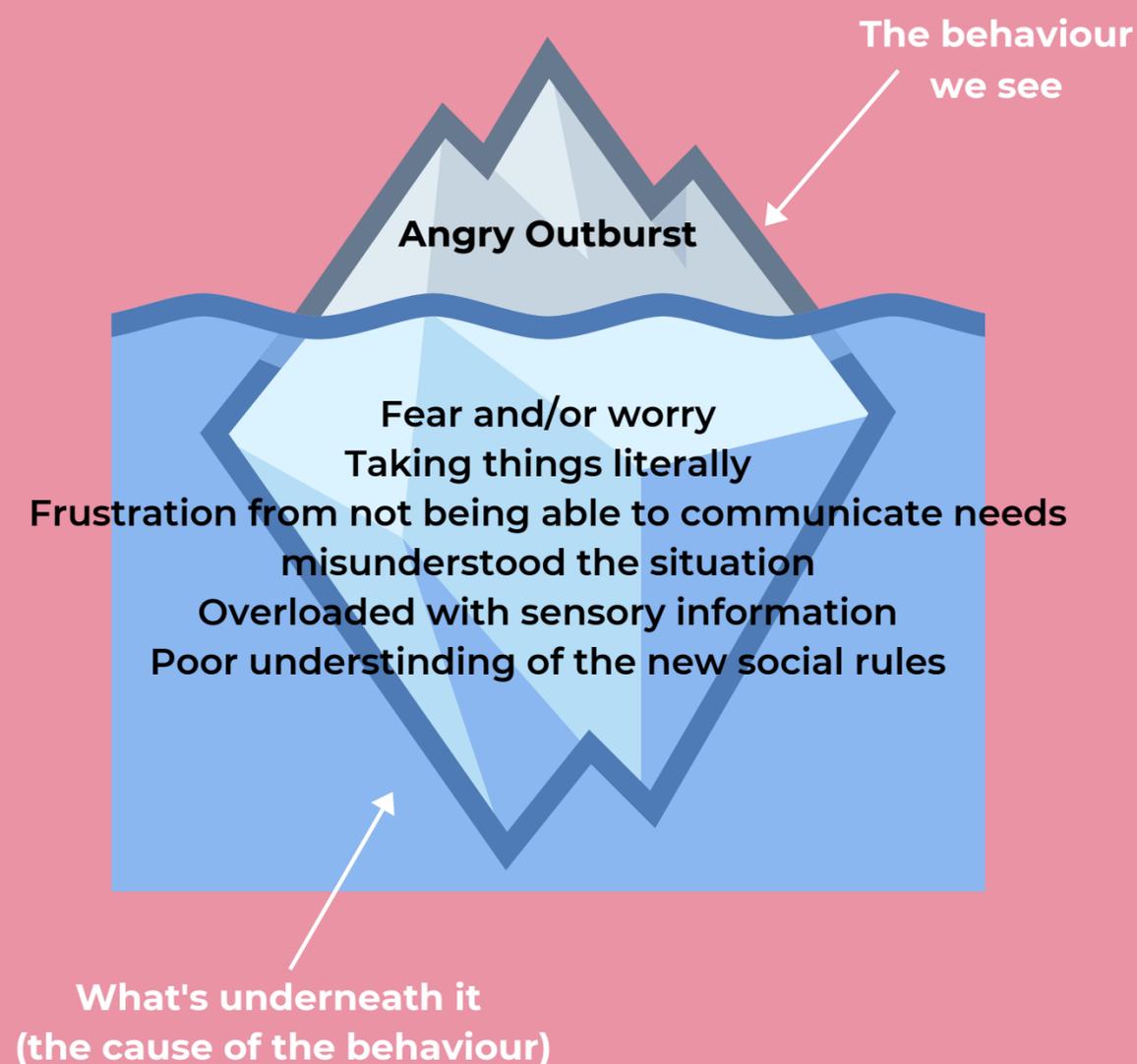
# Autism and Covid-19

How to help support an autistic person through this difficult time

One of the key features of autism is Restricted and/or Repetitive Behaviours which can often mean that our children like to have a routine and stick to it. Change can be very hard for them and at this unprecedented time, there is lots of change happening. Be aware that this could lead to a change in the behaviour of your child.

They may become more easily upset, or angry, perhaps they are being more disruptive than you would expect or not sleeping very well or feeling hungry all of the time. All of these behaviours are a way of communicating with you, and it is our job as parent to work out what they are trying to say, for example

**Useful video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXPtqmHKNoE>**



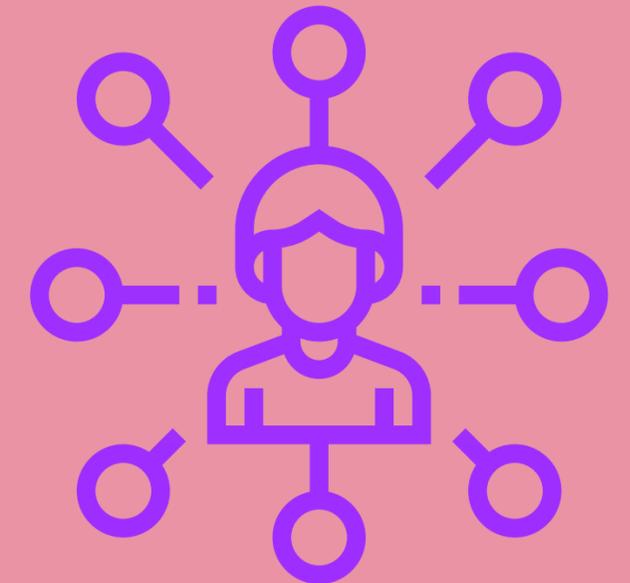
# Theory of Mind (ToM)

- Children on the autistic spectrum can struggle with ToM.
- ToM is the ability to understand that others have different thoughts, feelings and perceptions.
- Children on the autistic spectrum can have an impaired ToM meaning that whatever they are thinking and feeling is also what you and everyone else is thinking and feeling.
- Be patient and explain how you feel in the current situation and ask if they feel the same; they could be worrying due to misunderstanding a situation.



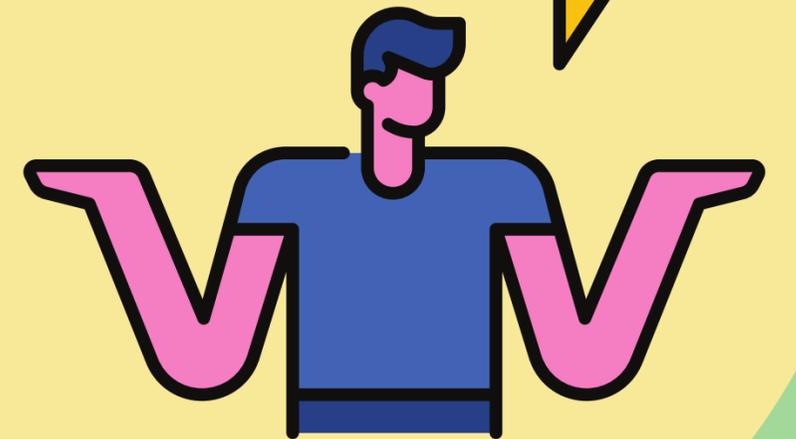
# Weak Central Coherence (WCC)

- **Weak Central Coherence is the inability to see the whole picture or get the gist of a situation.**
- **The child may need all of the information to be able to build up the whole situation.**
- **An example might be that they are aware of school closure due to social distancing, but this may not transfer to seeing other family members that are not in your household, they may need for you to explain all of the information again about social distancing but in relation to not seeing family members.**
- **This difficulty can arise in all situations and whilst you may feel that you have already explained about a particular situation, they may not transfer that information to a different context/situation**



# Language and Communication

- Autism can effect the child's ability to understand and/or process language.
- A long or complicated sentence may end up being filtered with just a few words being heard.
- Remember not all communication is verbal - we also use our body language, tone of voice, facial gestures and hand gestures to communicate and these can often be misunderstood.
- Trying to process all of these types of communication can be hard and the child may only focus on one of them, i.e. your mouth moving, they may not process what is actually being said.
- Verbal communication may be hard to understand and retain, using clear, precise and to the point language is much easier or even visual images (pictures, symbols, etc).



# Structure and routine

At this time of uncertainty and constant change, it is very important for our children with ASD to have some stability and routine so as not to feel so chaotic or confused which can lead to increased anxiety. Something can have a specific meaning in one situation but mean something completely different in another. It is for this reason that our children may need to control the activity and interactions around them. To help deal with the change in routine, it is important to decrease the level of uncertainty they are experiencing, some of the following may be helpful:

1. Provide accurate and easily understandable information about Covid-19 (see resource list).
2. Build structure into your daily routing by creating a daily schedule

## COVID-19 DAILY SCHEDULE

Before 9:00am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJ's in laundry
9:00-10:00	Morning walk	Family walk with the dog Yoga if it's raining
10:00-11:00	Academic time	NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal
11:00-12:00	Creative time	Legos, magnatiles, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc
12:00	Lunch	
12:30PM	Chore time	A- wipe all kitchen table and chairs. B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops. C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets
1:00-2:30	Quiet time	Reading, puzzles, nap
2:30-4:00	Academic time	ELECTRONICS OK Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show
4:00-5:00	Afternoon fresh air	Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside
5:00-6:00	Dinner	
6:00-8:00	Free TV time	Kid showers x3
8:00	Bedtime	All kids
9:00PM	Bedtime	All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight

# Structure and routine cont.

## 3. Use a visual schedule

Having the information on show for them to see what is expected, providing predictability and a path to follow. This alone can reduce anxiety. A visual schedule uses pictures/symbols or words to show what activities will occur and in what order. During stressful times, taking in and acting on verbal information can be extremely hard so having the visual aid there helps reduce anxiety.

Templates can be downloaded from [www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/](http://www.do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/) or you could use your own photographs.

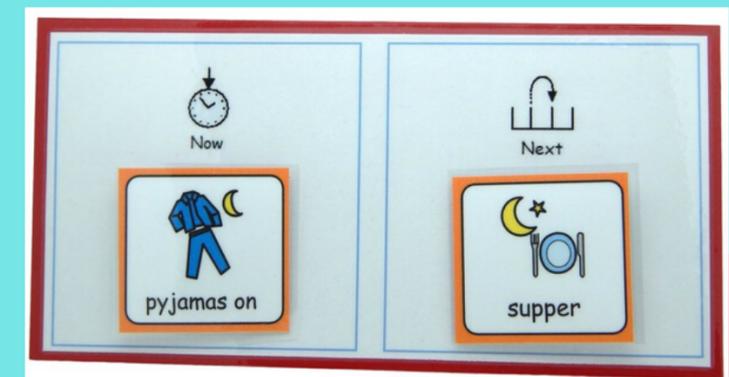
Get up	
breakfast	
brush teeth	

My Week		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

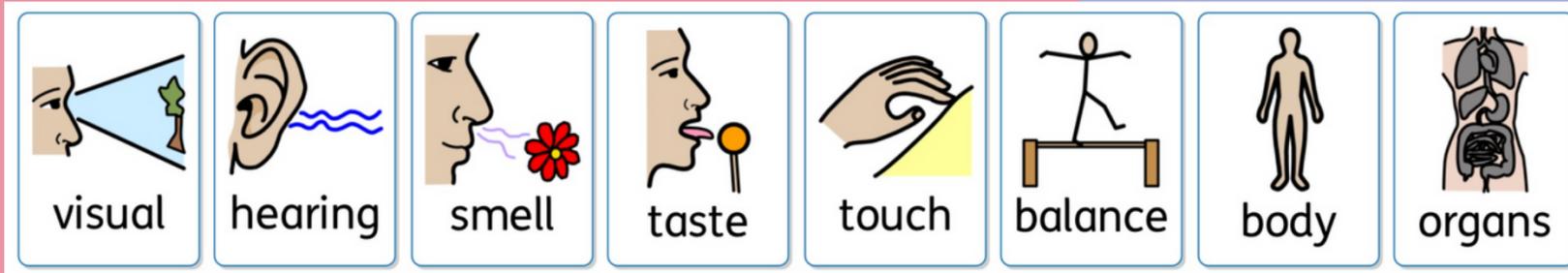
# Transitions



Changing between tasks can be difficult for those on the spectrum. However, offering warnings and reminders when nearing the end of one activity and before starting the next, can ease the level of anxiety or disruptive behaviour. Using a timer can be helpful or 'Now and Next cards' (dependent on the child's age/ability).



# Sensory Activities



For some brilliant occupational therapy sensory regulating activities go to:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/sensorystuckathome/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/groups/sensorystuckathome/?epa=SEARCH_BOX)

<http://www.cardiffandvaleuhb.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1143/Supporting%20Children%20with%20LD%20&%20ASD%20with%20COVID%20Isolation.pdf>



# Social Distancing

The Government has asked everyone in the UK to stay at home. Social Distancing means avoiding close contact with others to prevent the spread of the virus and protect the most vulnerable. This includes:

Avoiding non-essential trips in the community



Keeping kids away from group settings



limiting, postponing or cancelling gatherings



Avoiding visits to long-term care homes and other care settings



Working from home, where possible; conduct meetings virtually.

Keep a distance of 2 metres from others when going for walks or shopping for groceries



## BREAKING NEWS

Government guidance has relaxed the number of times those with additional needs, such as Autism, can go out. It is now advised that children with autism etc, are allowed out on up-to 3 occasions.

Social distancing rules still apply.

# Handwashing Advice

Duration should be between 20-60 seconds.

Hand Washing Tips for People With Sensory Difficulties:

<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/News/8821506>

NHS hand washing:

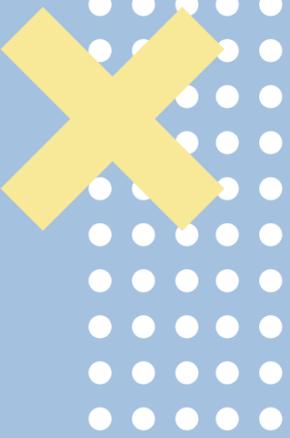
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ij1I0OB2hk>

Workbook for children explaining hand washing:

<https://www.schuelke.com/gb-en/news-media/news/Legal-Framework.php>



# Social Stories for children



## What is Coronavirus (listed from suitability for younger to older children)

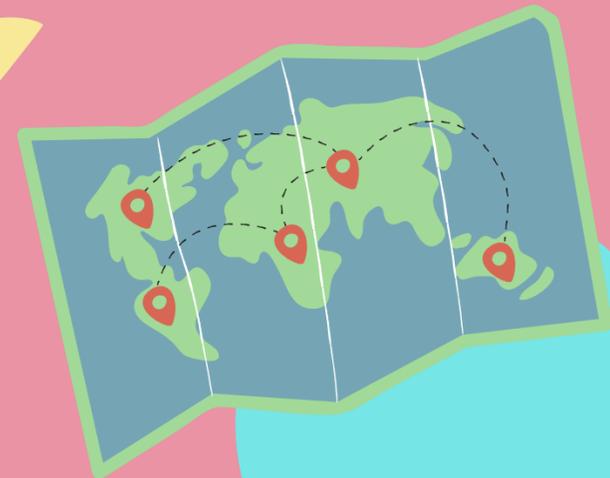
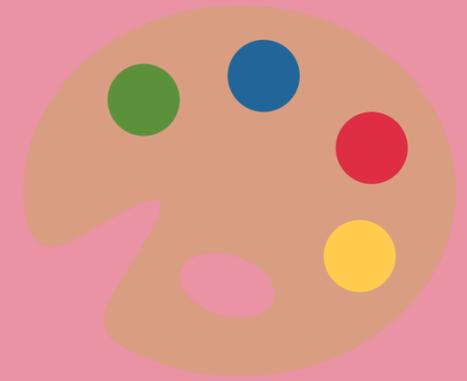
- Hello! I am a virus - <https://www.nacosa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CoronaVirus-INFO-for-children-Full-Pack.pdf>
- Social story for wearing a mask: <https://paautism.org/resource/wearing-mask-social-story/>
- YouTube social story for wearing a mask: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q_U)
- What is the coronavirus - <https://littlepuddins.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>
- My social story about pandemics and the coronavirus - <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>
- Coronavirus: A book for children - <https://nosycrow.com/blog/released-today-free-information-book-explaining-coronavirus-children-illustrated-gruffalo-illustrator-axel-scheffler>

## School

- School is closed - <https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/stapleford-community-primary-school/UploadedDocument/e3c1e0164b3149da9e6c3c31cf774202/school-is-closed.jpg>
- Why school has changed - <https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/stapleford-community-primary-school/UploadedDocument/4a19622bf22a45818a251071e444eee7/why-has-school-changed....pdf>

# Activities

- **Home workouts** - There are lots online videos and some that are chair based for those with mobility needs - try searching on YouTube.
- **Yoga** - You can follow a routine online - there are plenty of apps and YouTube videos.
- **Indoor games** - scavenger hunt, board games, karaoke, charades, quizzes.
- **Outside games** - Obstacle courses, football, and bikes/scooters.
- **Learn a new skill** - Teach your child to do something new such as cooking or using the washing machine.
- **Do something together** - do activities with your child on a regular basis such as baking, reading, gardening.
- **Relaxing activities** - colouring, listening to relaxing music, having a bath, blowing bubbles.
- **Plan for the future** - plan and research holidays and trips that you might take when this pandemic is over.



## Outdoor activities

Note that these outdoor activities can be done in the garden or outdoors whilst abiding to the Government's social distancing advice.

**30 THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR KIDS OUTSIDE**

Look at a cloud and say what you think it looks like. <input type="checkbox"/>	Make a wish on a dandelion. <input type="checkbox"/>	Explore a cobweb and make spiders cool. <input type="checkbox"/>	Hug a tree. <input type="checkbox"/>	Build a house for fairies. <input type="checkbox"/>
Read a book in the woods. <input type="checkbox"/>	Fill a basket with nuts, leaves, and sticks that have fallen from trees. <input type="checkbox"/>	Pick up 3 pieces of trash from outside. <input type="checkbox"/>	Identify 3 birds. <input type="checkbox"/>	Throw rocks in a river, pond, or puddle. <input type="checkbox"/>
Plant wildflowers. <input type="checkbox"/>	Build a rock cairn. <input type="checkbox"/>	Slide down a sand or grassy hill. <input type="checkbox"/>	Explore a trail you have never been down. <input type="checkbox"/>	Draw pictures in the dirt. <input type="checkbox"/>
Paint rocks with water and see what colors arise. <input type="checkbox"/>	Splash in a big puddle. <input type="checkbox"/>	Put bugs in a bowl and observe them. <input type="checkbox"/>	Work in a garden or explore a public garden. <input type="checkbox"/>	Pick out how many shades of green you see on a trail. <input type="checkbox"/>
Look for something prickly. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sing in the rain. <input type="checkbox"/> no rain?? stick your head in a fountain or waterfall and sing!	Plant a seed that you find on the trail. <input type="checkbox"/> i.e. acorn, pine cone, willow fuzz	Have a picnic. <input type="checkbox"/>	Find a trail with a creek and look for the animals that live in it. <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>My Trail</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Name a trail with your own special name.	Make binoculars out of toilet paper rolls and spy something through them. <input type="checkbox"/>	Make a new friend. <input type="checkbox"/>	Walk like a duck, a deer, or a bear. <input type="checkbox"/>	Find different items that are your child's favorite color. <input type="checkbox"/>

www.hiketbaby.com



# Managing your mental health

## Coping with Worry

When we are faced with a possible threat, it is a natural reaction to worry about it. Many of us are probably worrying about the Coronavirus, and to a certain extent that is perfectly normal. However, some people may worry to such an extent that it disrupts their lives significantly.

It's normal for children and young people to feel worried or anxious, or even not to worry, at the moment. We've all experienced sudden changes in our lives and routines - and we're living with lots of uncertainty about the coming weeks.

Here is a link with suggestions for ways to support your child - <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

Also ways you can support yourself - <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/OH-012.20-Coronavirus-and-worry-v2.pdf>



# Managing your mental health

## Coping with depression

Feeling low in mood is common, particularly in circumstances like those caused by Coronavirus. You might experience times when you feel upset or low in mood and these feelings are understandable when you must deal with a lot of things at once.

The ability to deal with these feelings is often made easier by talking to someone close to you about how you are feeling.

For general information - <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/depression/>

Here is a link with some useful suggestions to help your low mood - <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/OH-010.20-Coronavirus-and-depression-v3.pdf>



# Managing your mental health

## Coping with OCD

The coronavirus pandemic is a difficult time for many people, but for those with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) it may be particularly challenging as it may lead to a number of additional worries including:

- Contamination fears leading to additional washing/cleaning.
- Intrusive thoughts around passing virus on to loved ones/elderly.
- Increase in health anxiety/worrying about being more vulnerable.

For tips to help manage your OCD during the Coronavirus pandemic:

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/tips-for-coping-with-ocd-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- <https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-coronavirus-summary/>

# Self-care

Self-care is key to calming ourselves so we have the resources (brain power!) to care and support others. We would recommend trying to implement structure, routine, and consistency to your life as well as those you care for. For self-care to be effective it needs to be sustainable and practical for your lifestyle. Here are some suggestions for self-care:

## Mindfulness

There are some great mindfulness apps to use in our app section.

## Breathe

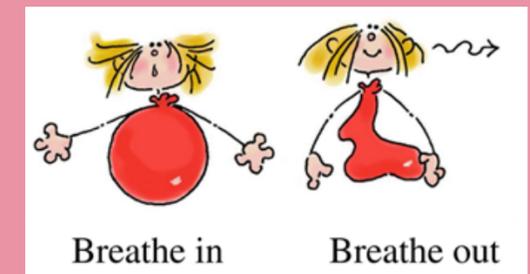
Slowing down your breathing can really help ground you and slow things down. Try imagining blowing up a balloon in your stomach and slowly releasing it or the deep breathing hand technique.

## Be Your Own Best Friend

If your best friend came to you upset and was struggling what would you say to them? Write this down and pin it in a place you regularly look. This is how you will speak to yourself when you are struggling. Give yourself a break, be kind, you're doing your best in a difficult time. Go you!

For further self-care ideas visit:

- Youngminds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/young-peoples-self-care-tips-for-self-isolation/>
- Sheffield Childrens NHS Foundation Trust: Self-care kit - <https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/download/766/coronavirus-resources/9747/self-care-kit-covid-19.pdf>



# The 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique

Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.

Acknowledge **5** things that you can see around you.



Acknowledge **4** things that you can touch around you.



Acknowledge **3** things that you can hear around you.

Acknowledge **1** thing that you can taste around you.



Acknowledge **2** things that you can smell around you.

#DeStressMonday

DeStressMonday.org

DESTRESS  
MONDAY



## Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

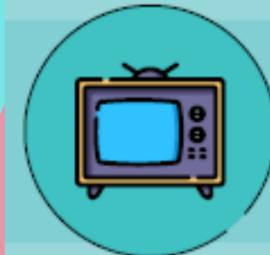
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



**If your child's mental health is reaching crisis please visit- <https://camhsdorset.org/contact-us/crisis>**

# Staying Safe Online

The internet can be a great resource during the coronavirus pandemic. It can help your child stay in touch with family and friends, keep them entertained and even learn new skills.

Whilst it is recommend not to spend too much time online, it can be particularly useful for autistic young people in many ways:

- It is a great tool for finding and connecting with other autistic people, or people who share the same interests
- Messaging communication is written down giving more time to process information
- Turn-taking is less of an issue with online chats due to the natural pause when typing messages

It is also important to understand how to stay safe online because sometimes the internet can become unsafe. Some of the risks when going online:

- Bullying
- Scams
- Online predators
- Phishing
- Downloading unsafe software
- Hackers
- Viewing upsetting content

Remember your children need to be SMART when online.



# Online Gaming

Many young people with autism are members of online gaming communities and they are a great way to connect with people and stay entertained.

Many online games include the option of talking in real time to other players on the game, who can be of all ages.

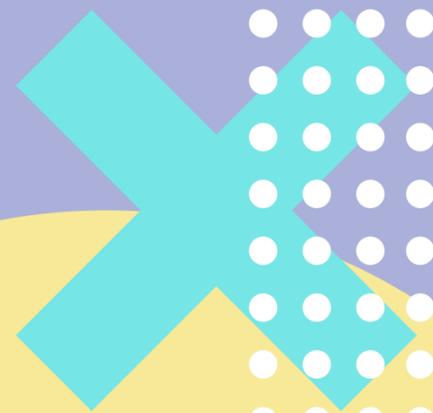
This means there are lots of things that might stop their game being fun like:

- Being bullied or hurt
- Not feeling able to stop gaming
- Competing too much with other people
- Getting into trouble with your parents or carers for playing too much

Some bullies may sometimes disguise their bullying as being 'just a joke' or 'banter', but sometimes your child may have difficulty understanding some jokes. If your child ever feels hurt or confused by this 'online banter', remember it is OK for them to say so or leave the conversation.

## 5 ways to keep gaming fun:

1. Block, report and mute people who troll or bully your children in games
2. Remind your child to take short breaks if they've been gaming for a long time.
3. Remind your child not to share personal information with people in games
4. Avoiding in-game purchases like loot boxes
5. Check the age rating of any games your child plays



# When things go wrong online

If things have gone wrong online remember you and your child can:

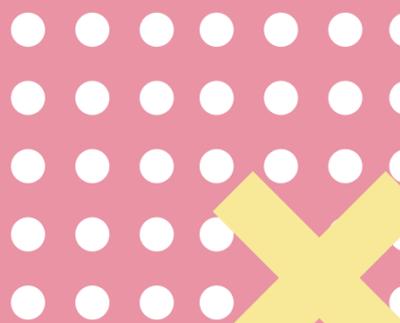
- Remind your child to talk to someone they trust like an adult
- Report bullying and abuse directly to the website or app they were using
- Delete the thing they have shared that you or your child is worried about, or try to find a way to hide them
- Tell the police by making a report to CEOP if someone is threatening or blackmailing you - <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>
- Plan for the future by changing privacy settings to try and stop it happening again

**Ambitious about Autism: Staying Safe Online -**  
<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/sites/default/files/myVoice%20-%20Staying%20Safe%20Online%20Guide.pdf>



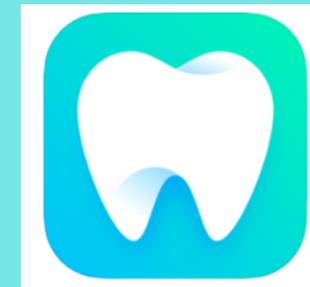
## Danger signs

- If something doesn't feel right or someone has asked you something that makes you feel uncomfortable, say 'no'.  
Remember that you ALWAYS have the right to say no.
- If someone asks you for a picture of yourself, it should generally only be for the purpose of recognising you if you are planning to meet for the first time in real life.
- If someone keeps asking you for pictures of yourself, especially if they ask for pictures where you are not wearing a lot of clothes – do not send them any pictures and immediately talk to someone you trust for advice.
- If someone you've met online says something one day and then another day they say something that doesn't match up with what they said previously, it could be a sign that they are lying.
- If something seems 'too good to be true' then be wary.
- Be wary of anyone setting up multiple accounts. If someone doesn't have much history or many photographs of themselves on their account, then it may be a fake account.



# Apps to Support Health and Wellbeing

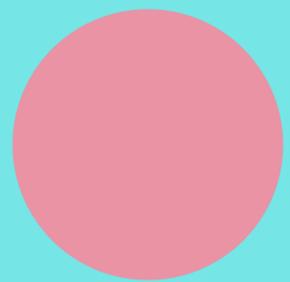
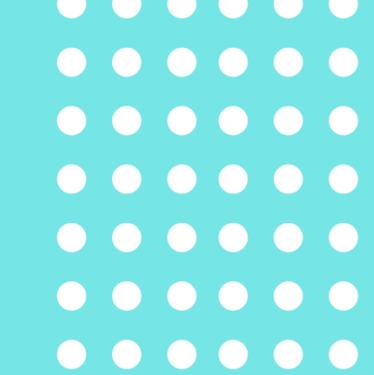
**Dental Hygiene:** This app offers a timer and visual guidance for how long and where to brush your teeth, a dentist appointment reminder, and a toothbrush tracker to prompt when it is time for a new toothbrush.



**Calm:** This app is designed to help individuals with their sleep, meditation and relaxation. Some features on this app you have to purchase. However, due to Covid-19, Calm have got a webpage with a range of free resources to use. Please see here : [https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath?utm\\_source=lifecycle&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=difficult\\_times\\_nonsubs\\_031720](https://www.calm.com/blog/take-a-deep-breath?utm_source=lifecycle&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=difficult_times_nonsubs_031720)

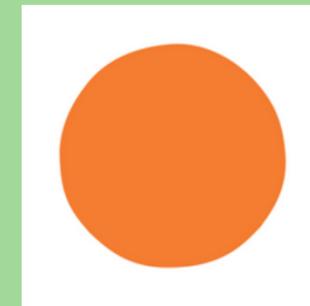


**Sand timer:** This app is very similar to the time timer by showing the passing of time. The alert tone and colours of the timer can be personalised.



# Apps to Support Health and Wellbeing

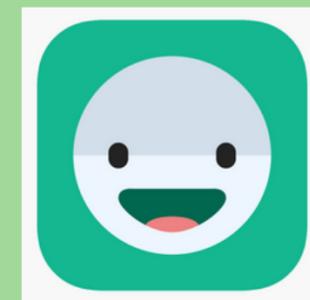
**Headspace:** This app can be used to relax with guided meditations and mindfulness techniques to bring calm and wellness. This can also be used to support with sleep and practising good sleep hygiene. (Payment is required after the basic free course if offered).



**MindMate:** This app is designed to transform and maintain health and wellness through daily activity workouts and mental activities. This app includes brain workouts, information about nutrition, physical exercise guidance, TV and music, a diary and reminders.



**Daylio:** Daylio enables you to keep a private journal without having to type a single line. You can pick your mood for each day and add activities you have been doing. This format helps you to understand your habits better. This app would be helpful to those who may benefit from tracking their mood and activity to share in health appointments or professionals.



# **Together We Can Overcome**

**TO THE DOCTORS, NURSES, CARERS AND EVERYONE ON THE FRONT LINE**

**TO THE UTILITIES WORKERS KEEPING OUR COUNTRY GOING**

**TO THE VOLUNTEERS AND HELPERS KEEPING SPIRITS UP**

**TO THE PICKERS, PACKERS, SUPPLIERS AND DELIVERY DRIVERS**

**TO ALL THE CLEANERS KEEPING OUR SURROUNDINGS SAFE**

**TO EVERYONE STAYING AT HOME**

# **THANK YOU**

