



Coping & Calming Skills



Coping and Calming Skills

- Supporting individuals with autism to learn coping, self-management, and self-care skills is a priority during this time of uncertainty.



- **Prioritize Coping and Calming Skills**

- Many individuals with autism have some **coping and calming strategies** in their repertoire of skills to access with support during their most anxious times. These may include rocking in a rocking chair, listening to music on headphones, deep breathing, watching a preferred video clip, brief periods of vigorous exercise, or accessing a favorite activity or material. If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, caregivers can prioritize the teaching of these skills during this time of uncertainty.





- Coping/calming activities may be scheduled regularly across the day in the initial weeks of changes.
- Exercise/physical activity is a proven strategy to reduce anxiety symptoms with the broader population, as well as with individuals with autism. Consider establishing or adding basic exercise routines for the *Family* such as a *nightly walk*, *online/app based workout*.
- Some sites offering free access during this time include Down Dog yoga app, Nike Run Club, Go Noodle, Breath, Think Do with Sesame

Ideas to help with calming skills



- Choose times of the when the individual with autism is calm to initiate the instruction.
- Create a concrete visual routine to support the use of these strategies.
- Free apps available for calming strategies and guided meditations include Calm, Headspace, Breathe2Relax, Pacifica and RainRain.
- Coping/calming activities may be scheduled regularly across the day

CALMING ROUTINE



ALL DONE



FACE COVID



Focus on what you can control

Say to yourself "I can control what I am doing here and now."



Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

Silently and kindly acknowledge any thoughts and feelings



Come back into your body

Slowly stretch your arms or neck, shrug your shoulders
Take slow, deep breaths



Engage in what you are doing

Notice 5 things you can see, 3 things you can hear, 1 thing you can smell, and what you are doing

Repeat the above 2 to 3 times



Commit to action

What can you do this week to help yourself? Or others?
Write it down in your schedule.



Open up

Acknowledge that your feelings are normal and that it is okay to feel what you are feeling



Values

How do you want to treat yourself? Others? Values include love, humor, kindness, honesty...



Identify resources

Identify 'Who' and 'Where' to get help, assistance, and support



Disinfect and distance

Wash your hands and practice social distancing

(Adapted from Rush Harris, 'The Happiness Trap' and 'I'm Learning ACT')

Self-Management

Directions:

At the end of each of the 5-time intervals, circle whether you practiced the target behavior/skill. After the fifth or last time interval, determine if you get a reward.

Target Behavior/Skill:

1	2	3	4	5
 	 	 	 	 

How many smiles do I have?



Do I get a reward?

(Adapted from AFIRM Module: Self-Management)

Exercise Activities Choice Board

 Inside	 Outside
 Lift weights	 Play ball
 Dance	 Yard work
 Climb stairs	 Take a walk
 Yoga	 Go on a nature hike

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PRADA PRIDEER DESIGN

CHILD DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS

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Exercise Activities

 Inside	 Outside
 Use food items (e.g., cans) or cleaning supplies as weights	 Take a walk or ride a bike
Learn a dance from YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, or GoNoodle...or freestyle to your favorite songs	 Gardening or yard work
 Do heavy work like carrying heavy items up and down stairs	 Go on a nature scavenger hunt
 Try yoga or animal poses/walks like crab walks, bear walks, frog jumps...	 Play catch or jump rope

Adapted from:

Hume, K., Waters, V., Sam, A., Steinbrenner, J., Perkins, Y., Dees, B., Tomaszewski, B., Rentschler, L., Szendrey, S., McIntyre, N., White, M., Nowell, S., & Odom, S. (2020). *Supporting individuals with autism through uncertain times*. Chapel Hill, NC: School of Education and Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from: <https://afim.fpg.unc.edu/supporting-individuals-autism-through-uncertain-times>