

# Coping and Calming Skills

In times of change and transition emotions can feel strong and overwhelming. Everyone benefits from having some strategies we are familiar with and have practiced to help us cope. For autistic students it can be helpful to teach ways to calm both mind and body. Each individual is unique, so discuss enthusiasms and preferences with students and their families to choose which activities to include within a calming routine.

There is no 'one right way' to make a calming routine. Including calming activities in a routine/supporting development of a new routine can support students to cope with change and transition:

## **Calming Routine-considerations**

- Link with home and identify what has been helpful during the student's time at home.
- Choose **times of the day** when the student is calm to initiate the instruction.
- Create a concrete and **visual routine** to support the use of these strategies. Many free apps are available for calming strategies and guided meditations such as Calm and Headspace ([see list below](#))
- Ensure that the student has **plenty of access** to these calming activities.
- Coping/calming activities should be **scheduled regularly** across the day in the initial weeks of changes, then, if appropriate, introduce and teach a **self-management plan** that helps individuals track their anxious or worried responses and identify when the calming strategies are required. (See <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/prioritize-coping-and-calming-skills> for additional resources)
- Introduce a visual cue so that the student can associate this with the activity and this then can be transferred into school setting –include in daily routine /schedule
- Physical exercise can support management of anxiety. Return to school may have an impact on anxiety levels for autistic students and should be considered as part of a coping and calming routine.

Content adapted from:

<https://teacch.com/resources/teacch-tips/teacch-tip2-relaxation-strategies-routines/>

<https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/prioritize-coping-and-calming-skills>

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## Calming Routine - Ideas

Calming Activity Ideas for your Mind	Calming Activity Ideas for your Body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing</li> <li>• Listening to favourite music</li> <li>• Playing a favourite game</li> <li>• Holding a favourite toy, stuffed animals etc</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Mindfulness and meditation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking a walk</li> <li>• Yoga and movement</li> <li>• Jumping on a trampoline</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Use sensory fidgets</li> <li>• Squeezing stress balls</li> </ul>

## Further Online Resources for Supporting Coping and Calming Skills

Resource	Websites:
Guided Meditation	<a href="https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app">https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app</a>
Relaxation Strategies	<a href="https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app">https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app</a>
Calming Routine visual	<a href="https://teacch.com/resources/teacch-tips/teacch-tip2-relaxation-strategies-routines/">https://teacch.com/resources/teacch-tips/teacch-tip2-relaxation-strategies-routines/</a>
Guided yoga themed around student interests	<a href="https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/">https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/</a>
Dance, mindfulness and physical activity	<a href="https://www.gonoodle.com/blog/gonoodle-games-movement-app-for-kids/">https://www.gonoodle.com/blog/gonoodle-games-movement-app-for-kids/</a>
Further physical activity inspiration, by Kiddo	<a href="https://kiddo.edu.au/">https://kiddo.edu.au/</a>

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Emotional Regulation Strategies from Middletown Centre for Autism	<a href="https://pathways-resilience.middletownautism.com/strategies/emotional-regulation-anxiety/anxiety-management/the-individual/strategies-for-self-management/">https://pathways- resilience.middletownautism.com/strategies/emotional- regulation-anxiety/anxiety-management/the- individual/strategies-for-self-management/</a>
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