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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

Help Your Autistic Child Manage Emotions

Many autistic kids can learn better regulation and expression By Lisa Jo Rudy, Updated February 1, 2024

<u>Autistic</u> children often <u>struggle with emotional regulation</u>.¹ Big emotions in autism can be related to problems with sensory integration, communication deficits, and difficulty understanding social cues—and they can be hard to regulate and express appropriately.²

Emotional outbursts can be hard for everyone involved. While emotional regulation does not come naturally to many autistic people, it is a skill that can be taught.

This article provides tips for helping an autistic child with low support needs to better manage their emotions. It explains the causes of autistic emotional outbursts and how to help your child learn to handle their emotions better.



WHY EMOTIONS ARE CHALLENGING

<u>Autism with low support needs</u> can be very challenging. On the one hand, you have the language and cognitive skills to be placed in a typical environment. On the other hand, social, communication, and executive functioning skills often need work when dealing with change.³

Continued on page 2

HELPING YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD MANAGE EMOTIONS CONTINUED....

At the same time, you may be coping with sensory dysfunction, anxiety, or other issues that make bright lights, loud noises, and high expectations almost impossible to manage.⁴

When autistic kids become unusually frustrated or angry, they often act out. When they do, they may behave in ways that surprise or shock the people around them.

For example, they may:

- Meltdown like a much younger child, with tears and shouting
- Run away from a difficult situation, sometimes putting themselves in danger
- Engage in aggressive or self-abusive behaviors
- Overreact to the situation and be unable to self-calm.
- Be unable to process logical information that, in another situation, would help them to calm down
- Become too upset to listen to calming suggestions
- Exhibit self-stimulatory behaviors (hand flapping, etc.)

"Many, if not most, autistic children have difficulty regulating their emotions and maintaining a calm state. They may also be coping with some of the limitations they feel but cannot verbalize or understand in other ways.

Sometimes, even autism with low support needs is anything but mild. It can be challenging for children and their loved ones; no one wants to see their child in pain when something is not working out.

This can change and you can help. Robert Naseef, Ph.D., and Cindy Ariel, Ph.D., psychologists who co-founded a practice specializing in helping families with challenges related to a loved one's health condition, offer the following professional tips.

REMIND THEM THE FEELING WILL PASS

Remind your child (and yourself) that crying is caused by a feeling and that feeling will pass like a dark cloud. The sun will come out again even though it feels like the sky is falling right now.

Help your autistic child to learn to take a few slow deep breaths when they first begin to feel upset. Practice this regularly with them when they're not upset.

Let them know that all of us, children and adults, get upset and have to learn how to calm ourselves.

Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower



Continued on page 3.

HELPING YOUR AUTISITIC CHILD MANAGE EMOTIONS CONTINUED....

HELP DEVISE MELTDOWN STRATEGIES

Some meltdowns may involve your child's reactions and their need to learn to deal with sensitivities and frustrations and to modulate themselves; to find comfort and encouragement from within.

You can help your child <u>learn to deal with extreme emotional reactions</u> by giving them ways to calm or comfort themselves before going on. There are many ways to do this, and most of us find our own ways over time.

For example, it helps some children to be alone for a few moments. It helps others to sit and talk with someone or to re-direct their thoughts to another place for a bit.

ADVISE THEM DURING CALM TIMES

In neutral times, when your child is not upset, you can talk to them about ways to keep their emotions from flaring up. By learning to own their anxiety and frustration, autistic kids can get through it with a little patience or by taking things in smaller steps.

You can work with your child and their teachers regarding the best ways for them to learn to calm down.



HEAD OFF THE INEVITABLE

During times that you know a meltdown is likely, you can sometimes cut it off by talking with your child about it beforehand and discussing how they might avoid it this time. You might even want to offer a reward for doing so.

When your child finally learns to modulate themselves, the improved feeling of self-confidence will be its own reward, for both you and for them.

 $\frac{https://www.verywellhealth.com/helping-children-with-autism-handle-emotions-}{260146}$

HOW TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION

How to Improve Emotional Self-Regulation Among Children with Autism and Attention Disorders

Does your child get distracted easily and need to be repeatedly reminded to complete a simple task? Does their room look like it's been hit by a tornado and they are constantly misplacing personal items? Do they have emotional outbursts when plans suddenly change?

For parents, many of these behaviors may seem familiar. But many typically developing children are able to improve their self-management skills, or executive functions, as they grow older and take on more responsibility. Some, including children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, traumatic brain injury and other learning disabilities, have a harder time and may face executive function deficits.

WHAT IS AN EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

Traditional definition: The chief operating system located in the prefrontal region of the brain used to engage in cognitive processes required for goal-directed behavior.

What this actually means: Everything that you do every day to manage your own behavior.

Common executive function processes for goal-directed behavior include:

- Working memory
- Task initiation
- Sustained attention
- Inhibition
- Flexibility
- Planning
- Organization
- Problem solving



Although executive functions are often thought of as brain functions, Dr. Adel Najdowski, director of the Master of Science in Behavioral Psychology program at Pepperdine University, says all executive functions involve behavior. Therefore, individuals with deficits may be able to learn specific behaviors to improve their executive function performance. In her recently published manual, &Idquo;Flexible and Focused: Teaching Executive Function Skills to Individuals with Autism and Attention Disorders," Dr. Najdowski, who also teaches with the OnlinePsychology@Pepperdine program, outlines principles, procedures and activities that practitioners, educators and parents can use to improve the executive function skills of learners with deficits. This lesson is an adaptation of one section in her book on emotional self-regulation. For more detailed explanations on each lesson, read *Flexible and Focused: Teaching Executive Function Skills to Individuals with Autism and Attention Disorders*Continued on page 5.

HOW TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION CONTINUED...

What is Emotional Self-Regulation and Why Is It Important?

Emotional self-regulation is the ability to adapt behavior when engaged in situations that might provoke emotions such as stress, anxiety, annoyance and frustration. A person with strong emotional regulation skills can:

- Notice when they become emotionally charged.
- Consider the consequences of their response.
- Engage in activities that move them toward their goal, even if they are feeling negative emotions.

Alternatively, a person who lacks emotional self-regulation may:

- Overreact to situations when compared to same-age peers.
- Experience negative emotions for a longer amount of time than same-age peers.
- Have a short temper and engage in emotional outbursts.
- Have mood swings.

Lesson: Teaching Emotional Self-Regulation

Before beginning the lesson, it's important to note that the child should already be capable of identifying and labeling emotions. The activities should be initiated when a child is in a good mood. This lesson is also meant to be taken in stages with the child moving to the next step after they have successfully developed a mastery of the preceding step.

1. Create an Emotional Levels Chart:

Emotional Level	I feel this way when
feeling good	
a little upset	
upset	
very upset	

Create a visual aid that depicts the different levels of emotions that a child may feel, allowing the child to create their own labels for each level. For example, levels can be labeled "feeling good," "a little upset," "upset" and "very upset." The chart should have two columns with the emotional levels in one column. Title the other column, "I feel this way when..." and leave the rows blank for the child to fill in.

Continued on page 6.

HOW TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION CONTINUED...

2. Teach the child to assign emotional levels to certain situations.

Emotional Level	I feel this way when
feeling good	
a little upset	
upset	I can't figure out an answer on my home- work.
very upset	l can't wear my favorite shirt.

The person working with the child can prompt them in a number of ways. Ask the child to write down different situations that make them feel specific emotional levels. Another option is to present a scenario and ask the child to identify how that situation would make them feel. For example, ask the child how she would feel if she wasn't allowed to wear her favorite shirt and instruct her to fill in the blank space next to the corresponding emotion.

3. Talk to the child about what appropriate reactions should be to different scenarios.

Emotional Level	I feel this way when
feeling good	
a little upset	Should be here: I can't wear my favorite shirt.
upset	I can't figure out an answer on my homew ork.
very upset	I can't wear my X favorite shirt.

Use the scenarios in the emotional levels chart to identify what should be treated as a big deal and what should be brushed off. For example, talk to the child about how not being able to wear your favorite shirt should make you a little upset, rather than very upset.

Link for a blank chart:

https://onlinegrad.pepperdine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2021/03/PEP-PSY-4483-Improve-Emotional-Self-Regulation-download.pdf

Continued on page 7.

happy

HOW TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION CONTINUED...

4. Teach the child coping strategies.

Identify strategies that children can use when they are feeling upset or very upset and practice the strategies. Give the child hypothetical situations and role-play how to use those strategies.

Coping Strategies Taking deep breaths Counting to 20 Asking for help Talking to a friend Thinking of a Compromise Walking away Letting it go Thinking of something that makes the learner

5. Practice coping strategies in a natural environment.

After the child has learned how to cope with a situation with advanced notice, ask them what they will do if the situation arises in real life. Remind them that they should always be prepared for the possibility that a situation will arise.

6. Measure the effectiveness of the intervention.

Use a graph to plot how often the child provides the correct response over time. The criteria for success may be different at each stage. For example, in the first stage, you may measure how often the child correctly identifies situations that make a child feel a specific emotional level. Once the child is able to score at least 80 percent across multiple sessions, you may begin the next stage. Measure for the following criteria:

Criteria to measure for:

- Correctly identifies situations that make the child feel an emotional level—across two to three sessions.
- Correctly identifies situations that are a big deal versus not a big deal—across two to three sessions.
- Correctly role-plays coping mechanisms—across two to three sessions.
- Successfully implements coping mechanism when warned about a difficult situation—across three to five sessions.
- Successfully implements coping mechanism when not warned about a difficult situation—across three to five sessions.

https://onlinegrad.pepperdine.edu/blog/emotional-self-regulation-children-autism/



Staying calm and regulating when a child is melting down, tantruming, or losing control is one of the most difficult tasks of parenthood. One of the reasons is something called **mirror neurons** - where when you observe the behaviors or emotions of another the neurons in your brain fire as if you were having that same experience. This is why if you are walking down the street and see someone smile, well... you start to smile too!

The sad news is that when the person in the room with you is a very angry, distressed, or enraged child - your neurons in your brain start to fire the exact same way too, leading to you as the grown up to become dysregulated too!

Our nervous systems also "talk" to one another and can pick up energy, cues, and clues from other human beings. This is why you can walk into a room where an argument just occurred and something "feels off". We are wired to get clues of safety or danger from other human beings and just being in the presence of a dysregulated nervous system can make your nervous system dysregulate too.

And sometimes? The behavior of children can be **pretty dangerous** or aggressive, so a parent's **nervous system is doing exactly what it thinks it needs to do to keep itself safe.** By powering up your body with a fast heart, fast breathing, and chemical responses, it is getting their body **ready for action** to fight or run away.

But, here is the hardest part, **the number one thing children need from grown ups is to be a container for regulation**, or as **Dr. Alan Shore** refers to it as **external co-regulation**. It's the task of using your regulatory capacities as a grown up (*with a fully developed prefrontal cortex*) to help co-regulate with the child **from a dysregulated to regulated state**.

So, in order to help young people calm down and regulate - you have to first start with your-self. I wanted to give you my FREE guide for the 9 ways I discuss helping parents regulate themselves and co-regulate with their child.

https://www.meehanmentalhealth.com/the-playful-therapist-blog/how-to-stay-calm-and-co-regulate-when-children-are-melting-down

THE SOCIAL TIMES- SELF REGULATION

21 LF-REGULATION **Ask Roger Gets-It: Apologies** tors: Claire and Winston

The LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter is a compilation of national and regional resources designed to support families and school teams. Every effort is made to provide accurate and complete information in the LBL ESD Autism Agenda Newsletter; however, LBL ESD cannot guarantee that there will be no errors. For example, some of the content within curated resources from across the nation may not apply to Oregon. LBL ESD does not assume any legal liability for any direct, indirect or any other loss or damage of any kind for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, product, or process disclosed herein, and do not represent that use of such information, product, or process would not infringe on privately owned rights.

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THE SOCIAL TIMES- SELF REGULATION CONTINUED....

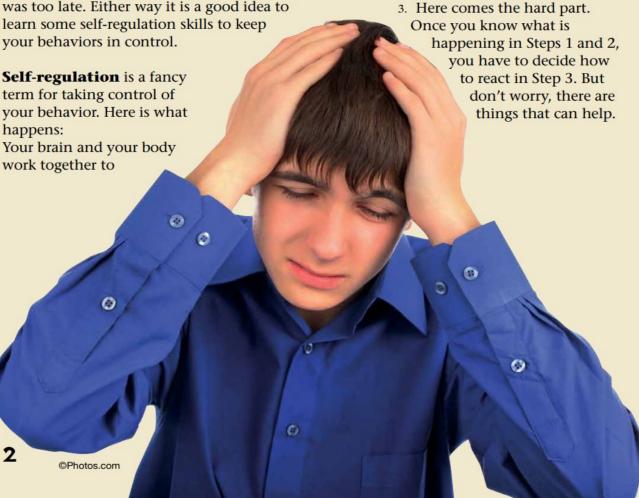
The Main Event

SELF-REGULATION

ave you ever been busy doing class work or eating lunch with friends and suddenly an adult comes by and says something like, "You need to calm down" or "Don't get so wound up"? Those are words that adults might use when they think that your behavior is getting too "big" for where you are at the moment. Sometimes you might agree that you were excited and needed to calm down, but there may be other times when you disagree because you didn't even notice that you were excited until it was too late. Either way it is a good idea to learn some self-regulation skills to keep your behaviors in control

help you understand what is going on around you and how you should react to different situations. Here are some examples of this:

- Your brain might tell you that you are taking a bus ride on a field trip with your classmates.
- Your body might tell you that you are getting excited by making your stomach upset or your ears hurt – you may even get a headache.



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THE SOCIAL TIMES- SELF REGULATION CONTINUED....

Here are some things you can do!

- Learn what situations or places make you uncomfortable or nervous. If you have trouble doing this, ask questions. Remember, the more information you have, the less likely you are to be nervous.
- Get to know yourself. Learn about how your body feels when you are happy, sad, or mad. If you know that your muscles get tight or tense when you are mad, then you will know that this is your body's way of warning you and that you will need to do something very soon.
- 3. Use the information from Steps 1 and 2 to decide what to do next. Being able to think clearly about these situations can help you to make good decisions, and you won't get in trouble for overreacting and doing something upsetting, like yelling or hitting. Talk to your teacher and come up with a way for you to let her know that you need a break, or practice ways to calm your brain and your body before things get out of control!

Learning to self-regulate is just like learning to read or write, so be patient and practice a lot. Getting good at self-regulation helps to build self-confidence. With self-regulation, you will be able to participate in more activities and try things that used to make you nervous. You won't need to worry about getting into trouble so much because you will be able to keep your body and voice even with the environment around you.



Now write down any time you remember getting into trouble at home or at school. Where were you when you got in trouble? Do you seem to get into trouble in the same or similar places?

3

THE SOCIAL TIMES- SELF REGULATION CONTINUED....

I Second That Emotion!

LEARNING TO LISTEN TO YOUR BODY



veryone gets frustrated sometimes. This issue's Main Event talked about self-regulation and how you need to listen to your body to stay in control. You might get frustrated with your mother, or with your sister, a friend, or a teacher. What you need to know is that you can learn how to read your own body and brain so that you can deal with the frustration in a reasonable way. For example, if you are frustrated with your sister because she is insisting on watching her favorite show when it is your turn to choose, you might first feel your teeth clenching. If she doesn't listen to reason, you might start to get a stomachache or feel your throat tighten up a bit. These are all signs that your emotions are getting bigger. If you tell your mother and she sides with your sister, if you are not listening to your body, you might start crying, swearing, or even throwing things.

Getting mad at home is bad enough, but what if you get that frustrated with your teacher or your boss? It happens. The key is to realize when your body starts to tell you that the emotions are rising and then do something about it.

This 5-point scale maps out how some people have told me their bodies feel at each level of frustration. The key to success is to do something to **derail** the frustration when you feel your teeth clenching or your stomach hurting.

Since everyone is different, your body has its own way of talking to you. It is a good idea to figure out your body's language so you can save yourself from overreacting to life's frustrations.

Rating	How Does Your Body Feel?		
5	Exploding/threatening other people/throwing things		
4	Crying/yelling/swearing at people		
3	Rapid breathing/talking negative/ spinning/throat feeling tight		
2:	Nervous laugh/tensed jaw/teeth clenching/stomachache		
11	Relaxed jaw/slow breathing		

Use this blank scale to fill in your own thoughts about how your body feels at each level of frustration.

Rating	How Does Your Body Feel?
5-	
4	
3	
2:	
11	

4

www.5pointscale.com

2024 SUMMER CAMP LIST

2024 Summer Camps for Kids with Autism and Other Disabilities

The following camps target kids with special needs. Inclusion on this list reflects availability, and is not necessarily an endorsement. For more detailed information, go to organizations' websites or contact them directly. You can also contact your local Parks and Recreation Department or OSU's KidSpirit programs

https://kidspirit.oregonstate.edu/summer for information about camps available to the general population.

Camp & Location	Description	Website/Contact Info	Ages/Population	Session Dates/Times	Registration Deadline
Camp Odakoda Falls City, OR	Overnight	http://www.asdoregon. org/	Ages 10 – 18 High-functioning ASD or similar disorder	July 23 - 27	REGISTRATION OPENS March 1
Camp Attitude Foster, OR	Overnight	http://www.campattitu de.com/	All ages/entire family. A "unique Christian camping experience."	Various week-long sessions See website	CLOSED Wait list
B'Nai B'Rith Camp Lincoln City, OR	Overnight/Day Camp	https://bbcamp.org/linc olncity/	Grades 2-10 Inclusive camp explores Jewish values and identities	Various sessions See website	OPEN
Autism Rocks Friends & Family Camp Florence, OR	Overnight (provides other events year- round)	https://kindtree.org/cal endar/camp/	All ages/entire family People with autism, parents, caregivers	August 15 - 18	REGISTRATION OPENS Financial assistance
Easter Seals Lyons, OR Neostu, OR	Overnight	http://www.easterseals. com/oregon/our- programs/camping- recreation/	Ages 10 and up All types of disabilities	July 14 -18 (ages 10-26) July 8 - 12 (ages 21+)	REGISTRATION OPENS Feb 19 Limited scholarships
Camp Yakety-Yak Lake Oswego, OR	Day camp	https://www.campyaket yyak.org/	HF ASD or similar Special Needs (ages 5-11) Social Skills in the Workplace Instruction (ages 16-22)	Various sessions See website	OPEN Scholarships
Mt. Hood Kiwanis Mt. Hood, OR	Overnight	https://mhkc.org/	Ages 12 and up All types of disabilities	Various sessions in various locations See website	OPEN Financial assistance



2024 Summer Activities and Programs for Kids with Autism and Other Disabilities

The following programs provide services all year round to children with specialized needs, but are well-suited for summer fun and learning. Inclusion on this list reflects availability, and is not necessarily an endorsement. See websites for more information to determine whether a program meets your child's needs.

Program & Location	Description	Website/Contact Info	Ages/Population
Hand in Hand Farm Lebanon, OR	Faith-based organization providing caring mentors and farm-based activities	http://www.handinhandfarm.org/	All ages and needs
Bright Horizons Therapeutic Riding Center Siletz, OR	Therapeutic mounted horseback riding adapted to fit the needs of the rider	https://www.olallacenter.org/brig ht-horizons	All ages and needs
Horses of Hope Turner, OR	Equine Assisted Services that help riders develop strength and balance, flexibility, confidence, problem solving, and empowerment	https://horsesofhopeoregon.org/p rograms/	All ages and needs
OSU IMPACT (Individualized Movement and Physical Activity for Children Today) Corvallis, OR	Various physical activity opportunities (swimming, dancing, climbing, etc.)	http://health.oregonstate.edu/impact	Ages 2 – 21
The ARC Benton County	Various recreational activities and classes (art/crafts, Karaoke, Legos, movie night, etc.).	https://arcbenton.org/	Teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
TOPSoccer Albany/Corvallis, OR	Soccer program that fosters the physical, mental and emotional development of youth with disabilities Summer Season: June 11th - August 1st	https://www.ovfalliance.com/Defa ult.aspx?tabid=1716225	Ages 5 – 18 FREE
Special Olympics Oregon Summer Games	Check website for current events and sports	Linn County: https://soor.org/program/linn/ Benton County: https://soor.org/program/benton/ Lincoln County: https://soor.org/program/lincoln- county/	Ages 8 through adult

COMMUNITY & FRIENDSHIP & GROWTH & PRIDE & FUN

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Session 1: June 22 – July 15

SESSION 2: JULY 18 - AUG 10



Get in Touch: campakeela.com @campakeela 866-680-4744





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PARTNERS AT CAMPLAUNCHER.



TOPSoccer 2024

TOPSoccer is a FREE, inclusive soccer program for youth ages 6-18 with ANY disability

Spring Season: March 5th - April 25th Summer Season: June 11th - August 1st Fall Season: September 10th - October 31st





Albany Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm OVFA Fields at YMCA

Corvallis Thursdays 4:30-5:30pm Corvallis Sports Park

Open enrollment all season long, sign up anytime! Questions? Contact Salvador at 541-220-2961 or salvador.maciel@jacksonstreet.org











TOPSoccer 2024

TOPSoccer es un programa de fútbol GRATUITO e inclusivo ara jóvenes de 6 a 18 años con CUALQUIER discapacidad.

Primavera: Marzo 5th - Abril 25th

Verano: Junio 11th - Agosto 1st

Otoño: Septiembre 10th - Octubre 31st





Albany Martes 4:30-5:30pm Campos de OVFA at YMCA

Corvallis Jueves 4:30-5:30pm
Corvallis Sports Park

Preguntas? Envíe un correo electrónico a Salvador a salvador.maciel@jacksonstreet.org o 541-220-2961

Inscripcion abierta durante las 8 semanas. Regístrate cuando quieras!



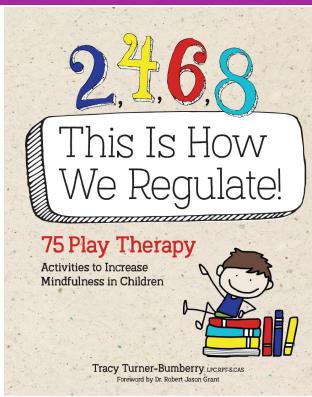








BOOK REVIEWS



2, 4, 6, 8 This is How We Regulate: 75 Play Therapy Activities to Increase Mindfulness in Children

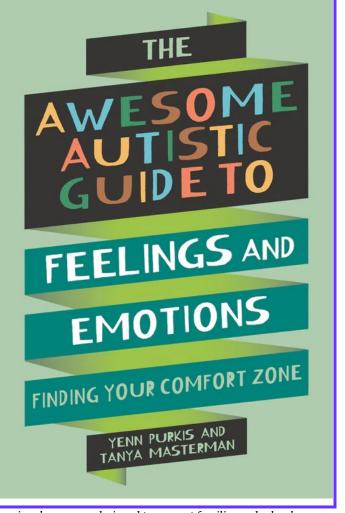
by Tracy Turner-Bumberry

Learning verbal mindfulness strategies can be difficult for children and adolescents, let alone when kids have autism, anxiety, ADHD or other emotional regulation issues. That's why play therapist and counselor, Tracy Turner-Bumberry, LPC, RPT-S, CAS, has created 75 simple, playful and on-point interventions that combine mindfulness, expressive arts and play to help kids achieve greater self-regulation by focusing more and stressing less. Interventions include: Breathing, Drawing, Coloring, Storytelling, Nature, and more.

The Awesome Autistic Guide to Feelings and Emotions: Finding Your Comfort Zone

by Yenn Purkis and Tanya Masterman

This book explores what it feels like to be a young person on the autism spectrum and looks at all the brilliant things people on the autism spectrum can do. Full of insights about being awesome and autistic, this book celebrates the strengths of understanding the world in a different way. It looks at all the reasons being oneself and thinking differently can be totally awesome! It also has tips for managing tricky situations such as meltdowns, sensory differences, and anxiety. It includes fun activities and diary pages where autistic youth, ages 10-14, can write their thoughts and feelings. This book helps adolescent autistic people to manage their emotions and develop the confidence to be who they are.



COMICS

Here are 2 artistic

examples of why autistic individuals struggle with emotional regulation.



AuTalkz

Autistic meltdowns are not the same as temper tantrums. In fact, gaining attention from others dure'n one can make things even worse for us when we get them. Temper tantrums are done to get



Why do they occur?
Welp, there are various factors:
Frustration over communication or
things "normal" people find easy, lack of
stimulation which creates nervousness,
overstimulation...lots of stuff.
We're quite sensitive to our



Meltdowns

They also show up and are acted out on in different ways.

Me...the sensitivity will cause a panic attack, and then I'll withdraw from the world for the rest of the day.

It's sorta a "mode" at that point, and hard to break out of.



To try and forcefully pull someone outta that "mode" when they're not ready... ..welp, be ready to pull them kick'n and scream'n. And I don't mean figuratively.





Linn Benton Lincoln ESD Cascade Regional Inclusive Services Autism Program

905 4th Ave SE Albany, Or. 97321 Tel: 541-812-2600 Fax: 541 926-6047

E-mail: webmaster@lblesd.k12.or.us

Autism Consultants:

Amanda Stenbergamanda.stenberg@lblesd.k12.or.us

Jill Sellersjill.sellers@lblesd.k12.or.us

Kayla Huntkayla.hunt@lblesd.k12.or.us

Michelle Neilsonmichelle.neilson@lblesd.k12.or.us

Ryan Stanleyryan.stanley@lblesd.k12.or.us

VISUALS



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