

Handouts Nelson

Managing Challenging Behaviour in Children with Autism

Repetitive Behaviour

1: Communication

- *The mannerisms have a message*
- Communication of thoughts and emotions

- When behaviour is the only means of communication
- Thoughts such as 'I can't cope' or 'I need help'
- Feelings such as jumping for joy or 'in a flap'
- Foreign phrase dictionary

Strategies

- Acquire an alternative means of communication using actions, gestures, vocalizations and speech
- Use the behaviour as an early warning system of agitation
- ‘Thermometer’

2: Exploration Through Sensation

- The person's developmental level in exploratory play
- Exploring the world through taste, touch, aroma, sound, colour and perspective
- Prior stage to constructive and imaginative play

Exploration Through Sensation

- Introduce a wide range of sensory experiences
- Sensory integration therapy
- Can be used as a reward
- If the action is dangerous or socially inappropriate, find an acceptable substitute

3:To Block Sensory Overload.

- Acute auditory sensitivity to specific sounds (Hyperacusis)
- Sudden or 'sharp' noises, (dog barking, coughing, click of a pen top)
- Small electric motors or a specific pitch

Temple Grandin

- “ Sudden loud noises hurt my ears like a dentist’s drill hitting a nerve. High pitched continuous noises such as hair dryers and other small motors are annoying. All the behaviour modification in the world is not going to stop an autistic child from screaming when a noise hurts his ears.”

Suggestions to Reduce Auditory Sensitivity

- Identify and avoid the sound
- Barrier such as ear plugs
- Camouflage the perception of the sound with music - iPod
- Social Story

Tactile Defensiveness

- Acute sensitivity to specific tactile experiences
- Sensitivity to touch and texture on particular parts of the body (scalp, upper arms, palms of hands and soles of feet)

Temple Grandin

- “I pulled away when people tried to hug me, because being touched sent an overwhelming tidal wave of stimulation through my body.”
- “Church was a nightmare because the petticoats and other Sunday clothes itched and scratched. Many behaviour problems in church could have been avoided by a few simple clothing modifications.”

Stephen Shore

- “Haircuts were always a major event. They hurt! To try to calm me, my parents would say that hair is dead and has no feeling. It was impossible for me to communicate that the pulling on the scalp was causing the discomfort.”

Tactile Defensiveness

- Gestures of affection perceived as too intense a sensation
- Aversion to certain fabrics
- Strategies: 'deep pressure', sensory integration therapy

Sensitivity to the Taste and Texture of Food

- Sensitivity to fibrous texture and multiple flavours
- Sensitivity to particular aromas
- Problems at meal times that are not due to having to sit still, talk, socialize or try unanticipated food

Sean Barron

- “I was supersensitive to the texture of food and I had to touch everything with my fingers to see how it felt before I could put it in my mouth. I really hated it when food had things mixed with it. I could never put any of it into my mouth. I knew if I did I would get violently sick.”

Strategies for Sensitivity to Taste and Texture

- Check diet
- Avoid programs of starvation to encourage a wider range of foods
- Avoid programs of force feeding
- Accept the unusual diet at mealtimes
- Try new foods during programs of interesting sensory experiences
- Distraction, relaxation and rewards to encourage increased tolerance

- Pain and temperature

A World Of Terrifying Sensory Experiences

- Hyper-vigilant and 'shell shocked'
- Need a coping or escape mechanism
- Self hypnosis, being mesmerized by a repetitive action or sensation

Temple Grandin

- “Intensely preoccupied with the movement of the spinning coin or lid, I saw nothing or heard nothing. People around me were transparent and no sound intruded on my fixation. It was as if I was deaf.”

4: Coping with change

Therese Jolliffe

- “Reality to an autistic person is a confusing, interacting mass of events, people, places, sounds and sights. There seems to be no clear boundaries, order or meaning to anything. A large part of my life is spent just trying to work out the pattern behind everything. Set routines, times particular routes and rituals all help to get order into an unbearably chaotic life.”

Donna Williams

- “I loved to copy, create and order things. I loved our set of encyclopedias. They had letters and numbers on the side, and I was always checking to make sure they were in order or putting them that way. I was making order out of chaos.”

Sean Barron

- “I loved repetition. Every time I turned on a light I knew what would happen. When I flipped the switch, the light went on. It gave me a wonderful feeling of security, because it was exactly the same each time.”

Weak Central Coherence

- Not recognizing the context (telescope)
- If the detail is changed, the 'whole picture' changes
- Desperate to make order out of chaos

- Repetitive behaviours and routines to achieve sameness and predictability
- Watching the same video again and again

Pictures to see the sequence of activities

Fascination with symmetry and order

- “The fun came from setting up and arranging things. Maybe this desire to organise things rather than play with things is the reason I never had any great interest in my peers.”

Position

- “For us, an object has colour, shape, density and position. Where it is in relation to other objects is part of the object. You can move it if you need to, but it ‘goes’ somewhere specific and needs to be back there. Not to put it there is like changing it’s colour- it is out of balance and it will bother you until you put it back. If it is not in the right position, it is lost.”
- Bess

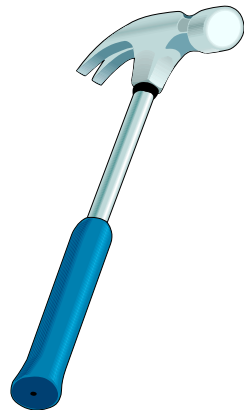
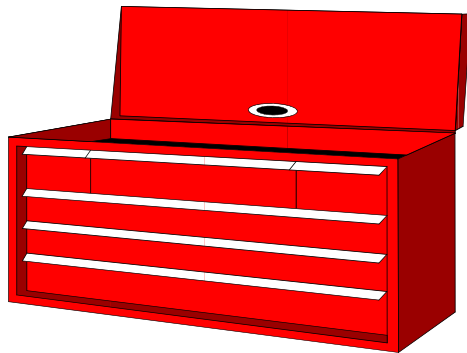
5: Manage Anxiety

A Means of Reducing Anxiety

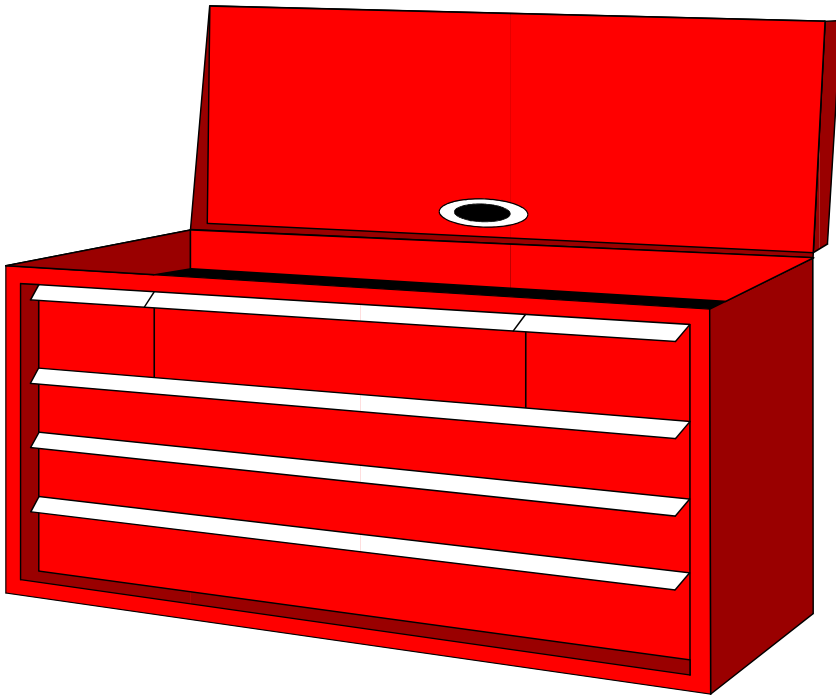
- A 'superstitious' behaviour
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*
- Negatively reinforced
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- To release emotional energy

Strategies

- Stress management program
- Learn alternative means of relaxation
- Controlled access
- Medication
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy



Emotional Toolbox: To Fix The Feeling



Physical Activity Tools.

Quick release of emotional energy



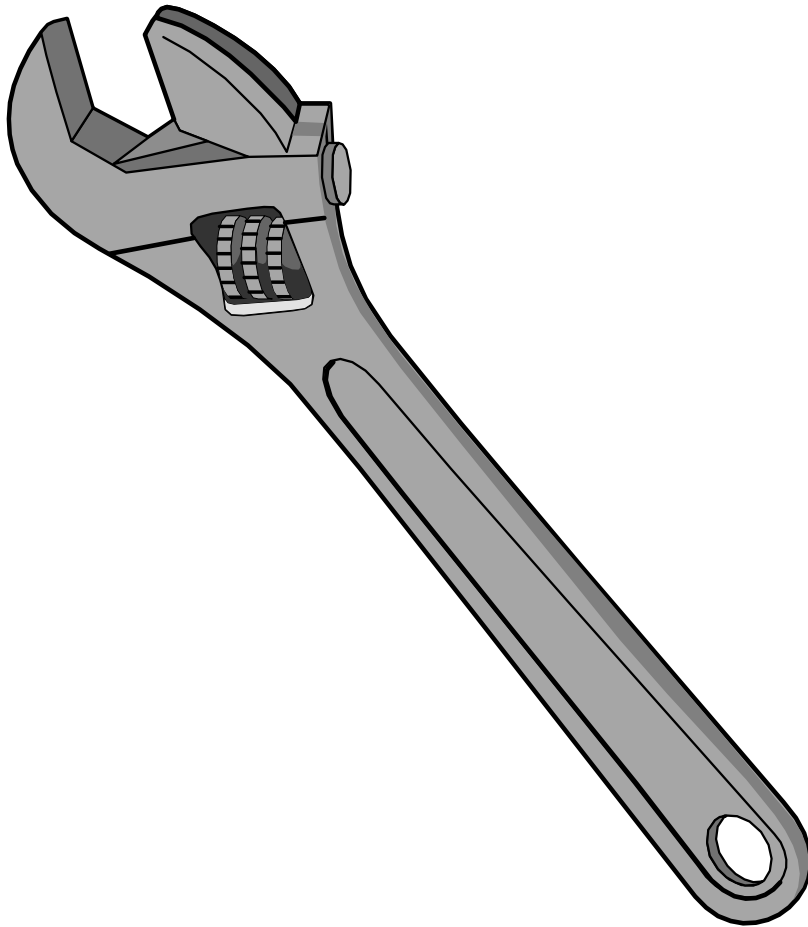
- Physical exercise, walk, run, trampoline.
- Sport. (Basket Ball, golf, weight lifting) or dancing.
- Creative destruction (recycling).

Relaxation Tools. Slow release of emotional energy



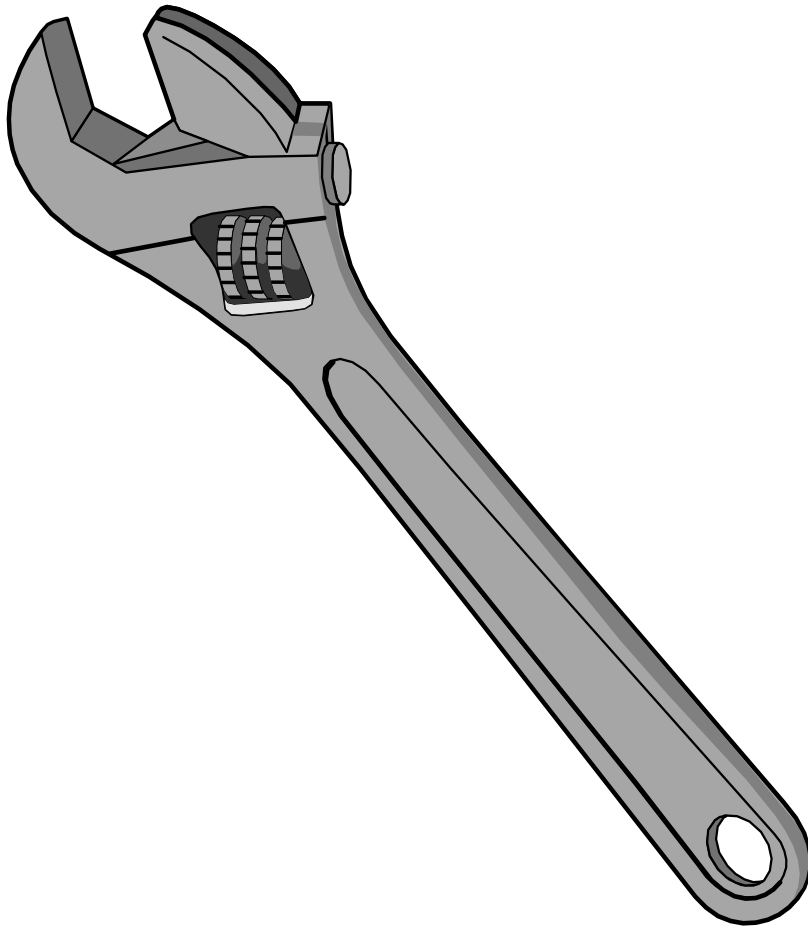
- Relaxation training.
- Music. “Feelings put into sound” Matthew.
- Solitude.
- Massage.
- Comedy programs.
- Repetitive action.
- Sleep

Social Tools



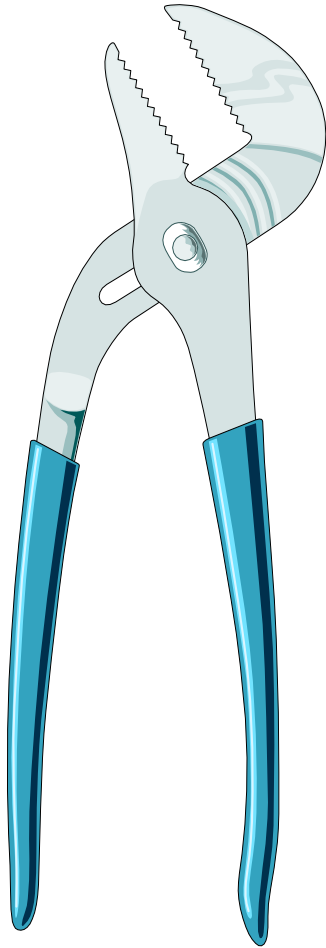
- Time with a family member or friend.
- Disclosure (typing, music, poetry)
- Seek advice.
- Being with a pet.

Social Tools: Affection



- Intensity
- Duration

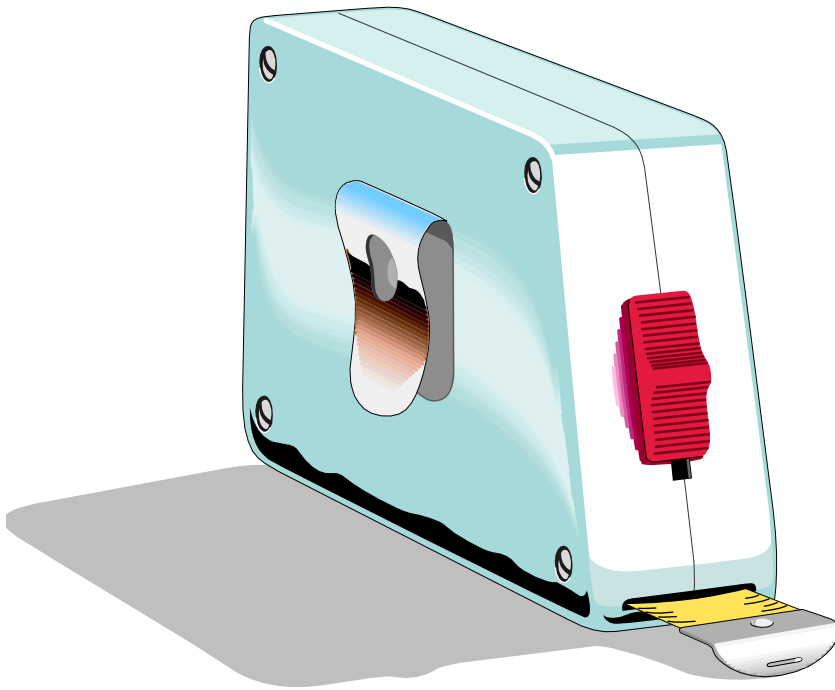
Thoughts and perspective



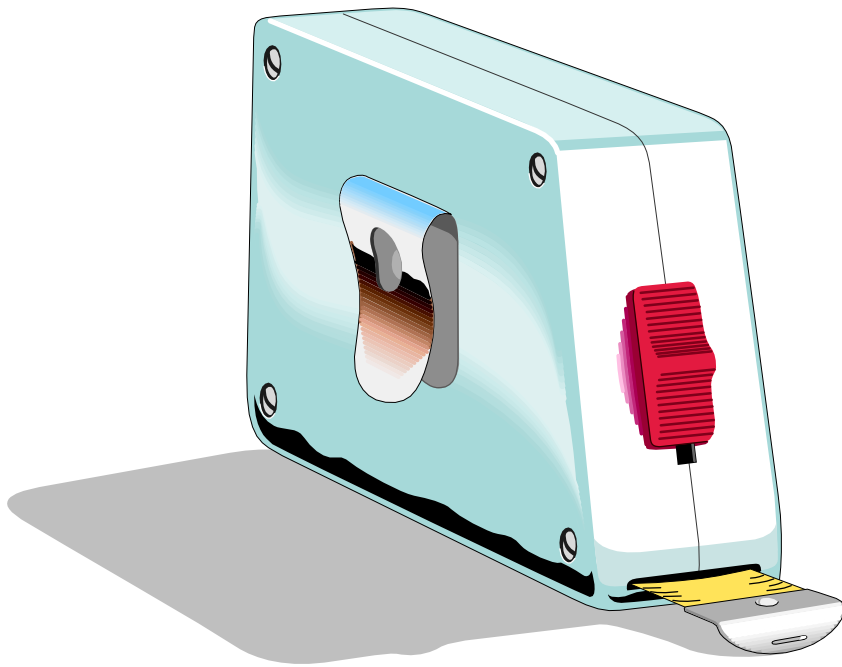
- Put the events in perspective.
- Imagine what you would like to do or say.
- Being calm is being smart (IQ)

Special Interests

- A means of relaxation, pleasure.
- Knowledge to overcome fear.
- Keeps anxiety under control
- Thought blocking.
- Interest or OCD. Is it irresistible?

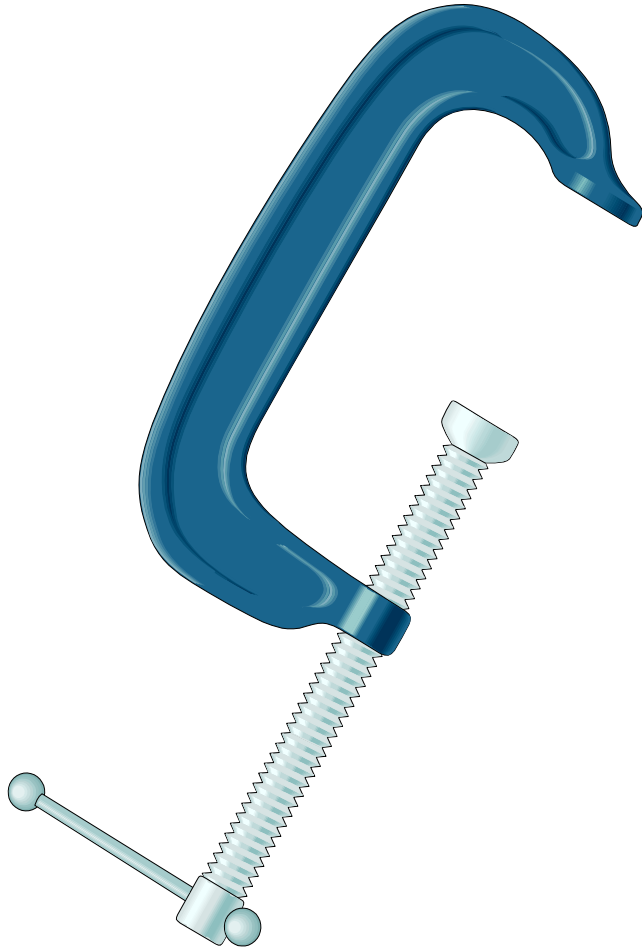


Special Interest



- Collecting and cataloguing (personal defrag).
- Distraction during a meltdown.
- The 'off switch'
- Motivation and conceptualization (Dr Who)

Medication As a Tool



- Treatment of an anxiety disorder or a clinical depression. (SSRI).
- Impulsive. (Stimulants).
- Mood cycles. (anti-convulsants).
- Sedation. (anti-psychotics)

Repetitive Questions

- Social echolalia.
- To maintain the interaction.

Repetitive Questions

- Predict what you are going to say next: *What colour is your car?*
- Reassurance that you have not changed your mind

6: Soothing and Pleasurable

- Soothing, as in a rocking chair or rocking to comfort someone
- Euphoria
- Tolerate an acceptable level

7: A movement Disorder

Tourette's Disorder: Motor Tics

- Blinking
- Grimacing
- Nose twitching
- Lip pouting
- Shoulder shrugs
- Arm and head jerking

Tourette's Disorder: Vocal Tics

- Grunting
- Barking
- Animal noises
- Coughing/sniffing
- Palilalia

Tourette's Disorder: Complex Motor or Behavioural and Emotional Tics

- Touching the mouth area
- Clapping
- Face and head slapping
- Hopping
- Touching objects
- Licking objects
- Emotion tics (injury to others, crying)

Self Injury

- Pain
- A means of communication and control
- Complex partial seizure
- Emotion tic
- Depression

Summary

1. Communication
2. Exploratory play
3. Sensory overload
4. Cope with change
5. Manage anxiety
6. Pleasurable
7. Movement disorder