

# Emotional Regulation: Tips for autistic teens



## What are emotions?

Emotions are the feelings we experience, such as sadness, joy, anger and relief. As teens our brains, bodies and environments are going through big changes which may make us feel strong emotions.

## What is emotional regulation?

Emotional regulation is how we name and manage our feelings. It is a skill that we learn as we grow and develop.

Sometimes we may lose control of our emotions when we don't yet have the skills to cope with the demands on us. This happens to everyone at times and that's okay.

Like all skills, learning to regulate big emotions takes practice. When we build these skills, we start to feel like we can manage stress or challenges in a healthy way.

## What can we do?

### Notice the sensations in our body

Sometimes it is difficult to work out how we are feeling. This is normal. There are some ways to learn how to do this. Learn to notice your body cues and sensations. Then think about what word might describe those sensations: "Name it to tame it". For example, we may notice that our stomach tightens and our heart beats faster when we feel scared.

### Identify the feeling/label the emotion

If naming emotions is difficult, talking, drawing or writing things down that have happened before we felt that emotion can help. It may have been something that happened earlier that caused the emotional response.

### Practice coping strategies when calm

Practice coping strategies *for* the moment, not *in* the moment. If we practice new coping strategies when we are calm, it means they are easier to use when we are stressed or overwhelmed.

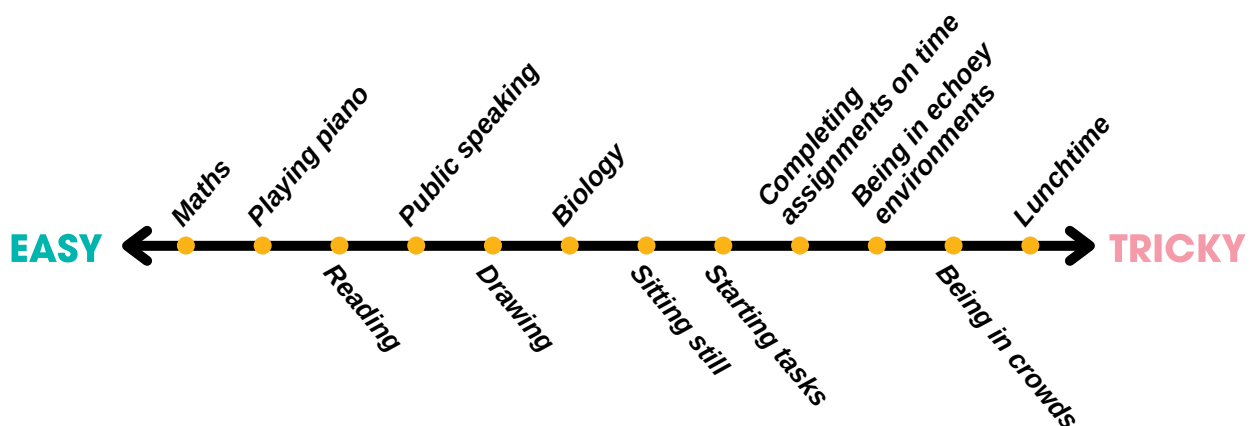
### Identify what we find tricky and easy

Things that we find tricky can cause big emotions. If we can figure out what things we find tricky, we can then work out strategies we can use to make them easier.

### How can we develop strategies?

1. We can think about the things at school that we find tricky and the things that we find easy.
2. Write the things we find really easy on the left through to things we find really tricky on the right. For example, I find maths really easy, but lunchtime is really tricky.

For example:



3. Talk with a trusted adult about the things we find tricky and some things we could do to make them easier.

Some strategies we might choose include:

- Having groups allocated for group work
- Having a trusted adult make lunchtime suggestions
- Having regular movement breaks
- Using a timer to assist in getting tasks done on time
- Using an app such as Worrytime to schedule in time for dealing with worries

For example:

<b>Things I find tricky</b>	<b>What can be done to make them easier</b>
Lunch	Asking a trusted adult to help you make a lunchtime plan. Joining a lunchtime club. Asking a teacher to help you start a lunchtime club. Identifying a safe space such as the library that you can go to if the yard is overwhelming.
Being in crowded places	Gaining permission to leave class a few minutes early to avoid crowded corridors. Asking to arrive and leave school assembly before or after other students to avoid congestion.
Noisy environments	Wearing noise cancelling headphones. Having a quiet space to go if feeling overwhelmed. Finding sensory tools such as fidgets for positive sensations.

## Templates

**EASY** ←————→ **TRICKY**

Things I find tricky	What can be done to make them easier

## Resources

Amaze Emotional Regulation [videos](#)

[Molehill Mountain App](#)

[Know Your Normal Toolkit](#) by Ambitious About Autism

[WorryTime App](#) by ReachOut

Where to get help?

Speak to a trusted adult, such as a parent or teacher.

Kids Helpline - 1800 551 800

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Headspace

<https://headspace.org.au/>

Autism Connect - 1300 308 699

Email: [info@autismconnect.org.au](mailto:info@autismconnect.org.au)

<https://www.amaze.org.au/autismconnect/>

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