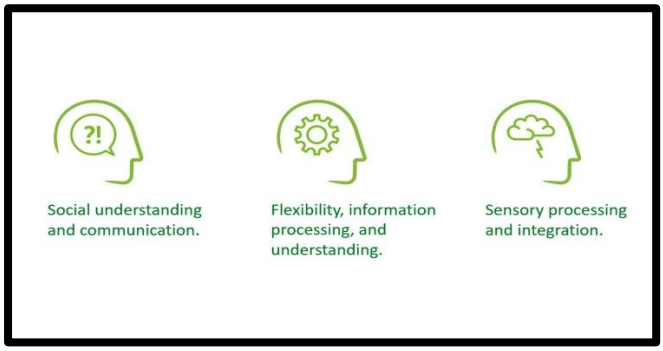
Emotional Regulation



Due to three areas of difference, Autistic children can have difficulties with regulating emotions.

Emotional regulation is a foundational skill that underlies:

- Attention
- Social engagement
- Communication development
- Maintaining optimal arousal in order to learn

States of Arousal – A form of communication

Regulated Arousal	Hyper Arousal	Hypo Arousal	Flooded Arousal
A calm, alert processing state. This is the time a child can focus on the present moment. They can pay attention and they are in control of their responses. A child is demonstrating a readiness to learn, and they are ready to focus and think.	When faced with stimuli that is perceived as challenging, distressing or threatening. It is a state of whole-body stress response marked by primarily increasing energy. It can create anxious hypervigilance and instigate the fight or flight response in the brain.	Marked by decreasing energy in the body. This occurs when the parasympathetic nervous system pushes on the brake pedal for protection, resulting in immobilisation response to threat. Shutting down. Sensations and feelings shut down.	As the hyperalert stage goes up in intensity more control is lost leading to 'flipping one's lid'. A state of fear and rage. Emotions feel overwhelming and the body may rely on the fight, flight, freeze reflex to quickly expend the surge of energy in an impulsive effort to stay alive.

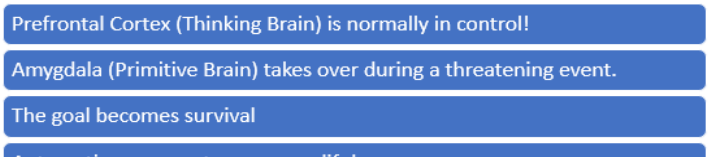
The Brain

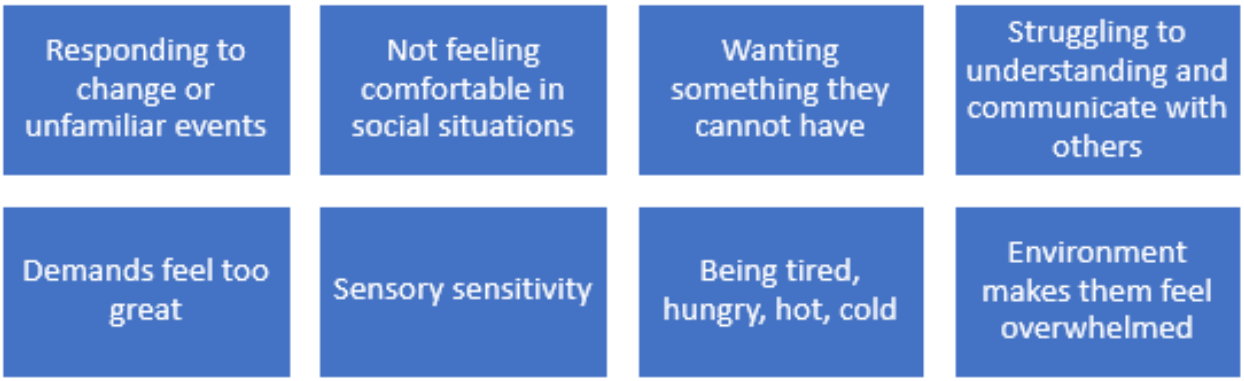
What happens when we perceive a threat?



Triggers

These are the events that can stimulate arousal and lead to

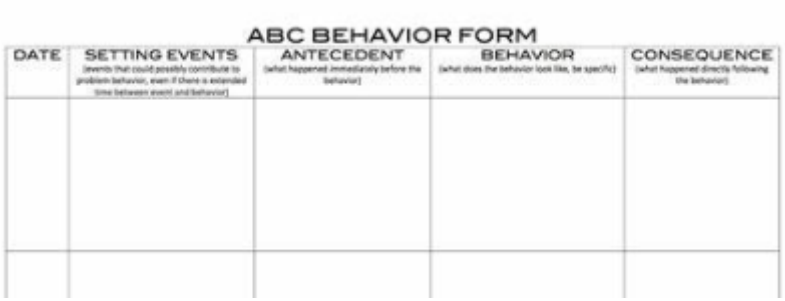




emotional dysregulation. Considering the three areas of difference, common triggers can include

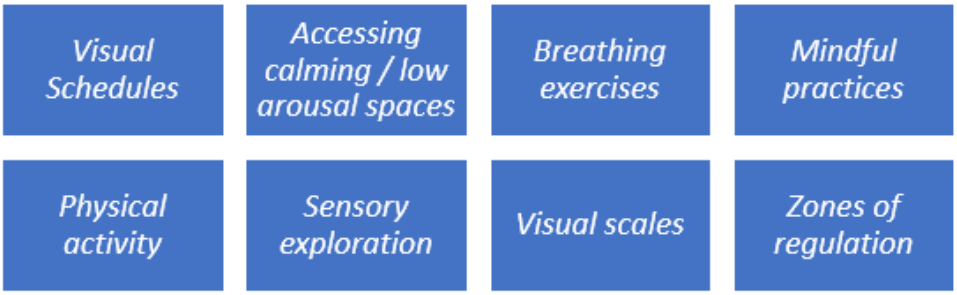
Strategies

- ABC charts – tracking back through observation



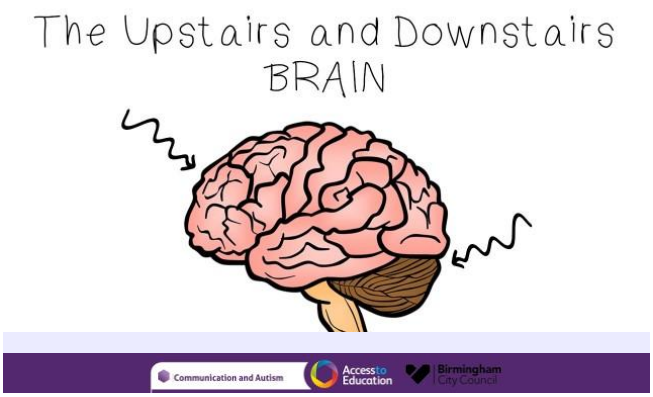
Can you spot the triggers, a pattern of when the distress occurs?

- Mutual regulation strategies:



- Providing processing time
- Reducing the complexity of language used
- Teach the child what happens in the brain when they feel distressed, so they understand that it is a physical process.
- Think about the brain – Bottom-Top, Top-Bottom!

Ready to Learn – strategies to stay motivated



Thinking about the brain and how it processes emotions.

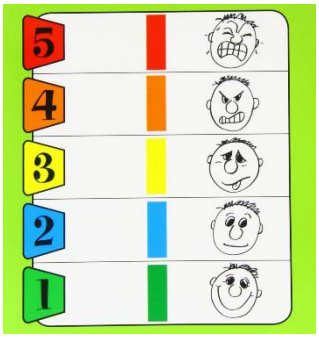
Bottom – up activities focuses on regulating the downstairs brain. These activities need to be patterned , repetitive and rhythmic activities. These activities are great for initial distress.

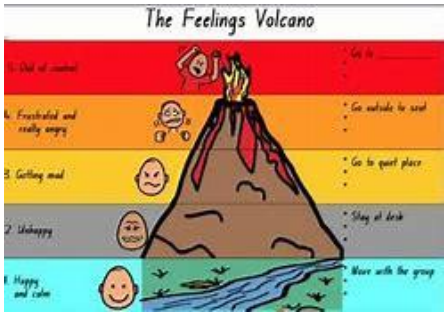
Top Down activities focuses on regulating the upstairs brain. Supporting cognitive behavioural approaches e.g. growth mindset and intentional optimistic thinking. These are best accessed when the initial distress is disseminating.

Bottom Up	Top Down
• Body movement • Yoga • Sensory circuits • Proprioception activities • Movement breaks • Running	• Discussing problems • Positive self-talk • Affirmations • Shining a light • Gratitude • Growth mindset • Stress Buckets

•



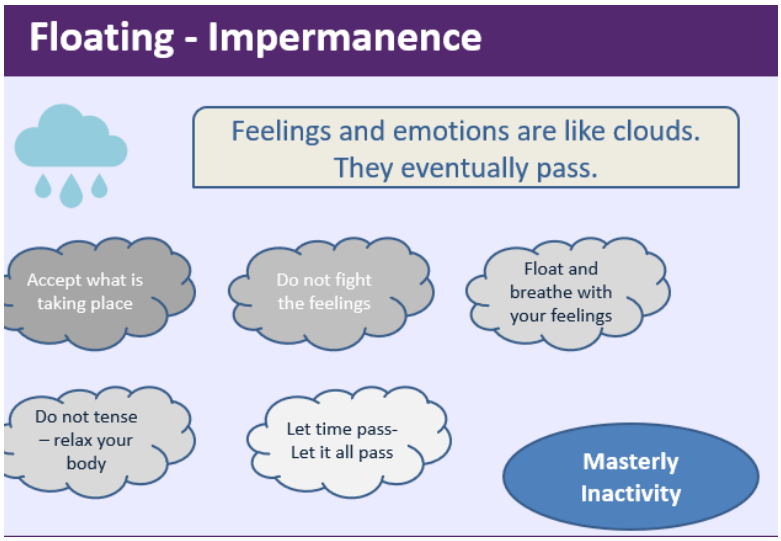




Reducing Demands

- Reducing the level of demand in the language you use
- Show them **how many or how long** they have to complete in a learning tasks – use visual timers and task boards
- Try **'I start, you finish..'** start off a task for them to reduce the pressure
- Now and Next – a short demand, followed by preferred activity
- Offer a choice (that both suit your outcomes).

Floating



When feeling anxious a second wave of fear can be triggered by the first. We become fearful of the fear. To prevent this second wave, we can accept the situation as it is. Accept that it will pass and not last for long.

Teaching pupils to imagine the emotion like the clouds in the sky. They will eventually pass.

Sensory Needs

- Evaluate the environment – is it over stimulating, cluttered?
- Complete a sensory checklist – are they seeking movement, sensory feedback?
- What sensory adaptations can we make?