



Helping your child to understand and regulate their emotions.



Communication and Autism Team



Birmingham
City Council



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S TRUST



Autism
Education
Trust

Aims of this workshop:

Think about our own emotions and emotional responses.



Think about why children sometimes become dysregulated.



What can dysregulation/distress look like?



Think about the autism lens.



How can we help in moments of dysregulation?



How can we reduce triggers?



How can we teach about emotions?

Are adults always in control of their responses?

We all have times when we react in a way that shows we are distressed:

- When we are tired
- When we are hungry
- When we are in danger
- When we are anxious



Can you think of any others?

Why do children become dysregulated?

Our children are more likely to become emotionally dysregulated if:

- They don't know what's going to happen next
- They do not understand their emotions yet
- They are hungry, thirsty, hot, cold or tired
- A certain sound or touch irritates them
- Their friends upset them




Why do children become dysregulated?

Our children are more likely to become emotionally dysregulated when:

- They find things they have been asked to do too hard
- They don't know why something has happened or why they have to do something
- They are confused
- They are finding it difficult to communicate effectively

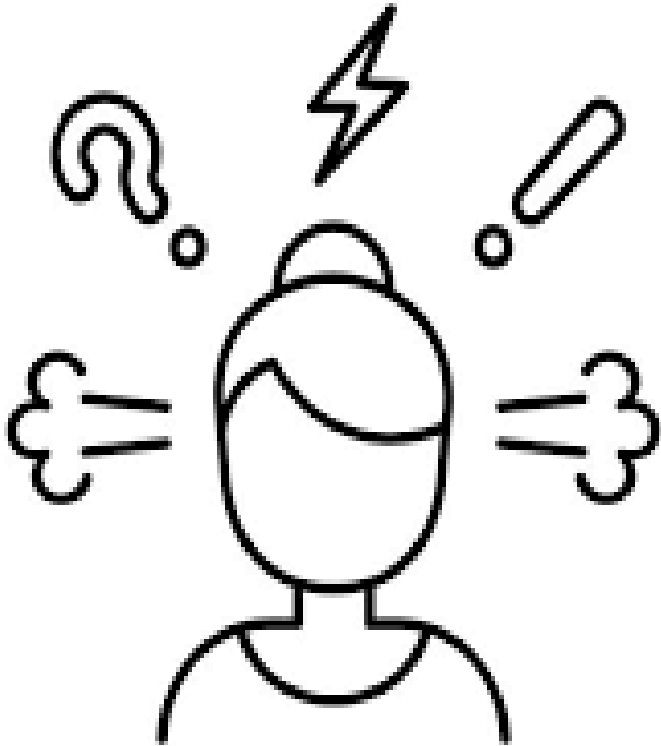


What might we see?

- Hiding
 - Refusal
 - “Defiance”
 - Shut down
 - Running off
 - Avoidance
 - Crying
- 
- Screaming
 - Shouting
 - Hitting out
 - Self-harm
 - Flop to the floor
 - Throwing/breaking objects

These are all responses to emotions. We should not attempt to stop the emotion itself. Try to understand the behaviour we see and redirect the responses where necessary to ensure safety.

Remember...



All behaviour is a form of communication.

What is your child's behaviour telling you?

There are no 'good' or 'bad' emotions.

All emotions are valid. We all experience a range of emotions in our daily lives.

The autism lens and the 3 areas of difference:

What is autism?

Autistic pupils have differences in three areas of development. These are:



Social understanding and communication.



Flexibility, information processing, and understanding.



Sensory processing and integration.

We need to look at these differences in terms of both the strengths and challenges that might arise.

How to help in the moment of dysregulation:

Think about your own emotions in the heat of the moment

Lower your tone of voice

Take some deep breaths and try to stay calm yourself

Give your child space

Reduce demands on your child

Reassure them and acknowledge their feelings (if appropriate)

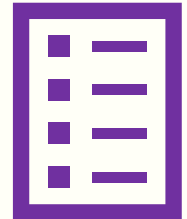
Use less words

Think about your own body language



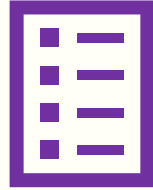
How can I help?

- Remove or lessen triggers
- Give/teach them a strategy to manage the trigger
- Prepare them and take away the unpredictability of a situation
- Plan ahead and have a visual schedule
- Be consistent with your responses – this adds predictability
- Use distraction or humour (if appropriate).

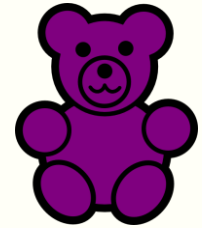


How can I help?

- Have strong routines and stick to them as best you can



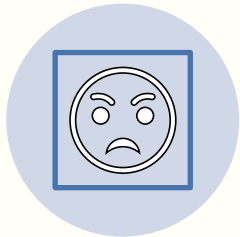
- Let your child use cuddly toys, sensory toys or movement to help them stay regulated



- Allow your child time to let off steam at regular intervals through active activities



How to help teach about emotions:



Teach them about their emotions



**Label emotions for them
e.g. I can see you're excited because you are jumping up and down**



Talk to them about what happens in their body when they feel emotions such as anger, frustration, excitement, happiness



Talk to them about your own emotions so that they see that we all have emotional responses



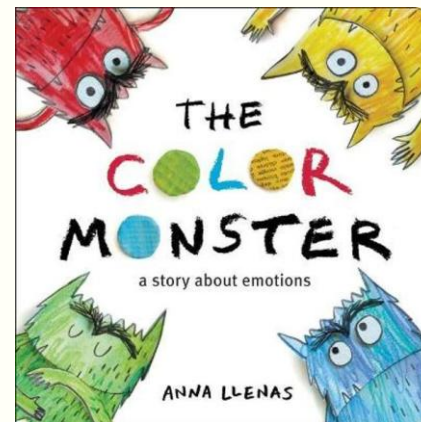
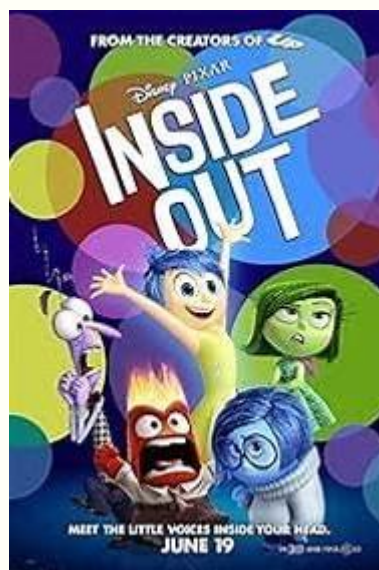
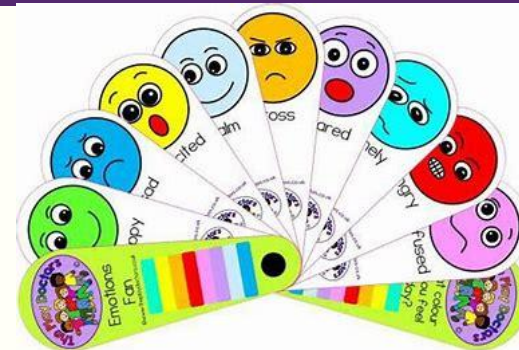
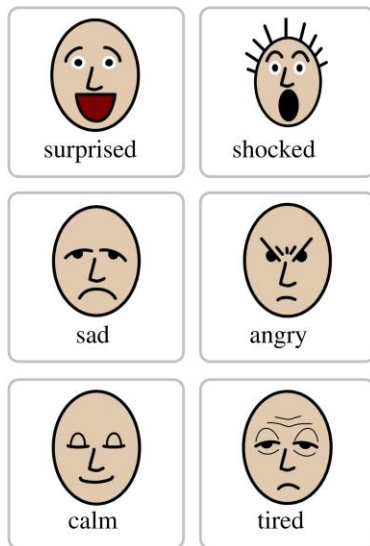
Talk about emotions displayed by book and TV characters



Your child's age/stage of development will determine how you teach them about emotions.



Some ideas/resources to help:



How to help in the moment of dysregulation:

Remember...

Your child is not giving you a hard time.
They are having a hard time.



Be kind to yourself:

- You might not get it right every time. You are still a good parent.
- Keep a note/journal/diary/photos of fun times with your child to help you when things are tough.
- Remember that your child will grow and develop and that they will learn regulation skills as they grow.



Resources and links:

- Occupational Therapy Team: [Children and Young People's Occupational Therapy Team | Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- [Communication and Autism Team | Local Offer Birmingham](#)
- [Distressed behaviour](#) National Autistic Society

Your Feedback is important to us:

- Please use the QR Code below to complete a short evaluation about today's session.

Parent Carer - Communication
and Autism (CAT) Team Feedback
2025 -2026

