



# Staying Mentally Well for the Whole Family

## Find a new normal

We love routine, and we are aware that many autistic young people also enjoy routine, doing similar things, and knowing what happening next. At the moment this is really difficult to maintain and keep up. Try and think about your daily routine at the moment and make this the norm. Such as: What time to get up, go to bed. Generally when you eat all of your meals. When you will take your daily exercise and lastly scheduling in school work and other activities. Do this a daily guide, try and keep it the same as much as you can.



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## Exercise good self-care

Look after yourselves. This is really important, be kind to yourself and others.

Make sure you are looking after your physical wellbeing – sleep – eating good diet – exercise, fresh air, talking kindly to your self – self soothing exercises (see below). What would you tell a friend to do to look after themselves? Then do this for yourselves. Try and make time to put yourselves first. Then look after your child and other family members

Please look at the 5 ways for wellbeing activity sheets for Primary and Secondary school children. I have often mentioned the 5 ways for wellbeing and how good this is to try and build this in every day. You may then like to take up the NHS Challenge.



## Self-soothe regularly



Practice these at a time of calm

**Massage your hands** – can feel really good, massaging hands, massage a cream and lotion into them after washing acts as a self-soothing. Focus on them just your hands, how they feel, smell, this is a quick and easy thing to do any time. Think of your worries and work them out of your hands rubbing each of the fingers upwards. Let those worries go.

## Story Massage

Story Massage can be really relaxing for our children, they may even like to do the same to you. Always ask permission first before, touching someone and starting a story. The Benefits can be:





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- Deep pressure massage gives a calming effect.
- It can improve body awareness which helps spatial awareness.
- It enables children to develop skills to better manage their difficulties and support them to access the curriculum.
- Offers mindfulness skills to control and manage anger and anxiety.
- Can improve visual memory.

The Story Massage Website to find out more is:

<https://www.storymassage.co.uk/>

Mary from story massage has kindly sent us a free story book for you to use. I have written out the hand movements for you and attach them. However there are many youtube video's on Mary's website if you would like to learn more.

**Close your eyes and look inwards** - Shut yourselves off from all the incoming information, focus in, sit still for 30 sec's. You don't need anything, focus on what you can hear, tune in on the different sounds, focus on smells and the chair you are sitting on.

**Give yourself a hug** - It sends a message to our brain we are safe, comes from being a baby, feeling safe and secure. Squeeze hard for 10 to 20 secs, ask someone else for a hug. Let your brain know you are safe, tell yourself out loud or tell your child.

**Box Breathing** – Simple breathing or 4 square breathing. Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4 drawing a square with your finger. Look up others.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNhMhp1PoGI>

**Body Scan** – Paying close attention to every part of our body. Focusing on our body. Look for a body script. Lots on the internet. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QS2yDmWk0vs>

## Stay connected

Stay connected virtually. Make the decision to interact with the people who are important to you. Who might be helpful to you? Build in regular times to talk to people. Stay connected with yourselves. This can also be part of your 5 ways to wellbeing. Improve your technology skills if you are not sure how to use Zoom and other virtually tools.



## Take time out from coronavirus worry

Make a time of the day when you can worry. It sounds strange but it is effective. I have attached a link to a nice free e book for children worrying about Covid 19. Give your self-time when you do not discuss Covid 19. We call this 'Worry free time'. Do it collectively, set up an agreement with all of the family.





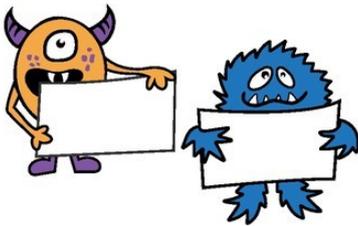
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## Name your worries to tame them

We do have worries and how do we take control of them. Name the worries, if you name it you can contain it. When we take action we are more able to do something with them. Write things down, doesn't matter how big or small they are. Once they are written down it feels more manageable. Then decide what can you control and what you can't control. So the ones you can, make a plan, what can you do. Try to except the ones you can't change, share them with others, sharing lightens the load. You can say to a child I will take that one and put it on my list as you do not need to worry about that one. Remember to use your Worry Monsters or make a worry book / box.

### Worry Monsters

What to Do: Cut out your worries and write down your worries. Place them in a box and let your monsters take away your worries.



## Make positive plans for the future

It's hard to imagine the future at the moment. However think about what you would like to do, where you may like to go. Visiting a friend, going to a restaurant, buying something or returning to a hobby. What are your plans? Write them down. What else would you like to do? Giving a family member a hug. This won't last forever, we can go back to doing things eventually.



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