

Some ideas for creating an anxiety tool kit at home for older children

What is an anxiety toolkit?

- **If your child gets anxious from time to time, they are not alone!** The National Autistic Society estimates that roughly 40% of Autistic people show some symptoms of anxiety, compared to 15% of the general population
- **Your child may already struggle with anxious thoughts, but may be finding it particularly difficult to manage his or her worries during this time of uncertainty and change**
- **An 'anxiety toolkit' is a collection of resources and strategies which can help to manage anxiety**
- **This toolkit can be physical (eg objects, pictures, printed resources in a shoebox or safe space) or virtual (eg an online folder with links to digital information and resources)**

Before you start

- Before considering individual strategies and resources (see below) it is a good idea to see whether some basic principles of relaxation are built into your child's routine
- Consider whether your child is **getting enough sleep, eating healthily and doing enough exercise** during this challenging time. Consider using a timetable, reminders, a tick list of activities and visual prompts to encourage these. Take opportunities to build these in to family time
- Also consider what 'normal' looks like for your child. Some common signs of increased anxiety may be loss of appetite, becoming withdrawn, struggling with sleep and tearfulness. However, you know your child best and some of these may not apply – it is best to look out for any **clear changes to behaviour**

What should I include?

- With your child, make a list of all the activities that normally help him or her to relax. Plan to build these in to daily routine – first thing in the morning and before bed is a good idea
- Some helpful apps to aid relaxation and positive thinking are HEADSPACE and CALM. A helpful mindfulness website is www.mindfulnessforteens.com, www.mindful.org
- Consider a 'gratitude list' that you can add one new thing to each day. It has often been said that gratitude is the antidote to anxiety
- Try visual imagery – draw on happy memories (eg a family holiday) and make a collage of photos to look at when feeling down
- Try to identify worries and patterns of thinking. Complete the **stress bucket** to help explain and understand worries. Use '**unhelpful thinking habits**' to look for new ways to work through problems and

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UnhelpfulThinking
HabitsWithAlternati



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