

Coping Mechanisms

In the midst of overwhelm, it might be worth having things put in place, or pre-arranged. Those things can include:

- Music – lots of autistic people love music! Find out if music works for your child by encouraging them to listen to different music genres.
- Go for a walk – sometimes walking away from the situation that causes the overwhelm can really help them. Having the comfort, and knowledge that they aren't 'trapped' in situations can be really helpful
- Exercise – exercise doesn't always mean going for a run, or a long walk, it can also be dancing, stretching, and a variety of other things that result in movement. Have a good old fashioned dance off and get those muscles moving!
- Breathing exercises can be a great way to calm a racing and overwhelmed mind:
 - Take a slow breath in through the nose
 - Hold it for 2 seconds
 - Breathe out through the mouth
 - Wait 5 seconds, and repeat until feeling calmer
- Blowing bubbles can also work as a breathing exercise, and can be a fantastic way of reducing overwhelm
- Sensory and fidget toys – giving your child something to squeeze, or fidget with can be great for them. And you don't need to go out and buy an expensive toy – blu tac and play-dough work just as well
- Meditation – try and encourage meditation/quiet time – use calming music, or find something online that can help

Autism Coping Mechanisms



The Lotus Mental Health

www.thelotusmentalhealth.org

What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental condition that affects the way a person communicates and interacts with people and the world around them.

Autism is a lifelong condition, with no treatment or 'cure', and instead tends to rely on support, understanding, and patience, from the people around them.

It is considered to be a spectrum disorder, meaning that although autistic people can often share similar traits and characteristics, they are also very different from one another. For example, some people with autism are completely equipped to lead independent lives, whereas others with the disorder, may require more intense, and long-term support.

What can you do?

Because of the unpredictability and difficulties that are often associated and experienced with autism, and living with a child who has autism, it can be helpful if both you and your child(ren) have coping mechanisms in place.

However, because of the range of symptoms and behaviours often found within autism, it is important that you find what works best for you, your family, and your child(ren).

Here are a few examples to get you started...

Coping Mechanisms

If your child(ren) are feeling overwhelmed, there are things that you can do, and encourage your child to do too, that can help them. Here are a few suggestions:

- Nobody should go through things alone, and this is something that everyone needs to understand. No matter how difficult or upsetting a situation can be, there is always someone to help. One of the things that you can do to help your child, is keep a diary, and if it's possible, encourage your child to do the same. Keeping a diary can help us to keep track of our emotions and can work as a way of getting the thoughts that are in our heads – out. Not only that but keeping a diary can also help to look for triggers that we were unaware of.
- Emphasise the importance of having a healthy, balanced diet – try and keep healthy snacks on hand, and make sure they are hydrated.
- Encourage a sleep routine – this can be reading a book, spending time on a device, watching their favourite tv show – do what works for you and your child.
- If you can, encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling when they are overwhelmed or struggling, and ask them to help you to come up with coping mechanisms that will work for you all.
- Seek out professional help, especially for situations that are particularly difficult.
- Be as organised as you can be – if your child needs a certain teddy, blanket, toy etc in their possession to help them to remain calm in difficult situations, make sure they, and you, know where it is. It is also important to prepare for the unexpected – spares, extra batteries etc
- Don't expect too much – recognise when they have had enough