

SEND Support – Social, emotional and mental health.

Area	Tips/ Advice/ Strategies for Parents and Carers
<u>Emotional, Social and Mental Health</u>	<p data-bbox="454 376 591 403"><u>Behaviour</u></p> <p data-bbox="454 411 875 438">123 Magic behaviour technique</p> <p data-bbox="454 483 1133 510"><u>Social Skills/ Relationships/ Social Interactions</u></p> <p data-bbox="454 518 1821 584">Here are some practical tips which have been suggested by parents and professionals who work with children who have special educational needs.</p> <ul data-bbox="454 628 1924 1198" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="454 628 1924 802">• Identify goals Think about short-term and long-term development of social skills. Break down those stages of development into tiny steps and create the "scaffolding" to support each step for your child. When you are teaching the social skills to make friendships, try breaking them down into small, easy steps. Give plenty of encouragement for each goal your child reaches.<li data-bbox="454 810 1924 908">• Furry friends Pets often make great friends for children with special educational needs. They offer unconditional love, and in return children learn about responsibility and easing social interaction.<li data-bbox="454 916 1924 1090">• Prepare an activity Build play dates around fun, interesting activities all children will enjoy. Think creatively and prepare in advance; you could try giving children a ball of pizza dough, for example, and have a pizza-making lunch. All children tend to love all special needs "kit", sensory features, trampolines and so on, so let them get stuck in!<li data-bbox="454 1098 1924 1198">• Be informed For older children and young adults, the National Autistic Society has produced an excellent guide, Social skills for adults and adolescents. <p data-bbox="454 1249 992 1276"><u>Obsessions /Complying to requests</u></p> <p data-bbox="454 1284 1924 1382">Obsessions, repetitive behaviour and routines can be a source of enjoyment for children and a way of coping with everyday life. But they may also limit people's involvement in other activities and cause distress or anxiety.</p>

How you can help

Does the obsession, routine or repetitive behaviour restrict the person's opportunities, cause distress or discomfort, or impact on learning? If not, then it may not be necessary to intervene. If it is causing difficulties, or is in some way unsafe, they may need support to stop or modify the behaviour, or reduce their reliance on it.

Understand the function of the behaviour: Think about the function of the repetitive behaviour, routine or obsession. What does the person get out of it? Does it reduce anxiety, or block out noise? Learn more about behaviour in our [behaviour - top tips](#).

Modify the environment: Does the person always seem to find a particular place hard to cope with? Is it too bright? You might find that modifying the [environment](#) (eg turning off strip lighting) can help to reduce [sensory](#) discomfort. If the behaviour is a way of getting sensory input, look for [alternative ways](#) of achieving the same sensation.

Set boundaries: If you need to, set clear, consistent limits - for example, ration an object, the time a person should spend talking about a subject, or the places where they can carry out a particular behaviour.

Give alternative options: Use the obsession e.g. writing about, maths questions, research etc to develop other skills.

Self-esteem/ Self-regulation

Self-regulation skills are any activities that help a person to manage their own behaviour and emotions.

If you can help the person to identify when they are feeling stressed or anxious and help them learn alternative strategies to use, you may, in time, see less repetitive and obsessively habitual behaviour. Strategies to consider might be relaxation techniques such as taking 10 deep breaths

or squeezing a stress ball, as well as finding ways to communicate their need for support either verbally or, if that is too difficult, by showing a red card or writing a note.

Many children with SEND have difficulty with abstract concepts such as emotions, but there are ways to turn emotions into more 'concrete' concepts, eg stress scales.

You can use a traffic light system, visual thermometer, or a scale of 1-5 to present emotions as colours or numbers. For example, a green traffic light or a number 1 can mean 'I am calm'; a red traffic light or a number 5, 'I am angry.

Coping with change(s)

Change. One of the many things in life that is inevitable. We as adults have learned this through time and experience. Trying to cope with change can be hard on anyone of any age. But it can be especially hard on little ones.

1. **Talk**- children need us to talk to them about what's going on in their lives. Let them know you realize how hard it can be to get used to new things. Give them a few examples of how you felt during changes in your younger years. Kids love [listening to stories](#) about when their parents were little.
2. **Listen**- When your child is ready to talk (this may take time for some children), [be sure to give them your ear](#). Letting them know you are there for them can make them feel more secure in their feelings.
3. **Offer choices**- Sometimes, children exhibit negative behavior during new changes because they feel out of control. They are used to one routine and now may not know what to expect from day to day. [Offer them choices](#) throughout the day and give them two options e.g. which book/ cereal from 2 choices.

4. Let Them Be Upset - We all have emotions in response to change and children are no different. For most of us, there has been at least one time in our lives where we felt the need to have a good cry. Little ones need to be able to express their emotions just like adults do.

If your child is suddenly crying about something that seems silly to you, try not to scold or belittle them. This is one way for them to get their frustrations out about their current changes.

5. Keep a routine- Children thrive on routine because it makes their daily lives feel predictable. Children need that type of predictability to feel secure, happy, and healthy. Without structure, our children will feel a sense of chaos which only breeds more stress.

6. Create new rituals:

craft day

game night

movie night

nap time song

back rub at bedtime

silly faces in the morning- anything!

7. Give Warning-Talk to your child about new changes ahead of time. It will be much easier for your child to process their new lifestyle if they are given ample explanation of upcoming changes.

Even though your child cannot predict how they will feel during the new changes, it is important to plant the seed. Let your child know what will be changing and how it might affect your day to day life.

8. Focus on the positive- Even if your family's new changes circle around negative situations, it is always important to look on the bright side for your child's sake. Oftentimes our children feed off of our emotions.

If you are constantly talking about the negative aspect of your new lifestyle, your child is going to do the same. To help ease their stress and anxiety, focus on the positive.

9. Accept that coping takes time- Everyone copes with new changes in their own time. It is important not to put a time limit on how long your child is to be upset or stressed.

Although it may be frustrating if your child seems to be upset for longer than you'd hoped, remember that they are an individual and need to process their feelings and emotions in a time frame that works for them.