



# Prioritize 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.

Ideally, 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

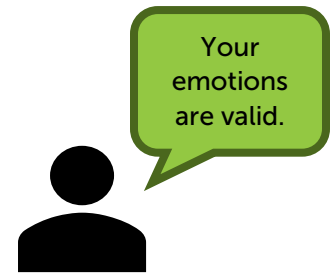
favorite activity or material. If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, caregivers can prioritize the teaching of these skills during this time of uncertainty.

- Strategically choose times of the day when the individual with autism is calm to initiate the instruction.
- Create a concrete and visual routine to support the use of these strategies.
  - Many free apps are available for calming strategies and guided meditations such as Calm, Headspace, Breathe2Relax,



Pacifica, and RainRain. Several examples of calming routines and self-management systems are provided.

- Ensure that the individual with autism has ample access to these calming activities.
- Coping/calming activities may be scheduled regularly across the day in the initial weeks of changes, then, if appropriate, caregivers may introduce and teach a **self-management plan** that helps individuals track their anxious or worried responses and identify when the calming strategies are required.



**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 wearing a FitBit and counting daily steps, a nightly walk, or an online/app-based workout. Many sites are offering free access

during this time, such as the Down Dog yoga app, Nike Run Club, and Facebook Live streams from Planet Fitness.

## Resources include:

[Self-Management: Calming Routine](#)

[Self-Management: FACE COVID](#)

[Self-Management: Reinforcement](#)

[Inside and Outside Exercise Activities Choice Board](#)

[Exercise Activities](#)

[Mindfulness Apps](#)

# Calming Routine

1. Take 4 deep breaths



2. Clench fists 4 times



3. Count to 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Good job!



# 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

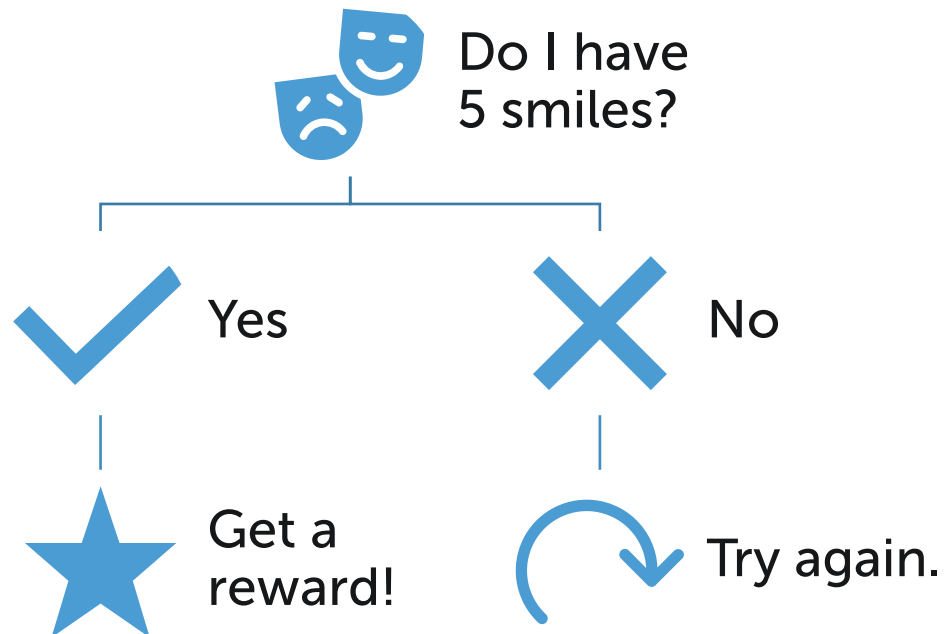
## Directions:

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  
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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

# 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

# Mindfulness Apps



Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame

Free



Calm

Free  
(in-app \$)



Daniel Tiger's Grr-ific Feelings

\$2.99



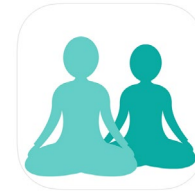
Headspace

Free  
(in-app \$)



HelloMind

Free  
(in-app \$)



Mindfulness for Children App

\$5.99