



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

MiNavigator

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Help. Hope. Answers. Today

Mental Health Tips for Families and Individuals with ASD



During these uncertain and difficult times, families and individuals of all ages are currently dealing with high levels of anxiety and stress. Below are some activities and tips to help you take care of your mental health. These activities can be completed individually or with your family members.

1. Meditation and Mindfulness

- Find a quiet or relaxing setting, if possible.
- Get comfortable: use a pillow, towel, or blanket (if needed) to sit or lie comfortably.
- Breathe deeply and slowly.
- Focus your attention on your breath, a specific object, image, or music.
- Have an open attitude. Don't judge yourself or your thoughts harshly.
- Scan your body by focusing on different parts of your body. Be aware of your body's many sensations and relax each body part one by one.
- Focus on gratitude. Think of that for which you are grateful, whether that might be people, things, memories, future events, feelings, or a good meal.

cont.





- Use a mindfulness app to assist you.

Headspace

Calm

Aura

Buddhify

Smiling Mind

Simple Habit

2. Grounding - Connect and Focus on the Present Moment

- Drink some cool water.
- Take 10 deep breaths.
- Savor food or a drink. Take small bites and focus on the way it tastes, smells, and feels in your mouth.
- Take a walk and focus on your steps.
- Put your hands in water. Focus on the way it feels on different parts of your hands.
- Move your body by doing some stretches.
- Listen and tune in to your surroundings.
- Touch a comforting item. This could be a sweater, blanket, furry pet, or anything that makes you feel safe and at ease.
- Drink a warm cup of tea. Inhale its scent, breathe deeply, and enjoy each sip.
- Put on a song and focus on listening to each instrument individually as the song plays.

3. Limit Media Intake

- Take a break from the news and/or social media, if you're feeling anxious.
- Hearing about the pandemic constantly can increase stress levels.

4. Use "I" Statements

- Use these statements to talk to others about how you are feeling, rather than letting your feelings and thoughts bottle up. Communication is key!
- Examples: "I feel frustrated when my sister is loud" or "I appreciate when you help me keep the house clean".

cont.





5. Take Care of Your Body

- Do your best to eat healthy and well-balanced meals.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Move your body (stretch, exercise, dance).

6. Belly Breathing

- Sit or lie in a comfortable or relaxed position.
- Place one hand on your belly, just below your ribs. Place your second hand on your chest.
- Inhale deeply through your nose while your belly pushes your hand out. Be sure that your belly is moving, rather than your chest.
- Exhale through pursed lips. Feel the hand on your belly sink in as you breathe out all of the air.
- Practice this belly breathing 5 to 10 times.

7. Take a Break and Unwind

- Schedule some time to do something just for yourself. Take a nap, read a book, call a friend, or watch a movie of your choice.

8. Muscle Relaxation Technique

- Lie or sit comfortably.
- Breathe deeply to relax throughout this exercise.
- Tense the muscles of your feet. Release the tension while you exhale.
- Tense your calf muscles. Release the tension while you exhale.
- Work your way up your body, tensing each muscle group.

9. Allow Yourself to be Imperfect

- You aren't going to be able to be perfect at caring for your kids, completing every task, or fixing every problem. Do the best that you can, and cut yourself some slack.

10. Stay Connected

- Use technology (e.g. phone, email, video chat, social media) to stay in touch with friends and family. You are not in this alone!

11. Take It One Day at a Time

- Remember, these measures are temporary and you are not alone!





Staying Safe When Your Child Becomes Escalated

















The recent pandemic has resulted in many changes to our daily lives and routines. Individuals with autism may struggle with these changes and variability in daily routines. This may result in an increase in problem behavior. Here are some simple safety tips for when your child may become escalated:

- 1.** If your child has a current behavior plan, this is a great time to review it. Utilize the strategies outlined in your child's behavior plan as frequently as possible. Reach out to your child's Behavior Analyst to review or ask any additional questions about the child's behavior plan.
- 2.** For low intensity behavior (e.g. you can tell your child is becoming cranky, tired, etc.), consider common setting factors such as pain, illness, discomfort, thirst, hunger, fatigue, etc. If any of these appear relevant, take steps to address the need(s).
- 3.** If your child is engaging in dangerous problem behavior, try to create a safe environment. Ask others to move from the area, if possible. Remove any potentially dangerous items or objects.
- 4.** Maintain supervision, if your child is in crisis (or post-crisis), to ensure their safety.
- 5.** If your child has a current safety plan, be sure to review it so that you may utilize it effectively as needed. If you do not have a current safety plan, reach out to your Behavior Analyst to see if one could be developed over the telephone or via computer/video.
- 6.** If your child's problem behavior has significantly changed (or new, serious behaviors have emerged), your child's Behavior Analyst should be notified, if possible.





Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt

<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Car		<input type="checkbox"/>	Ball	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Hydrant		<input type="checkbox"/>	Bird	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dog		<input type="checkbox"/>	Flag	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Flower		<input type="checkbox"/>	Acorn	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slide		<input type="checkbox"/>	Pine Tree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ant		<input type="checkbox"/>	Bench	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feather		<input type="checkbox"/>	Squirrel	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bunny		<input type="checkbox"/>	Bike	





Tips and Tools for Healthy Leisure During Quarantine

Sarah Spicer, CTRS, QIDP Behavior Specialist, Network 180

Kim Eisenbarth, CTRS, QIDP Behavior Specialist, Network 180

During this time of quarantine and loss of a structured routine for many individuals, structuring leisure time is extremely important. Promoting leisure decreases restlessness, verbal and physical aggression, property destruction and other negative behaviors. Leisure helps people relax, eliminates stress, builds a sense of community, gives individuals a sense of fulfillment, can improve one's mood and can be beneficial to your health (both mentally and physically). The following are some ideas from the five domains of leisure for structured fun to ease the burnout of being at home while in quarantine.

Physical Activity

- Balloon volleyball
- Sports (soccer, basketball, etc.)
- Play the Wii
- Yoga
- Indoor/outdoor obstacle course
- Walk
- Exercise circuits (jumping jacks, push ups, sit ups, stretch, etc.)
- Relay race
- Freeze dance party

Social Activity

- Cook/bake
- Have a group picnic
- Charades
- Bingo
- Talent show
- Movie night
- Build a fort
- Build a tower (spaghetti and marshmallow or paper)
- Freeze dance party

cont.





Intellectual Activity

- Play cards
- Play a board game
- Sudoku, word search, word puzzles
- Scavenger hunt
- Memory game
- Journal, write a story, poem
- Puzzles
- Trivia
- Spot the difference
- Call family or friends

Individual Activity

- Journal
- Listen to music
- Write a letter or create and write a card to someone
- Book on tape, read a book
- Meditate
- Clean room, organize
- Video games
- Play *pegs*
- Sort objects

Creative Activity

- Draw with chalk
- Dry erase marker draw on windows
- Color/paint
- Make a collage
- Make a birdfeeder
- Shaving cream pictures
- Rice table seek and find
- Plant an indoor garden or plant





Resources

Educational - Preschool-5th grade lessons, materials, and tracking tools: [Stages Learning Materials](#)

Adolescents - Adulting 101: [Adulting 101-Week 1 Budget-Credit-FULL - Clare County](#)

Mental Health - [MDHHS - MDHHS Announces Peer-run Warmline to Aid Persons with Mental Health Needs During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

School Closure Kit - https://l.ead.me/bbTE3n?fbclid=IwAR3LbbRY-QywcYVmXISFYGRbs4t3tuBcAQWOhAU0uj29ML_3f0SVR29ulBBA



LIVE! VIRTUAL INDEPENDENT LIVING TRAINING

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020 | 2PM - 4PM



Register at aaomi.org/ilt-registration

