



Resources for Autistic Individuals and their Families Impacted by War and Displacement

**Social
Narratives**

**Visual
Supports**

**Coping
Strategies**



RESOURCES FOR AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES IMPACTED BY WAR AND DISPLACEMENT

THE AUTISM HUB AT UNC

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Children and families impacted by war and displacement are likely experiencing severe trauma, and responses may include anxiety, sadness, shame, difficulty concentrating, feeling numb, insecurity, and physical pain. These responses may be heightened for autistic individuals. Our resources include three main categories: social narratives, visual supports (templates for daily routines and choices), and coping strategies. They are designed to help provide understanding during these chaotic times and offer routines that may bring comfort or familiarity.

These resources are designed to be viewed/used on a mobile device given printing inaccessibility.

RESOURCES



Social Narratives



Visual Supports



Coping Strategies





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SOCIAL NARRATIVES

A social narrative can explain in simple language what is happening or what will happen. It can identify where the individual may be going and what the expectations are.

Helping to clarify what is coming can increase predictability and a sense of control. Using both words and

pictures can be helpful to support comprehension and reduce overwhelm.



RESOURCES INCLUDE:

War (2 versions)

Sleeping In a New Place (2 versions)

Being Afraid (2 versions)

Big Feelings & Being Gentle with Myself and Others (2 versions)

Staying Safe (2 versions)

Adjusting to a New Place (2 versions)

Being in a Noisy Place (2 versions)

Leaving Suddenly (2 versions)

Loss of a Loved One (2 versions)





WAR I



People in my country are experiencing a war. War is very dangerous.

During a war, there may be bombings, gun shots, and violence. People can get hurt.

War is scary. I may cry, scream, or yell. My stomach may hurt. I may feel angry, mad, and sad. My family, other adults, and other kids may also feel this way. It is okay to feel angry, mad, and sad.

To stay safe, we may need to leave our home. I may have to travel with my family to stay safe.

To stay safe, it is important to listen and follow the directions of my family or other adults I know. I can take deep breaths, ask for tight squeezes, or ask for help.

War is dangerous and scary, but there are people that I know who are trying to keep me safe and comfort me.



WAR II



People in my country are experiencing



a war. War is very dangerous.



During a war, there may be bombings,

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gun shots, and violence. People can



get hurt.



War is scary. I may cry, scream, or yell.



My stomach may hurt. I may feel



scared, mad, and sad. My family, other



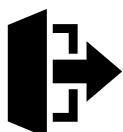
adults, and other kids may also feel



this way. It is okay to feel scared, mad,



and sad.



To stay safe, we may need to leave our



home. I may have to travel with my



family to stay safe.



To stay safe, it is important to listen

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and follow the directions of my family



or other adults I know. I can take deep



breaths, ask for tight squeezes, or ask

for help.



War is dangerous and scary, but there



are people that I know who are trying



to keep me safe and comfort me.





SLEEPING IN A NEW PLACE I



Sometimes, we have to sleep in new places. We might sleep in new places because it is safer than the old place we slept.

Sleeping in a new place is hard because it is different. I can remember that even though it is hard, we are sleeping in a new place to help us stay safe.

When I sleep in a new place, it might have different sounds or different smells. If that bothers me, I can cover my ears or plug my nose.

When I sleep in a new place, I might sleep on something that feels different, like the floor or a mat or a sleeping bag. People are trying to find things to make me comfortable, but sometimes it does not feel comfortable.

When I sleep in a new place, there might be different people. Being around new people might make me anxious. I can ask someone I know to stay near me or hold my hand while I fall asleep.

When I sleep in a new place, there might be more people. If there are more people, it might be noisy or the lights might be on when I am trying to sleep. I can cover my ears if it is loud. I can put something over my eyes if it is bright.

There are lots of changes when I sleep in a new place. If I need help trying to sleep in the new place, I can tell someone. I can ask someone I know to sing me a song or tell me a story. I can also have someone I know rub my back.



SLEEPING IN A NEW PLACE II



Sometimes, we have to sleep in new



places. We might sleep in new places

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because it is safer than the old place

we slept.



Sleeping in a new place is hard



because it is different. I can remember



that even though it is hard, we are



sleeping in a new place to help us stay



safe.



When I sleep in a new place, it might



have different sounds or different



smells. If that bothers me, I can cover



my ears or plug my nose.

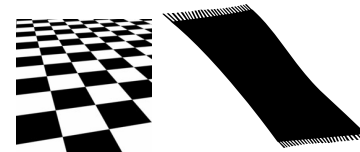


When I sleep in a new place, I might



sleep on something that feels

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different, like the floor or a mat or a



sleeping bag. People are trying to find

things to make me comfortable, but

sometimes it does not feel

comfortable.



When I sleep in a new place, there





might be different people. Being



around new people might make me



anxious. I can ask someone I know to



stay near me or hold my hand while I



fall asleep.



When I sleep in a new place, there

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might be more people. If there are



more people, it might be noisy or the



lights might be on when I am trying to



sleep. I can cover my ears if it is loud. I



can put something over my eyes if it is

bright.





There are lots of changes when I sleep

in a new place. If I need help trying to



sleep in the new place, I can tell

someone. I can ask someone I know to



sing me a song or tell me a story. I can

also have someone I know rub my

back.

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BEING AFRAID I



Sometimes I might feel afraid or scared. It is okay to feel afraid.

I might feel afraid when there are loud noises, when I am away from home, or when something changes around me. I might feel afraid when I see other people who are afraid or upset.

When I feel afraid, I might feel like my stomach is upset or my heart is beating faster. I might want to hide or run.

When I feel afraid, I can find an adult that I trust to help me. I can squeeze their hand or give them a hug if I want to. I can hug my own body to help me feel safe.

To help my body calm down, I can go somewhere safe with someone I trust. I can take deep breaths in through my nose and out through my mouth to help me breathe out the scary feelings.

It's okay to be afraid. When I am afraid, I can ask for help to calm down.



BEING AFRAID II



Sometimes I might feel afraid or



scared. It is okay to feel afraid.



I might feel afraid when there are loud

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noises, when I am away from home, or

when something changes around me. I



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When I feel afraid, I might feel like my



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feel safe.



To help my body calm down, I can go



somewhere safe with someone I trust.



I can take deep breaths in through my



nose and out through my mouth to



help me breathe out the scary feelings.





It's okay to be afraid. When I am afraid,



I can ask for help to calm down.

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BIG FEELINGS & BEING GENTLE WITH MYSELF AND OTHERS I



Life is very hard right now. Life is different than it was before. When things are hard and different, people have lots of feelings.

I might feel mad, sad, confused, or scared. Sometimes my feelings are big. Sometimes when I have big feelings, I hurt myself or hurt other people. When I have big feelings, it is important that I am gentle with myself and gentle with others.

If I am having big feelings, I can think of ways to help my big feelings and be gentle with myself and other people.

I can give myself big squeezes or ask someone else to give me big squeezes. This is a way to be gentle with myself and others when I have big feelings.

I can push my hands together or against someone else's hands. I can push my hands on a wall or the floor. This is a way to be gentle with myself and others when I have big feelings.

I can take deep and slow breaths on my own. I can take deep and slow breaths with others. I can cover my ears or close my eyes when I take deep slow breaths. This is a way to be gentle with myself and others when I have big feelings.

I can cry or talk to someone about my feelings. This is a way to be gentle with myself and others when I have big feelings.

Having big feelings makes sense right now. It is okay to have big feelings. When I have big feelings, I will remember to be gentle with myself and others.



BIG FEELINGS & BEING GENTLE WITH MYSELF AND OTHERS II



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Life is very hard right now. Life is

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 hurt myself or hurt other people.




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of ways to help my big feelings and be
 gentle with myself and other people.


I can give myself big squeezes or ask
  someone else to give me big squeezes.


This is a way to be gentle with myself
 and others when I have big feelings.




I can push my hands together or



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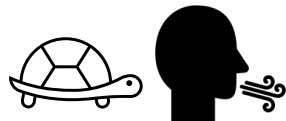


push my hands on a wall or the floor.

This is a way to be gentle with myself



and others when I have big feelings.



I can take deep and slow breaths on

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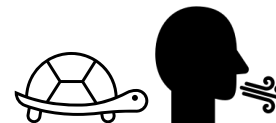
my own. I can take deep and slow



breaths with others. I can cover my



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gentle with myself and others when I



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I can cry or talk to someone about my



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with myself and others when I have big



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Having big feelings makes sense right



now. It is okay to have big feelings.

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When I have big feelings, I will

remember to be gentle with myself



and others.





STAYING SAFE I



Staying safe means avoiding danger when possible. When I am in danger, my heart may beat faster, I may sweat, or my stomach may hurt.

There are rules to stay safe and avoid danger when possible:

- Stay with my family member or an adult I know.
- Hold the hand of my family member or an adult I know.
- Follow directions of my family member or an adult I know.

To keep me safe, my family member or another adult may tell me I need to do something. When my family member tells me to do something, I need to follow the direction quickly to stay safe. Sometimes I might not like the directions, but I need to follow the direction to stay safe.

If I feel I am in danger or unsafe, I can tell my family member or an adult I know. I can hold my family member's hand. I can take deep breaths or ask my family member for a tight squeeze.

When I follow safety rules, my family member or an adult I know can help me stay safe.



STAYING SAFE II



Staying safe means avoiding danger



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- Follow directions of my family



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 hand. I can take deep breaths or ask


 my family member for a tight squeeze.


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 member or an adult I know can help

 me stay safe.





ADJUSTING TO A NEW PLACE I



I had to leave my old home and go somewhere new. I went somewhere new so I could be safer. Going to new places can be hard.

When I am somewhere new, there might be different sounds. It might be louder or quieter than my old home. There might be different sounds that I have never heard before. If I don't like the new sounds, I can cover my ears to take a break from the sounds.

When I am somewhere new, there might be different smells. Some smells might be good, and some smells might be gross. If I don't like the new smells, I can plug my nose for a little while.

When I am somewhere new, there might be different people. There might be people that I know and people that I don't know. Being with new people might feel scary. If I feel scared, I can tell someone I know and stay by someone I know. Being with new people can also be a good thing. I might meet someone new that I like.

When I am somewhere new, I am not with my old things. I had to leave things behind. That might make me feel sad or mad. I won't be able to get my old things, but I can tell someone that I miss my old things.

It is hard being somewhere new. There are people who want to help me get used to the new place. I can tell them my feelings and ask for help.



ADJUSTING TO A NEW PLACE II



I had to leave my old home and go

somewhere new. I went somewhere



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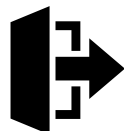


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When I am somewhere new, I am not



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feel sad or mad. I won't be able to get



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that I miss my old things.



It is hard being somewhere new. There



are people who want to help me get

used to the new place. I can tell them



my feelings and ask for help.



BEING IN A NOISY PLACE I



Sometimes it is noisy. There may be loud crashing noises, popping noises, sirens, or people crying or yelling. This can feel scary.

People can feel scared when it is noisy or when they see others crying. It is okay to feel scared.

When kids hear loud noises, they might feel afraid or have an upset feeling in their stomach or head. The sounds might feel painful in their ears, head, or body. They might feel like they want to hide.

When I hear loud noises, I may feel scared or want to hide. I can stay with my family or another adult. I can cover my ears and take deep breaths to breathe out the fear. I can breathe in through my nose and slowly out through my mouth. I can look at my family or another adult that I know. I will stay with my family or another adult that I know.

I can be proud of myself for trying to relax my body and for staying close to my family or another adult that I know when it is noisy.



BEING IN A NOISY PLACE II



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I can cover my ears and take deep



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I will stay with my family or another



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I can be proud of myself for trying to



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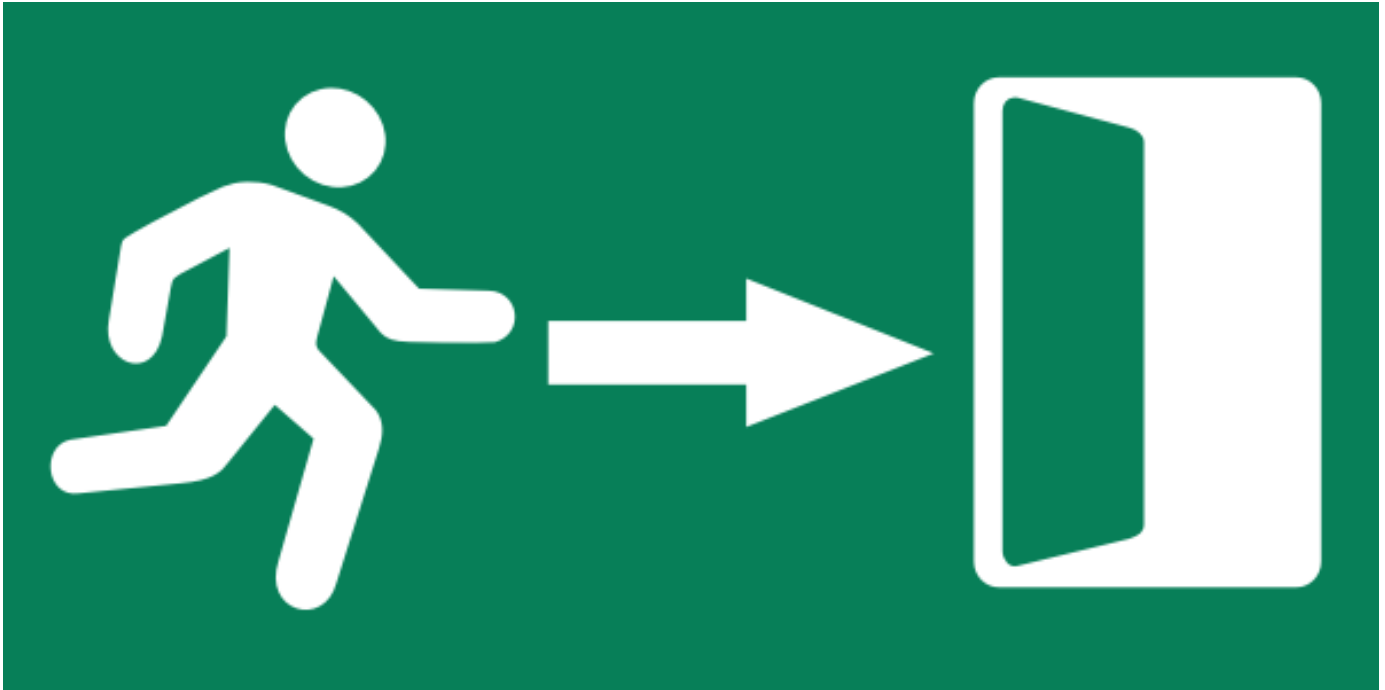


when it is noisy.

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LEAVING SUDDENLY I



Sometimes we need to leave quickly. This may feel scary.

People may be afraid or angry when we need to leave or when there is danger. People might yell instructions and pack things fast or leave things behind. People might walk fast or run away.

When kids have to leave quickly, they might have an upset feeling in their stomach. They might feel scared, worried, or angry. They might feel sad leaving things behind. They might not want to move or feel like they cannot move.

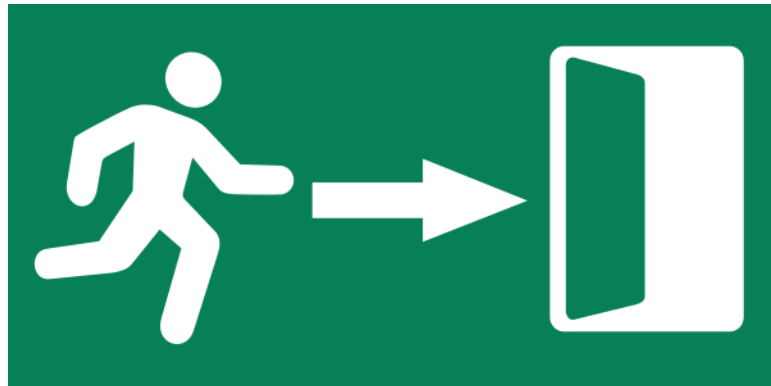
When I have to leave quickly, I may feel afraid and get an upset feeling in my body. My body may feel full of energy and my heart might beat fast. It is okay for me to feel scared.

I can hold a family member's hand and watch what they do. I can do the same things my family does and follow them. I can go to a safe place with my family or another adult that I know. When I get to the new place, I can take deep breaths or gently squeeze my hands or body. This can help calm my body.

I can leave quickly and then calm my body down when we get to the new place.



LEAVING SUDDENLY II



Resources for Autistic Individuals and their Families Impacted by War and Displacement

Sometimes we need to leave quickly.



This may feel scary.



People may be afraid or angry when we



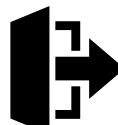
need to leave or when there is danger.



People might yell instructions and pack

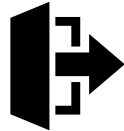


things fast or leave things behind.





People might walk fast or run away.



When kids have to leave quickly, they



might have an upset feeling in their



stomach. They might feel scared,



worried, or angry. They might feel sad

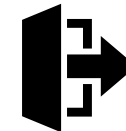
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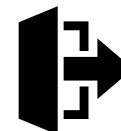
the new place, I can take deep breaths



or gently squeeze my hands or body.



This can help calm my body.



I can leave quickly and then calm my

body down when we get to the new

place.





LOSS OF A LOVED ONE I



When someone I love dies, it means I will not see them again. It can be hard when I do not get to see people I love. There are things I can do to help me remember them.

I can think about them and the happy things we did together. I can talk to them in my head, or I can talk to other people about them.

When someone I love dies, I may have strong feelings. It is OK to feel sad, mad, or scared. When I have big feelings, it is OK to cry.

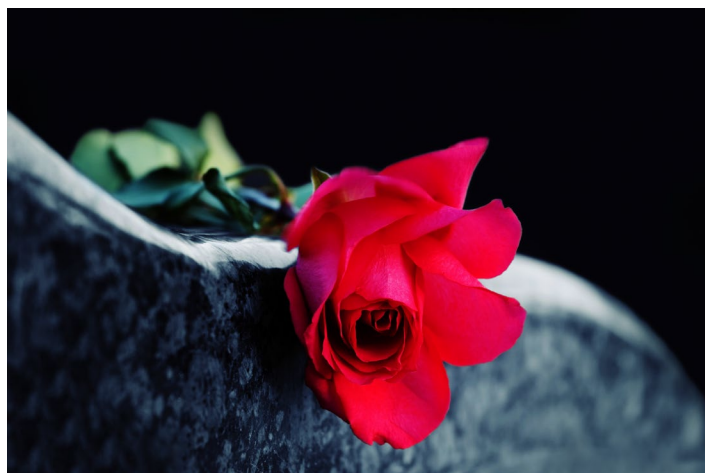
When I have big feelings, there are things I can do to help me feel better. I can take deep breaths. I can think about things that make me happy, and I can be with people I love.

It is OK to feel confused when someone dies. I can ask questions to help me understand. I can talk to others about how I feel.

Even though I lost someone I love, there are other people here who still love me. The people here who love me will help me feel better.



LOSS OF A LOVED ONE II



When someone dies, I will not see

them again.



Instead, I can think about them in my

head.

When someone dies, it is OK to feel



sad or mad. When I am sad, it is OK to



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When I am sad, I can take deep



breaths and be with people I love.



The people here who love me will help

me feel better.





VISUAL SUPPORTS

Visuals can offer predictability and promote understanding even in the midst of a chaotic and uncertain time. Using a visual schedule, First/Then, or a visual reminder about the steps of a task can help orient someone to the next activity(ies) and provide a familiar routine. Offering choices, when possible, can also embed a sense of control during a time of crises. Choices can relate to HOW an activity is completed (e.g., wash your right hand or your left hand first) or WHAT is completed (eat your cracker or your fruit; sing this song or that song) even when there is little option for choice about the activities that must occur.



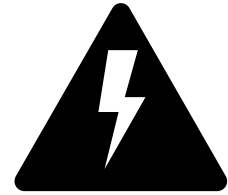
RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- What To Do If I Am Hurt
- Daily Schedule: Template I
- Daily Schedule: Example
- Daily Schedule: Template II
- Choice Board: Exercise Activities
- Choice Board: Daily Activities I
- Choice Board: Daily Activities II
- First/Then Template
- Daily Routine: Going to the Bathroom
- Daily Routine: Getting Dressed



WHAT TO DO IF I AM HURT

1. Check for additional dangers (falling objects, live wires, broken glass)

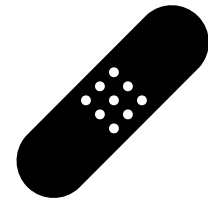


2. If possible, call an emergency number
OR

3. Let a nearby adult know that you are injured. If it is a severe injury or you cannot move, call out for help, or repeatedly tap on a nearby object to gain someone's attention



4. If you are bleeding, if possible, find a clean cloth to cover the wound and apply pressure to stop the bleeding



5. If you have a burn, if possible, rinse the burned area with cool water for 15 minutes, then cover with a clean cloth



6. If you have a broken bone, gently place the bone between two non-flexible objects (wood) and tie in place with a clean cloth



7. Find a safe area to wait for help











DAILY SCHEDULE TEMPLATE I

Activity	Done





DAILY SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

Activity	Done
 Wake Up	
 Brush Teeth	
 Get Dressed	
 Eat Breakfast	
 Read (30 minutes)	
 Exercise (30 minutes)	



EXERCISE ACTIVITIES



Lift weights



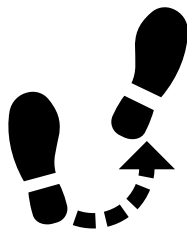
Wall push-ups



Dance



Sit-ups



Climb stairs



Walk up/down a hallway

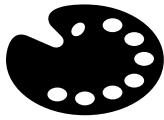


Yoga



Jump rope

DAILY ACTIVITIES I



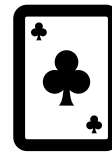
Create art/crafts



Play board games



Write



Play cards



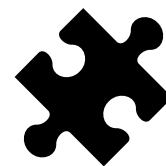
Read



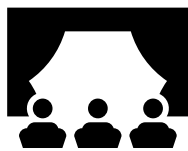
Talk



Knit/Crochet/Sew



Work on a puzzle



Put on a play



Exercise

DAILY ACTIVITIES II



Play with toy vehicles



Watch birds



Brush teeth



Get dressed



Gaze at the stars



Make silly faces



Eat a snack



Sleep



Use bathroom



Brush hair



FIRST/THEN BOARD

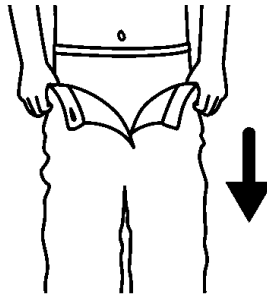
First	Then

VISUALS FOR DAILY ROUTINES: BATHROOM

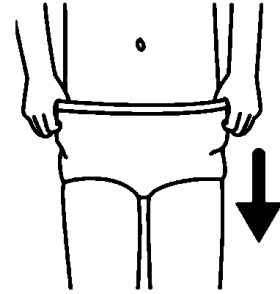
1. Go into the bathroom and close the door.



2. Pull pants down.



3. Pull underwear down.



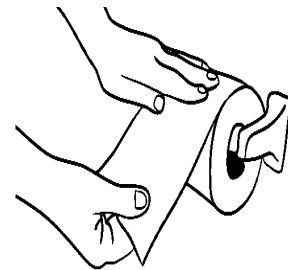
4. Sit on toilet.



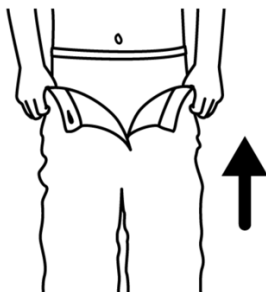
5. Go to the bathroom.



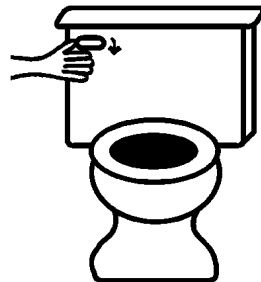
6. Wipe with toilet paper.



7. Pull pants and underwear up.



8. Flush toilet.

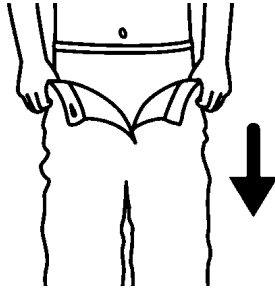


9. Wash hands in sink and dry them with a towel.

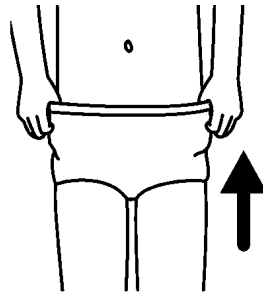


VISUALS FOR DAILY ROUTINES: GETTING DRESSED

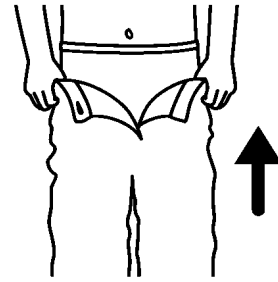
1. Take off clothes



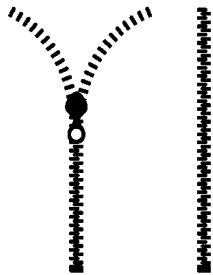
2. Put on underwear



3. Put on pants or shorts



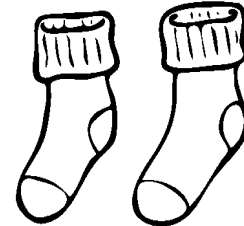
4. Zip up zipper on pants



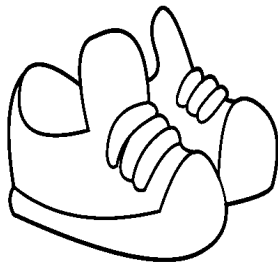
5. Put on shirt



6. Put on socks



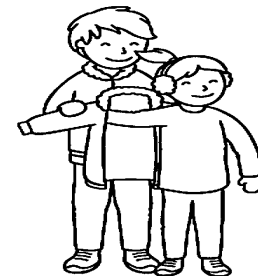
7. Put on shoes



8. Tie your shoes or ask for help



9. Put on coat or jacket



COPING STRATEGIES

Trauma can contribute to shut down, meltdown, physical pain, difficulty communicating, aggression, anxiety, and/or self-injurious behavior. This section includes ideas and supports that can promote coping skills during this very stressful time. One strategy is mindfulness.



Mindfulness is a technique to remain present in the moment, by noticing feelings and events that are occurring, such as what sounds you are hearing or what you see in your surroundings. Mindfulness can help reduce stress.

RESOURCES INCLUDE:

Coping Strategies

Calming Routine

Mindful Senses












Exercise: Yoga Poses

Expression Activities

Soles of the Feet (adapted from Singh et al., 2003)

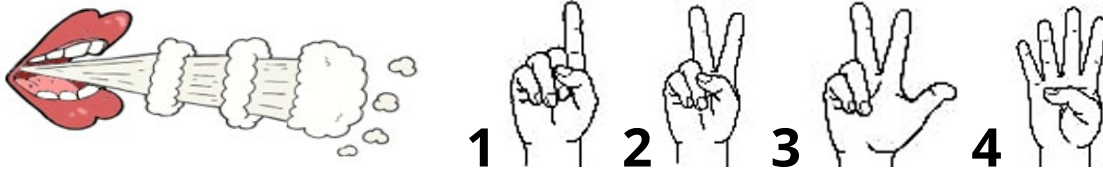
Dandelion Breathing

COPING STRATEGIES

<p>It is normal to feel forgetful. Keep a notebook with you to write things down to help you remember.</p>	
<p>Drawing can help children express how they feel. Provide paper and pencil/crayons and encourage children to draw what they are feeling.</p>	
<p>Connecting with others by going to school, if possible, and seeing friends (online or in person when safe) is helpful</p>	
<p>Following any familiar routines can be helpful (story before bedtime, special hugs).</p>	
<p>Having a special toy or item from home can be soothing.</p>	
<p>Helping others in any small way can improve mental health.</p>	
<p>Find a spot to get away or take a break, if possible (under a blanket, in a quiet corner)</p>	
<p>Use music to help with transitions or difficult times (sing a familiar song).</p>	
<p>Offer sensory input like deep pressure or preferred smells.</p>	
<p>Use a timer to let your child know when a transition is ahead (on any mobile device, can also download Time Timer for free).</p>	
<p>Draw pictures to let your child know what is coming.</p>	

CALMING ROUTINE

1. Take 4 deep breaths



2. Clench fists 4 times



3. Count to 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Good job!

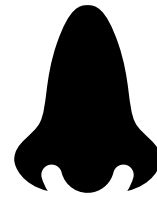


MINDFUL SENSES

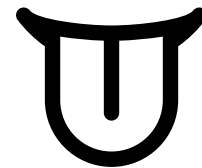
**Think about something I like
to look at.**



**Think about something that
smells good.**



**Think about something I like
to taste.**



**Think about something I like
to listen to.**



**Think about something that
feels good to touch.**



YOGA POSES

With your mouth closed, take in a deep breath (inhale) through your nose and hold for 3 seconds, gradually working up to 10 seconds. Then breathe out (exhale) slowly through your mouth while saying 'Ahhhh.' Go through three deep inhale/slow exhale cycles per pose.



Tree



Crescent Lunge



Warrior



Cobra



Downward-Facing
Dog



Mountain



Triangle



Plank



Cat

EXPRESSION ACTIVITIES

Journaling



Create a daily routine



Create a bullet journal:

- Write one line a day
- Add images
- List calming tips
- Track your mood
- Take a daily photo and describe what is happening



Video journal:

- Film 1 second daily
- Interview, talk about your mood, experiences...

Art



Draw

- Scribble stress away
- Draw with your eyes closed
- Think of a flower you would love to see and draw what you imagine
- Draw yourself as a superhero



Create a graphic novel or comic strip:

- What do you miss?
- What are you worried about?
- What are your hopes?

SOLES OF THE FEET (adapted from Singh et al., 2003)

When feeling sad or angry, you can focus on an object to help you cope through the feelings.

1. Stand with your feet flat on the floor



2. Move your toes



3. Feel your socks, shoes, or the floor touching your feet



4. Repeat as needed

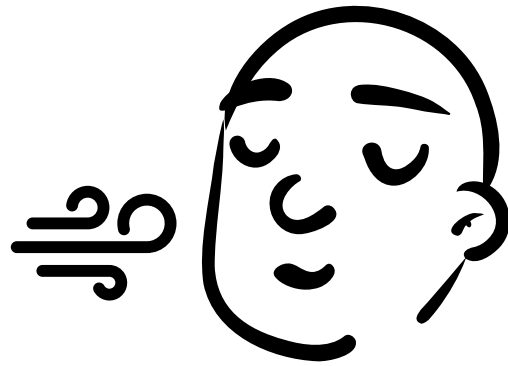


DANDELION BREATHING

Imagine you are holding a dandelion



Take a big breath in



Blow away all the dandelion seeds.





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These resources were developed, adapted, and compiled upon request by an autistic advocate and autism-related professionals from the Ukraine and Russia. They will be culturally and linguistically adapted and translated by Dr. Danna Summers. We recognize they only touch the surface of the many supports needed by those impacted by war and displacement, and that our resources may reflect our limited understanding of these traumatic events. We also recognize that autistic individuals and their families are currently experiencing war and displacement in other areas around the world, and we will work to share and adapt/translate these resources more broadly.

Please reach out if you would like to translate or adapt these materials to be meaningful for your community: kara.hume@unc.edu

OTHER RELATED RESOURCES INCLUDE:

<https://www.actcommunity.ca/resources-for-ukraine/>

SUGGESTED CITATION

Hume, K., Waters, V., Dees, B., Rentschler, L., Sam, A., Steinbrenner, J., Kennedy, T., Tomaszewski, B., Reszka, S., Perkins, Y., Nowell, S., & Bossen, B. (2022). *Resources for Autistic Individuals and their Families Impacted by War and Displacement*. Chapel Hill, NC: School of Education, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and Allied Health of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/resources-autistic-individuals-and-their-families-impacted-war-and-displacement>

