Learning Better Ways to Cope: Teaching Students with ASD to Recognize and Manage Their Emotions

CENTER FOR AUTISM AND RELATED DISABILITIES
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York
Objectives

1) Participants will describe the difficulties individuals with ASD may have in regulating their emotions and coping with stressful situations

2) Participants will employ modifications to the environment to make it easier for individuals with ASD to manage stressful situations

3) Participants will use strategies to teach students on the autism spectrum ways to cope and regulate their emotions
Inside Out

Every day is full of emotions.
Emotion Regulation: *How we try to influence which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express these emotions* (Gross, 1998)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQ3hjymiCCg
What do we know about emotion regulation in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Recent study (Lecavalier, 2006) found that more than 60% of school-aged children with an autism spectrum disorder have high rates of behavioral and emotional problems.
Emotion Regulation and ASD

- Between 11% and 84% of children with ASD experience some degree of impairing anxiety (White, Oswald, Ollendick, & Scanhill, 2009)

- Individuals with ASD use adaptive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., goal-directed behaviors, seeking social support) less effectively than controls (Jahromi et al, 2012)

- Individuals with ASD tend to use more maladaptive strategies such as avoidance and venting (Jahromi et al, 2012)
Fig. 1. Characteristics of ASD that may contribute to emotion dysregulation.
ASD and Coping

Some common coping behaviors include:

- Self-isolation
- Biting and or motor stimulation
- Repetitive patterns in play, communication and familiar daily events
- Vocal stimulation (humming, echolalia self talk, whistling)
- Intense attachment to favored objects
- Excessive avoidance or intense seeking of particular sensory experience

http://www.fraser.org/tip_sheets/coping_skills.PDF
How Can We Help?
Adaptive and Maladaptive Coping Model (Groden et al., 1994)

**Maladaptive Model**
(Exhibited by persons with poor coping strategies, especially by individuals with developmental disabilities)

- **Stressors** (taking criticism, changes, inability to understand instruction, external control)
- **Inability to Use Buffers** (lack of friends, communication deficits, lack of self-control)
- **Maladaptive Behaviors** (aggression, tantrum, self-injury, stereotypic behaviors)
- **Punishment**
- **Increased Stress**

**Adaptive Model**
(Exhibited by persons with good coping strategies)

- **Stressors** (promotion, death, separation, birth of a sibling, pain)
- **Buffers** (social networks, hardiness, internal locus of control)
- **Adaptive Behaviors** (assertiveness, socializing, exercise)
- **Reinforcement**
- **Stress Reduction**
Mitigate and Cope (Ladd, 2007)

• **MITIGATE** - the adult (e.g., parent, teacher) makes environmental modifications to context
• **COPE** - the student is taught skills to “cope” with the context
Why Move Beyond Mitigation...

– Waiting too long – needs to start early
– Post graduation studies have show that our students with ASD are not faring well
– Lack of independence
Mitigate and Cope (Ladd, 2007)

- Austin is likely to have problem behavior when he is hungry
- Mitigate – teacher schedules an extra snack time for Austin during the day
- Cope – Austin is taught to indicate on a visual when he is feeling hungry
Mitigate and Cope (Ladd, 2007)

Example – ACTIVITIES/ROUTINES:

• Cameron is more likely to have problem behavior when she has to end a preferred activity
• Mitigate – parent provides access to a new preferred activity/object
• In addition, parent gives/uses visual timer to indicate when preferred activity is going to end
• Cope – Cameron is taught to use her communication skills to request the new preferred activity that is appropriate
Mitigate and Cope (Ladd, 2007)

Example – SOCIAL:

• Hunter had more problem behavior when told “No, that’s wrong”

• Mitigate – teacher/parent said “Try again” instead of “No, that’s wrong”

• Cope – Hunter is taught to ask for help when he faces a difficult problem
When to Teach

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html
Where/Who to Teach

• May need to practice some skills outside of the situation

• Important to also practice skill in actual context that behavior occurs in – plan time or set up scenario

• Also need to generalize individuals that person uses skill with
Coping Skills: What to Teach

9 Families of Coping (Skinner et al., 2003)

1) Emotional Regulation
2) Distraction
3) Support Seeking
4) Positive Cognitive Restructuring
5) Problem Solving
6) Escape
7) Rumination
8) Helplessness
9) Social Withdrawal
Emotional Regulation

• Recognize your emotions
• Express your emotions
• Control your emotions
Emotion Regulation: Recognizing How You Feel

• Learning to recognize what their body feels like
• Understanding when their feelings may be getting worse
• Recognizing other behavioral indicators of their internal state
• Identifying situations that make them feel a certain way
• Can be done verbally or nonverbally
Recognizing How You Feel
Recognizing How You Feel

- Knowing yourself
- Forecasting emotions that situations are expected to produce
- Taking into account these emotions when selecting situations you will be exposed to

Pena-Sarrionandia, Mikolajczak, & Gross, 2015)
Recognizing How You Feel

Strategies to teach:

- How to identify situations that are difficult
- Linking situations with the emotions they will likely cause
- Weighing pros and cons of confronting or avoiding certain situations
- Appropriate ways to avoid known difficult situations
Mark whether each period makes you feel like you have a happy brain ☺ or a worry brain 😞:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Happy brain</th>
<th>Worry brain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Routine</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td>☞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack/Break</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers/Library</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>☺</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>☞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts and Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>☞</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recognizing How You Feel
Emotional Regulation

- Recognize your emotions
- Express your emotions
- Control your emotions
Expressing How You Feel

- Appropriately communicating how they feel can be an important part of the process
- Can be done verbally or nonverbally
- Alerts the adult to when intervention may be necessary
- Can be difficult for children with ASD – may require frequent labeling
- May not be a necessary step for all individuals
Expressing Emotions
How Do I Feel Right Now?

1. Calm
   - Relaxed
   - Content
   - Happy
   - Peaceful
   - Positive
   - Settled

2. Nervous
   - Worried
   - Concerned
   - Anxious
   - Fidgety
   - Jittery
   - Unsure

3. Tense
   - Insecure
   - Confused
   - Lost
   - Upset
   - Sad
   - Impatient

4. Overwhelmed
   - Uncomfortable
   - Agitated
   - Frustrated
   - Irritated
   - Discouraged
   - Cross

5. Angry
   - Panicked
   - Out of Control
   - Rage
   - Powerless
   - Frightened
   - Despair
5. This work is too hard.

4. I need a lot of help to do this work.

3. I need a little help to do this work.

2. I can try to do this work.

1. I can do this work easily.
Emotional Regulation

- Recognize your emotions
- Express your emotions
- Control your emotions
SQUARE BREATHING

1 2 3 4
breathe in for 4 seconds

4 3 2 1
hold for 4 seconds

4 3 2 1
breathe out for 4 seconds

1 2 3 4
hold for 4 seconds

http://elearning.autism.net/visuals/main.php?g2_itemId=138
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Jacobson (1929) – Anxiety
- Reduces anxiety, promotes self control and improves sleep
- Numerous studies have shown behavioral benefit to those with ASD
Teaching Relaxation

Kids Included Together
Mindfulness and ASD

• Few research studies examining mindfulness to support persons with ASD have had some success (ex – Bogels et al., 2008, 2 studies by Singh et al, 2011, Spek, 2013)
Coping Skills: What to Teach

9 Families of Coping (Skinner et al., 2003)

1) Emotional Regulation
2) Distraction
3) Support Seeking
4) Positive Cognitive Restructuring
5) Problem Solving
6) Escape
7) Rumination
8) Helplessness
9) Social Withdrawal
Distraction

• Helping student identify situations where using distraction may be beneficial
• Teaching the individual to select and engage in an activity that will distract them during the identified situation
• Teaching the individual to attend to the positive aspects of a situation instead of ruminate on the negative
Distraction Objects

- Manual or Tactile
- Auditory
- Visual
- Cognitive
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Support Seeking

Skills to Teach:
- Knowing you need help
- Determining what kind of help you need
- Who to ask for Help
- How to Ask for Help
- When to Ask for Help – Is it the right time?
READY TO TALK

You may come up and ask questions or ask for help.

BUSY RIGHT NOW

Right now I am busy with something else. You need to wait to ask me a question or talk to me.

When you need help, you can raise your hand or come and tap the teacher on her shoulder. You can say, "Excuse me, I need help please." Then wait for your teacher to respond.

I need help please.

I need help please.
INSTRUCTIONS
Cut out the Traffic lights and arrow.
Laminate or glue them on to some strong cardboard.
Attach the arrow to a clothes peg with glue or tape.
Model using the arrow to communicate if help is needed.
The ‘Do I Need Help?’ Flowchart

Do I have a problem? Y → What is it? N → Do I know the solution? Y → I need help N → Do I know who can help? Y → Find a back-up person N → Find a back-up person

Y → Can I solve it myself? N → Try my solution Y → Did it work? N → I don’t need help Y → Get help

www.snagglebox.com
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Cognitive Change

- Cognitive Change – changing one or more cognitive appraisal in a way that alters the situation’s emotional significance, by changing how one thinks either about the situation itself or about one’s capacity to manage the demands it poses.
Cognitive Change

Recent research suggests that compared to typically-developing children and adolescents, individuals with ASD use cognitive reappraisal less frequently, which was associated with increased negative emotion experience, which in turn was related to greater levels of maladaptive behavior (Samson, Hardan, Lee, Phillips, & Gross, 2015).
### Common Cognitive Distortions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black or White</strong></td>
<td>Viewing situations, people, or self as entirely bad or entirely good – nothing in between</td>
<td>Paul made an error while playing on the school’s basketball team. He began thinking, “I’m a total failure. Nobody will like me. Everyone will hate me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catastrophizing</strong></td>
<td>Blowing expected consequences out of proportion in a negative direction</td>
<td>Sierra did not win first prize at the science fair. She thought, “My life is over. I’ll never win anything. People will look down on me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forecasting</strong></td>
<td>Predicting everything will turn out badly</td>
<td>Kelly finished taking an important test. She immediately predicted that she failed. “I’ll never get into college, because I blew it here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings are Facts</strong></td>
<td>Because you feel a certain way, reality is seen as fitting that feeling</td>
<td>Jim did not have plans with his friends this weekend. He felt lonely and inferior. He thought, “no one likes me. I have a terrible personality.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

Established Intervention for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ages 6-14) – National Standards Project, 2015

- Some manualized cognitive behavioral intervention packages have been modified for students with ASD (e.g., The Coping Cat Program, Exploring Feelings and Facing Your Fears)
- These interventions should be implemented by professionals trained in cognitive behavioral interventions that also have experience working with individuals with ASD
Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

- Recently there is more research on school-based implementation of these strategies.
- Studies suggest that prevention programs using CBT in the schools are effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety in students (Nell & Christensen, 2009).
Cognitive Restructuring

• “Flipping the Pancake”*
Cognitive Restructuring Techniques

- Coping Modeling
- Identifying Negative Self-Talk
- Being a detective – What’s the evidence?
- Identifying positive replacement thoughts or realistic thinking

Bernstein, Aldridge, & May (2013)
Ways to Teach Cognitive Restructuring

- Using Thought Bubbles
- Using a Thought Record
2. When I felt __________ these thoughts raced through my head:

   [Thought bubbles]

3. When I felt __________ I DID these things:

   [Boxes for listing actions]

4. While I felt __________ here is what I SAID. (Did it make it worse, or better?)

   [Communication boxes]

5. People can get upset in their bodies.

   [Diagram of human figure with places to put X]

   Put an X on the places that felt bad or different when you were upset.
**How to deal with it when I feel**

6. To fight the upsetting thoughts, I could have tried these thoughts instead:

   Name: ____________________________

   -
   -
   -
   -

7. When I felt ______________________, here are some better things I could have SAID:

   To get help:
   -
   -
   -
   -

   To let someone know how I feel:
   -
   -
   -
   -

8. Something better I could have **DONE** when I was upset:

   -
   -
   -
   -

9. Sometimes people can calm down their bodies when they are upset.

   Think about the time you were upset. What things could you have done to calm down your body?

   -
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

http://autismteachingstrategies.com/
http://autismteachingstrategies.com/
Using Comic Strip Conversations

- Comic Strip Conversations (Gray, 1994) are one instructional strategies to help teach social understanding and cognition
- Illustrates conversation through simple drawings
- Can be used as a social autopsy
I walk in the hallway.
There are a lot of people.

He bumps into me.
My books fall to the floor.

I think: "He did that on purpose!"

I become upset and yell at him.
I walk in the hallway.
There are a lot of people.

He bumps into me.
My books fall to the floor.

It's OK, it must have been an accident.

I think: "Deep breath. 1 - 2 - 3."
I say: "Hey man, you bumped into me."
I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

I say: "It's OK."
He asks: "Can I help you with your books?"
He says: "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it."
Clusters: you can have between 2-4 panels

Email it
Move it
Scale their size
Bring to front
Flip
Cognitive Picture Rehearsal

- Change routine
- I'm fine
- Breathe and relax
- Listen to music
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Worries</th>
<th>Feeling/Action</th>
<th>Helpful Thoughts</th>
<th>Feeling/Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m horrible at math!</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Math might not be my best subject, but I try hard. I’m better at...</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fail Test</td>
<td></td>
<td>Give it a try; ask for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What if someone laughs at me in the lunchroom?</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>No one has laughed at me during lunch before and if they do I can ignore them.</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eat in bathroom/don’t make friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go to lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t make any mistakes on my homework.</td>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Mistakes help me learn. Everyone makes mistakes.</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t do homework</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do homework; get help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I lose, I must be dumb.</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Everyone has a turn at winning and losing because everyone is good at different games.</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid playing games</td>
<td></td>
<td>Try to play game; make new friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dog will bite me.</td>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Most dogs I’ve seen have been friendly and didn’t bite me.</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Won’t go places where there are dogs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Go to places where there are dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Managing Anxiety in People with Autism – Chalfant, 2011
Teaching cognitive strategies to younger children or children with cognitive delays (Macklem, 2011)

Suggested modifications:

• Decreasing cognitive load by using concrete examples, slowing pace, adding more frequent practice, increasing visual aids and modeling

• Decreasing discussion and adding more actions such as fun games

• Adding emotion education

• Adding reinforcement

• Involving Parents
## Coping Skills: What to Teach

### 9 Families of Coping (Skinner et al., 2003)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Emotional Regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Support Seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive Cognitive Restructuring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Escape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rumination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Helplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problem Solving

• How do you teach problem solving?
• What skills does a student need?
  – Decision making skills
  – Experience
Decision Making Tools

- Decision-making is a life skill
- Students with ASD don’t always have much experience
- Students with ASD have a difficult time predicting or conceptualizing outcomes
Decision Making

When I feel MAD!

I breathe and count 1, 2, 3

I feel happy!

I get a sticker!

I hit my friend

My friend and I are both sad

No sticker
Decision Making

When computer is finished

If Andrew waits his turn and takes a deep breath

He gets another turn at the computer

If Andrew cries and doesn’t wait his turn

He doesn’t get another turn on the computer

Contingency Map

Graphics by www.autismclassroomnews.com
Problem Solving

1. Define the problem
2. Generate alternative solutions
3. Evaluate and select an alternative
4. Implement and follow-up to evaluate

---

I have a problem

1. Stay Calm
2. Tell myself, "I can solve this problem"
3. Take a deep breath
4. Think about what to do
5. What is the best solution?
6. Decide what to do
7. Solve the problem
8. If I can't solve the problem myself, it is ok to ask for help!
Problem Solving Steps

1. What is my problem?
2. Think, think, think of some solutions
3. What would happen if...? Would it be safe? Would it be fair? How would everyone feel?
4. Give it a try!

http://ecmhc.org/tutorials/social-emotional/mod4_3.html
Turtle Technique

Recognize that you feel angry.

Go into shell. Take 3 deep breaths and think calm, coping thoughts.

Stop.

“Think” Stop.

Come out of shell when calm and thinking of a solution.
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_preschool.html
What is the problem?

One solution is:

Consequence:

Another solution is:

Consequence:

Action:
Problem Solving

Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.

Possible Solutions

For

Against

Chosen Solution

Steps Required

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anxiety.asp
What can I do?

Problem solving wheel:

- Wait and cool off.
- Tell them to stop!
- Go to another activity.
- Rock, paper, scissors, go.
- Use an I message.
- Walk away and let it go.
- Ignore it.
- Talk it out.
- Apologize.

I feel...
## Just-Right Strategies Investigation

Try these out and see how you feel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Just-right strategy</th>
<th>How much does this strategy help me get to “just right”?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take five deep breaths.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close your eyes and think of a “happy place” (e.g., the beach).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close your eyes and think of your favorite activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run outside.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think to yourself over and over, “I am okay; I feel calm.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a drink of water.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask to take a break.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try the deep breathing script.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count to 30.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing or hum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swing on the swings.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Make your own strategy:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make your own strategy:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Something Different</td>
<td>Do The Same Thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRO:</strong></td>
<td><strong>PRO:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get to dance</td>
<td>• Won’t make any mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hear great music</td>
<td>• Won’t get nervous trying to talk to strangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hang out with friends</td>
<td>• Won’t be embarrassed that I wasn’t asked to dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be part of a group</td>
<td>• Will feel safer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet new people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet someone to date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have lots of fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CON:</strong></td>
<td><strong>CON:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Don’t like to make conversation with strangers</td>
<td>• Won’t get to dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Afraid no one will ask me to dance</td>
<td>• Won’t get to hear great music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Might make an embarrassing mistake</td>
<td>• Won’t be able to see my friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Will feel really nervous</td>
<td>• Won’t meet anyone new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Won’t meet someone to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will be lonely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will be bored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will be sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will never get to go to a dance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# My ANGRY Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Looks/Sounds Like</th>
<th>Feels Like</th>
<th>I Can Try To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Swearing</td>
<td>I have to break something</td>
<td>Ask someone to help me leave and take a walk with me to calm down enough to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking stuff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clenched Teeth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide eyes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Swearing under breath</td>
<td>I am mad</td>
<td>Leave the room with permission and go to a safe place to calm down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twisting things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No talking</td>
<td>I am upset</td>
<td>Go get a drink and come back to the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pacing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breathing a little heavy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Scowling face</td>
<td>I am irritated</td>
<td>Use deep breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping to self</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tell someone how I feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Still interacting when asked to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nothing different</td>
<td>I am a little anxious</td>
<td>Use deep breathing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Center for Autism and Related Disabilities**

**University at Albany** — State University of New York

**New York State Regional Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders (NYSRC ASD)**
Autism 5-Point Scale App
By The Autism Society of Minnesota

[Image of the Autism 5-Point Scale App interface]
Embedding Strategies into the Classroom

Why?

1) Children with ASD have difficulty generalizing from one setting to another.

2) Repetition is important for new skill acquisition.
Embedding Strategies into the Classroom
At the Elementary Level

1) Consider whole class social skills lessons

2) Choose books that correspond to skills being taught during large group reading.

3) Target skill use in the whole class reinforcement system.
Embedding Strategies into the Classroom
At the Elementary Level and Beyond

1. Look for naturally occurring opportunities to use coping language.

2. Look for naturally occurring opportunities to practice skills as a whole class.
What to do when it doesn’t work

• Are maladaptive strategies continuing to “work” better for the student?
• Has the coping skill been adequately taught? (e.g., small steps, visuals, using reinforcement, modeling)?
• Does the student have the necessary prerequisite skills to perform the new behavior?
• Do they see the “benefit” of using the new behavior?
• Have they had enough opportunities to practice? Have they practiced in the actual stressful situation with prompting?
What about those Ruminators?

• Teaching Flexibility

Unstuck & On Target! An Executive Function Curriculum to Improve Flexibility for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorders

Lynn Cannon, Lauren Kenworthy, PhD, Katie C. Alexander, MS, OTR, Monica Adler Werner, and Laura Gutermuth Anthony, PhD
What to Do When What I Want Is Impossible

Every time I want something, there are three possible outcomes.
Let’s say I would like to play outside with my friends for recess. What could happen?

#1 Everything I wanted
My original plan worked out. I was able to get all of what I wanted.
I got to play
I’m happy
I went outside
My friends are happy

#2 Nothing I wanted
It rained, so we could not play outside. I became “stuck in the mud.” I was so upset that I refused to do anything.
I didn’t get to play
I’m sad
My friends are sad

#3 Part of what I wanted
I was flexible and made a Plan B. I got part of what I wanted.
I got to play
I’m happy
My friends are happy
**My Two Choices**

**Educator:** I am very hungry. I am going to go to McDonald's with my family for a delicious hamburger. We start driving to McDonald's and hear on the radio that McDonald's is closed today.

- If I choose to get stuck in the mud, what will happen?
- If I choose to be flexible, what are my options? How will I feel? What will happen?

### Stuck in the mud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No food</td>
<td>Went to Wendy's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad mood</td>
<td>Got food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Enjoyed time with my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungry</td>
<td>Made my parents proud of me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did I get what I wanted?

No

When I'm stuck, I

- Miss fun things
- Don't get anything I want
- Am not with people I like
- Am upset
- Am angry
- Do not earn all my points

Bring stuck might also result in

- Getting in trouble
- Wasted time
- Possibly missing part of lunch and recess or playtime

### Flexible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Went to Wendy's</td>
<td>Get something I want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got food</td>
<td>Don't miss any part of the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed time with my family</td>
<td>Feel better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made my parents proud of me</td>
<td>Get to stay with people I like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did I get something I wanted?

Yes

When I'm flexible, I

- Get something I want
- Don't miss any part of the day
- Feel better
- Get to stay with people I like
- Get bonus points, etc.

**You will write your students' answers as they provide them.**

**Keep this sheet as a ready reference during the activity. You can use it to get a conversation going if your students are struggling.**
## Flexibility Thermometer

### Rating Schedule:
Choose a day to help the student rate himself or herself at least 5 times a day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Flexibility Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismiss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How am I feeling right now?**

**How do I wish to feel?**
**My Flexibility Dictionary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan A/Plan B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“With a Plan B, I have a good backup plan if Plan A doesn’t happen.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We all have a way that we would like things to go. Our top plan is called Plan A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Plan A does not always work out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Without a Plan B, an alternative plan, you may get upset and then get bored because there is nothing to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- With a Plan B, you have another good plan for backup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Remember to make a Plan B when you make your Plan A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

• The world for individuals with autism spectrum disorders may be more stressful

• It is important to not just modify the individual’s environment to make things easier but also to TEACH COPING SKILLS

• Teach individuals how to recognize and express how they feel, and cope with the situation or problem-solve it

• The goal is to increase the individuals independence in using these skills in multiple settings
CARD Albany is now on Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/cardalbany

Required Coursework for Special Education Professionals now online – “Responding to the Needs of Students with ASD”
http://www.albany.edu/autism/nysed_autism_training.php

Online Distance Learning Training
http://www.albany.edu/autism/33452.php
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Center Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton - TBD</td>
<td>Albany Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>SUNY Albany • 1535 Western Ave. • Albany, NY 12203</td>
<td>Phone: (518) 422-2574 <a href="mailto:card@albany.edu">card@albany.edu</a> • <a href="http://www.albany.edu/autism">www.albany.edu/autism</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.albany.edu/autism/nysrcasd.php">http://www.albany.edu/autism/nysrcasd.php</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson Valley</td>
<td>Hudson Valley Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>Westchester Institute for Human Development Cedarwood Hall • Valhalla, NY 10595</td>
<td>Phone: (917) 493-7373 <a href="http://www.wihd.org/page.aspx?pid=894#.U3uOMSiP_JZ">http://www.wihd.org/page.aspx?pid=894#.U3uOMSiP_JZ</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Westbury</td>
<td>Old Westbury Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>SUNY Old Westbury • 223 Store Hill Road • Old Westbury, NY 11568</td>
<td>Phone: (516) 628-5647 <a href="mailto:autism@oldwestbury.edu">autism@oldwestbury.edu</a> • <a href="http://www.owautism.com">http://www.owautism.com</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>Rochester Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>University of Rochester 601 Elmwood Ave. • Box 671 • Rochester, NY 14642</td>
<td>Phone: 855-508-8485 <a href="mailto:rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu">rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu</a> • <a href="http://www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism">www.golisano.urmc.edu/rrcasd-nyautism</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western NY</td>
<td>Western NY Regional Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>Summit Educational Resources 150 Stahl Road • Getzville, NY 14068</td>
<td>Phone: 716-629-3445 <a href="http://www.summitautismcenter.org">www.summitautismcenter.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions?

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
Phone: (518) 442-2574 or toll free 1+(866) 442-2574
Email: card@albany.edu
Website: www.albany.edu/autism