



Autism Advocate Printable Resources

A Coping Toolbox

Many autistic individuals have difficulty managing emotions, anxiety and unexpected changes. They may worry about unknown situations, a change in daily routines, or meeting new people. One strategy to reduce anxious moments is to create a coping toolbox.

A coping toolbox is a collection of items and suggested activities that individuals can use during an anxiety or panic attack or when feeling stress. The items in a coping toolbox can help them calm down and express their emotions in a safe and healthy way. Each coping box will be unique, and the items included will vary from person to person. With so many coping strategies available, it might take some time to learn what works best for your child. The toolbox is a great way to be prepared for possible anxious moments that your child might face.

Making a Coping Toolbox

- Find a container or box that can hold the items selected by your child. For example, a shoebox may be a good choice. Have a family activity in which family members make a coping toolbox, write their name on the box and decorate it with stickers or drawings.
- Brainstorm items that help you to feel calm. These can be physical items, such as a stress ball or fidget toy. It can include a list of encouraging words, photos that make you happy, a printout of breathing exercises, or a list of your favorite funny movies. These items might seem like obvious relaxation items. However, it is helpful to have them written down when you are in the midst of an anxious moment or a panic attack and you are unable to focus.
- Create the toolboxes at a time when you and your child are not experiencing high levels of stress. You may want to take several days or weeks to identify coping tools that work for you. Take time to refine your coping toolbox by removing items that are not working or adding items that you discover after creating your toolbox.

Using the Coping Toolbox

When the toolbox is complete, let your child explore it. Talk about the items in the box and how they can help when your child feels sad, worried, overwhelmed or anxious. Find a place to put the toolbox that is easily accessible to your child. Remind your child often that the toolbox can be used at any time. Go through the toolbox regularly to see if there is anything your child would like to add or remove.



A COPING TOOLBOX

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Each person's coping toolbox will be a little different. All items should be safe and age-appropriate. Experts suggest that parents try to include at least one item for each sense.



- photo book of family and friends and favorite places
- snow globe
- images of a dream location



- bubble wrap
- playlist of calming songs
- click pen
- chimes



- soft piece of cloth
- stress ball
- fidget toys
- silly putty
- blanket
- smooth rock
- textured cloth



- scented lotion
- calming essential oils, such as lavender or chamomile
- scratch-and-sniff stickers



- mints
- chewing gum
- hard candies

You could also include:

Favorite Items: book, stuffy, doll, toys

Distracting Items: puzzles, sketchpad, Sudoku puzzles

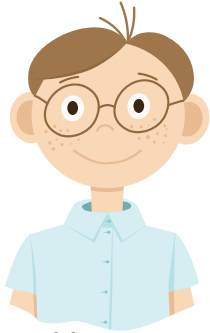
Positive Mindset Items: affirmation statements such as, "I am doing my best," or "I can do hard things," a list of funny jokes

List of Activities: go for a walk, watch a movie, take deep breaths, hum your favorite song, dance, get a hug

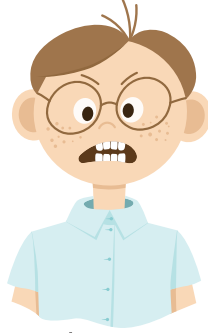
Emotional Awareness Tools: Feelings Chart, GLAD worksheet, journal for writing down feelings



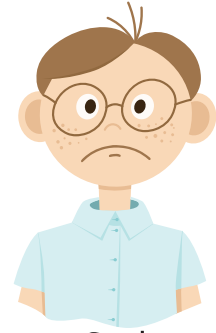
How Am I Feeling?



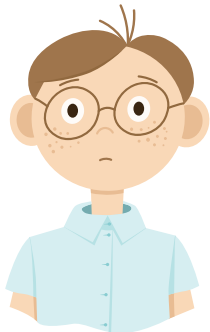
Happy



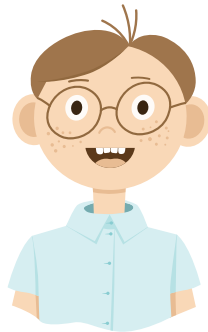
Angry



Sad



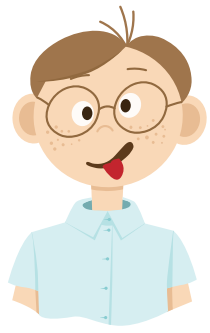
Worried



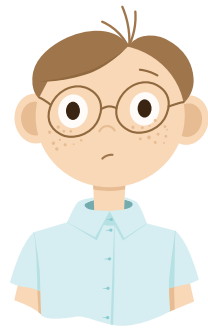
Excited



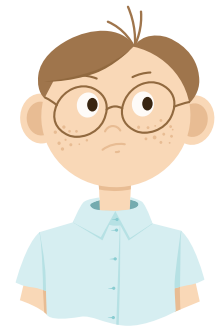
Calm



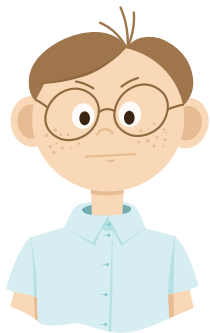
Silly



Scared



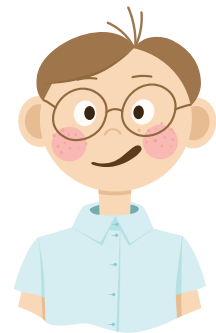
Disappointed



Frustrated



Relieved



Embarrassed

I can be G.L.A.D.

A large, stylized letter 'G' drawn with red crayon, featuring a textured, scribbled appearance.

Write down the things you are **Grateful** for.

A large, stylized letter 'L' drawn with blue crayon, featuring a textured, scribbled appearance.

Write down something you **Learned** today.

A large, stylized letter 'A' drawn with green crayon, featuring a textured, scribbled appearance.

Write down something you **Accomplished** today.

A large, stylized letter 'D' drawn with orange crayon, featuring a textured, scribbled appearance.

Write down things that bring you **Delight** or make you happy.

COPING TOOLBOX ACTIVITIES

Print out the pages. Cut out the specific activity ideas that your child would like to use in the Coping Toolbox. Laminate the cards and put them together using a key ring.

My Coping Toolbox Activities

**Watch a funny
movie.**

My favorite Funny Movies are:

**Breathe as deep
as you can, hold it
for 5 seconds and
then slowly exhale.**

Go for a walk.

Call a friend.

**Jump on the
trampoline.**

COPING TOOLBOX ACTIVITIES

I am doing my best!

I can do hard things!

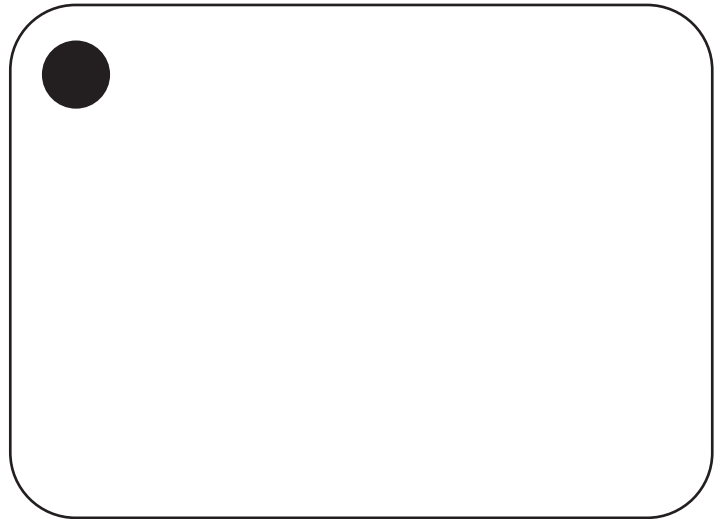

Dance

Listen to music.

Write a story in my journal.

Build a fort.

COPING TOOLBOX ACTIVITIES



My Breathing Exercises



Bunny Breathing

Sit on your knees like a bunny. Take four quick sniffs in through your nose and then exhale slowly through your nose.

Blow Out A Candle

Put one hand on your chest and take in a deep breath. Then imagine there is a candle on your birthday cake and blow it out.

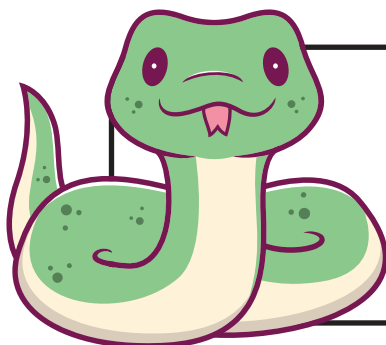


Blowing Bubbles

Pretend you have a bubble wand. Imagine you are blowing bubbles.

Smelling Flowers

Imagine you are smelling flowers. Breathe in slowly through your nose and out slowly through your mouth.



Snake Breathing

Breathe in through your nose and make a hissing noise as you exhale. Lie on the floor like a snake.

AUTISM ADVOCATE

PARENTING MAGAZINE



- ✓ No more wondering if you are accessing the best information for your child.
- ✓ No more mindless scrolling or searching where to look for answers.

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 Fragile X Detox Embracing Differences Executive Function
 Employment Family Enzymes
 Financial Resources/Planning Tics Gastro Intestinal Issues
 Gender Differences Genetics of Autism Gut-Brain Axis
 Feeding/Oral Development GI and Behavior
 Therapy and Medication

Is there valuable Autism information you are missing?

Theory of Mind Visual Schedules Hyperbarics
 Global Perspective Happiness Social Stories
 Integration Hygiene Mindfulness Healthy Lifestyle Teaching at Home
 Medication Independence Learning Difficulties Yoga Hypersensitivity
 Motivation PECS Lyme Disease Microbiome Sibling Support
 Nutrigenomics Literacy Mitochondrial Dysfunction Self-Care
 Neurobiology of Autism Mycotoxins Music/Sound Therapy
 Play Therapy Safety Occupational Therapy PANS/PANDAS
 Positive Reinforcement Sensory Processing
 Probiotics Pre-Diagnosis Checklists Selective Eating
 Self-Determination Self-Injury Thinking Traps
 Relationships Sexual Abuse Self-Esteem School/IEP
 Supplements Severity of Autism Over Time
 Sports Stress Regulation Taking Turns Toilet Training
 Transition to Adulthood Visual Strategies

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 Employment Family Enzymes
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 Gender Differences Genetics of Autism Gut-Brain Axis
 Feeding/Oral Development GI and Behavior
 Therapy and Medication

Topics Covered

IN AUTISM ADVOCATE PARENTING MAGAZINE

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 Integration Hygiene Mindfulness Healthy Lifestyle Teaching
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 Probiotics Pre-Diagnosis Checklists Positive Reinforcement Sensory Processing
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