

*Embracing  
Autism*



# Managing well-being during Coronavirus – Covid19

## OAADSS Aspiration Workshop



# Objectives of the workshop



## To develop a fuller understanding of:

- The feelings associated with uncertainty
- The behaviours associated with uncertainty
- Strategies to help manage these feelings and behaviours



# Coronavirus (Covid-19)



- The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has meant we have all had to make changes to the way we live. We are all living with uncertainty.
- Uncertainty can cause us to experience a range of feelings for example anxiety, stress, loneliness, sadness, worry, boredom or frustration.
- It is important to remember it is OK to experience these feelings, even if they may be uncomfortable. Everyone experiences uncertainty in different ways. So remember this situation is temporary and the difficult feelings will pass.



# What is Uncertainty ?



- Not knowing the outcome of an event or experience
- Unpredictability – not knowing what is to come next
- Being unsure of what is happening around us.
- Being unsure of what to say or do



# Feelings



- For many people on the autism spectrum recognising, naming and coping with feelings can be very difficult
- Uncertain situations can be particularly challenging
- Learning to recognise when you are starting to have uncomfortable/negative feelings is key
- Once you have noticed the uncomfortable/negative feeling starting you can try to do something about it



# Anxiety

- Anxiety or worry can be linked to uncertain situations or events
- A high level of anxiety is common in people on the autism spectrum – people worry about changes in routines, unanswered questions, uncertainties , unknowns
- It is normal to experience anxiety at times. However, anxiety which is long lasting can affect daily life and impact on emotional and physical well-being.



# What might anxiety look like



- You may experience some physical sensations e.g. be aware of your heart rate rising, becoming hot and sweaty, tingling in your hands, butterflies in your stomach.
- Sensory sensitivities – these may be heightened due to higher levels of anxiety and the limitations of the lockdown e.g. coping with children and limited access to quiet times
- You may begin to feel uneasy, unsettled, uncomfortable, nervous



# What might anxiety look like

- You may begin to do some of the following i.e. behave in certain ways
  - Begin to make lists or make more than is your norm
  - Seek out information about Covid-19 i.e. search on the internet, read articles, watch the news
  - Put things off or keep really busy
  - Try to take control, don't let others help
  - Find decision making difficult or make impulsive decisions
  - Be over-protective of family members or friends





# What might anxiety look like

- You may begin to experience the following thoughts:
  - Being intolerant of not knowing what is going to happen next
  - Negative thoughts about the uncertain times e.g. The worst is going to happen
    - I must be completely prepared for what happens next
    - I need to know everything there is to know about Covid-19
    - There is too much risk at the moment



# Five Ways to well-being



- **Five simple steps:**

- Connect – with people around you e.g. family, friends, work colleagues, neighbours
- Be active : Find an activity you enjoy e.g. go for a walk, do some gardening, dance, exercise etc.
- Take notice: enjoy the moment, reflect on how you feel physically and emotionally
- Keep learning : try something you or re-visit something you have enjoyed before, maybe use online activities
- Give: do something nice for a friend or stranger e.g. smile, make a phone or video call, volunteer, say thank you

Taken from Oxfordshire Mind 5 Ways to Well Being



# Connect



- Being connected to family, friends and your community is important
- Follow the Social Distancing advice from The Government
- Use a way to keep in touch that suits you e.g. telephone call, text, video call (Skype, Zoom), write a letter, write an email, use social media
- Plan how often you are going to do this
- Think about what you might say
- If you are accessing counselling or therapy contact them and ask if there is another means to continue the service



# Be Active – Look after your body



- Keeping active impacts on both your physical and emotional well-being
- Activity also helps to maintain a healthy sleep pattern
- Create a routine of being active e.g. housework, yoga, the NHS have some online exercises

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/gym-free-workouts/>

- Follow Government advice in relation to leaving your home for shopping and exercise
- Plan a balanced diet and stay hydrated
- Keep in touch with your GP if needed



# Take Notice

- Take note of what you might be feeling
- If you can share how you are feeling with a family member or friend
- Try and focus on things that you can control e.g. who you can talk to, what chores need to be done, what music you can listen to, what you can watch on TV, what you can read etc.
- Do something that you enjoy
- Access help when you are feeling overwhelmed e.g. family member, your GP, online support,



# Keep Learning

- Take the opportunity to create new routines including some familiar and some new activities
- Take the opportunity to learn a new skill or explore a new hobby. This can raise self-esteem and give purpose
- Revisit an activity you have enjoyed lately
- Explore online events and activities (list of potential activities giving in the references at the end)



# Give

- Do something nice for a family member or friend or neighbour or your community
- Follow the Government Advice to help our NHS
- Call a friend, send a message
- Give to yourself – allow quiet time in your day, be kind to yourself and give yourself what you need
- Use of visualisation or Mindfulness can support both physical and emotional well-being



# Recognising unhelpful thinking (negative automatic thoughts)

- Mental Filtering
  - Focusing on the negative and ignoring the positive
- Emotional reasoning
  - Confusing fact with feeling
- Catastrophizing
  - Imagining the worst case scenario
- Labeling
  - Assigning labels to ourselves and others
- Discounting the positive
  - Minimising positive experiences
- Overgeneralising
  - Seeing a pattern based on a single event
- Demand thinking
  - 'should', 'ought', 'must'
- Black and white thinking
  - What is the compromise? In the grey area?





# Challenge unhelpful thinking

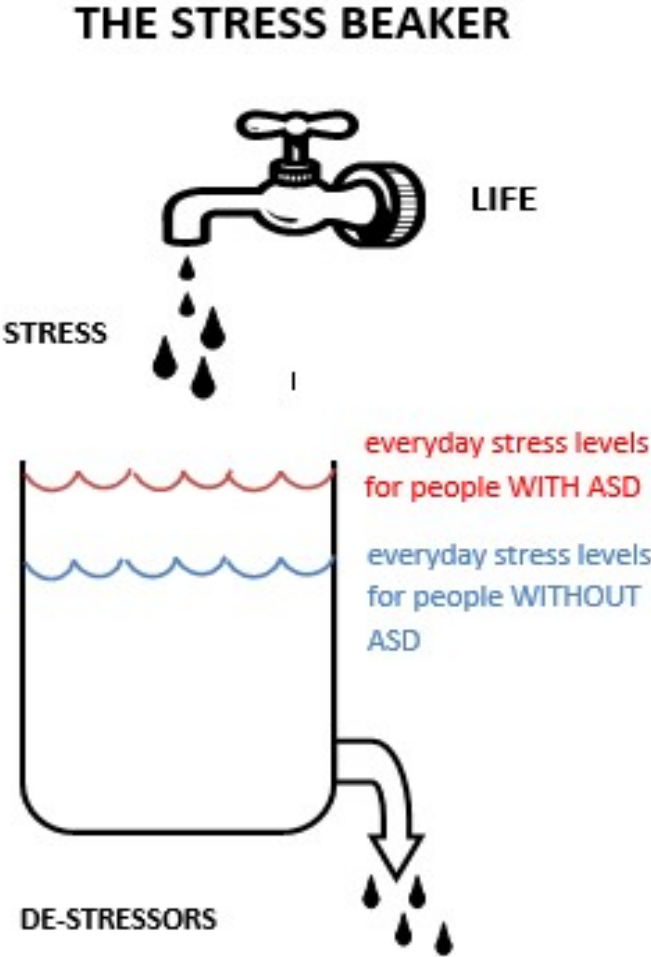


- What would be the opposite (ie positive) version of that thought?
- Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?
- How will you feel about this in 6 months time?
- What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?
- What would be an alternative explanation for what happened?
- What are the costs and benefits of thinking in this way?

***Try to apply these questions to the unhelpful thoughts that you notice. It can help to reduce your anxiety levels.***



The more anxious you are, less able you are to cope with the demands of life



| Intensity Level | What I am doing  | Called      | What helps   |
|-----------------|--|-------------|--|
| 5               | Shout<br>Threaten to hurt people<br>Swear, break things          | Very angry  | Give me space<br>Leave the place that is difficult<br>Don't talk to me   |
| 4               | Being rude to people<br>Voice gets higher and louder<br>Pacing   | Quite angry | Listen to calming music<br>Watch TV<br>Don't talk to me too much – use short sentences. Ask me what would help |
| 3               | Get repetitive and talk about something a lot<br>Hand fidgeting  | Annoyed     | Count to 10<br>Deep breathing<br>Ask me what would help  |
| 2               | Refuse to talk to people<br>Withdraw and isolate myself          | Irritated   | Visual meditation<br>Listen to music, podcast, book  |
| 1               | Ok being with people<br>Working<br>Enjoying favourite activities | Chilled     | Leave me to enjoy myself!  |



# Links for support during the Coronavirus pandemic



- **Mind**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

- **National Autistic Society**

<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/tips.aspx>

- **NHS**

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

- **Autistica**

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/coping-with-uncertainty/>

<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/tips-for-managing-mental-health-coronavirus>



# Mindfulness, meditation and breathing

**Online:**

[www.Headspace.com](http://www.Headspace.com)

[www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

[www.meditainment.com](http://www.meditainment.com)

<https://eddiestern.com/the-breathing-app/>

**Apps – Bee Zone and Breathe2Relax**

