

Level 2 Early Help



ASD Support Parenting/Carer Pack

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Introduction

Parenting is a journey that comes with its own set of joys and challenges. When you're raising a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), that journey can be both incredibly rewarding and, at times, challenging.

Every family's journey is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Remember, you're not alone in this!

This pack will give you valuable insight into ASD, sharing practical strategies that can make a difference in your day-to-day life, and how to support parents who are navigating the complexities of parenting a child with ASD.

We hope that this pack will empower you as a parent and support you along your journey.

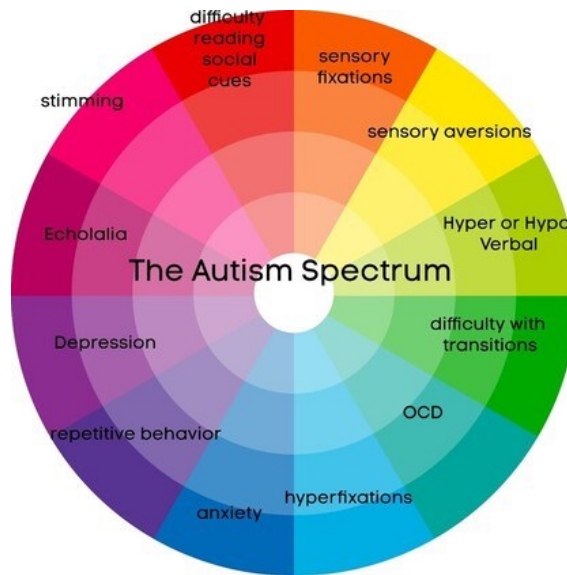


Understanding ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder

What is ASD?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurodevelopmental disorder that affects social interaction, communication, behaviour, and sensory processing.

ASD is characterized by a range of symptoms and challenges, which can vary widely among individuals.



Social Interaction

Individuals with ASD often have difficulty with social interactions, such as making eye contact, understanding social cues, and forming relationships.

Communication

Many individuals with ASD struggle with communication, which may manifest as delayed speech, difficulty with non-verbal communication, or repetitive language.

Repetitive Behaviours

People with ASD may engage in repetitive behaviours, routines, or show intense fixations on specific interests.

Sensory Sensitivities

Sensory sensitivities are common, where individuals may be hypersensitive or hyposensitive to sensory stimuli like lights, sounds, textures, and tastes.

Common Signs and Symptoms

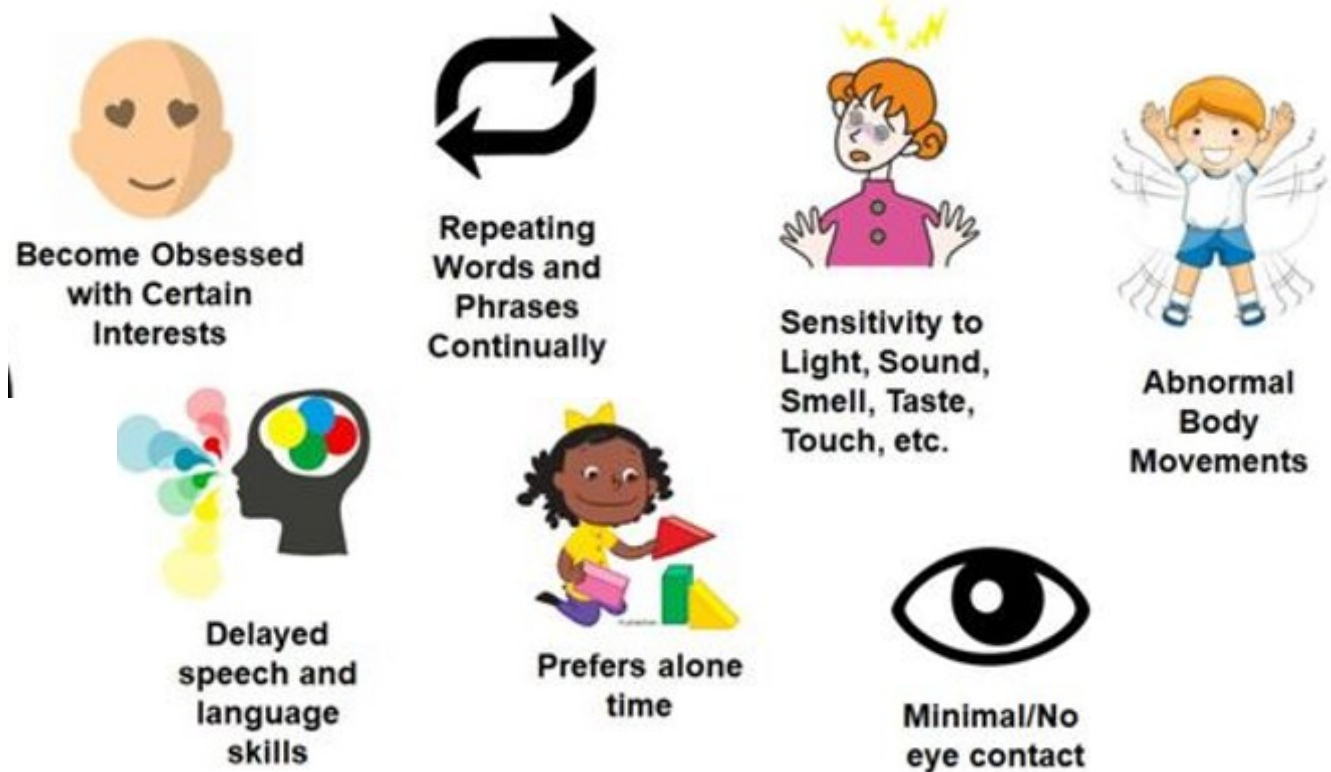
Let's explore some of the common signs and symptoms of ASD.

Early Signs - Infants and Toddlers:

- Lack of or limited eye contact.
- Delayed or limited speech development.
- Limited interest in playing with others.
- Difficulty responding to their name.

Signs - Children and Adolescents:

- Difficulty understanding and expressing emotions.
- Challenges with social interactions and making friends.
- Repetitive behaviours or rituals.
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g., covering ears in response to loud noises).



Importance of Early Diagnosis

- Early diagnosis is critical because it allows for early intervention and support.
- Research has shown that early intervention can significantly improve long-term outcomes.

Early Intervention:

- Early intervention services may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioural therapy.
- These interventions can help children develop essential skills and improve their quality of life.

The Impact on Families

Emotional Challenges for Parents

Raising a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can bring forth a rollercoaster of emotions for parents.

Grief and Loss

Parents may grieve the loss of the expected "typical" parenting experience and the dreams they had for their child.

Stress and Anxiety

The daily challenges, constant advocacy, and uncertainty about the future can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety.

Isolation and Loneliness

The unique demands of caring for a child with ASD may lead to social isolation, making parents feel lonely and disconnected from their support networks.

Guilt and Self-Blame

Parents may struggle with feelings of guilt and self-blame, wondering if they did something to cause their child's condition or if they are doing enough to help.

Practical Challenges for Parents

In addition to emotional challenges, parents face a range of practical challenges in raising a child with ASD.

Time and Energy Demands

Caring for a child with ASD often requires a significant amount of time and energy, including therapy appointments, school meetings, and daily routines.

Financial Stress

Therapy, medical bills, and special education services can place a financial burden on families.

Remember:

Work with your child as gently as you can, but remain firm with structure and routines. Always stay focused on the process and not just the outcome. Children with autism respond very well when they know that their needs are being understood and supported.

Impact on siblings and other family members

ASD also affects siblings and other family members in various ways.

Sibling Relationships

Siblings may experience complex emotions, such as jealousy, resentment, or concern for their brother or sister with ASD.

Increased Responsibility

Siblings may take on additional responsibilities or caregiving roles, which can be both rewarding and challenging.

Coping Strategies and Support

Families can navigate these challenges with the help of coping strategies and support networks.

Seek Support

Encourage parents to reach out to support groups, therapists, and professionals who can provide guidance and understanding.

Strengthening Family Bonds

Families can grow stronger through these challenges, fostering resilience and creating a supportive environment for one another.



National Autistic Society is a great website offering advice, guidance and support.

www.autism.org.uk

Effective Strategies for Parenting

Parenting a child with ASD can be challenging, but with the right strategies and support, you can help your child thrive.

Here are some effective strategies for parenting children with ASD:

Educate Yourself

Learn as much as you can about ASD. Understanding the condition, its symptoms, and how it affects your child can help you better support them.

Early Intervention

Early intervention services can make a significant difference in a child's development. Seek out therapy and support services as soon as you suspect or receive a diagnosis of ASD.

Advice!

If you have any concerns around your child's development and behaviour, you can speak to your Health Care Visitor (if child is under 5), GP or SENCO in their school or nursery setting. They can then explore whether a referral to The Lighthouse Developmental Centre is required for your child to be assessed by a Paediatrician.

Create a Structured Environment

Children with ASD often thrive in structured environments with clear routines. Establish consistent daily routines to help your child feel more secure.

Visual Supports

Visual schedules, social stories, and visual cues can help children with ASD understand and follow routines and instructions.

Effective Communication

Use clear and concise language. Be patient and allow extra time for your child to process and respond. Consider using visual aids or communication apps if needed.

Sensory Sensitivities

Many children with ASD have sensory sensitivities. Pay attention to your child's sensory triggers and create a sensory-friendly environment. This may involve using noise-cancelling headphones, providing sensory toys, or adjusting lighting.

Positive Reinforcement

Use positive reinforcement techniques to reward desired behaviours. Praise and rewards can motivate your child to repeat positive behaviours.

Social Skills Training

Consider enrolling your child in social skills training programs or groups to help them develop essential social interaction skills.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy can address sensory and motor skill challenges. Consult with an occupational therapist if needed.

Behavioural Interventions

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy can be highly effective in teaching new skills and reducing challenging behaviours. Work with a qualified ABA therapist if recommended.

Support Networks

Connect with support groups and networks of parents who have children with ASD. They can provide valuable advice, understanding, and emotional support.

Self-Care

Caring for a child with ASD can be emotionally and physically draining. Make sure to prioritize self-care to maintain your own well-being.

Individualised Approach

Remember that every child with ASD is unique. What works for one child may not work for another. Tailor your approach to your child's specific needs and preferences.

Advocate for Your Child

Be an advocate for your child's needs, both in educational settings and healthcare. Ensure they receive the necessary accommodations and services.

Long-Term Planning

Start planning for your child's future early. This includes considering education, employment, and living arrangements as they transition into adulthood.

Patience and Empathy

Above all, approach parenting with patience and empathy. Understand that your child may struggle with certain aspects of life, and your support and understanding are crucial.



Little Heroes ASD Support group

Little Heroes ASD Support Group is a parent led support group for families of children who are on the autistic spectrum.

Little Heroes provides a drop in service for parents and families of children with autism on a regular basis at the Support Hub. During term time there are regular bookable activities each week for the parent/ carer and their children.

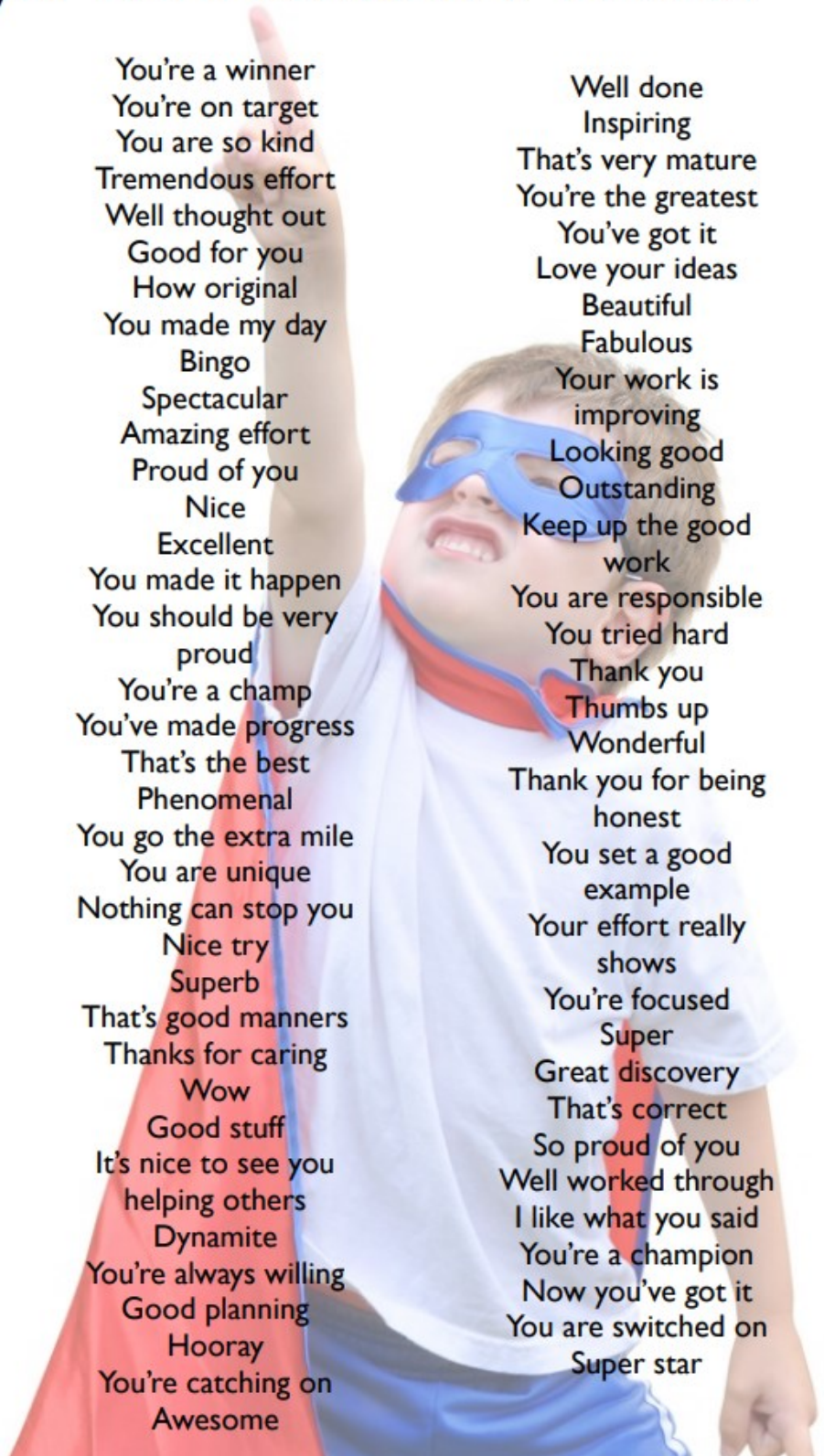
Remember that parenting a child with ASD is a journey that requires ongoing learning and adaptation. Seek guidance from professionals and take advantage of available resources to provide the best possible support for your child.

100 Ways To Praise A Child

Way to go
Bravo!
Fantastic
You're catching on
Wonderful sharing
You're on target
You tried really hard
You're a good listener
I knew you'd do it
Problem solver
Good thinking
Thanks for helping
Hooray for you
What an imagination
You learn quickly
Love your ideas
Beautiful sharing
You tried something
new
Great answer
Now you've got it
You figured it out
Magnificent
Marvelous stuff
I'm happy that you
listened to me
Love your
presentation
Thanks for all your
hard work
Looking good
Outstanding
performance
Brilliant
Congratulations
You're a real trooper
Well done
Super

You're a winner
You're on target
You are so kind
Tremendous effort
Well thought out
Good for you
How original
You made my day
Bingo
Spectacular
Amazing effort
Proud of you
Nice
Excellent
You made it happen
You should be very
proud
You're a champ
You've made progress
That's the best
Phenomenal
You go the extra mile
You are unique
Nothing can stop you
Nice try
Superb
That's good manners
Thanks for caring
Wow
Good stuff
It's nice to see you
helping others
Dynamite
You're always willing
Good planning
Hooray
You're catching on
Awesome

Well done
Inspiring
That's very mature
You're the greatest
You've got it
Love your ideas
Beautiful
Fabulous
Your work is
improving
Looking good
Outstanding
Keep up the good
work
You are responsible
You tried hard
Thank you
Thumbs up
Wonderful
Thank you for being
honest
You set a good
example
Your effort really
shows
You're focused
Super
Great discovery
That's correct
So proud of you
Well worked through
I like what you said
You're a champion
Now you've got it
You are switched on
Super star



Importance of visual supports and sensory considerations

Visual supports and sensory considerations are of great importance for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). They play a crucial role in helping children with ASD navigate their environment, communicate, and manage sensory sensitivities. They enhance communication, reduce anxiety, promote independence, and create a more accommodating and inclusive environment.

Here's why these elements are significant:

Communication Support

- ♦ Many children with ASD may struggle with verbal communication. Visual supports, such as visual schedules, communication boards, and social stories, provide alternative ways to convey information and help children understand and express themselves.

Predictability and Routine

- ♦ Children with ASD often thrive on predictability and routine. Visual schedules and routines provide a visual representation of what to expect, reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of control and security.

Enhanced Comprehension

- ♦ Visual aids can make abstract concepts and instructions more concrete and understandable. They can clarify expectations and help children follow directions.

Reduced Anxiety

- ♦ The visual representation of tasks and activities can reduce anxiety by offering a clear roadmap for what comes next. This can help prevent meltdowns and challenging behaviours.

Support for Transitioning

- ♦ Visual supports can assist with transitions between activities or environments. A transition card or timer can signal when it's time to move from one activity to another.

Improved Social Interaction

- ♦ Visual supports can aid in teaching social skills and understanding social cues. Visual cues, like facial expression cards, can help children recognize emotions in others.

Sensory Regulation

- ♦ Many children with ASD have sensory sensitivities or sensory processing challenges. Sensory considerations involve creating an environment that accommodates these sensitivities. For example, reducing fluorescent lighting, using noise-cancelling headphones, or providing sensory toys can help children regulate their sensory experiences.

Prevention of Sensory Overload

- ♦ Visual supports can also help children anticipate and avoid overwhelming sensory experiences. For instance, a visual schedule can indicate when a noisy or crowded event is coming up, allowing the child to prepare or opt-out if necessary.

Individualized Support

- ♦ Visual supports and sensory considerations can be tailored to the specific needs and preferences of each child with ASD. What works for one child may not work for another, so individualization is key.

Independence and Autonomy

- ♦ Visual supports can empower children with ASD to become more independent. They can use visual schedules to manage their own activities and routines, promoting self-regulation and decision-making skills.

Enhanced Learning

- ♦ Visual aids can facilitate learning by providing visual cues and prompts. They can be especially helpful in educational settings, helping children follow instructions and stay engaged in learning activities.

Independence and Autonomy

- ♦ Visual supports can empower children with ASD to become more independent. They can use visual schedules to manage their own activities and routines, promoting self-regulation and decision-making skills.

Enhanced Learning

- ♦ Visual aids can facilitate learning by providing visual cues and prompts. They can be especially helpful in educational settings, helping children follow instructions and stay engaged in learning activities.

Here are some examples of visual supports and sensory considerations to support your child:

Play time cards



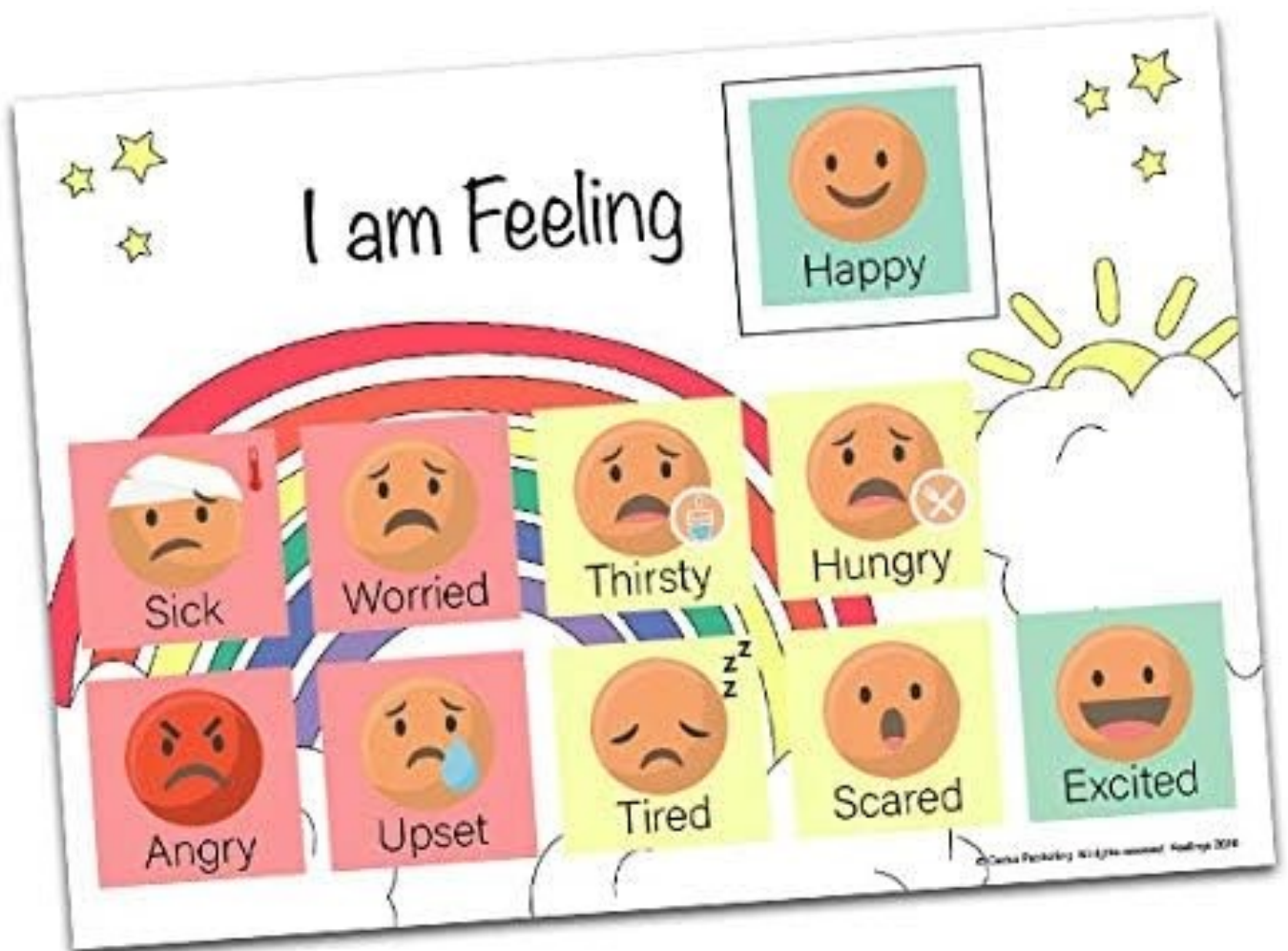
Tip:

You can create your own visual schedules & timetables for your child to put up the home. Include tasks which are part of their daily routine like brushing your teeth, having breakfast and getting dressed.

Now, Next & Then visual board

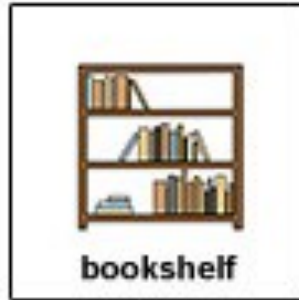
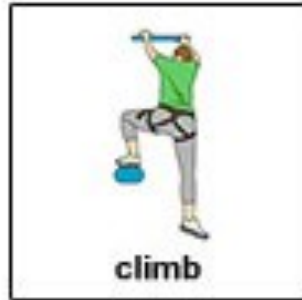
Now	Next	Then

Feelings



Safety Skills

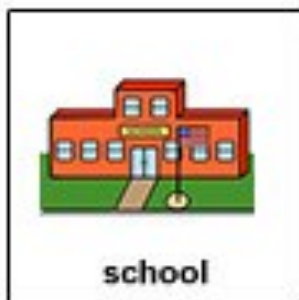
Story strips can be used to teach many safety skills such as do not climb, do not touch the iron, or how to cross the street safely.



"Do not climb the bookshelf"



"Do not run near the pool"



"When you hear the fire alarm, exit the school"

Reminder strips (bathroom)

Brushing Teeth



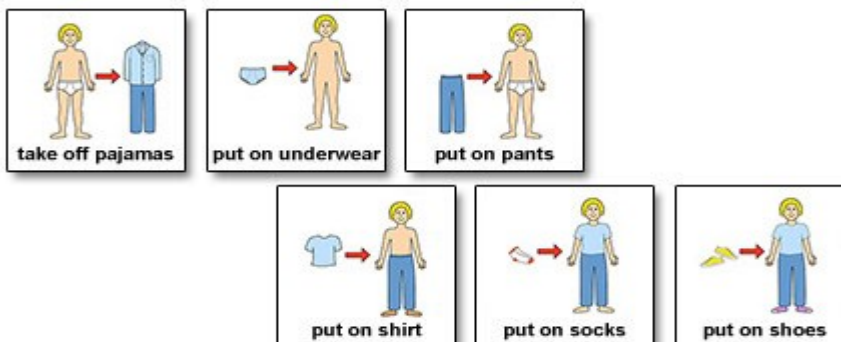
Washing Hands



Washing Face



Getting Dressed



Using the Bathroom



Social Stories

What are social stories?

Social stories were created by Carol Gray in 1991. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

What are social stories for?

Social stories can be used to:

- ♦ develop self-care skills (for example, how to clean teeth, wash hands or get dressed), social skills (for example, sharing, asking for help, saying thank you, interrupting) and academic abilities.
- ♦ help someone to understand how others might behave or respond in a particular situation.
- ♦ help others understand the perspective of an autistic person and why they may respond or behave in a particular way.
- ♦ help a person to cope with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (for example, absence of teacher, moving house, thunderstorms)
- ♦ provide positive feedback to a person about an area of strength or achievement in order to develop self-esteem.
- ♦ as a behavioural strategy (for example, what to do when angry, how to cope with obsessions).

How do social stories help?

- ♦ Social stories present information in a literal, 'concrete' way, which may improve a person's understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous situation or activity. The presentation and content can be adapted to meet different people's needs.
- ♦ They can help with sequencing (what comes next in a series of activities) and 'executive functioning' (planning and organising).
- ♦ By providing information about what might happen in a particular situation, and some guidelines for behaviour, you can increase structure in a person's life and thereby reduce anxiety.
- ♦ Creating or using a social story can help you to understand how the autistic person perceives different situations.

How to write a social story

Picture the goal

Consider the social story's purpose. For example, the goal may be to teach a child to cover their mouth when coughing.

Now think about what the child needs to understand to achieve this goal. For example, they need to understand why covering their mouth when coughing is important, i.e. it stops germs from being spread which may make other people sick.

Gather information

Collect information about the situation you want to describe in your social story. Where does the situation occur? Who is it with? How does it begin and end? How long does it last? What actually happens in the situation and why? If it is for a situation where a particular outcome is not guaranteed, use words like 'sometimes' and 'usually' in the story.

Stories should appeal to the interests of the person they are written for and avoid using words that may cause the person anxiety or distress. The content and presentation of social stories should be appropriate to the person's age and level of understanding. Use age-appropriate photographs, picture symbols or drawings with text to help people who have difficulty reading or for younger children.

Gather information about the person including their age, interests, attention span, level of ability and understanding.

Tailor the text

- ◆ A social story needs to have a title, introduction, body and conclusion.
- ◆ It should use gentle and supportive language.
- ◆ It should answer six questions: where, when, who, what, how and why?
- ◆ It should be made up of descriptive sentences and may also have coaching sentences. A descriptive sentence accurately describes the context, such as where the situation occurs, who is there, what happens and why.

How to use social stories

Think about ways to aid comprehension – would adding questions help, or replacing some text with blanks for the person to fill in?

Find ways to support the story, e.g. create poster with a key phrase from the story.

Plan how often, and where, the story will be shared with the person.

Present the social story to the person at a time when everyone is feeling calm and relaxed, using a straightforward approach, e.g. I have written this story for you. It is about thunderstorms. Let's read it together now.

Monitor how well the story is received and whether it is working as intended.

Keep your stories organised in a ring binder or computer folder. This makes them easier to find and review, and to develop with new information.

Example of a Social Story - going to school:

Sharing with My Friends

	I have friends at school.		It makes me feel happy to let my friends have a turn.
	I do lots of different things with my friends.		I am happy when my friends are happy.
	I need to share when I am with my friends.		I will wait quietly when it is my friend's turn.
	I can share by taking turns with my friends when playing.		Everybody gets a turn when I share with my friends.

Self-Care and Coping Strategies

Parenting a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be demanding, both emotionally and physically. It's crucial for parents to prioritize self-care and employ coping strategies to maintain their well-being.

Here are some self-care and coping strategies for parents of children with ASD:

Build a Support Network

Connect with other parents of children with ASD. Support groups and online communities can provide a safe space to share experiences and gain valuable insights.

Seek Professional Support

Consider therapy or counselling for yourself. A mental health professional can help you manage stress, anxiety, and any feelings of guilt or frustration.

Set Realistic Expectations

Understand that parenting a child with ASD comes with unique challenges. Set realistic expectations for yourself, your child, and your family. Celebrate small victories.

Respite Care

Arrange for respite care to give yourself a break. This can involve having a trusted friend or family member watch your child for a few hours or using respite care services.

Time Management

Prioritize tasks and manage your time effectively. Create a schedule that includes time for self-care, work, and family responsibilities.

Self-Care Activities

Engage in activities that rejuvenate you, whether it's reading, exercising, practicing mindfulness, or pursuing a hobby. Make time for these activities regularly.

Healthy Lifestyle

Eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep. Physical health plays a significant role in emotional well-being.

Delegate and Share Responsibilities

Share parenting responsibilities with your partner or other family members. Don't hesitate to ask for help when needed.

Learn About ASD

Continue educating yourself about ASD and therapies available. Knowledge can empower you to make informed decisions and reduce anxiety.



Set Boundaries

Set boundaries to protect your personal time and space. It's okay to say no to additional commitments when you need a break.

Practice Stress-Reduction Techniques

Explore stress-reduction techniques like deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or progressive muscle relaxation.

Take Breaks

It's essential to take short breaks during the day. Even a few minutes of solitude can help you recharge.

Communicate Openly

Share your feelings and concerns with your partner, friends, or a therapist. Open communication can provide emotional release and support.

Resilience-Building Strategies

Develop resilience by focusing on positive thinking, problem-solving skills, and finding meaning in challenging situations.

Plan for the Future

Consider long-term planning for your child's future, such as financial planning and transition planning for when they become adults. This can provide peace of mind.

Celebrate Achievements

Acknowledge and celebrate your child's milestones and achievements, no matter how small. Positive moments can boost your spirits.

Remember:

Remember that self-care isn't selfish; it's essential for your well-being and your ability to provide the best support to your child with ASD. Be patient with yourself and recognize that taking care of your own needs is an integral part of being a successful and resilient parent.

Support groups, information & additional resources

Little Heroes

Little Heroes ASD Support Group is a parent led support group for families of children who are on the autistic spectrum.

www.littleheroesasd.co.uk



National Autistic Society

Is a great website offering advice, guidance and support.

www.autism.org.uk



SENDIASS

The role of SENDIASS Southend is to ensure that children and young people with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) and their parents or carers have access to impartial information, advice and support so that they can make informed decisions about matters relating to their special educational needs.

www.sendiasssouthend.co.uk



LIVEWELL

This is Southend's health and wellbeing website. You can find information and advice on how to stay well, as well as links and contact details for people who can help.

You can also find:

- community groups
- details of organisations who can support children or adults with various health and wellbeing issues
- services that can provide support for children and adults
- information, advice and guidance on local services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

www.livewellsouthend.com



ASD Helping Hands

ASD Helping Hands will support all service users affected by an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) regardless of age or what stage of life they are at

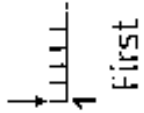
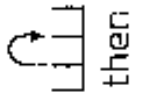


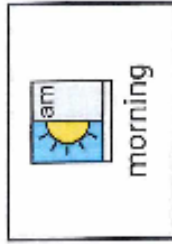
Trust Links

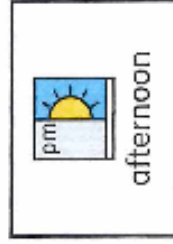
Trust Links is a local independent charity aiming to improve mental health, wellbeing and the environment in Essex. We offer therapeutic gardening, recovery classes, social activities, employment training, environmental workshops and more.

www.trustlinks.org



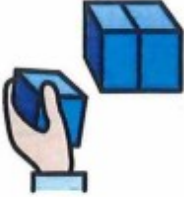
	

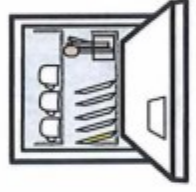
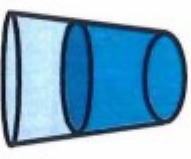
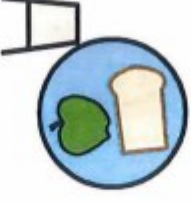
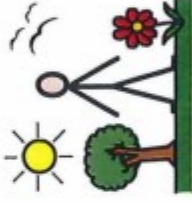


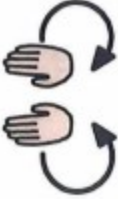
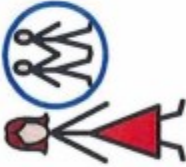
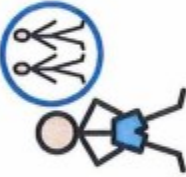






	stickers		build		LEGO		Duplo		doll
	teddy		ball		car		train		dress up
	den		paper aeroplane		iPad		tablet		film
	TV		computer		DVD		YouTube		music

	set table		clear table		dishwasher		wash up		clean
	tidy		hoover		mop		washing		cook
	breakfast		snack		drink		lunch		snack
	tea		picnic		outside		inside		upstairs

				
feeding tube	flush tube	hearing aid	glasses	massage
				
wash hands	dry hands	mum	dad	sister
				
brother	auntie	cousin	grandma	grandad
				
home	work	shop	school	park