



CENTRE FOR AUTISM
MIDDLETOWN

Cycle of an Emotional Stress Response

Frances O'Neill
Autism Trainer/Advisor

35 CHURCH STREET, MIDDLETOWN, CO. ARMAGH BT60 4HZ
T. +44 (0)28 3751 5750 F. +44 (0)28 3751 5758 E. ADMIN@MIDDLETOWNAUTISM.COM W. WWW.MIDDLETOWNAUTISM.COM

1

Temper Tantrum	An Emotional Stress Response
Will look occasionally to see if his or her behaviour is getting a reaction	Does not look, nor care, if those around him or her are reacting to his or her behaviour
Will take precautions to be sure he or she will not get hurt	Does not consider his or her own safety
Will attempt to use the social situation to his or her benefit	In an emotional Stress Response, child has no interest or involvement in the social situation.
Is in control, although he or she would like you to think he or she is not	Conveys the feeling that no-one is in control
Is thrown to achieve a specific goal and once the goal is met, things return to normal.	Will usually continue as thought moving under its own power

CENTRE FOR AUTISM

2



CENTRE FOR AUTISM
MIDDLETOWN

Smith Myles, 2003



3

What does Rumbling look like

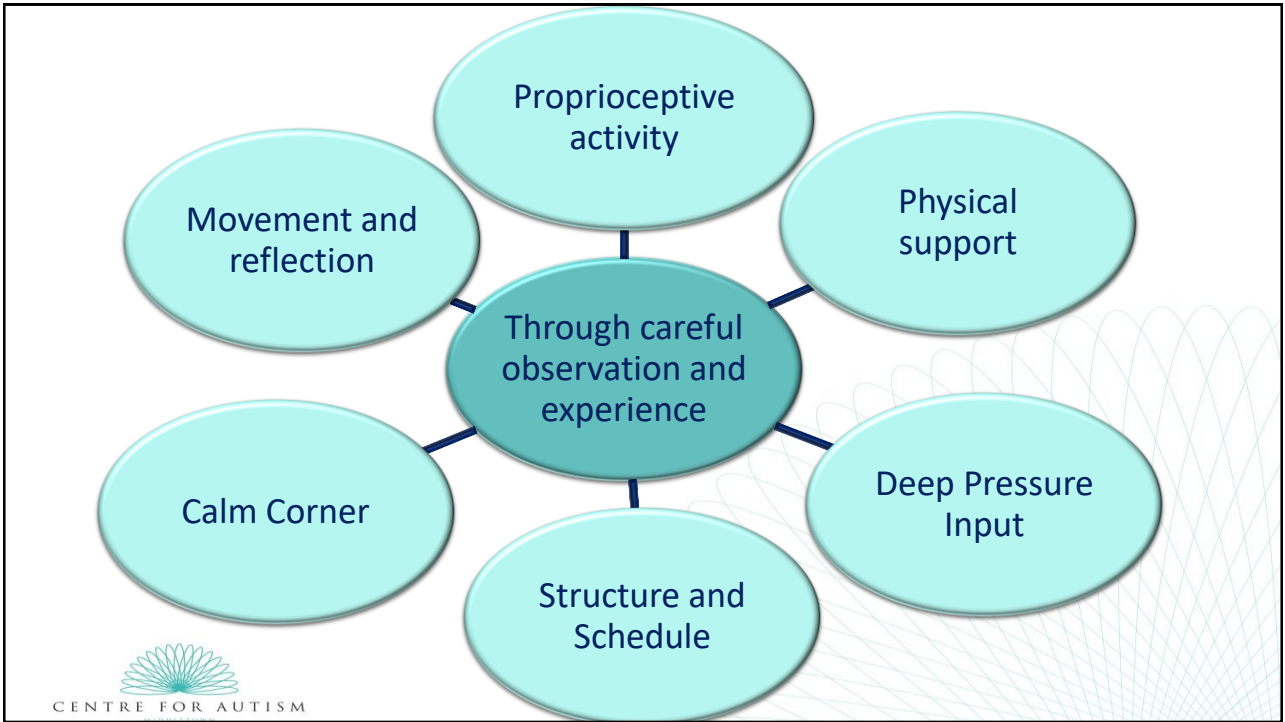
- Fidgeting
- Swearing
- Making noises
- Ripping paper
- Grimacing
- Refusing to cooperate
- Rapid movements



- Tensing of muscles
- Tears
- Name calling
- Increasing or decreasing voice volume
- Verbal threats
- Tapping foot

Now we act!

4



5

Kari Dunn Buron

- Recognise and validate the worries of the child – we may be able to see a plan out of a particular situation, but the young autistic child may experience difficulties.
- Kari recommends a scheduled, not earned, activity at different times throughout the day that may alleviate the anxiety, which may be expressed as inappropriate behaviour – thus, a positive proactive approach



6

Energy Accounting – Maintaining Equilibrium

- Concept of an energy bank account
- Energy withdrawals and deposits

Objective: to keep **“in the black”** and avoid going **“into the red.”**

- Healthy energy bank balance
 - Physical and mental health

Energy accounting: an interview with Maja Toudal
<https://vimeo.com/213640278>

Professor Tony Attwood



7

Energy Bank: What causes Withdrawals?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialising • Change to routines • Coping with anxiety • Making a mistake; taking criticism • Sensory sensitivity • Daily living skills • Overanalysing social performance • Sensitivity to other people's mood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much verbal language • Being teased or excluded • Crowds • Perceived injustice • Unstructured time, • Having no direction, • Not understanding social rules • Certain people |
|--|---|



8

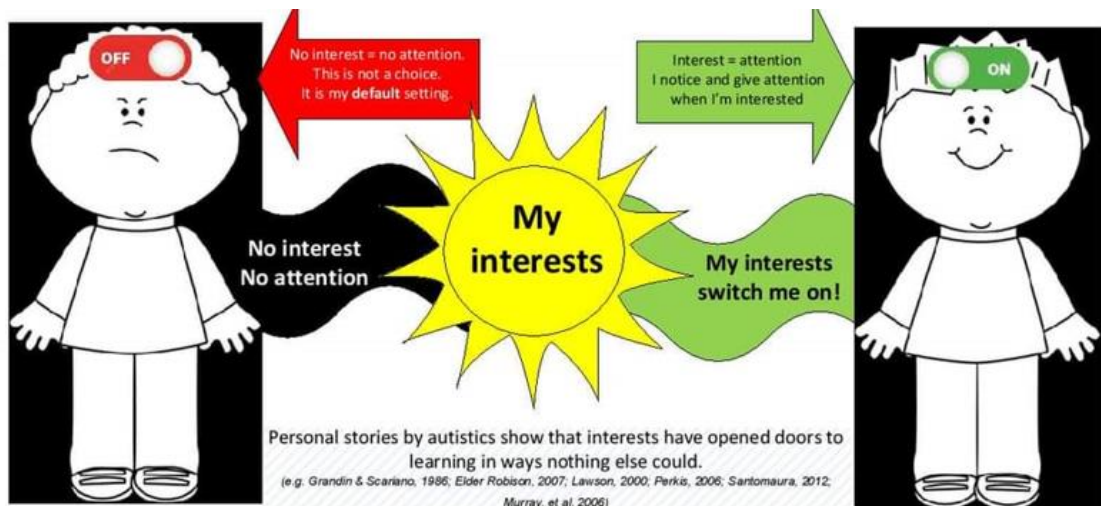
Now what about Deposits - create opportunities for deposits

- Structure predictability
- Consistency
- Solitude
- Special interest
- Animals and Nature
- Sleep
- Relaxation, meditation
- Maja Toudal recommends Pokémon Go
- Physical activity
- Computer Games
- Caring for others, including pets
- Nutrition
- Reading Harry Potter books!
- Surfing the net
- Certain people



9

As Dr Wenn Lawson reminds us




Developed by Dr Wenn B. Lawson, Senior Advisor Complex Support; Disability Policy and Programs, Early Years and Child Development; 2018

For more information and resources: <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health-e-safety-and-wellbeing/health-support-planning/managing-health-education-and-care/neurodiversity>




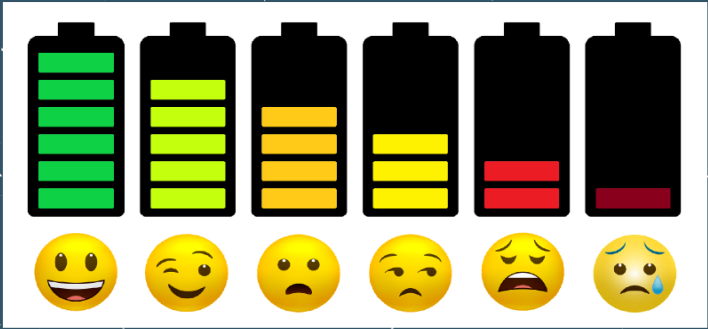
10


Beautiful
Resource
designed by the
Centre's
talented team

 **Our Self-Care Battery**


When we are feeling low it is important for us to try and take some time out to re-charge our own emotional battery, and by trying out different activities such as the examples shown on the next page we can really help to give our mental and physical wellbeing a boost.







When my self-care battery is starting to run low I can try these activities to help



© Designed and Produced by Middletown Centre for Autism

11

 **Our Self-Care Battery**

Choose some of the activities below that will help you to re-charge your own self-care battery



Read a book



Take a relaxing bath



Try some mindfulness breathing



Screen-free day



Enjoy some healthy food



Write in my bullet journal



Spend time with friends



Talk to someone I can trust about how I am feeling



Try some mindfulness colouring or doodling



Enjoy a relaxing drink



Aim for a good nights sleep



Play with my pet



Listen to some relaxing music



Try some gentle exercises



Enjoy some time outdoors in the fresh air

© Designed and Produced by Middletown Centre for Autism

12

“Small Changes Make Big Differences” —Realistically, what can we change

1. Physical setting
2. Peer social engagement
3. Opportunities for recognition
4. Adult social style
5. Adult language
6. Degree of independence
7. Sensory



<https://vle.middletownautism.com/mod/scorm/view.php?id=145>

Environment – Physical and Learning

Physical Structure for working



Predictability and Choice

Schedules

Schedules come in different forms

- Object
- Tobi
- Photograph
- Symbol
- Word



Structure Down Time

- Allow the children to engage in activities when they have to wait – remembering how difficult waiting can be, time with their rip roaring obsession, fidget toys, stress kits, bubbles
- Allow for physical activity – space hopper, Jumping Jacks, Ball wall, Chair or Wall Press ups or Push ups, Moovlee, GoNoodle, TJ Reid or Joe Wicks
- Offer structured lunch time activities – Lego Club, Minecraft Club, Book or Film Club, Structured Play in the playground, Calm area in the playground

Communication

Often children have only one way of expressing anger, frustration, or confusion, what has worked in the past may not be socially appropriate,

NCSE (2020) has reminded us to **"tune in to the hidden message."**

We must teach the alternatives

"I don't know what else to do and this worked the last time!!"

How do you want the child to respond?

Teach a new and more effective response.



I need help please!!

17

head

eye

nose

ear

neck

mouth

stomach

arm

back

elbow

hand

leg

knee

feet

I hurt...

When you have difficulty isolating the problem to get the right support
Allows for accuracy and eliminates the need to guess

18

The Bored Board, offering Choice

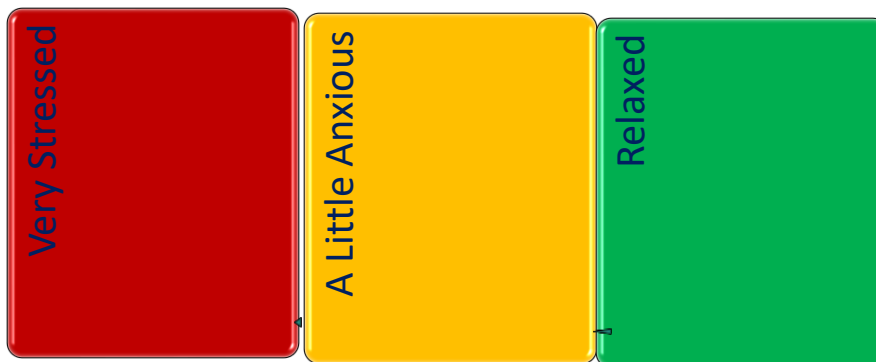


You may need to
build up to 8
choices, depending
on cognitive ability



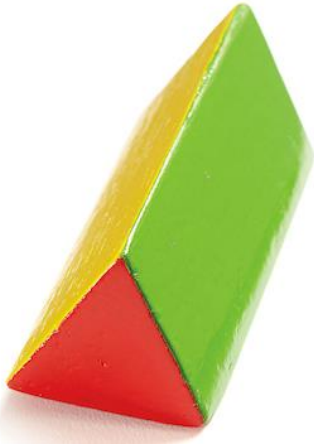
19

Anxiety – Asking for Help



20

Desktop Communicator



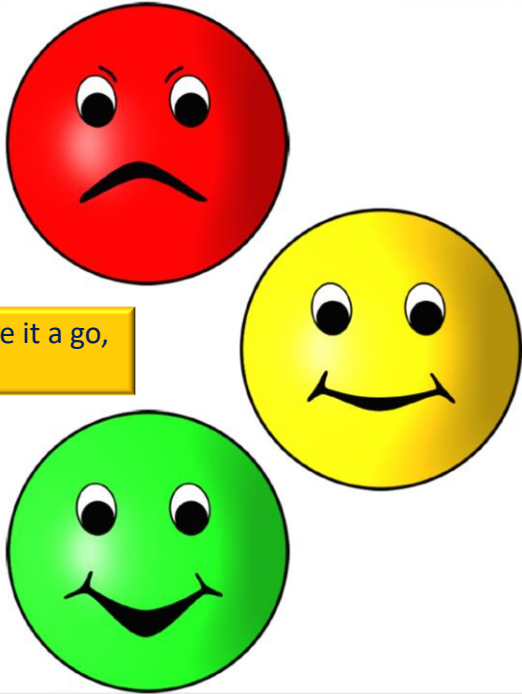

A communication block for children to express how they are feeling about their work or themselves.

The child can show

- **Red** - he or she needs help immediately,
- **Yellow** - he or she needs assistance when you are free or
- **Green** - he or she needs getting on happily with their work

Consider age and stage appropriateness




The child presents	What this means
	Cool, Relaxed Happy
	Anxious Concerned
	Get me out of here!

<p>This is really hard; I cannot do it – HELP!</p>		
<p>OK, this is hard, but I think I will give it a go, will you stay close by?</p>		
<p>This is great, I can do it</p>		

CENTRE FOR AUTISM

23

Encourage the use of visual support cards

		
<p>Pause Card</p>	<p>Question Card</p>	<p>Help Card</p>

CENTRE FOR AUTISM

24



"I really can't cope,
I think 5 minutes will
make all of the
difference.
Thank you."

De-escalating Strategies

Am I escalating or de-escalating??

- Offer choice, however simple we may think it is
- Free access to a break card, a proactive means of communicating
- Humour
- Re- direction
- Offer calming choices – quiet room, movement break, listening to music, Take Ten app
- Sensory Processing strategies - Deep pressure
- Exercise
- Give space
- Distraction

Distraction – means you will have to continue being novel

- Bubbles
- Spontaneous singing
- Novelty high impact toys, high attention grabbing
- Nursery Rhymes – Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes – with actions, of course
- 5 Jumping Jacks
- Karaoke – on YouTube, have it primed and ready to go
- Sensory Play
- Fidget spinner
- Pulling silly faces in a mirror
- Child requested to do work in colour on white board – choice of markers
- Go outside unexpectedly
- Dance

Smith Myles, 2003



Raging

At this stage, the child is often uninhibited, therefore may act

- Impulsively
- Emotionally and
- Explosively

At this stage, the options are few with provision of the calm area, not only recommended but also age and stage appropriate



29

What can we do

- Stay calm
- Protect the child
- Protect others
- Protect the environment
- Don't discipline
- Remove demands
- Reduce sensory stimuli
- Obtain assistance
- Prompt a calm area
- Use few or no words
- Don't take it personally
- Use a timer

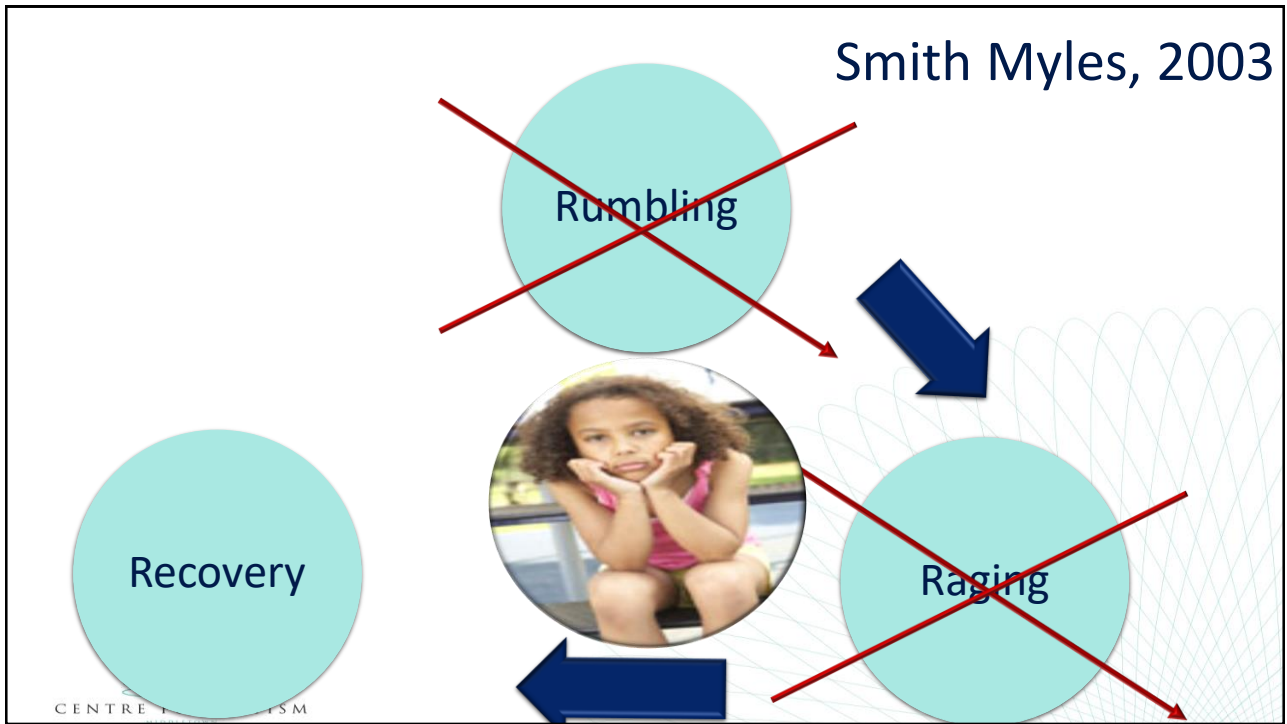
Try not to

- Get in the child's personal space
- Intervene physically to stop the behaviour
- Talk to the child
- Talk amongst yourselves while the behaviour is occurring

Now is not the time to be discussing breathing patterns



30



31

Recovery

Child may

- Be contrite
- Have no memory
- Be sullen
- Withdraw
- Deny behaviour occur
- Be exhausted

Interventions can only be presented at a time when the child is experiencing emotional, physical and psychological stability

CENTRE FOR AUTISM

32

Now what!

- Allow to sleep or rest
- Introduce relaxation techniques,
- Do not refer back to the behaviour
- Use the structure and visuals – go back to what we all know
- Redirect to successful activity
- Provide space
- Ensure everything is understandable – maybe simplify
- Do not make demands
- Calm – for child and for yourself
- Time out for you

Go to what we know works

- Routines
- Timetables
- Consistency
- Predictability
- Visual systems
- Low arousal areas
- Learning breaks
- Timers (where appropriate)
- Explosive exercise

Reward with Positive Reinforcement

A child may engage with a behaviour because of the positive payback.

They have learned that displaying this type of behaviour is also beneficial to them.

We all benefit from this form of positive reinforcement

Extra time playing Fortnite

Watch additional YouTube videos



35

Top Tips . . .



- Try to stay positive.
- Behaviours of concern are difficult for everyone involved. Don't punish yourself. You won't have the right response all the time.
- Remember, behaviours of concern can be temporary. The child may have limited skills right now but when he or she learns a better way, he or she will do it that way.
- Assess your energy levels.
- Don't take on too much all at once.
- If you are faced with regular incidents of concerning behaviour, when you are ready, start looking for the triggers. When you know what causes it, you can possibly prevent it.



36

Options to Consider

- Be prepared to reduce the demands made upon the child
- Be prepared to adjust your interaction by:
 - Lowering your voice,
 - Taking a step back,
 - Reducing verbal input avoiding criticism,
 - Staying calm.
- Distract (Distraction boxes, favourite music, My staying calm book)
- Redirection to preferred activities that are calming
- Worry, anxiety, emotional regulation “What to do” cards
- Promote wellbeing, happiness and meaningful physical activity
- Offer a range of communication methods
- Understand the impact of the environment on understanding, anxiety, stress,
- Seek to understand the child’s sensory experience, address sensory difficulties and make the most of sensory strengths.

“Predictability and consistency
are two of the cornerstones of
effective behaviour management”

Gordon, 1990

Keep up to Date with Events at the Centre



www.middletownautism.com



Follow us on **Twitter** @autismcentre



Find **Middletown Centre for Autism** on Facebook



Find **Middletown Centre for Autism** on Pinterest

