

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

HOW TO SUPPORT NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN WITH EMOTIONAL PROCESSING AND ANXIETY

Psychology in Schools Team, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

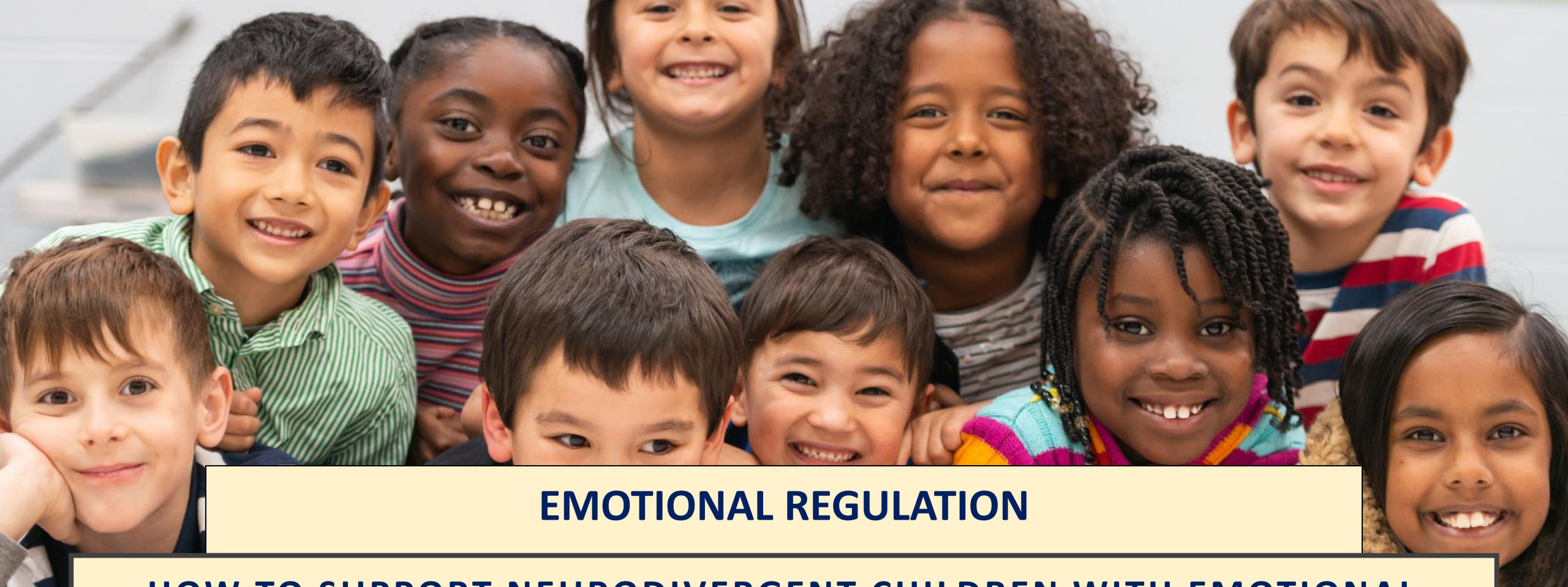
With thanks to Essex Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools - Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services, Essex Family Forum, Essex Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Suffolk Parent Carer Forum (SPCF)

How would you rate your current knowledge of big feelings in neurodivergent children?



How would you rate your current confidence supporting neurodivergent children/young people with managing big feelings?





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Looking after yourself

- Emotional topics being covered today, including self-harm and suicide
- Do what you need to look after yourself
- Recording and resources will be shared with everyone who signed up for the workshop

Workshop Overview

- WHAT is the prevalence of anxiety, low mood, self-harm and suicidality in neurodivergent children?
- WHY might neurodivergent children need more support with their big feelings?
- HOW can you and others help your child manage their big feelings?



Mental health in neurodivergent children and teenagers

Increased risk of mental health problems

Increased risk of anxiety

Increased risk of depression

Increased risk of self-harm and suicide

- Statistics indicate that the risk of self-harm and suicidal thinking and attempts are sadly higher for neurodivergent children
- For some families, helping managing risk of self-harm is an important part of supporting their neurodivergent child with their emotions

What protects against poor mental health and wellbeing?

- Special interests
- Having a sense of shared connection
- Self-acceptance
- Neuroaffirmative approaches and language are key





Why might neurodivergent children need more support with their big feelings?

- Emotional literacy
- Emotion dysregulation
- Environment and experiences
- Brain differences in neurodivergent children

WHAT WE MIGHT SEE

Nauseous

Self-harm

Withdrawn

Breaking things

Crying

Eating problems

Struggling to attend school

Appears fine (masking)

Violence

Irritable

Confused

Shame

Sadness

Low self-esteem

Sense of difference

In pain

Hunger

Friendship fall out

Seeking safety

Uncertainty

Academic problems

Tired

Bored

Feeling left out

Sensory overload

Jealousy

Embarrassed

Needing to feel loved

Hopelessness

Anger

Lonely

Bullying

Overwhelmed

Needing attention

Fear

Trauma memories

WHAT MIGHT BE GOING ON FOR A CHILD

Activity: What might trigger your child's big feelings?



The Brain House

Upstairs brain

- The control tower

Downstairs brain

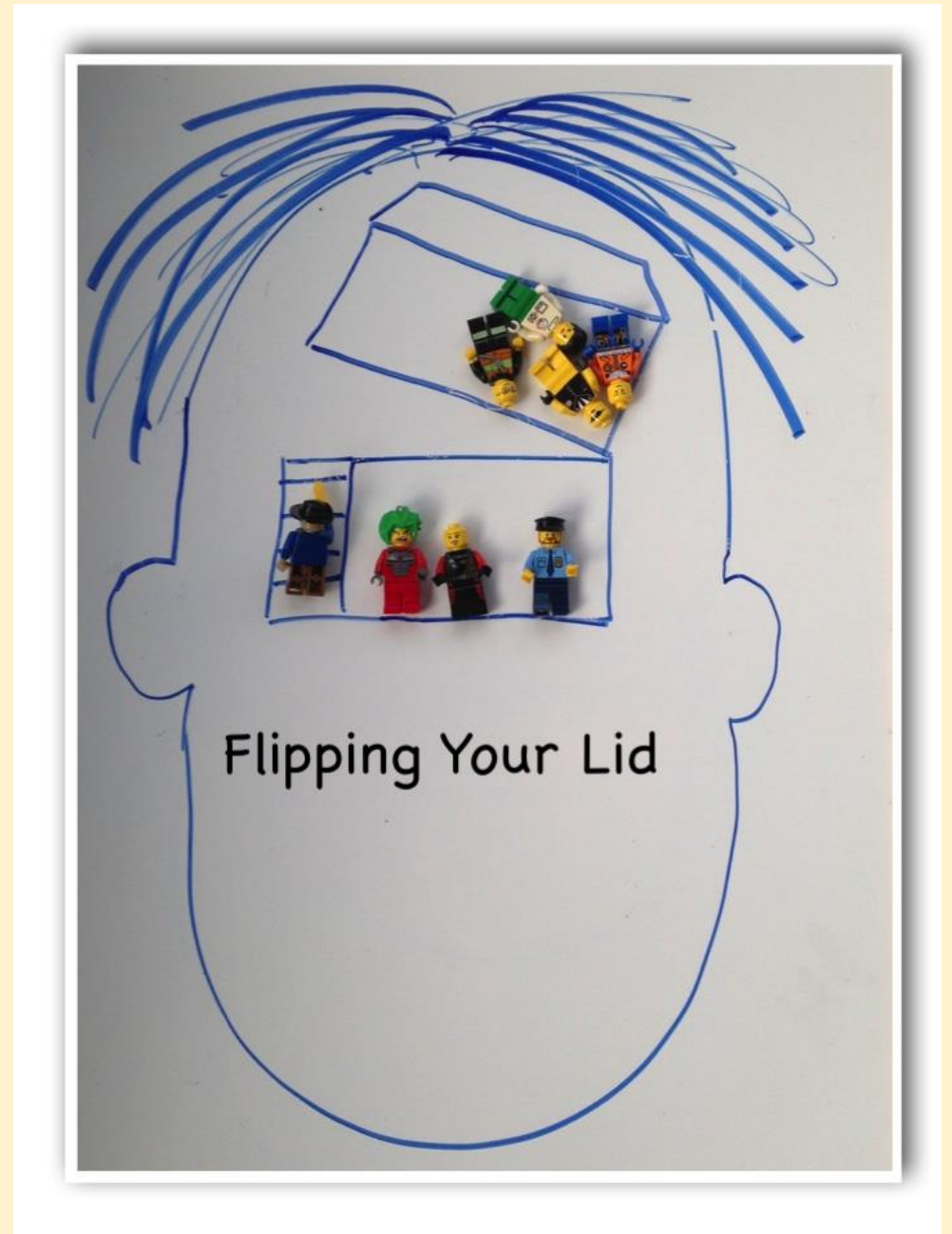
- The alarm system



Illustrated by Dr Hazel Harrison

Flipping The Lid

- This is what happens when people get overwhelmed by big feelings
- We lose access to the upstairs part of our brain
- When this happens children no longer have access to the part of their brain that helps them to make good decisions



Brain house in neurodivergent children

Processing sensory information



Impulsivity/mind wondering



Emotion regulation



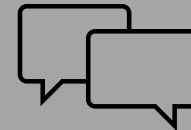
Recognising, differentiating & expressing emotions



More frequent negative experiences



Understanding other's points of view





Neurodivergent Experiences

- School problems e.g. difficulty learning, sensory overwhelm, masking – trying to fit into ‘neurotypical box’ sometimes expected at school
- Social difficulties e.g. lonely, friendship problems, bullying, being taken advantage of by peers

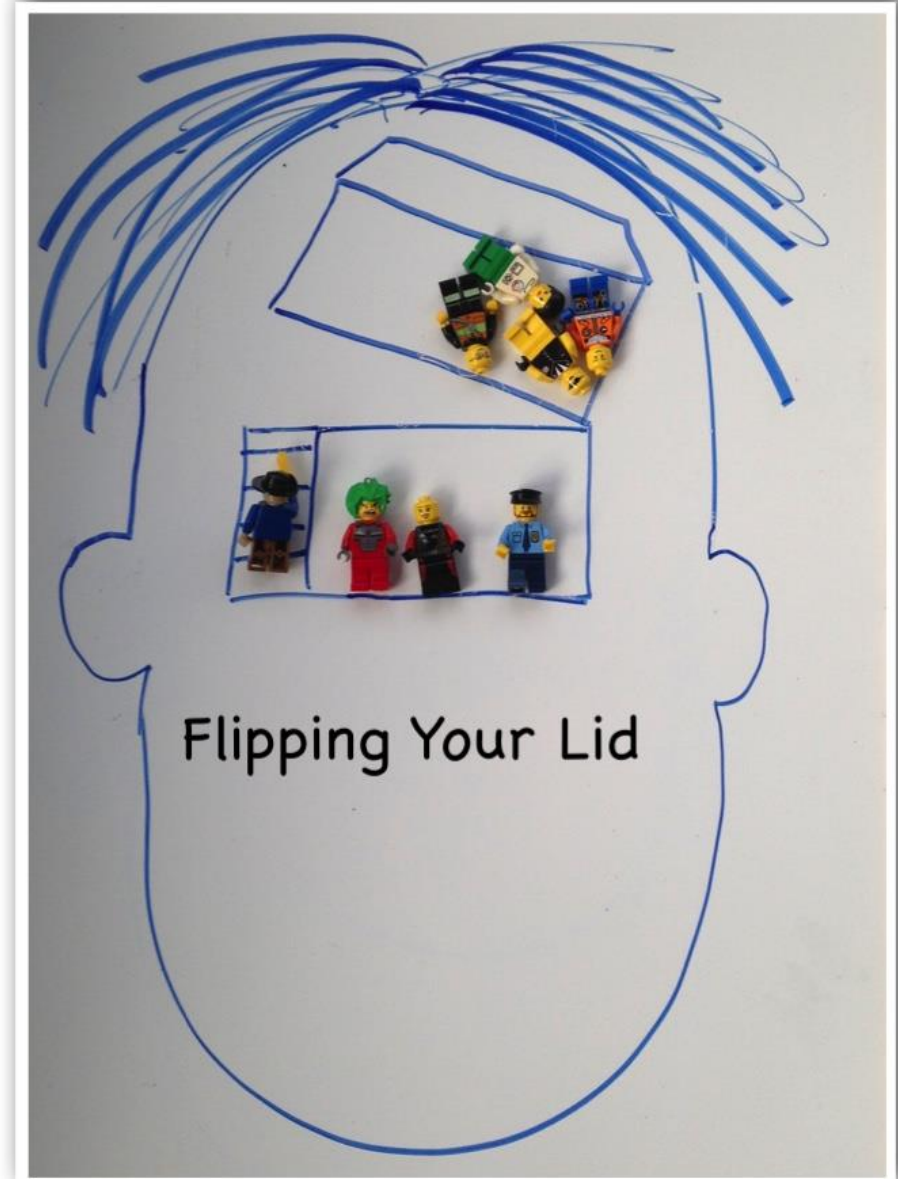
How can you and others help your child manage their big feelings

- Connection before correction
- Building emotional literacy
- Addressing triggers and the importance of neuroaffirmative environments
- Calming and relaxation
- General wellbeing



Connection before Correction

- When children are overwhelmed, they will not be able to hear us until the thinking part of the brain is back online
- We can help with this by prioritizing connection over correction
- Coming alongside your child to help them regulate, becoming calm before deciding what to do next



Connecting with neurodivergent children

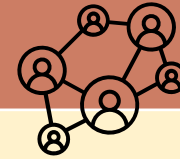
Connecting at the right time



Give alternate ways of communicating



Connection may look different for neurodivergent children



Be mindful of sensory differences



Incorporate special interests



Doing something they enjoy alongside them



Small group discussion: What makes it difficult for you to do this? What helps you?



Building emotional literacy



Identifying emotions



YouTube GB Search

Then you're ready to play Name That Emotion!

Sesame Street

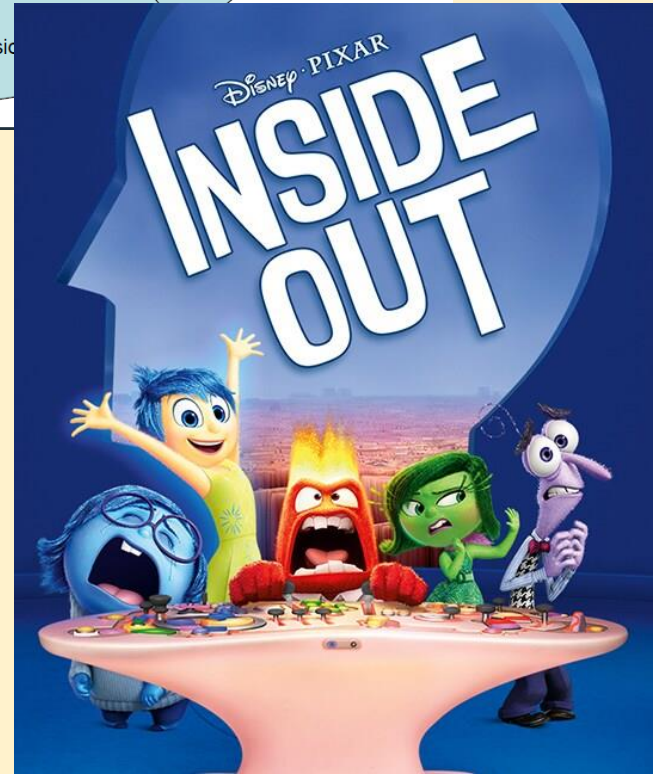
Sesame Street: Name That Emotion with Murray!

Sesame Street 23.3M subscribers

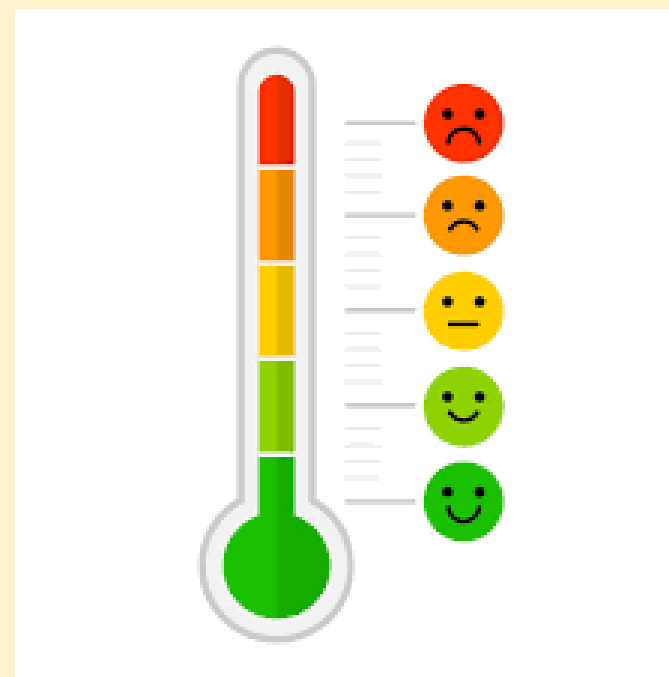
Subscribe

4.5K

Share



Communicating emotions



Addressing triggers

- Work out together what the triggers are
- Reducing sensory distress
- May need to support your child in navigating their friendships
- Increasing social support – clubs based on hobbies, neurodivergent communities, school mentoring/pastoral support
- The importance of neuroaffirmative environments



Classroom-based strategies

- Teach children about difference and diversity
- Whole-class education on neurodiversity and interoception
- Encourage understanding
- Encourage and model kindness



Working together

- Masking at school may mean emotional needs are less obvious
- Sharing your understanding and strategies
- Consider reasonable adaptations at school – remember needs-based not diagnosis based



Calming and Regulation

- Breathing techniques
- Grounding techniques - bringing into present moment
- Sensory regulation
- Safe space



Positive self-talk

- Celebrating their successes and strengths
- Encouraging and modelling positive self-talk
- Being your child's champion!





Importance of your own wellbeing

- If you are feeling dysregulated, it's very difficult to support a young person to regulate themselves
- Filling up our own resource bucket first
- Emotional contagion

Childhood Neurodivergence: Managing Parental/Carer Stress

General family wellbeing



SLEEP



HEALTHY DIET



EXERCISE



SOCIAL
CONNECTION


Small group discussion: What two things will you try do to in the next week?



HOLDING HOPE

“Keep being curious, become the detective and stay resilient. Be your child’s Ambassador, give them a voice. Everyday is a learning day. Talk to Others and ask for support, remember to take 5 minutes for yourself. Create a WOW board, take a photo of every achievement, don’t try and solve everything at once”

“It's hard to understand how your child is feeling but try to keep calm & don't take it personally. Your child loves you & trusts you the most and therefore feels most comfortable being angry at you more than anyone else.”



“Every child is different. You’ve just got to find what works”

“Ask for support. Do not try to do things alone”

“You are not alone”

Key sources of support and resources in Suffolk for parents/carers

- **Suffolk Local Offer**

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/>

- **Parenting courses and more:**

[The Parent Hub - Suffolk County Council](#)

Action for children: [Support when you feel like you can't cope as a parent](#)

- **Parent/carer networks:**

[PACT | Parents And Carers Together | Suffolk Suffolk Parent Carer Forum \(suffolkpcf.co.uk\)](#)

- **The Source Engagement Hub:**

<https://thesource.me.uk/engagement-hub/>

- **Behaviour safe at home – Suffolk SEND Local Offer:**

[Behaviour safe at Home - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)

Two-day course, £10 per person. Look at the link for dates

RECOMMENDED BY

PARENTS FOR PARENTS ON THE ADHD/ASD PATHWAY

THE CURLY HAIR PROJECT



Uses animated films, stories and comic strips to support young people on the ASD spectrum.

[The Girl With The Curly Hair - Autism Training, Animations, Books](#)

PARENT WORKSHOPS

Workshop programme designed by the Psychology in Schools Team to support parents

Sign up here -



ACTIVITIES UNLIMITED

Short breaks open to young people with SEND needs in Suffolk

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/short-breaks-and-leisure-activities/activities-unlimited>



SENDIASS

A free support service which offers information and resources for supporting special educational needs and disability.

<https://suffolksendiass.co.uk/>

NEURODIVERGENT ABILITIES GROUP (IPSWICH)

<https://www.neurodivergentabilities.org/>

Bespoke support tailored to help young people thrive in a neurotypical world.

Offers 1-1 face to face support in Ipswich. Also offers remote sessions and independent living support.



SCHOOL SUPPORT

Find key staff members to understand and support your child. Roles who may be most helpful include SENCO, pastoral lead, teaching assistant, form tutor, head of year, mentor, thrive leader, school nurse, nurture group leader. They can consider reasonable adjustments.

ELSA:

Your school may offer ELSA intervention. A 6 session intervention supporting young people to develop their emotional literacy skills

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/>



FAMILY ACTION (SUFFOLK)

<https://www.family-action.org.uk/>

Offer self help resources, local services and a free helpline called 'FamilyLine' which can be used to help through



BEANS

Offers support for families journey with neurodiversity. Support for parents/carers, young people (11-25), siblings. Support includes drop ins, groups and activities.

<https://accessct.org/beans/>

Support in Suffolk continued

SENDIASS

Parent workshops on SEND including:

- What is a special educational need (SEN)?
- SEN support in schools
- EHC Needs Assessment
- Preparing for school transitions

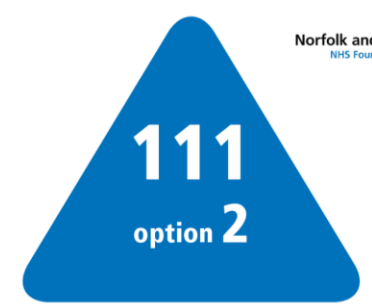
Recorded previous workshops on YouTube

Parent & carer information sessions - Suffolk SENDIASS

Suffolk Sendiass – YouTubeFS

Resources and support

If you need
urgent mental
health help,
call 111 and
choose option 2



Mental health crisis support 24/7 for people of all ages in Norfolk and Suffolk

Mental health

- YoungMinds mental health charity for children and young people
www.youngminds.org.uk
- Apps: Headspace, Calm, Combined Mind, Sleepio, Clear Fear (anxiety), Move Mood
- The Source information and advice for young people in Suffolk www.thesource.me.uk
- Kooth free online counselling for ages 11-25 in Suffolk www.kooth.com
- Suffolk Support and self-help guide – local services

Self-harm and suicide

- Alumina free online self-harm support group for 11-19 year olds
www.selfharm.co.uk
- Calm Harm an award-winning app developed to help teenagers manage the urge to self-harm
- Papyrus “Supporting your child: self-harm and suicide” a guide for parents and carers
www.papyrus-uk.org
- MIND urgent help
- Suffolk *if your child needs urgent mental health support you can call the NHS 111 service on **111 option 2**, free service available 24/7*

Psychology In Schools: Free Live Workshops And Video Recordings

Upcoming LIVE Parent/Carer workshops on mental health

www.nsft.uk/workshops



Previous recorded workshops include school avoidance, Tics and Tourette's, self-harm, supporting behaviour, social media, OCD and more!

Childhood Neurodiversity Workshops:

[Neurodiversity online parent/carers workshops - Suffolk SEND Local Offer](#)



Previous recorded workshops include supporting sensory needs, eating difficulties, sleep, anxiety, social relationships and more!

Access recorded workshops here:

[Parent workshops | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS](#)

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**How would you rate your current confidence
neurodivergent children with big feelings?**



FEEDBACK FORM

PINS Feedback Survey (Suffolk)



[click here](#)