



Supporting autistic children at home

Information and Top Tips

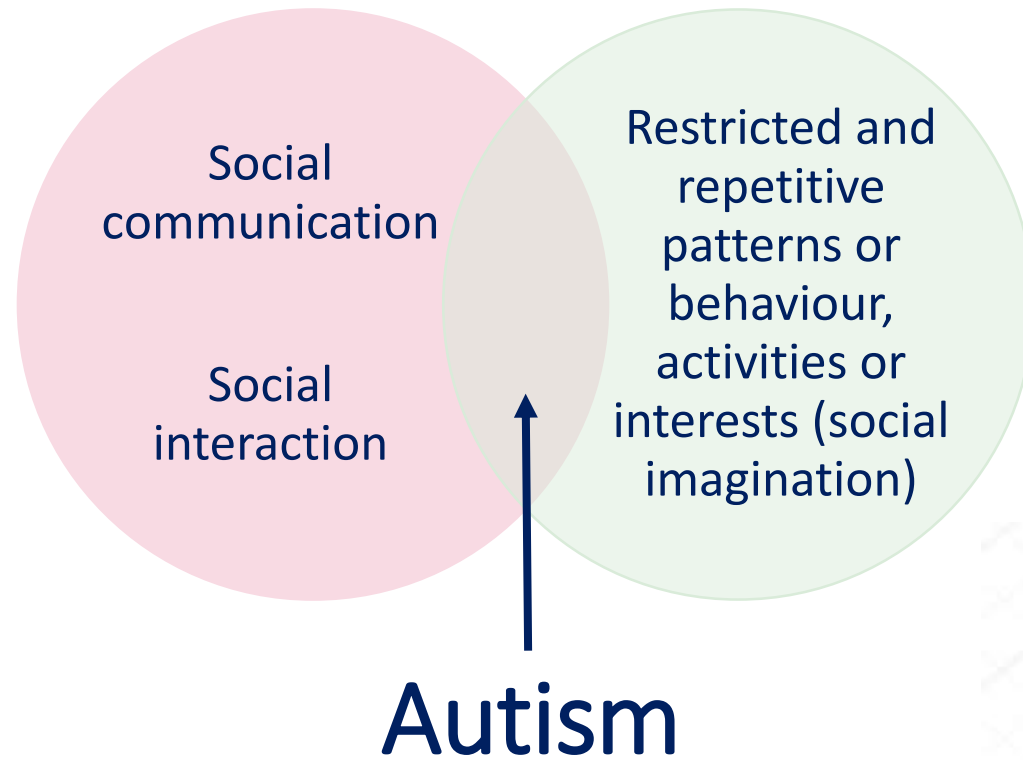


Nicola Vivian – Autism Outreach
Woodlands School

The plan

- What is Autism?
- Top tips for supporting autistic students at home
- Questions





What do we see?

Social
Imagination

- Makes it hard for children and young people (CYP) to organise themselves and think about what's happening.
- May need support with transitioning.
- Can make it hard for CYP to understand and cope with change.
- May need support understanding others.
- Logical thinking.
- Can fixate on certain things.
- Unique and creative thought processes.



What do we see?

- Good language skills don't always mean good understanding.
- Literal understanding of language; CYP may not understand sarcasm or idioms.
- CYP may need time to process information and instructions.
- Visual learners and communicators.
- May need help making choices.
- Difficulty expressing their own needs and feelings.
- Imitation echolalia (copying language from favourite shows or experiences).

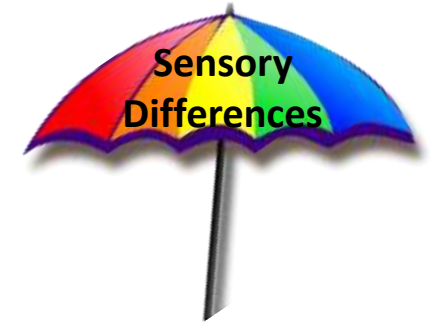


What do we see?

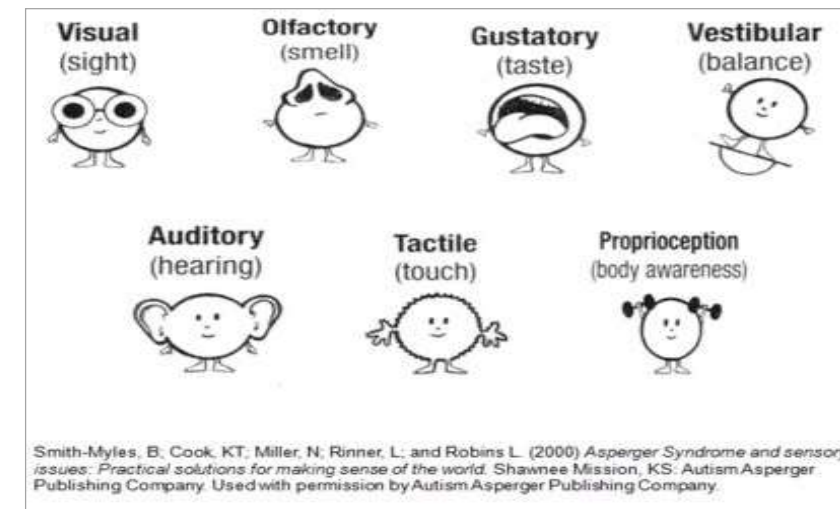
- Strong personal agendas.
- Interaction can sometimes cause anxiety.
- Copying others to 'fit in.'
- Masking
- Support - new people, places or situations.
- Difficulty with eye contact, turn-taking and sharing.
- Difficulty with emotions.
- Articulate - preference for conversations with older children / adults.
- Lots of children with autism learn how to 'fit in' to a neurotypical world



What do we see?



- Varies hugely from child to child
- Particularly sensitive to some sensory experiences e.g. sound
- Under-sensitive to others e.g. not feeling pain
- Some students – OT support, especially if sensory processing disorder is suspected
- Need regular sensory breaks built into their day
- May feel overwhelmed in noisy or busy places
- Lots of children with autism cope with adaptations and understanding about sensory needs



The Vestibular Sense

The sense that detects movement through sensory receptors in the inner ear.



The Proprioceptive Sense



Proprioception is the **body awareness sense**. It helps with:

Knowing where our body parts are



Scratching an itch and knowing where to scratch without looking



Touching hands to feet, also known as "finding your feet"

Understanding how much force to use



Using a pencil with the proper amount of force



Holding a delicate item without breaking it

Coordination between body parts and senses



Riding a bike and coordinating the movements to stay on track



Using hand-eye coordination to catch a ball



The Interoceptive Sense

What is Interoception?

Interoception is the **internal sense**. It helps with:

Understanding our body's needs



Recognizing feelings of hunger



During potty training, knowing when to use the bathroom

Knowing how to appropriately address needs



Sensing pain and looking for ways to relieve it



Scratching an itch with the proper amount of force

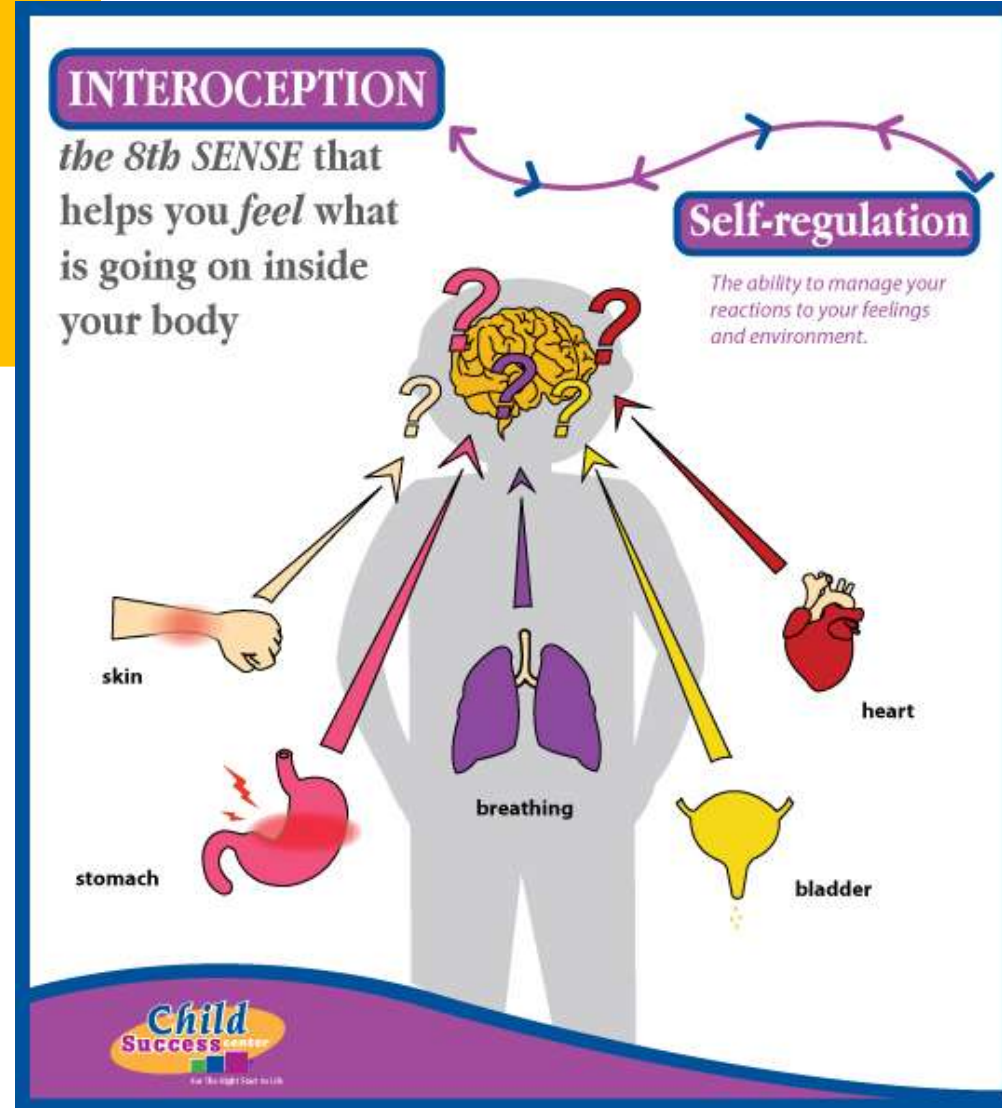
Regulating emotions and controlling behavior



Feeling sensations of anxiety and calming self



Avoiding temper tantrums by meeting basic needs



Amazing things happen

By Alexander Amelines



4 minutes

How can we support our autistic children?

- Prevention is key for reducing the likelihood of emotional meltdowns.
- In all special needs settings the focus is on preventing students becoming dysregulated in the first place.
- How can we do this?







 Sunday no school



 Monday school



1. Make life as predictable as possible
 Planners and calendars let your child know what to expect and reduce anxiety. They also allow us to let children know when there are going to be changes to what they expect! You can also use social stories or YouTube videos about new places.

2. Think sensory – think about their sensory needs and have a plan to tackle overstimulating environments.



SENSORY CHECKLIST



Visual/Sight

✓ Tick where appropriate

Visual Seeking	Visual Avoiding
Looks for bright/flashing lights	Overly sensitive to bright lights (may complain or close eyes)
Enjoys lining up items in rows or by colour	Easily distracted by bright displays
Enjoys playing with toys that spin	Finds 'busy' rooms challenging
Loves to play with shiny objects	Seeks out dark spaces
Appears to enjoy games which involve bumping and crashing different toys	Often rubs eyes when focusing on work
Stands too close to interactive whiteboard/screen	Avoids eye contact with others

How to support:



Allow the child to play with visually stimulating equipment (such as a torch). Ensure this time is carefully managed and structured.

How to support:



Schedule regular visual breaks into their day. Use a blackout tent (if possible) or create a bespoke low-stimulating area for them to use.



Touch/Tactile

Tactile Seeking	Tactile Avoiding
Enjoys touching everyone/everything	Dislikes being touched unexpectedly
May not recognise when they have been touched (unless forcefully)	Avoids having their hair brushed
Unaware when they have dirty hands/nunny nose	Dislikes being close to others (lining up)
Seeks messy play	Sensitive to certain items of clothing or labels



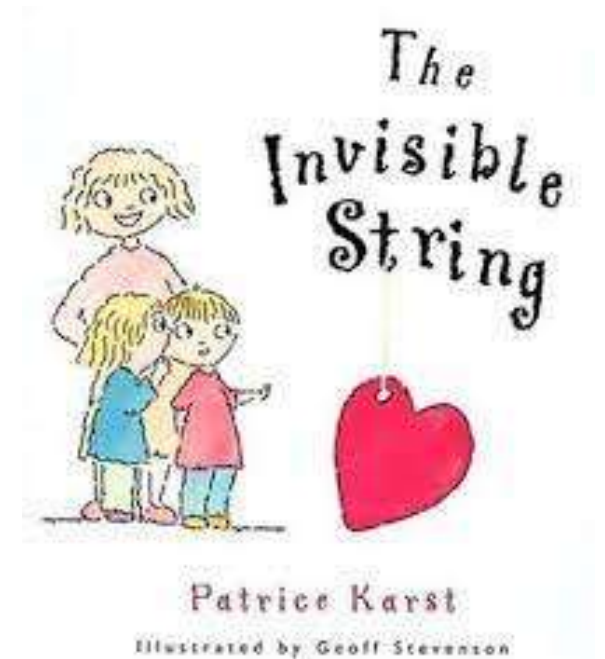
3. Prepare positively for the school day

Talk through the lessons
or timetable for the day ,
or remind them of a
favourite activity



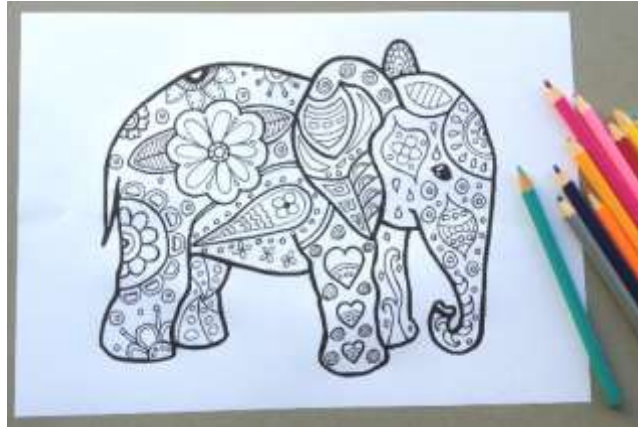
Morning jobs to complete	Tick
Wake up and get out of bed	
Go to the toilet	
Have breakfast and a drink	
Take your pyjamas off	
Put on your school clothes on	
Clean your face and brush your teeth	
Brush your hair	
Put on suncream	
Put your school shoes on	

Consistent
morning routines



Discuss the link with home

4. Allow some down-time after school



Energy Accounting



Too much energy out
and not enough in is bad.
It leads to overload, and
exhaustion.



Balancing your energy
using energy accounting is
good. It leads to feeling
regulated, calm and
happy.

Don't worry if children don't
want to talk about their day



5. Transition Activities

Something calming/relaxing to add energy to the battery at key times in the day? In the car on the way home? As soon as they get into the house?

Energy Accounting

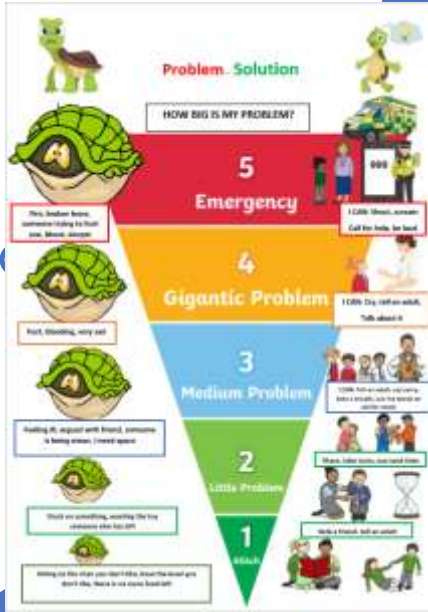


Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It leads to overload, and exhaustion.



Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.





We all
make
^S mistakes!

6. Model Emotions

Show children that it is normal to feel different emotions – the key bit is how we deal with them and get back to calm. Give guidance on appropriate ways to respond to problems.

BUT...

Beware of over-sharing serious worries with your child.



7. Prioritise sleep routines

Sleep is really important and sleep deprivation can be a source of behaviors and anxieties;



- Have a bedroom set up for sleep and downtime!
- Keep similar bedtime timings - even the weekends and holidays.
- Have a consistent routine, which is as boring as possible and once the child has gone upstairs, they need to stay there.
- Work towards self-settling.

8. Managing Meltdowns

Fight



flight



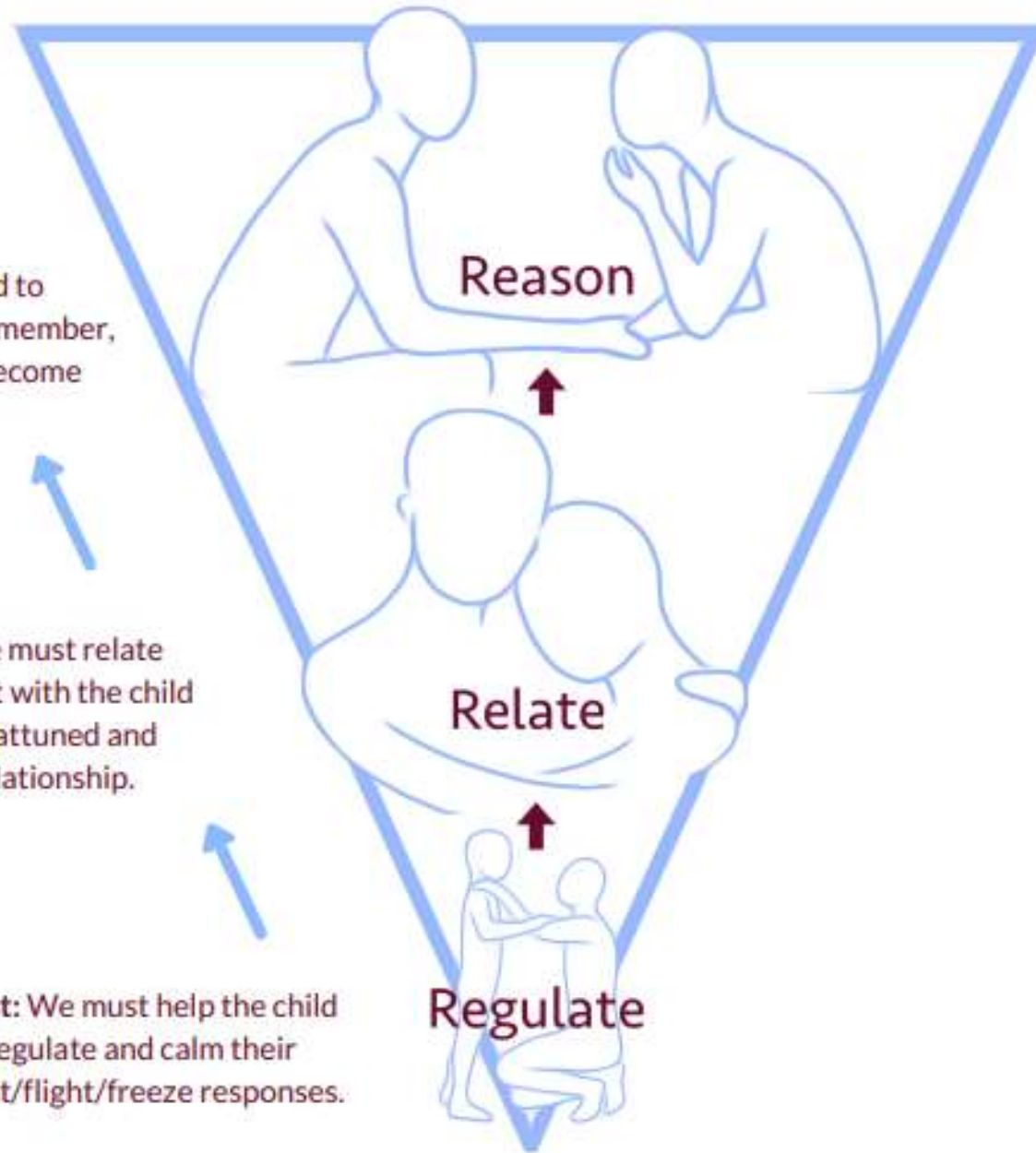
FREEZE



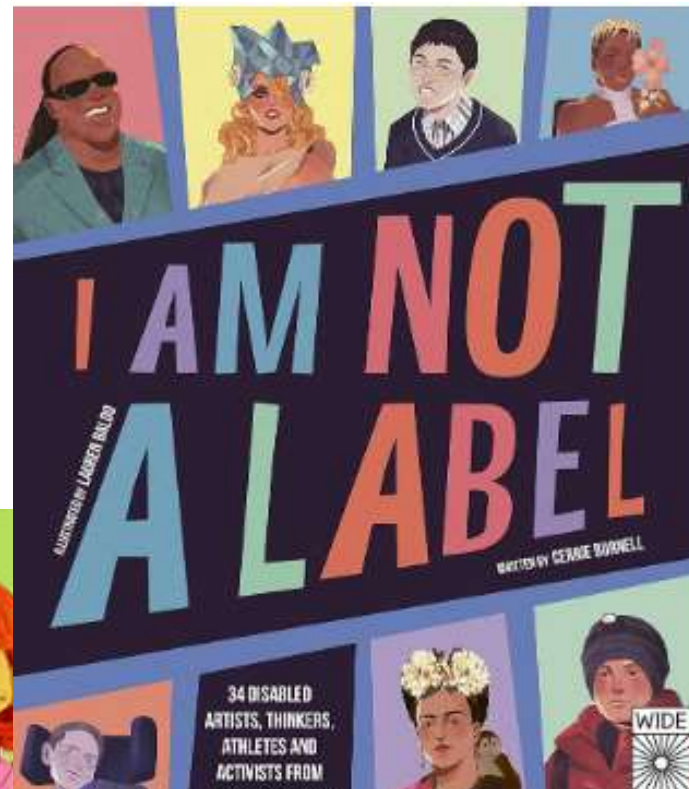
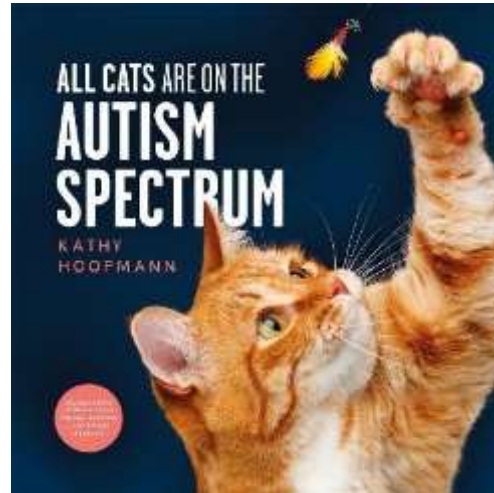
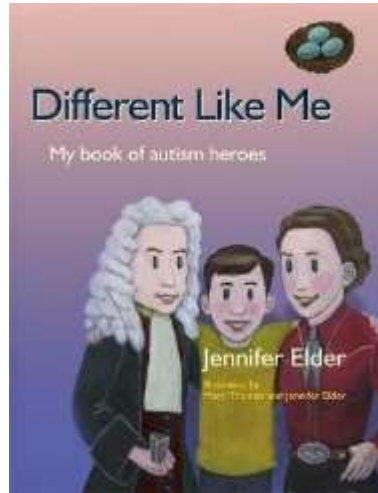
Third: We can support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate and become self-assured.

Second: We must relate and connect with the child through an attuned and sensitive relationship.

First: We must help the child to regulate and calm their fight/flight/freeze responses.



9. Talking about the autism diagnosis (if appropriate)



There are lots of famous / successful autistic people.



Amazing Things Happen!

YouTube · Amazing Things Project
9 Apr 2017

10. Look after yourself

YOU'LL HAVE
GOOD DAYS,
BAD DAYS,
OVERWHELMING DAYS,
TOO TIRED DAYS,
I'M AWESOME DAYS,
I CAN'T GO ON DAYS.
AND EVERY DAY YOU'LL
STILL SHOW UP.



11. Don't be afraid to ask for support

- Surrey Branch of the National Autistic Society: www.nassurreybranch.org
- BRAAIN (Be ready ADHD ASD Information Network): www.braain.co.uk
- APPEER (Support for autistic girls): <https://www.appeer.org.uk/>
- Send Advice Surrey: <https://www.sendadvice.surrey.org.uk/>
- Family Voice Surrey: <https://www.familyvoicesurrey.org/>
- Autism Outreach for Schools: <https://www.autismoutreachforschools.uk/>
- Mindworks: <https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/>
- YMCA East Surrey: <https://www.ymcaeastsurrey.org.uk/>



Find help sheets, FAQs, videos
and more at:
www.autismoutreachforschools.uk

