



# Supporting autistic children at home

Information and Top Tips



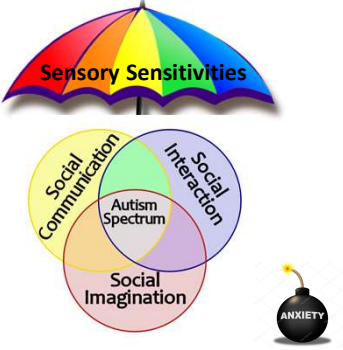

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## The plan

- What is Autism?
- Top tips for supporting autistic students at home
- Questions



## Autism



Sensory Sensitivities

Social Communication

Social Interaction

Autism Spectrum

Social Imagination

ANXIETY

## What do we see?

- Makes it hard for children and young people (CYP) to organise themselves and think about what's happening.
- May need support with transitioning.
- Can make it hard for CYP to understand and cope with change.
- May need support understanding others.
- Logical thinking.
- Can fixate on certain things.
- Unique and creative thought processes.



Social Imagination

## What do we see?

- Good language skills don't always mean good understanding.
- Literal understanding of language; CYP may not understand sarcasm or idioms.
- CYP may need time to process information and instructions.
- Visual learners and communicators.
- May need help making choices.
- Difficulty expressing their own needs and feelings.
- Imitation echolalia (copying language from favourite shows or experiences).



Social Communication

## What do we see?

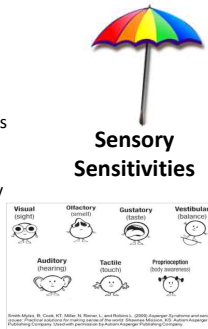
- Strong personal agendas.
- Interaction can sometimes cause anxiety.
- Copying others to 'fit in'.
- Masking
- Support - new people, places or situations.
- Difficulty with eye contact, turn-taking and sharing.
- Difficulty with emotions.
- Articulate - preference for conversations with older children / adults.
- Lots of children with autism learn how to 'fit in' to a neurotypical world



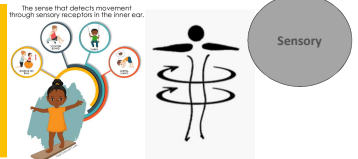
Social Interaction

## What do we see?

- Varies hugely from child to child
- Particularly sensitive to some sensory experiences e.g. sound
- Under-sensitive to others e.g. not feeling pain
- Some students – OT support, especially if sensory processing disorder is suspected
- Need regular sensory breaks built into their day
- May feel overwhelmed in noisy or busy places
- Lots of children with autism cope with adaptations and understanding about sensory needs



## The Vestibular Sense



## The Proprioceptive Sense

**Proprioception is the body awareness sense. It helps with:**

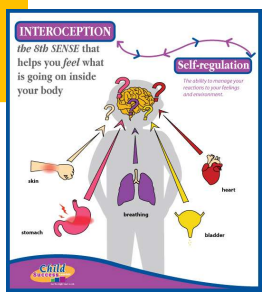
**Knowing where our body parts are**  
 Scratching an itch and knowing where to scratch without looking  
 Touching hands to feet, also known as "finding your feet"

**Understanding how much force to use**  
 Using a pencil with the proper amount of force  
 Holding a delicate item without breaking it

**Coordination between body parts and senses**  
 Riding a bike and coordinating the movements to stay on track  
 Using hand-eye coordination to catch a ball



## The Interoceptive Sense



**What is Interoception?**  
 Interoception is the internal sense. It helps with:

**Understanding our body's needs**  
 Recognizing feelings of hunger  
 During peppy running, knowing when to use the bathroom

**Knowing how to appropriately address needs**  
 Listening to one's body to know when to take a break  
 Stretching or taking a break when feeling tired

**Regulating emotions and controlling behavior**  
 Feeling uncomfortable or stressed and taking a break  
 Drinking water before heading to recess to prevent thirst



Amazing things happen  
 By Alexander Amelines



4 minutes

## How can we support our autistic children?

- Prevention is key for reducing the likelihood of emotional meltdowns.
- In all special needs settings the focus is on preventing students becoming dysregulated in the first place.
- How can we do this?



**1. Make life as predictable as possible**

Planners and calendars let your child know what to expect and reduce anxiety. They also allow us to let children know when there are going to be changes to what they expect! You can also use social stories or YouTube videos about new places.

**2. Think sensory** – think about their sensory needs and have a plan to tackle overstimulating environments.

**SENSORY CHECKLIST**

Visual/Sight	Visual Annoyance
Visual clutter	Visual clutter
Visual distractions	Visual distractions
Visual noise	Visual noise
Visual patterns	Visual patterns
Visual textures	Visual textures
Visual colors	Visual colors
Visual shapes	Visual shapes
Visual sizes	Visual sizes
Visual heights	Visual heights
Visual depths	Visual depths
Visual widths	Visual widths
Visual lengths	Visual lengths
Visual volumes	Visual volumes
Visual weights	Visual weights
Visual temperatures	Visual temperatures
Visual pressures	Visual pressures
Visual vibrations	Visual vibrations
Visual movements	Visual movements
Visual sounds	Visual sounds
Visual smells	Visual smells
Visual tastes	Visual tastes
Visual textures	Visual textures
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Visual textures	Visual textures

**Touch/Tactile**

Touch/Tactile	Tactile Annoyance
Tactile clutter	Tactile clutter
Tactile distractions	Tactile distractions
Tactile noise	Tactile noise
Tactile patterns	Tactile patterns
Tactile textures	Tactile textures
Tactile colors	Tactile colors
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**3. Prepare positively for the school day**

Talk through the lessons or timetable for the day, or remind them of a favourite activity

Discuss the link with home

**4. Allow some down-time after school**

**Energy Accounting**

Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It leads to overload and exhaustion.

Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.

Don't worry if children don't want to talk about their day

**5. Transition Activities**

Something calming/relaxing to add energy to the battery at key times in the day? In the car on the way home? As soon as they get into the house?

**Energy Accounting**

Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It leads to overload and exhaustion.

Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.

**6. Model Emotions**

Show children that it is normal to feel different emotions – the key bit is how we deal with them and get back to calm. Give guidance on appropriate ways to respond to problems.

**BUT...**

Beware of over-sharing serious worries with your child.

**We all make mistakes!**

### 7. Prioritise sleep routines

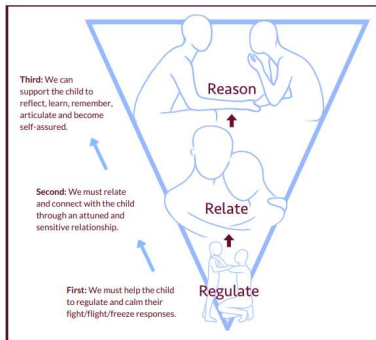
Sleep is really important and sleep deprivation can be a source of behaviors and anxieties;



- Have a bedroom set up for sleep and downtime!
- Keep similar bedtime timings - even the weekends and holidays.
- Have a consistent routine, which is as boring as possible and once the child has gone upstairs, they need to stay there.
- Encourage / work towards self-settling.

### 8. Managing Meltdowns

**Fight**    **flight**    **FREEZE**



### 9. Talking about the autism diagnosis (if appropriate)

There are lots of famous / successful autistic people.

Amazing Things Happen!  
YouTube - Amazing Things Project  
9 Apr 2017

### 10. Look after yourself

YOU'LL HAVE GOOD DAYS, BAD DAYS, OVERWHELMING DAYS, TOO TIRED DAYS, I'M AWESOME DAYS, I CAN'T GO ON DAYS. AND EVERY DAY YOU'LL STILL SHOW UP.

WHEN YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES, YOU'RE ALLOWED TO

- feel all your feelings, even if they seem wrong
- listen to the experts but trust your gut
- love your child yet wish things were easier
- be polite but advocate like a bear
- be kind to yourself, even if you feel ineffective
- put yourself first so you can keep on giving
- set boundaries even when it's awkward
- hold joy and sorrow at the same time
- believe you're a superhero, perfectly imperfect

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### 11. Don't be afraid to ask for support

- Surrey Branch of the National Autistic Society: [www.nassurreybranch.org](http://www.nassurreybranch.org)
- BRAAIN (Be ready ADHD ASD Information Network): [www.braain.co.uk](http://www.braain.co.uk)
- APPEER (Support for autistic girls): <https://www.appeer.org.uk/>
- Send Advice Surrey: <https://www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk/>
- Family Voice Surrey: <https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/>
- Autism Outreach for Schools: <https://www.autismoutreachforschools.uk/>
- Mindworks: <https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/>
- YMCA East Surrey: <https://www.ymcaeast.surrey.org.uk/>



Find help sheets, FAQs, videos  
and more at:

[www.autismoutreachforschools.uk](http://www.autismoutreachforschools.uk)

