



# Emotion Management in the Young Child with Asperger's Syndrome



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# Overview



- Main areas of difficulty – anger & anxiety
- Basic emotional education
- Bodily signs of anxiety & anger
- Emotional toolbox
- Facing fears
- A role for parents
- How to handle a meltdown
- Emotion management group program 4-6 yrs at Minds & Hearts



# Anger & Anxiety

- Higher levels anxiety & anger
- Higher resting level/arousal level
- 0-100 in a matter of seconds
- Difficulties calming down
- Fight or flight response almost constant
- Difficulties recognising & managing negative emotions
- Anxiety fuels anger





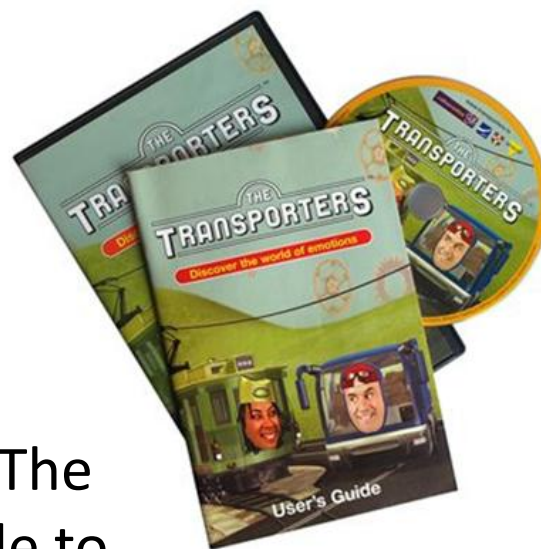
# Basic Emotional Education



- Spend more time on basic emotions
- First step is recognising emotions in others

Transporters DVD series  
developed by Autism Research  
Centre at Cambridge University

<http://www.thetransporters.com>



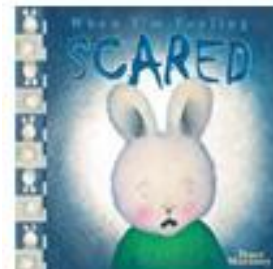
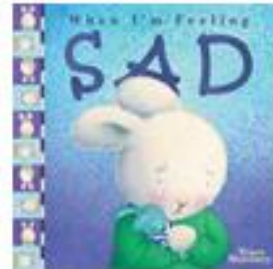
Mind Reading: The  
interactive guide to  
emotions CD Rom  
Jessica Kingsley  
Publishers



# Basic Emotional Education



- Project on emotions
  - Happy, relaxed/calm, sad, angry, scared
  - Pictures of faces showing feeling
  - Use their interest area “How do you think Ben 10 is feeling now?”
  - Trace Maroney feelings books Five Mile Press
  - Things that make me feel that way

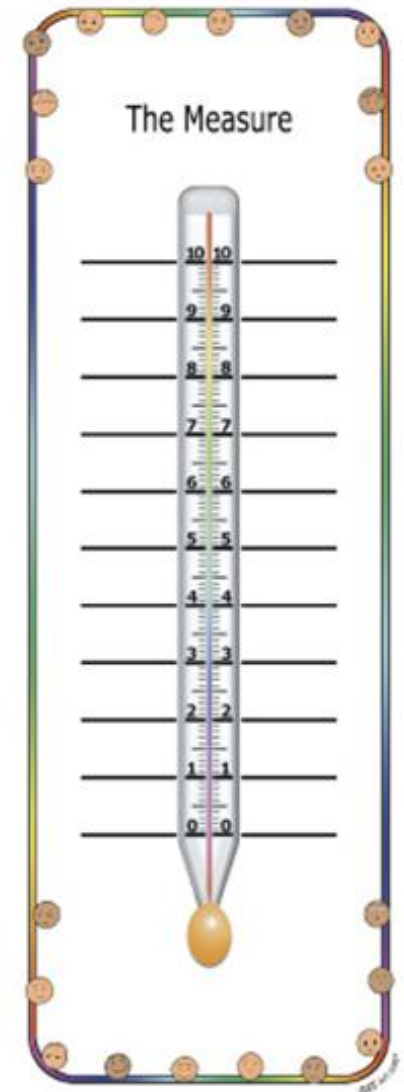
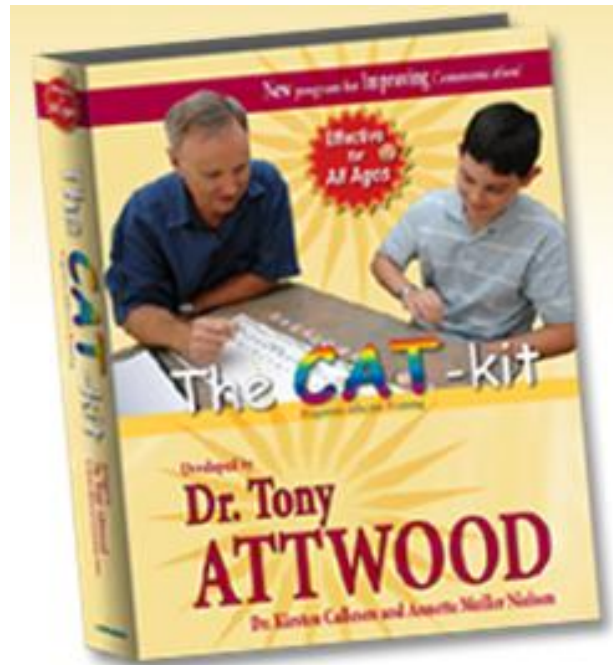
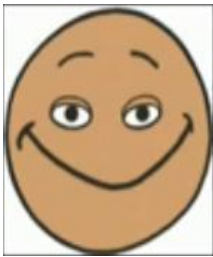




# Basic Emotional Education



- Different levels of the feeling
- The Cognitive Affective Training Kit (CAT kit) Jessica Kinsley Publishers





# Cognitive Behaviour Therapy



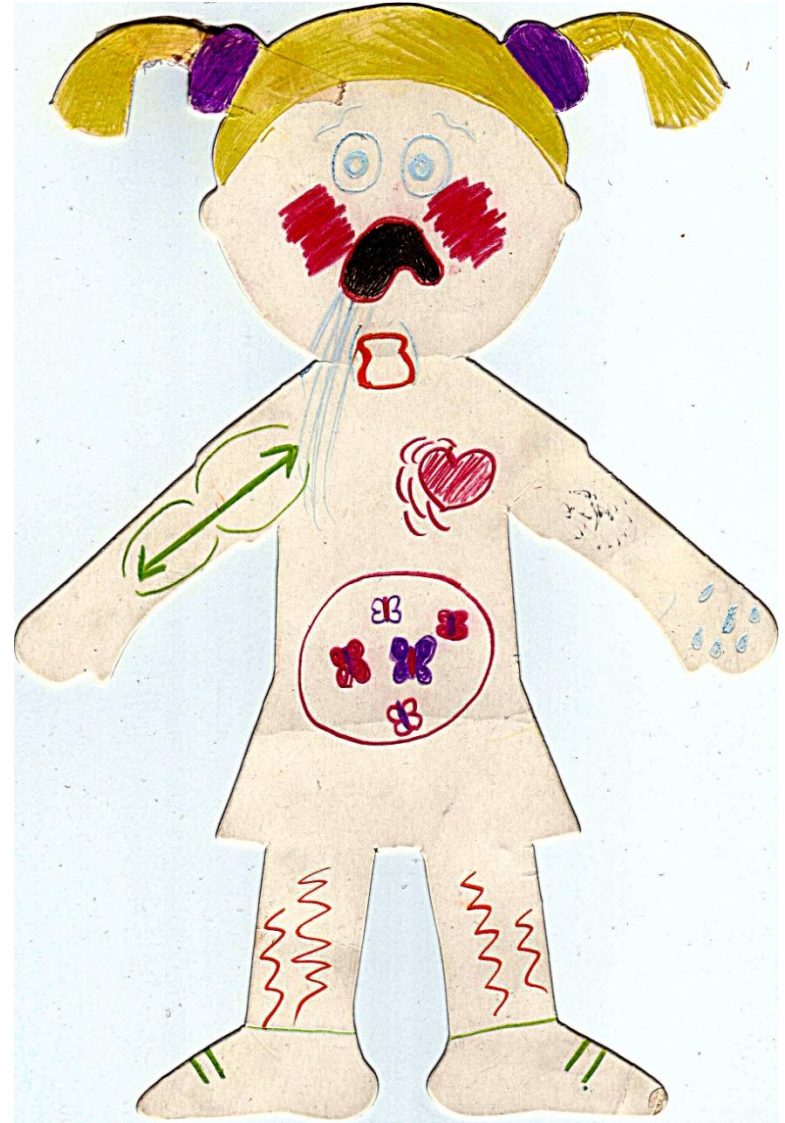
- Better recognising & labelling emotions
- Using strategies to expend physical emotional energy/ calm down
- Understanding relationship between thoughts, feelings & behaviours
- Changing thoughts to improve how feel and resulting behaviour



# Anxious/Angry Body Signals

## Recognition & Awareness

- Recognising bodily sensations associated with feelings of anger & anxiety
- Identify and monitor these





# Emotional Toolbox



- Relaxation tools - strategies for below five on thermometer to calm down
  - Breathing
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Lego/Drawing
  - Listening to music
  - Watching TV
  - Reading



# Emotional Toolbox



- Physical tools - strategies for above five to burn up the anxious or angry energy
  - Jumping on trampoline
  - Punching a pillow
  - Creative destruction - recycling
  - Swimming
  - Riding scooter
  - Playing Wii



# Emotional Toolbox



- Thinking tools – things the child can say to him/herself
  - “I can keep calm. When I’m calm I’m smart & I can solve the problem”
  - “It might have been an accident. I should check before I get angry”
  - “Sometimes plans change. I will get to go to grandma’s another time”



# Emotional Toolbox



- Social tools – people or pets
  - Speaking to or being with family member
  - Talking to a mentor or helper
  - Patting a pet



# Emotional Toolbox



- Solitude – mentally & emotionally exhausted after socialising



- Special interest tools – a source of relaxation, pleasure & escape



# A Role for Parents



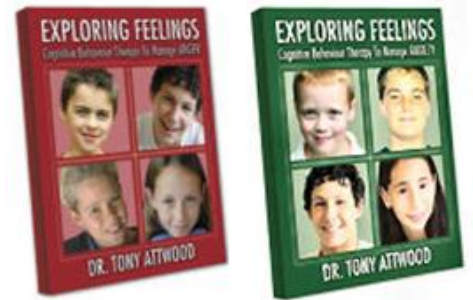
- Acknowledge the emotion
- Have the child label & rate emotion
- Prompt the child to use a strategy
- Be careful not to accidentally reward
- Remain calm – escalating emotion will fuel child's emotion
- Be aware that your anxiety can fuel your child's anxiety





# Further Information

- Not much available for very young age group
- Tony Attwood's Exploring Feelings books  
Jessica Kingsley Publishers



- Evaluation studies (10-12 yrs)
  - Sofronoff et. al., (2005) A randomised controlled trial of a CBT intervention for anxiety in children with Asperger Syndrome. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46, 1143-1151.
  - Sofronoff et. al., (2007) A randomised controlled trial of a CBT intervention for anger management in children diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 37, 1203-1214.



# Meltdown - What Should I Do?



- Remain calm
- Direct away from source of frustration
- Say something brief like “you are feeling angry and now you need to calm down”
- Suggest activity to burn up energy or calm down
- Don’t discuss or put consequence in place until calm



# Emotion Management Group

- New group program at Minds & Hearts
- Stef Plows' Doctoral research
- 4-6 year olds with an ASD
- 8 week CBT program
- Emotional education & management
- Parent component
- Pre and post questionnaire measures
- No published research for such young age





# Question Time



- Contact Details

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