

Strategies to Support Children with ASD



HALLAM FIELDS JUNIOR SCHOOL

Consider keeping a record or diary to see if a pattern emerges? Don't be afraid to go back to basics and consider facts like;

- Is it too hot or too cold? • Is the child hungry or thirsty? • Is it too noisy? • Is the child in pain? (e.g. toothache/headache/temperature?)
- Was there anything that triggered it?
- Is it associated with anything? (time of the day, hunger, activity, environment, other)
- Is there anything that makes it better or worse?
 - Is there something sensory going on?
 - Can I "unpick" what is causing this behaviour?
- What can I do to address this issue? Is there something we can change or adapt to prevent this difficulty?

Children who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder may not be able to adapt to their environment, therefore changes may have to be made for them to maximise their potential.

Clear Communication

Always use, simple clear communication. Face the child when communicating. Don't expect eye contact. Use familiar language each time and ask other people for ideas and suggestions about communicating effectively by using their name, and give one instruction at a time.

Change your language to the positive. Instead of, "Don't do that because....." say: "I need you to walk with me over here."

Structure

Provide clear structure to the day using visual cues such as: Now and Next and a Visual Timetable. Tick sheets for tasks and in and out trays can also be used. Make sure that visual cues continue even as the child moved up the school or seems not to 'need' them any more.



1-5 Scale and Power Cards

Use a 1-5 scale or power cards to explore feelings and to introduce strategies to help the child to calm when they are starting to struggle. Teach strategies for calming yourself when either you notice them starting to bubble or they recognise it in themselves. Verbalise what you are seeing and that is letting you know that they are struggling.

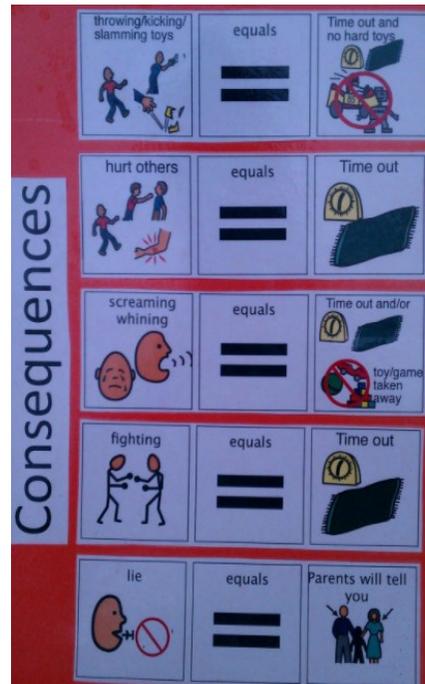
How am I feeling?		What can I do?
5	Explode —I feel angry and I am not sure how to calm down. I need an adult to help me.	I need to leave the classroom. I need to get to a safe place. I need some space - I will let you know when I am ready to talk.
4	Rumbling —I feel like I am starting to lose control. I may need space and some support.	I can ask for a brain break. I can go to my safe place. I can move away from something that is upsetting me.
3	Bubbling —I am feeling frustrated or something is worrying me. I may need a break to calm myself.	I can let my teacher know how I am feeling. I can get something from my sensory box. I can write or draw the problem.
2	Ok —I know something is not right but I know what I need to do.	I can think about something that makes me happy. I can take deep breaths. I can go and have a drink.
1	Happy —I feel good about myself and what is going on around me.	I can carry on having fun.

Consequences

Consequence flow charts and reward charts for making the right choices and the consequences of making the wrong choices should be very clear to the child and very visual. Make sure that this is clearly gone through with them before you implement it and; refer to it lots and give lots of warnings for when they are nearing a consequence.

Use the school behaviour chart but break this down and know that adaptations such as: the number of warnings may need to be adapted but this needs to be **shared clearly** with the child through social stories, role play or drawings and needs to be repeated regularly (at least 3 times a week but ideally daily).

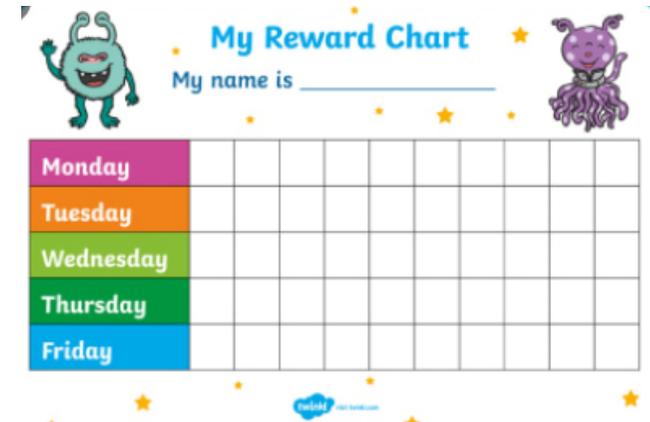
Be consistent! Share what is going to happen and then make sure that it does. This should be the case for positive and negative consequences.



Reward Chart

Use lots of rewards and try to praise whenever the child is making the right choices; try to give 5 more positives a day than you do negatives. Things that are very visual tend to work best.

Rewards may need to be given regularly, as waiting until the end of the day or even by lunch time may be too far in the future and too long for them to wait.



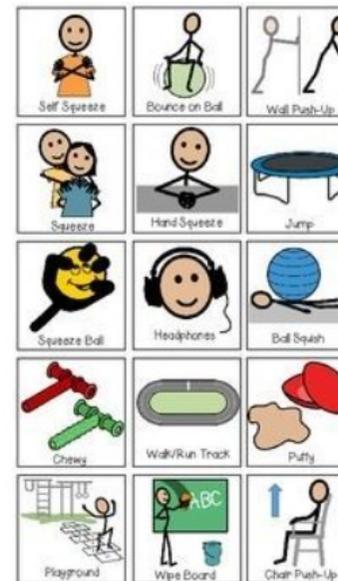
Social Stories

Use social stories to prepare the child for situations and to help them to rehearse making the correct choices.

Social stories can also be used when an incident has happened to review the choices made and talk about better choices next time.

Comic Strips to review incidents

Drawing what has happened and using the consequence chart can help the child to review what has happened in a less threatening way.

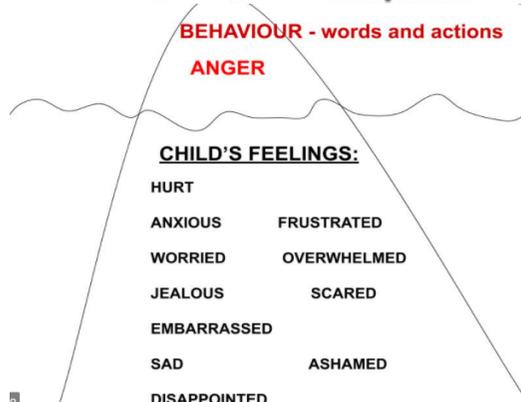
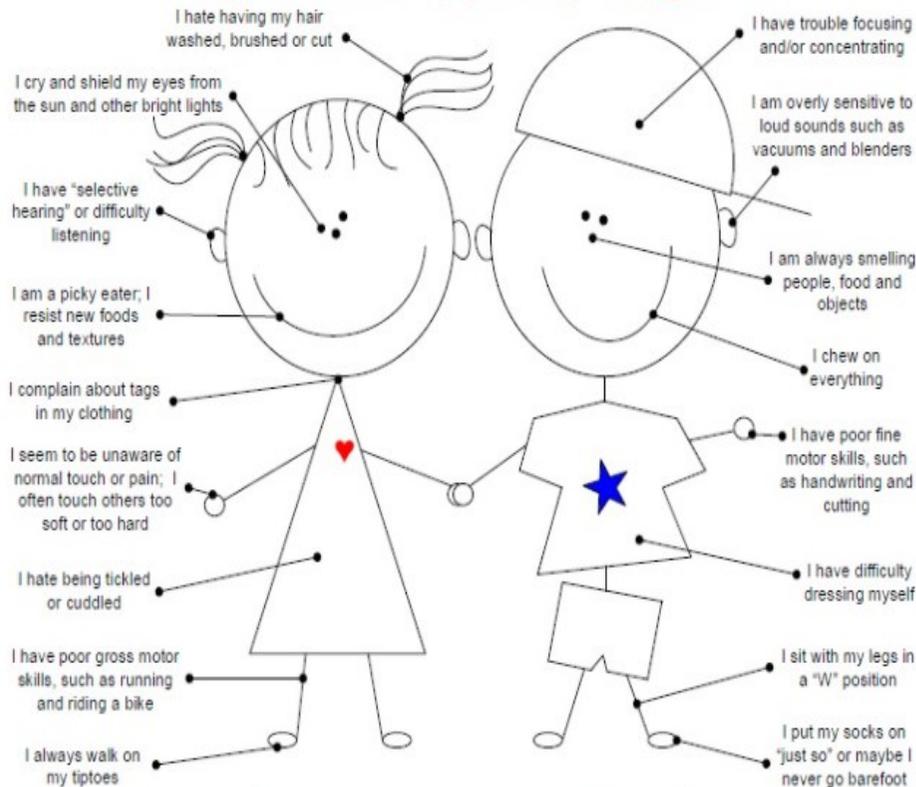


Sensory Breaks including Proprioceptive activities.

Plan in regular sensory breaks and proprioception activities into the day; particularly around parts of the day that the child finds the most challenging such as transition. Also consider using fiddle toys or a sensory box or set of activities that they can go to when needed or as planned into their timetable. Things such as crunchy foods can also give them the feedback that they need and help them to regulate.

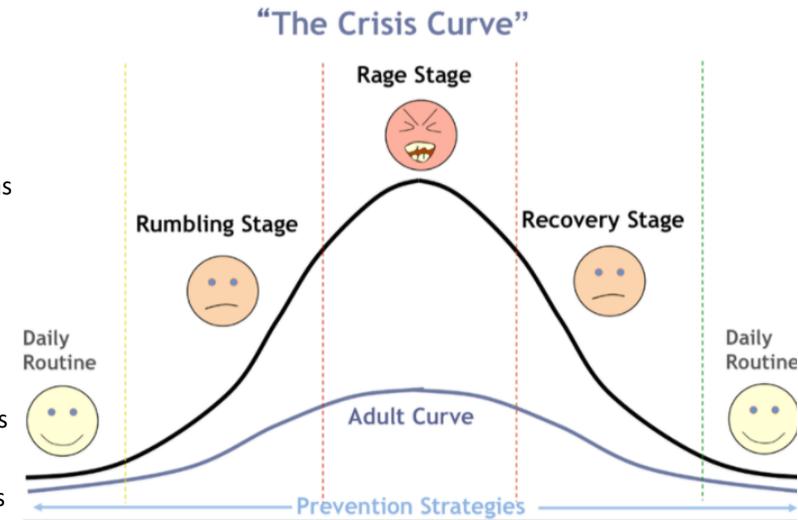
Sensory Processing Difficulties

Are there sensory processing issues that are causing difficult behaviours? Do we need to allow the child to go out for break before other to avoid busy corridors, use noise cancelling headphones, use a screen in the classroom, have them eat where they can't smell other children's food or give them sensory fiddle or chew toys. Keep a record of triggers and plan to avoid these triggers in the future.



Meltdowns or Tantrums

Firstly, plan to avoid these situations by planning to avoid triggers and ensuring that there are lots of sensory breaks built into the day. Use what you know and notes you have kept about incidents, to limit triggers and plan to avoid situations that may cause meltdowns and make sure that the other strategies listed are in place.



If meltdowns do happen, give time and space whilst letting them know that you are still there to support. Make your focus keeping them and others safe.

- Give them some time - it can take a while to recover from information or sensory overload.
- Make space - try to create a quiet, safe space as best you can. Ask people to move along and not to stare, turn off loud music and turn down bright lights – whatever you can think of to reduce the information overload, try it. You may need to remove a class from the classroom to give this time and space to the child.
- Keep talk and language to a minimum. The child will not be able to access this part of their brain until they are calmer.
- Have a premade plan of calming activities that the child knows to go to when they are calm enough to access them.
- Try to distract using things that they might engage with or that help them to calm.
- Use their 1-5 cards or other visuals to assess how they are feeling.

*Incidents can be dealt with afterwards using the consequences, comic strips and social stories but initially we want to keep them and those around them safe. *

Break and lunch time

In contrast to their peers, children and young people on the autism spectrum may not enjoy break and lunch times. This could be because they:

- find the lack the structure and routine that they need difficult
- are daunted by noisy, busy and unpredictable environments, such as the dining hall
- can lack the fast processing of conversation and social interaction skills that are needed may be fearful of bullying, including social isolation.

Here are some ways you can help

- Organise structured lunchtime clubs or groups focusing on shared interests.
- Use cards in the classroom and at lunch times to ensure consistent communication methods and to ensure that it is clear to the child what is expected.
- Provide social learning and pre-learning before break times and ensure that this is passed on to lunch time staff who can support with strategies.
- Try using social stories or comic strip conversations if a pupil is concerned about a particular situation and to prepare them for what to expect and how to behave.
- Ensure that there is good supervision by staff that have understanding of the child.
- Ensure good hand over between teacher and lunch time staff both at the start and end of lunch times.
- Teach autism awareness and acceptance amongst peers.
- Have a zero tolerance 'no bullying' policy and ensure that all staff are aware of procedures.
- Use a buddy system or have a buddy bench in the playground. When using a buddy system, it's important to not let the autistic child or young person become too dependent on just one person. If they do and that person is absent then their anxiety level may increase and this can lead to distressed behaviour or a meltdown.
- Some autistic pupils may find social interaction too demanding. If you have tried to help them form friendships, but can see that they would rather be alone, then try to accommodate them having this time in a quiet and safe area.
- Plan to avoid trigger times such as all of the children going out or coming in together. Get the child to go out or come in first or last and plan in transition time and activities that will help them to calm and settle.