

Tips for coping when everything feels different...

A guide for autistic people and their friends, colleagues and families



- Lots of people are describing the world as 'strange' or 'scary' at the moment. This may feel different to each one of us and we all cope in different ways.
- Self-care is important for everyone. It helps us regulate our emotions and senses. It is important to remember to care for ourselves and each other.
- Self-care can be activities like going for a walk, using sensory equipment or toys, or using a mindfulness meditation app.
- Self-care can also be the way we do things; like remembering to ask for company if we're lonely or to rest and not take on too much to distract ourselves from our worries.

Dealing with people:

It can feel difficult to cope with situations like visiting a shop because people are acting differently from usual. Strategies we've learned off by heart to help us cope aren't appropriate at the moment. It's ok to feel distressed about this. Familiar places seem unfamiliar and this can feel very disorientating. Remember that everyone is having to adapt to this. It is ok that we don't understand things. It's ok to ask for an explanation or help so that we get it right.

Socialising:

People need to socialise differently. Some people are happy because they don't have to meet people as much. This is ok. Some people are really missing hugging their friends and seeing them. This is ok. People are using social media, telephones and email more. This can be challenging. It is ok to tell people how you prefer communicating. Not everyone likes Zoom or Skype where you see people on a screen. Not everyone likes using a telephone. It is ok to tell people if this makes you feel distressed or pressurised.

Senses:

Feeling anxious makes people's senses work differently. Autistic people often experience hyper or hypo sensitivity. Stress increases this. Everyone experiences this in their own unique way e.g. extra sensitive hearing or less awareness of where their body is. Self-regulation and Co-regulation are important, and we need to be in a state where we can function safely and with minimal distress in order to cope best. Proactively making time for regulation and self-care is essential. When we are aware of our own and each other's needs we can help each other regulate. Being aware of what we can control and change, in order to promote regulation is important. Especially when so much is outside of our control.