

Mental Health Matters: Strategies for School-Aged Children

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AutismONTARIO

Presenters



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Agenda

- Lifestyle strategies
- Building emotional literacy
- Brain and body strategies
 - Sensory strategies
 - Mindfulness
- Strategies for “connecting”
 - Attachment strategies
- Creative arts strategies

Strategy Considerations

- Lifestyle strategies vs. brain and body strategies
- Record keeping

Keep in mind, that change takes time!



Lifestyle Strategies

- Predictable schedule
- Visuals:
 - Communicate clear expectations
 - Changes in schedule



Lifestyle Strategies

- Planning our day:
 - High energy vs. low energy activities
- Managing transitions:
 - Clear communication
 - Planning ahead



Lifestyle Strategies- Screen Time

Considerations:

- Type of screen time
- Content quality
- Engagement and participation with family and friends
- Length of screen time



Building Emotional Literacy

**Internal
Awareness**



**Emotional
Label**



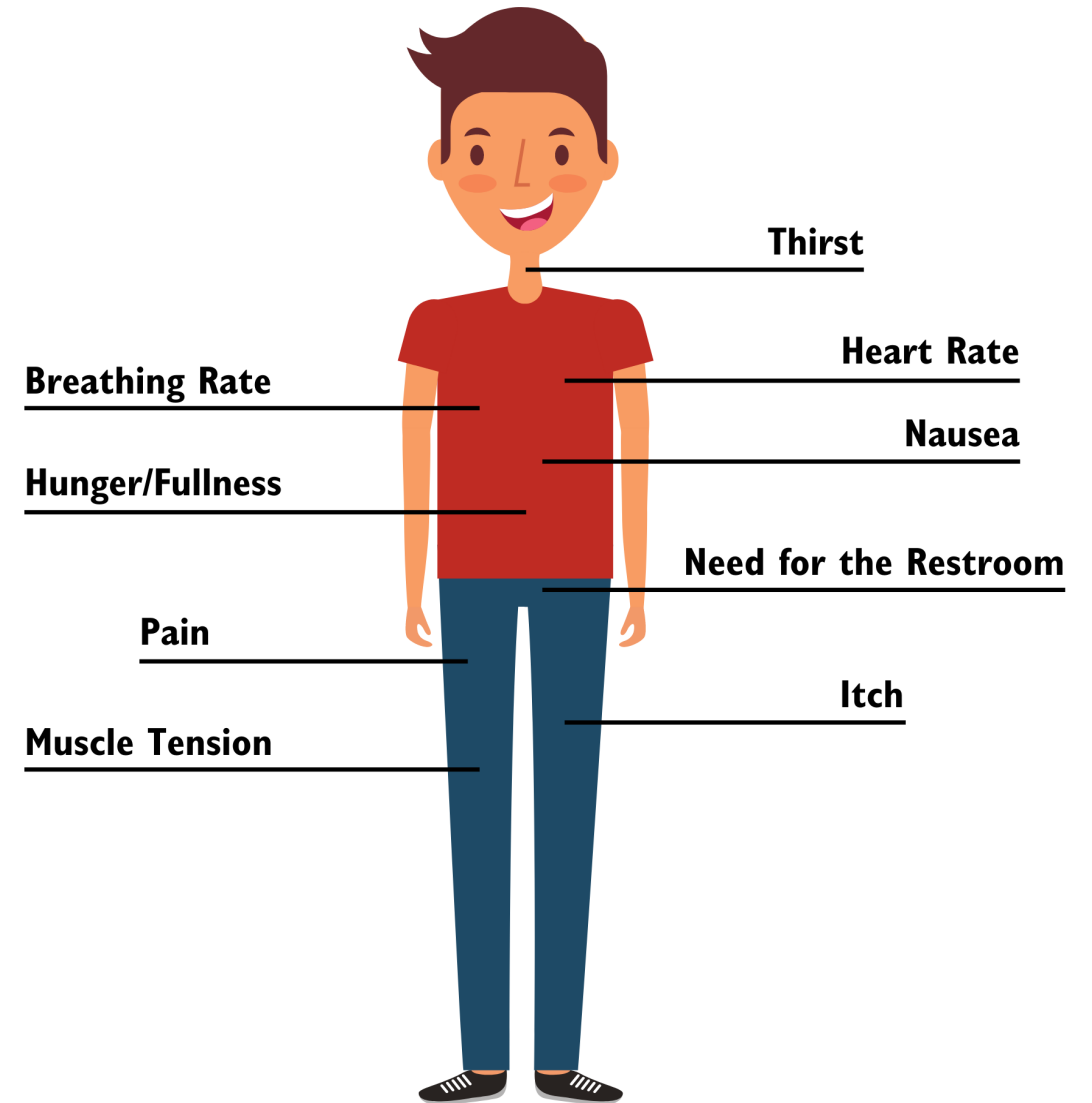
**Resolving
the Feeling**

Building Emotional Literacy- Internal Awareness

Interoception:

“The perception of sensations from inside the body” including the “nervous system activity related to emotions”

(Price and Hooven, 2018)



Building Emotional Literacy- Labelling Emotions

- Children need to understand what “emotions” are
- Books, games, movies, and other media sources can be used to teach these concepts to your children



Building Emotional Literacy- Resolving the Feeling

Strategies to try:

- Sensory
- Mindfulness
- Attachment
- Creative Arts



Brain/Body Strategies- Sensory

“Seeking”:

- Movement
- Rhythm
- Deep pressure
- Heavy work
- Tactile exploration



Brain/Body Strategies- Sensory

“Avoiding”:

- Sensory headphones
- Sunglasses
- Cozy corner



Brain/Body Strategies-Sensory

“Sensory tools can help kids stay calm and self-regulated in order to focus, attend, listen, and participate”
(Biel, 2017)

[Sensory Webinar Series](#)



Brain/Body Strategies- Mindfulness

Mindfulness: an approach to mental health where people are trained to pay attention to the moment and bring awareness to their bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, and senses.



Brain/Body Strategies- Mindfulness

CALM DOWN COCOA

Smell the hot cocoa



Blow to cool the cocoa



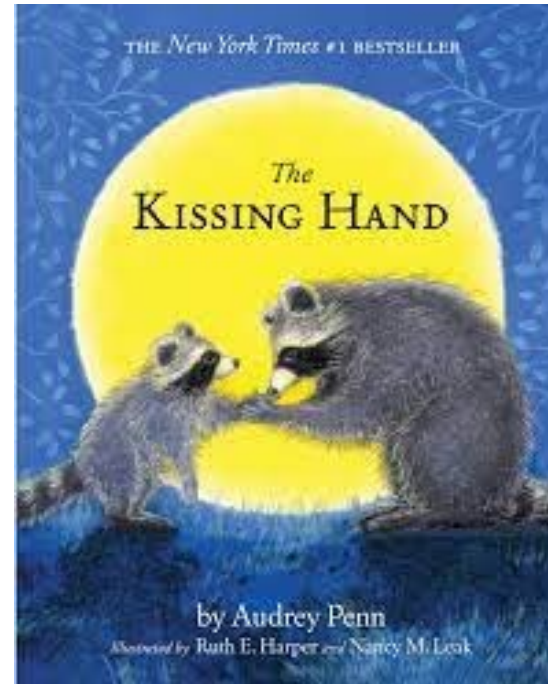
Repeat until you feel calm



Strategies for Connecting- Attachment Strategies

Autistic children:

- Benefit from 'secure attachment' the same way neurotypical children do
- Need tools/strategies to feel connected to their parents



Creative Art Strategies

- Art therapies aim to improve self-esteem and coping skills and minimize stress
- Creative art therapies include drama, music, dance, photography, and visual arts



Creative Arts/Sensory: Play Doh

Benefits of Play Doh

- Builds fine motor skills
- Improves cognitive flexibility
- Encourages imaginative play



Supporting Your Child's Mental Health- Next Steps

**Where is your child at
developmentally?**

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