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# Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

## Tips for Responding to Challenging Behavior in Young Children

January 2017 By *Phil Strain, Jaclyn Joseph, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Erin Barton, & Lise Fox*

The most effective strategies for addressing challenging behavior are primarily focused on prevention of challenging behavior and promotion of appropriate social behaviors. These strategies include environmental manipulations, providing positive attention and feedback to children, and teaching social skills and emotional competencies. Even when these practices are in place, some young children will engage in challenging behavior. There are several strategies you can use when responding to challenging behavior but these should always be combined with more intentional promotion and prevention practices. The use of these response strategies is intended to reduce the likelihood of challenging behavior, but will not be effective without careful and intentional attention to teaching social skills and emotional competencies.

1. When children are engaging in challenging behavior, keep interactions with them to a minimum during these episodes. You should ensure the child's safety while providing minimal attention to the challenging behavior. This recommendation is based upon the fact that the two most likely reasons for challenging behavior are: (1) attempts to get attention or (2) attempts to avoid or escape a non-preferred activity. Sometimes if we attend to children during this time, we are reinforcing their inappropriate behavior.
2. When children are engaging in challenging behavior, interrupt, and redirect the child to the appropriate alternative behavior using minimal attention, discussion, and emotion. Your redirect should focus on stating what the child should or might do. For example, if the child has taken another's toy, prompt a more appropriate social skill (e.g., "You can trade with Eric."). For example, throwing blocks might be redirected to: "Let's build, you put one here!" Notice that this recommendation involves minimal interaction and usually just one prompt.
3. Reinforce the nearest child who is engaging in the appropriate, alternative behavior (e.g., "I see Manuel using walking feet" or "LaShawn you are sharing the blocks so nicely with your friends!"). Then, when the child with challenging behavior engages in the desired behavior, immediately use descriptive feedback to acknowledge his/her use of the desired behavior.

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## TIPS FOR HANDLING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR CONTINUED....

4. When the incident of challenging behavior ends and the child engages in appropriate behavior, provide positive attention to the child. This might include joining in the child's play, having a conversation with the child about the child's interests or activity, providing the child with a response opportunity, or providing the child with physical affection. It is important for the child to be able to rejoin the classroom community and to experience positive attention from the adult in the classroom when behaving appropriately.
5. If another child is hurt, attend to the "victim." You can say, for example, "Tim, it looks like you got hurt, come sit here with me." Notice that this recommendation involves ignoring, for the moment, the challenging behavior.
6. Put 95% of your time and attention into the teaching of replacement behaviors and do this when the child is not engaging in the challenging behavior. If and when children are upset and engaging in challenging behavior, it is likely that your teaching efforts will be minimally effective. Intentionally plan opportunities to teach the replacement skill throughout the day before the challenging behavior is likely to occur and focus most of your efforts on this instruction.
7. Remember that what keeps challenging behavior occurring are the things that happen after the behavior occurs (e.g., a redirection, saying, "stop," being escorted to the cozy corner during large group). If challenging behavior seem to be reoccurring, consider what has been happening immediately following the challenging behavior and adapt it.
8. Find individualized reinforcers and use them liberally at first. Challenging behavior works for the child 100% of the time **unless** we teach the more appropriate skill and reinforce it at a higher frequency than the challenging behavior is being reinforced.
9. Figure out what makes the good times so good. If you analyze carefully, most children who engage in challenging behavior actually spend very little time engaged. Think about what environmental and contextual characteristics are engaging to the child and add more of these to the times of the day and routines when challenging behavior is most likely to occur.
10. Make a plan, write it down, and teach **all** adults *what to do!* *It is important that all adults are responding consistently to children's appropriate and challenging behavior.*
11. Know that severe and persistent challenging behavior can require the use of individualized positive behavior support (e.g., Dunlap, Strain, Lee, Joseph, Vatland, & Fox, 2017; Dunlap, Wilson, Strain, & Lee, 2013). That is, once challenging behavior is severe and persistent, it oftentimes necessitates the use of a process in which goals are set, data collection occurs, the function of the behavior is determined, and a comprehensive behavior support plan is developed based on the function of the challenging behaviors, implemented consistently, and monitored to ensure success.

## References

- Dunlap, G., Strain, P.S., Lee, J.K., Joseph, J. D., Vatland, C., & Fox, L. (2017). *Prevent, teach, reinforce for families: A model of individualized positive behavior support for home and community*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Dunlap, G., Wilson, K., Strain, P., & Lee, J. K. (2013). *Prevent, teach, reinforce for young children: The early childhood model of individualized positive behavior support*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co

Pyramid Equity Project



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## 10 EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES

# 10 Easy-to-Implement Behavior Strategies for Children with Autism

Working with children with autism can be challenging and also quite rewarding. Each and every day poses a new adventure in learning as well as in behavior. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents who work with children with autism need to be prepared with a toolbox of strategies and techniques to not only make their lives easier but to help their children be successful and gain the intervention they deserve.



There are 10 behavioral strategies that are super easy to implement with children with autism, in the classroom and even at home.

Continue reading to learn about the following...

## 1. TEACH TIME MANAGEMENT

Children with autism often have a difficult time managing their time, such as understanding how long it takes to complete an activity. An example of this is a teacher allowing ten minutes for playtime until the next activity begins. If the child is unaware of exactly how much time they have left, playtime may end quite abruptly and cause them to react negatively. Using a sand timer or a visual clock timer will help teachers easily communicate how much time is left for certain activities. Being proactive with timers and reminders with students with autism will help reduce problem behaviors while also teaching the students how to self-manage time and to think ahead about transitions.



## 2. SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

All children benefit from rules, procedures, and expectations, and children with autism do so even more due to their disability and the fact that they need more structure and consistency than the average child. Setting realistic expectations means taking the whole child into consideration and determining personalized procedures and rules based upon that particular student's needs. Not every child is the same; symptoms of autism are on a spectrum, which means the needs will be different for each child.

Continued on page 4.

## 10 EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

Here are 4 tips on setting realistic expectations from [Autism Classroom Resources](#):

- Make them positive
- Have students help with creating them
- Create expectations for each environment/activity
- Tie expectations to a reinforcement system

An example of a realistic expectation for an elementary student who roams the classroom when they enter the class.

*\*I will come into my class, put my bag on my hook, and sit at my desk with my feet on the ground until my teacher asks me to get my breakfast.*

### 3. REINFORCE POSITIVE BEHAVIORS

Just like it is important for behavioral expectations to be made clear to the children in a classroom, it is also just as important to positively reinforce appropriate behaviors, such as following expectations. It can be beneficial for children with autism to be aware of what they are working toward, such as 5 free minutes on a computer game, extra recess time, or a piece of chocolate. Children can also have a say in what they are working toward; this will ensure that the reinforcement will actually be *reinforcing*. For example, giving free time on a computer to a student who cares nothing about technology and would rather go swing on the swing set outside, will be less motivated to comply if they know they are going to earn something they aren't interested in.

A few important things to consider when choosing and providing reinforcements to children with autism are...

- Get with the child and do a reinforcement inventory to determine likes and dislikes.
- Before each activity, help the child decide what they are working toward.
- Place a visual near the child to remind them of what they are working toward.
- Be consistent; if the child follows through with the expectations, they must be given the reinforcement.
- If a reinforcer no longer works, try something else!

Using positive reinforcement is an excellent and simple way to modify behavior...use it to your advantage at home and in the classroom with your children with autism.

### 4. GIVE CHOICES FOR NON-PREFERRED ACTIVITIES

It is important for any child to have a sense of control. By giving children simple choices to make, it allows them to feel included and empowered. Be sure to give very specific choices as children with autism may be overwhelmed by too many options. For example, asking them if they'd prefer orange juice over grape juice or if they'd like to play a game over watching a movie should be fine. If a child has difficulties with language, be sure to have visuals of the options so that they can select by them self.

Choice-making can be used throughout the day, from what activity to start with, what type of reinforcer to work toward, or if they prefer writing or verbally stating their answer. The easiest way to use choices with children with autism is by using a visual choice board that shows pre-selected options for the situation and have the student point to or say which option that they would like.

Overall, allowing children to make choices at school and at home benefits everyone involved and helps with motivation and compliance.



Continued on page 5.



## 10 EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

### 5. USE VISUALS AND SOCIAL STORIES

A choice board is an excellent example of a visual. Many children with autism need visual reminders, prompts, and social stories throughout the day to stay on task and be successful. Using a variety of visuals in the form of pictures, flip charts, posters, and cards help support students' needs. They are used to prepare students for transitions, to help make choices, to give them answer options to questions, etc.

Social stories, in particular, are used to prepare children with autism for upcoming events or for transitions. Some stories are only simple sentences while others incorporate many visuals for non-readers. An example of a situation in which a student might need a social story is if little Johnny often has problem behaviors right before it is time to get on the school bus at the end of the day. His teacher creates a social story with visuals to read with him once he cleans his area up for the day and is waiting for his bus to be called. It consists of four simple sentences and describes why it is important for Johnny to get on the bus and the steps he must take to make it there. Johnny and his teacher will continue to read his social story each day, then periodically after once problem behaviors have ceased.

There are so many pre-made social stories online for all sorts of situations and the site [Your Therapy Source](#) guides individuals through making their own from scratch.

### 6. Teach Coping Skills and Calming Strategies

Children with autism absolutely need to be taught coping skills and calming strategies for when they are feeling frustrated, anxious, or are having sensory overload. For lower-level ASD students, they may need assistance with using these strategies and won't be able to do them independently. It is not uncommon for children with autism to seem anxious, fidget, or even have a meltdown. Providing physical and emotional tools to help calm the body and mind are important during times of stress or sensory overload.



Examples of these include providing a weighted blanket, a bouncy seat, a fidget or other sensory toy to play with, turning the lights down, playing soft music, giving noise-cancelling headphones to wear, allowing the student to use a sensory room or go to a calm space in the classroom, practicing deep breathing and stretching, counting backward, tapping, etc. Each child will have his or her own preferences and what is used will also depend upon the situation. A SPED teacher and a parent of a child with autism should have a "toolbox" full of calming strategies handy.

### 7. PRACTICE TRANSITIONS

Children with autism often have a difficult time transitioning from one place or activity to another. This is because some individuals with autism have rigid thinking, have a hard time with multi-step directions, and have cognitive challenges that help them to do certain things independently and with ease. Executive functioning is necessary during the shift between one activity to the next and a lot is going on in the brain during this time. Teachers and parents can practice transitioning with children with autism in unique ways so that they are more prepared and able to cope with the frequent changes.

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## 10 EASY-TO-IMPLEMENT BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

An article in [Psychology Today](#) shares five strategies that can be used to help children with autism handle transitions well are:

- Give advance notice before a transition is going to occur
- Use visual supports
- Use structure and consistency
- Use reduced language
- Provide light praise for good transitions

Being proactive when dealing with transitions and explicitly practicing them with children with autism will help things go much more smoothly.

### 8. BE CONSISTENT EACH DAY

Consistency is key! Children with autism thrive on steady patterns and a reliable schedule. Changing up their routines throughout the day, from day to day, is not advised. Giving a child with autism a visual schedule for their day and sticking to the plan can assist them in being more independent, in preparing for transitions and what is coming up next in their day, and helps lessen anxiety and worry. Children on the spectrum tend to prefer rules and routine over spontaneity and going with the flow. Teachers and parents of these children will learn quickly that being inconsistent is not what is best. Of course, things happen that are out of their control; in those instances, it is always good to know what the calming strategies are and also what Plan B is going to be.

### 9. CONSIDER SENSORY NEEDS

There are various reasons why a child with autism might have sensory issues. They may be sensitive to light or sounds, they might have sensitive skin and have a strong preference for only soft fabrics without tags, they might not like other children in close proximity to them, or they might have dislikes such as a classroom door being open or walking down the hallway with other classes about.

While sometimes adults might want to minimize the exposure that their children have to their sensory triggers, some may actually want to do the opposite and expose them to these things in order to train them to accept them. For instance, if a student becomes aggressive when s/he hears another person cry (at school, home, and community), that problematic behavior needs to be addressed, as hearing someone cry is something that could happen at any moment, in any environment, and is not something anyone can control.

Despite those situations, children with autism should be provided sensory needs in order to help them cope with their environments.

### 10. TEACH SELF-MONITORING AND EMOTION REGULATION

Lastly, self-monitoring physical emotions and being able to regulate those emotions is an important skill for children with autism to learn. Even some children who are non-verbal are able to show how they feel in one way or another and express their needs. Children in the school and in the home can be taught how to monitor their own behavior and emotions. This is easily done by making a chart or visual of some sort. In the classroom, for instance, a student with autism can point to a picture with an angry face if they are upset or flip over a red card to signal they need a break. Using tally charts, schedules, and pictures are common ways to help children become more independent in monitoring their behaviors and feelings.

## CONCLUSION

Learning about and understanding these 10 behavior strategies for children with autism is the first step all teachers and parents who work with this population should take. Implementing them is actually the easy part. These strategies do not require much effort and they are typically things that parents and teachers do anyway and don't even realize that they are implementing a legit ABA behavioral strategy. The main things to remember are to be consistent, implement them correctly, and if something isn't working, try something else or tweak how you are doing things. Working with children who have autism while modifying behaviors has a lot to do with trial and error. You have to continue trying strategies to see what works best for each individual child, as no child is alike.

<https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/lists/5-easy-to-implement-behavior-strategies-for-children-with-autism/>

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## CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

### Challenging Behavior: Autistic Children and Teenagers -ages 3-18

#### CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

It's common for autistic children to behave in challenging ways or ways that are difficult to manage.

For example, autistic children and teenagers might:

- refuse or ignore requests
- behave in socially inappropriate ways, like taking their clothes off in public
- behave aggressively
- hurt themselves or other children – for example, by head-banging or biting.



#### WHY AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS BEHAVE IN CHALLENGING WAYS

Autistic children and teenagers might behave in challenging ways because they:

- have trouble understanding what's happening around them – for example, what other people are saying or communicating non-verbally
- have difficulty communicating their own wants and needs, which can lead to frustration
- are highly anxious and stressed
- feel overwhelmed by what's going on around them.

Your child's difficult behaviour might also have specific triggers, like the following.

##### Routines and rituals

Autistic children often like predictable environments, and they can get very upset if they can't follow familiar routines. For example, your child might be upset if you change the route you usually take home from school.

##### Transitions

Your child might not understand it's time to move on from one activity to another. Or like typically developing children, your child just might not want to.

##### Sensory sensitivities

Autistic children often have sensory sensitivities – for example, they might like feeling or touching particular surfaces or objects. Your child might get upset if they aren't allowed to touch.

##### Sensory overload

Your child might get upset if too much is happening around them, if they find a particular noise overwhelming, or if the light is too bright.

##### Unrealistic expectations

Autistic children can get frustrated if they're expected to do something they don't have the skills for, like getting dressed independently.

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## CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS CONTINUED....

### Tiredness

Autistic children can have [sleep problems](#). If your child isn't getting enough good-quality sleep or is tired from an activity or situation, this can cause challenging behaviour.

### Discomfort, pain or illness

This could include things like the feeling of clothes against skin, a prickly label, wet pants, a bump or pain. Check with your GP if you suspect there could be a medical condition causing your child's behaviour.

### Other conditions

Your child might have other conditions as well as autism, like [epilepsy](#), [mood disorder](#) or [ADHD](#). These can all cause difficult behaviour. A medical assessment will help you to identify and manage these conditions.

## CHANGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

To change your child's behaviour, you need to understand what's triggering or causing it and what your child is getting out of it.

You can use the following steps to work on your child's difficult or challenging behaviour.

### Step 1: Choose a behaviour

Choose one behaviour to focus on. For example, maybe your child yells at others when they're upset.

### Step 2: Identify what triggers the behaviour and how it meets your child's needs

Keep a diary of the difficult behaviour for 1-2 weeks. It's a good idea to include two weekends in the diary. Family routines and behaviour can be different on weekends and weekdays.

Here's an **example**:

- Difficult behaviour: got upset and yelled at brother
- When: 4 pm, Monday 7 June
- Where: in the car on the way home from school
- What happened before behaviour: stopped at shop, intended to buy milk
- What happened after: briefly tried to soothe child, then went home without buying milk



In this example, the trigger seems to be the change to the child's usual after-school routine. Note that sometimes there might be more than one trigger for a behaviour. And the behaviour met the child's needs because they got their routine back when the family left the shop.

### Step 3: Make changes

Once you know what's triggering the behaviour and how it meets your child's needs, you can use the information to make changes.

Continued on page 9.



## CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR CONTINUED...

Here are some ideas:

- Organise predictable routines, perhaps using picture timetables. Prepare your child for [changing routines](#) – for example, by giving your child a five-minute warning (this could be a visual warning like a clock). Using pictures can also help. In the example above, it could be a picture of a shop or milk. [Social stories](#) can be useful too – for example, a picture of school, then the shop, then home with a story like 'First mum picks you up from school, then you go to the shop, then you go home'.
- Set up gradual introductions to environments that might be overstimulating. For example, start with short shopping trips during which your child gets something they like, or go when it's less busy.
- Communicate clearly with your child. For example, make sure your child is paying attention when you explain what's going to happen. Use only one request or instruction at a time. Use language, symbols or pictures your child understands.
- Teach your child how to ask for things they want or need. For example, your child could say 'help' or use a 'help' sign when doing a difficult task.
- Plan for situations you know might be difficult. For example, don't do new things when your child is tired, or let your child take a favourite toy when you go somewhere that makes your child uncomfortable.
- Calmly ignore your child's protests. But when your child is doing the right thing, give plenty of [praise](#).



Cooperative behaviour helps autistic children and teenagers succeed at school and in relationships with others. You can [encourage cooperative behaviour in autistic children](#) by using strategies like setting limits, giving effective instructions and offering choices. You can also encourage good behaviour by using our [15 behaviour tips](#). Although these tips are written for typically developing children, you can adapt them to suit your child's level of development and communication.

## THERAPIES AND SUPPORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS

Improved communication and social understanding can lead to lower anxiety and less challenging behaviour in autistic children and teenagers. There are many therapies and supports that might increase your child's skills in these areas, and help you manage your child's behaviour.

A good first step is talking with your child's GP, [paediatrician](#) or [psychologist](#), or another health professional who works with your child. They can help you find appropriate therapies and supports for your child. Psychologists, [speech pathologists](#) and experienced [Applied Behaviour Analysis \(ABA\)](#) practitioners can help you with behaviour management if the behaviour continues to be a problem or you need support to deal with it.

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/behaviour/understanding-behaviour/challenging-behaviour-asd>



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## INDIANA RESOURCE CENTER FOR AUTISM

The Indiana Resource Center For Autism has a wide variety of resources to help families who are struggling with behaviors. Here are a few of their resource links:

1. This section contains visual supports for families, professionals supporting individuals in the home setting and for school personnel to send home to assist an individual in daily living tasks. <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/resources/visual-supports/home.html>
2. This collection is from the Family Support Webinar Series. The topic for this collection is behavior <https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/resources/videos/family-support-video-behavior.html>
3. About this video: Kari Dunn Buron, MS  
Social cognition involves social awareness, emotional awareness, relationship building, self-management and emotional regulation. Social cognition is a developmental issue and can impact a person's confidence and competence in almost all social situations. This presentation will highlight the use of a highly systemized scale to teach skills in these four areas.  
To receive a certificate of attendance, click [here](#) and answer the study questions for this webinar.  
<https://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/incredible-5%E2%80%90point-scale>

## THE INCREDIBLE 5-POINT SCALE

Kari Dunn Buron has her own website full of information and free tools. Please click on the link to access: <https://www.5pointscale.com/>

### Introducing The Incredible 5-Point Scale

I have been asked by several teachers to post some ideas for introducing the 5 point scale to other teachers in their schools, and other educators on their teams.

The most important point to make when introducing the scale is that it is a **teaching approach** to social and emotional skill delays. It is not a behavior management system nor a "level" system. The scale is based on the premise that children and adolescents who "mis-behave" do so because they lack the social/emotional information and/or skills needed to handle difficult or frustrating social interactions in a better way.

The 5-point scale is based on Simon Baron Cohen's learning theory of Hyper-systemized learning preference (suggesting that most autistic individuals have stronger skills in the use and understanding of systems versus learning through social/emotional language). Teachers and parents typically use social/emotional *language*, embedded with social and emotional concepts, to teach social behavior. The idea of the scale is to support such learning with a visual, concrete, numerical system.

The scale should feel good. Avoid "good and bad" and "right and wrong" language whenever possible. Focus on little and big emotions and situations.

I am attaching a few slides you can use to introduce the scale. I recommend you embed at least one scale and example of its' use into this presentation.  
[https://www.5pointscale.com/uploads/7/9/4/7/7947067/intro\\_to\\_the\\_scale.pptx](https://www.5pointscale.com/uploads/7/9/4/7/7947067/intro_to_the_scale.pptx)

OCALI has an article written by Kari Dunn Buron- [https://www.ocali.org/project/resource\\_gallery\\_of\\_interventions/page/5\\_point\\_scale](https://www.ocali.org/project/resource_gallery_of_interventions/page/5_point_scale)

5	I AM GOING TO EXPLODE!!!
4	I AM GETTING ANGRY
3	I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS
2	FEELING OK
1	CALM AND RELAXED

## THE ZONES OF REGULATION



**Life is 10% what happens to us and 90% how we react to it. -Charles Swindoll**

Self-regulation is something everyone continually works on whether or not we are cognizant of it. We all encounter trying circumstances that test our limits from time to time. If we are able to recognize when we are becoming less regulated, we are able to do something about it to manage our feelings and get ourselves to a healthy place. This comes naturally for some, but for others it is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. This is the goal of The Zones of Regulation (or Zones for short).

**What are the Zones?**

The Zones is a systematic, cognitive behavioral approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete colored zones. The Zones framework provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to problem solve conflicts.

By addressing underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, the framework is designed to help move students toward independent regulation. The Zones of Regulation incorporates Social Thinking® ([www.socialthinking.com](http://www.socialthinking.com)) concepts and numerous visuals to teach students to identify their feelings/ level of alertness, understand how their behavior impacts those around them, and learn what tools they can use to manage their feelings and states.

### The Four Zones: Our Feelings & States Determine Our Zone

- The Red Zone is used to describe extremely heightened states of alertness and intense emotions. A person may be elated or experiencing anger, rage, explosive behavior, devastation, or terror when in the Red Zone.
- The Yellow Zone is also used to describe a heightened state of alertness and elevated emotions, however, one has more control when they are in the Yellow Zone. A person may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety, excitement, silliness, the wiggles, or nervousness when in the Yellow Zone.
- The Green Zone is used to describe a calm state of alertness. A person may be described as happy, focused, content, or ready to learn when in the Green Zone. This is the zone where optimal learning occurs.
- The Blue Zone is used to describe low states of alertness and down feelings such as when one feels sad, tired, sick, or bored.

The Zones can be compared to traffic signs. When given a green light or in the Green Zone, one is “good to go”. A yellow sign means be aware or take caution, which applies to the Yellow Zone. A red light or stop sign means stop, and when one is the Red Zone this often is the case. The Blue Zone can be compared to the rest area signs where one goes to rest or re-energize. All of the zones are natural to experience, but the framework focuses on teaching students how to recognize and manage their Zone based on the environment and its demands and the people around them. For example, when playing on the playground or in an active/competitive game, students are often experiencing a heightened internal state such as silliness or excitement and are in the Yellow Zone, but it may not need to be managed. However, if the environment is changed to the library where there are different expectations than the playground, students may still be in the Yellow Zone but have to manage it differently so their behavior meets the expectations of the library setting.

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## STEPS FOR MORNING CHECK-IN



### Steps for Morning Check-in or "Morning Circle"

Each morning is an opportunity to set the stage for the day. Children (and adults!) thrive when they have some routine and structure built into the day. This is even more crucial during uncertain times, and for children/teens who have special needs. Even teenagers, who may say they don't like schedules, profit from having them.

Research shows that starting your day with something positive can prime your whole day for positivity.

You can start your day on a positive note with the morning circle or morning meeting. This can be done casually during breakfast or after breakfast in a different place in your home.

The morning meeting or check-in is a way to build social and emotional awareness as well as executive functioning and planning skills.

You can also pre-plan for challenges that might arise, using the Calming Strategies Menu tool from Video 3.



[www.makesociallearningstick.com](http://www.makesociallearningstick.com)



## STEPS FOR MORNING CHECK-IN CONTINUED....

### Sample Questions You Can Ask During Morning Check In

#### STEP ONE: POSITIVE START

- What is one thing you are grateful for?
- Tell me your favorite joke
- What is one thing you are looking forward to today?
- Draw a picture of something that makes you happy
- Share a favorite quote and why you like it.
- Tell a family member something you appreciate about them.
- Show your favorite animal video/picture

#### STEP TWO: EMOTIONAL CHECK IN

- How are you feeling today?
- Draw a picture of how you feel right now
- Find a picture of a person in a book who matches the feeling you are having right now.
- If you were a character from Inside Out, which one would you be right now?
- Visit [www.emotionalabcs.com](http://www.emotionalabcs.com) for videos that show you how to check in emotionally.
- Be sure to acknowledge feelings and normalize them.

#### STEP THREE: REVIEW YOUR DAY AND PRE-PLAN FOR CHALLENGES

- Review your family schedule for the day
- Give responsibility to your child for sharing out the plan for the day
- Ask for ideas on how to improve the plan
- Ask family members if they agree to the plan
- Ask family members if they have any concerns about the plan and address them in advance
- Use the "Calming Strategies Menu" to pre-plan if someone needs a break, calming time, or feels dysregulated and needs to "reboot" during the day.



## STEPS FOR MORNING CHECK-IN CONTINUED....



### Steps for an Afternoon/Evening Check-in or "Debrief"

At the end of each day, it is helpful to meet as a family and evaluated how the schedule went. This way you can adjust your schedule for the following day based on what is working and what is not. Every day is a chance to reboot!

As in the morning meeting, starting the meeting with something positive. This will help set the stage or "prime" your children for positive problem solving.

The afternoon or evening check-in is another opportunity to build social and emotional awareness, reflection skills, as well as executive functioning and problem-solving skills.

You can also evaluate how the family did with using calming strategies throughout the day to reinforce and praise successful use of coping skills.



[www.makesociallearningstick.com](http://www.makesociallearningstick.com)

## STEPS FOR MORNING CHECK-IN CONTINUED....

### Sample Questions You Can Ask During Evening Debrief

#### STEP ONE: POSITIVE START

- What is one thing you are grateful for?
- What is one thing you enjoyed about today?
- Say one appreciation for another family member

#### STEP TWO: EMOTIONAL CHECK IN

- How are you feeling about how today went?
- Draw a picture of how you feel right now
- Find a picture of a person in a book who matches the feeling you are having right now.
- If you were a character from Inside Out, which one would you be right now?
- Visit [www.emotionalabcs.com](http://www.emotionalabcs.com) for videos that show you how to check in emotionally.
- Be sure to acknowledge feelings and normalize them.
- Review successes if anyone in the family used the "Calming Strategies Menu" when they needed a break, calming time, or needed to "reboot" during the day.

#### STEP THREE: REVIEW YOUR DAY AND RESET FOR TOMORROW

- Share one positive thing about how the schedule went today (for younger kids, one "Yum")
- Share one thing you might want to change about how the schedule went today (for younger kids, one "Yuk")
- Share one idea how to change or improve on the schedule (for younger kids, turning a "Yuk" into a "Yum")
- Incorporate your child's feedback into the plan and make agreements that work for everyone in the family.
- Ask family members if they agree to the plan
- End with a celebration or appreciation ritual.



## IDENTIFYING CALMING STRATEGIES



### Identifying Calming Strategies/Breaks for You and Your Child

In a moment of calm, or during a morning meeting, sit down with your child and let them know that you would love to come up with a few strategies to use if anyone in the family needs a calming moment or a "brain break."

Post your family's calming strategies somewhere as a reminder to use in the moment.

You might want to create a list for each child and adult in your household, as adults need calming breaks as well!

Make sure you have all the materials needed to implement the strategies (you don't want to be building a calm space or looking for coloring books or arts and crafts materials in the moment!).

Role play what it might look like to use the strategy.



[www.makesociallearningstick.com](http://www.makesociallearningstick.com)



## IDENTIFYING CALMING STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

### Calming Menu for Your Child

Sit with your child and have them circle the ones they would like to try or add their own:

Take a deep breath  
 Get some fresh air  
 Walk away  
 Hum/sing  
 Drink some water  
 Go for a walk  
 Listen to music  
 Draw/color  
 Read a book  
 Jump  
 Play with a pet  
 Talk to an adult  
 Talk to a friend  
 Journal  
 Dance/move your body  
 Read a comic book or something that makes you laugh  
 Do art/crafts  
 Get a hug  
 Squeeze something tight  
 Smell something that makes you feel calm  
 Take a bath/shower  
 Tell yourself that it will be okay  
 Tell yourself something calming  
 Do a 10-minute mindfulness app  
 Go into Zen Den (calming place)  
 Listen to an audiobook  
 Practice mindfulness activity: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_



Make It Stick  
**Parenting**  
 EMBRACING TEACHABLE MOMENTS

## IDENTIFYING CALMING STRATEGIES CONTINUED...

### Calming Menu for Parents

Circle the calming strategies you would like to try or add your own:

- Take a deep breath
- Have a warm tea or coffee and savor it
- Take a digital detox moment and go outside and take 3 deep breaths
- Get some fresh air
- Walk away
- Hum/sing
- Drink some water
- Go for a walk
- Listen to music
- Draw/color
- Read a book
- Do a short exercise video online (dance, yoga, etc.)
- Play with a pet
- Talk to a spouse
- Talk to a friend
- Journal
- Dance/move your body
- Read a book or something that makes you laugh
- Do art/crafts
- Get a hug
- Smell something that makes you feel calm
- Take a bath/shower
- Tell yourself that it will be okay
- Tell yourself something calming
- Do a 10-minute mindfulness app
- Go into an adult Zen Den! (calming place)
- Listen to an audiobook
- Text a friend
- Practice mindfulness activity: \_\_\_\_\_  
(see menu on next page for ideas)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES

On pages 19-25 you will find a variety of visual supports to help an individual with autism. If you have any question or need additional support in using these visual tools please contact your special education teacher or Autism Consultant.

### “The importance of visual aids for autism

Visual aids expand a child with autism’s ability to interact with his/her surroundings. They can give children a sense of autonomy and allow them to make choices and express needs. Visual aids also help children comprehend daily rhythms and have input in their activities. Perhaps most importantly, visual aids can open lines of communication between children with ASD and their caretakers.

Families who previously struggled to understand their child’s needs, endured meltdowns, and tried to reassure anxious children, can find some respite in opening lines of communication. Most importantly, children can learn how to express their desires, ideas, personalities, and wishes in a way they could not before.”

A clip from the article “The Benefits of Visual Supports for Children with Autism”. You can find the full article here: <https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/benefits-of-autism-visual-supports/#:~:text=The%20importance%20of%20visual%20aids,have%20input%20in%20their%20activities.>



One Visual Tool:

It might be helpful to have your child draw or write about something to distract them when they have an angry thought. This is a great graphic to help guide the child through this process.

If you can model how to use this tool for your student or child and then have them do it, it will help.

## VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES CONTINUED...

# 5-Point Scale (Voice Control at Home)

	My Voice	When To Use My Voice
5	Screaming and yelling	When I am hurt or unsafe and need my family's help.
4	Outside voice	When I am outside on the trampoline or swings.
3	Normal talking voice	When we are eating dinner together as a family.
2	Whispering voice	When the family is watching a TV show or movie.
1	No voice	When mom or dad is working and having a virtual meeting with co-workers and I'm nearby.

Adapted from Buron & Curtis, 2003

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## VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES CONTINUED...

\_\_\_\_\_ 'S SCALE FOR \_\_\_\_\_

Looks/Feels Like

I can try to . . .

5		
4		
3		
2		
1		

<https://www.5pointscale.com/downloadables.html>

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## VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES CONTINUED...

# Stress Thermometer

## Family Example Most Stressed Ever

### *What I Look Like*

When attending my  
sister's recital and  
sitting quietly

---

When I go grocery  
shopping with my family

---

When my family eats  
dinner at a different time

---

### *What I Can Do*

Squeeze my stress ball  
Use my tangle fidget

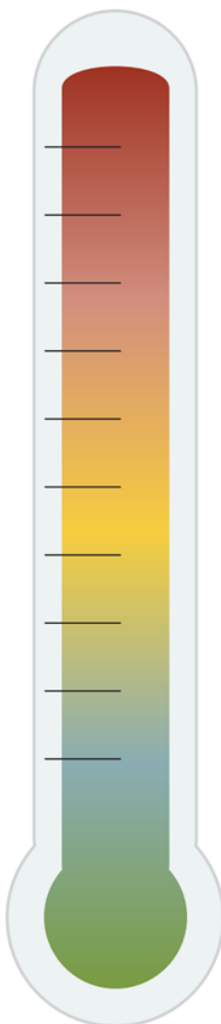
---

Wear earbuds and listen  
to my music

---

Read social narrative on  
schedule changes

---



— No Stress —



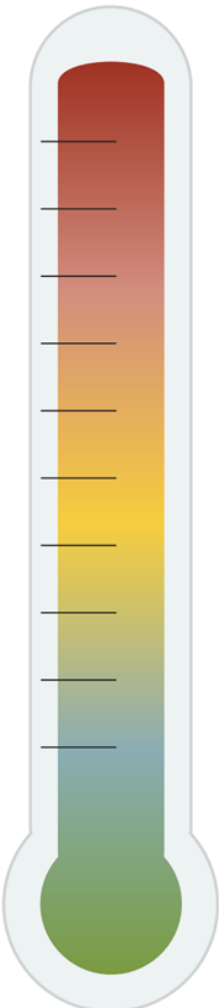
Navigating the Social World  
— Jeanette McAfee

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## VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES CONTINUED...

# Stress Thermometer

Most Stressed Ever

<i>What I Look Like</i>		<i>What I Can Do</i>
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

No Stress



Navigating the Social World  
— Jeanette McAfee

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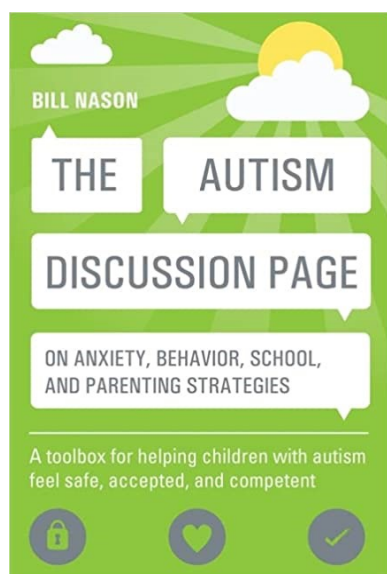
# VISUAL SUPPORT EXAMPLES CONTINUED....

## Anger Choice Cards For Classroom

<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>BREATHE DEEPLY</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>COUNT TO 10</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>DRINK WATER</p> 
<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>GO TO THE QUIET SPOT &amp; USE THE COOL DOWN BOX</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>GET AN ADULT TO HELP</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>DRAW A PICTURE</p> 
<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>SING A SONG</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>WRITE ABOUT IT</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>HAVE THINK TIME</p> 
<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>WALK AWAY</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>IMAGINE A PEACEFUL SPOT</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>TAKE A BRAIN BREAK</p> 
<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>REMEMBER A HAPPY TIME</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>TALK TO A FRIEND</p> 	<p>When I'm angry, I can...</p> <p>SMILE ANYWAY!!!</p> 

\*\*Created by Mrs. Kilby at <http://confessionsofaprimaryteacher.blogspot.com>

## BOOK REVIEWS



### ***The Autism Discussion Page On Anxiety, Behavior, School and Parenting Strategies*** by Bill Nason

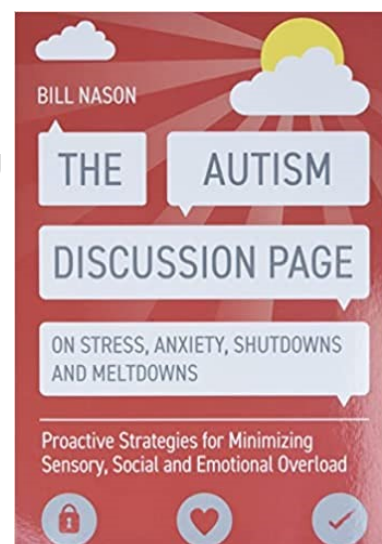
*The Autism Discussion Page green book covers anxiety and stress, challenging behaviors, stretching comfort zones, discipline, and school issues. It also provides more general teaching and mentoring strategies for coaching children on the autism spectrum in basic daily living strategies to improve their day-to-day lives.*

Based on posts on the popular online community page and organized by subject for ease of reference, this book offers an excellent understanding of how children with autism process and experience the world and effective strategies for coping with the challenges.

### ***The Autism Discussion Page On Stress, Anxiety, Shutdowns and Meltdowns*** by Bill Nason

Anxiety, meltdowns and emotional regulation can be hugely challenging for autistic people. This book is full of proactive strategies for understanding, accepting and respecting the processing differences in autism. It contains tools for reducing sensory, social and mental drain, and offers strategies to protect from ongoing stress and anxiety. These help minimize shutdowns and burnout, while maximizing self-esteem, autistic identity and mental health.

Learn strategies for matching environmental demands to the person's processing needs, how to support vulnerabilities, and how to prevent and manage meltdowns while protecting the identity and self-esteem of the individual with autism.



#### **Additional resources from the web:**

#### **Zones of Regulation:**

<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/zones-of-regulation-activities/>

<https://www.socialthinking.com/zones-of-regulation/free-stuff>



## VISUALS



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Comic by Rebecca Burgess-Speak Up! Released September 13th.

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