

Visual Supports and Resources to Engage People with Autism and Their family Members

First Responders/Medical



1516 Atwood Avenue Johnston, RI www.theautismproject.org **(401) 785-2666**

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ABOUT AUTISM: TIPS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS



In the United States, 1 in 44 individuals has a diagnosis of Autism. (CDC, 2018)

People with developmental disabilities have 7X more contacts with police.

(Organization for Autism Research, 2014)



1 in 5 youth with ASD have been stopped and questioned by the police before the age of 21.

(Rava, Shattuck, Rast, & Roux, 2017)

TIPS FOR INTERACTION

Don't Assume: Do not assume the individual will respond to 'stop' or other commands or questions

Allow Space: Give the individual time and space, and avoid the use of restraint

Stay Calm: Maintain a calm and relaxed demeanor, if sitting, get down on their level

Offer Water/Snack: Hold it out to the individual

Simplify Language: Use simple, literal phrases

Reassure: Even if the person is nonverbal, offer reassurance

Offer Tools: Offer a phone, iPad, or paper/pen to communicate— these items may also calm the individual



WHAT IS AUTISM

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental diagnosis that impacts how a person communicates, learns, and experiences their world. Autistic people often have:

- challenges communicating with others
- restricted interests and repetitive behaviors
- difficulty regulating emotions (especially in challenging situations)
- atypical experiences of / responses to sensory input (lights, sounds, smells, tastes, etc.)



Autism is known as a spectrum disorder because there is wide variation in the way that people experience the above characteristics.

49% of children with autism attempt to elope from a safe environment

(Phillips, Briggs, Fisher, & Greer, 2018)



23% of individuals with ASD have had interactions with first responders due to wandering or eloping.

(Engaged Scholars, v. 7, 2019)



TIPS FOR SEARCH & RESCUE

Act Quickly: People with autism may head straight to water, traffic, or abandoned cars/areas, so treat each case as critical regardless of age

Search Water First: Search any type of nearby water, including waste water

Ask Questions: Ask the caregiver if the individual will respond to his/her name, and about likes/dislikes (Will they be drawn to certain music, favorite characters, fire trucks, mom's voice? Or afraid of certain noises, sirens, search dogs?)



If Person With Autism is Missing

- ✓ **Treat each case as critical.** Those with autism can have an impaired sense of danger and often go straight to water or traffic.
- ✓ Ask the caregiver if the person wears a personal tracking device, if so, immediately initiate tracking measures.
- ✓ **Search Water First!** Even if the child or adult is said to dislike water, search any type of nearby water, including waste water.
- ✓ Ask about other dangers that the person may be attracted to; busy roads/highways/construction sites, etc. and immediately dispatch personnel to secure those areas.
- ✓ Ask about individual's likes that may assist in search efforts – Will they be drawn to certain music, favorite characters, fire trucks, mom's voice, etc.
- ✓ Ask about individual's dislikes and fears or sensory issues that may hinder search efforts. (Dogs, Sirens, Aircraft, Lights, Shouting.)
- ✓ Ask if the individual will respond to his/her name when called.
- ✓ Implement Reverse 9-1-1 (Visit achildsmissing.org for details.)
- ✓ Issue an Endangered Missing Alert.



Training & Search Resources

National Center For Missing & Exploited Children:
missingkids.com; 1-800-THE-LOST

Project Lifesaver Tracking:
projectlifesaver.org

SafetyNet Tracking:
safetynettracking.com

Reverse 911:
achildsmissing.org

Autism Risk Management:
autismriskmanagement.com

Take Me Home Registry:
Officer Jimmy Donohoe
Jdonohoe@ci.pensacola.fl.us

EMA Emergency Alert Guidelines:
ncjrs.gov

Prevention Resources for Families

National Autism Association
nationalautismassociation.org

NAA's Big Red Safety Box
bigredsafetybox.com

AWAARE Collaboration
awaare.org



"We're ecstatic we found this kid with everything stacked against us."

Capt. B.J. Jones, who helped locate a nonverbal 7-year-old boy in a riverbed after an eight-hour search - ModBee, January 2014

Today's date:

Meet _____

_____ is diagnosed with autism and could be misunderstood if there is ever an encounter with law enforcement or other first responders.

Because _____ has difficulty visiting new places or people, I'm writing you today to introduce this amazing person who may not know what to do in a stressful situation.

In addition to some of the characteristics I've marked on the right side of this page, other behaviors include:

Should this person ever become lost, please search nearby water, busy streets and these places:

This person has certain likes/dislikes that may affect interactions with police or other first responders. To limit risk, please:

If this person is ever lost, I can be reached at:

_____ or _____.

I may be attaching other helpful information. Should you have any questions, please call me at the number listed above. Thank you for all the work you do to protect the lives of people with autism.

Sincerely,

(place image here)

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Meds or Allergies: _____

Emergency Contact: _____



This Person with Autism May:

- ☐ Not speak
- ☐ Appear deaf
- ☐ Avoid eye contact
- ☐ Not respond to their name or verbal commands
- ☐ Rock, pace, spin or hand-flap (stimming), or repeat phrases (echolalia)
- ☐ Hold hands over ears due to sound sensitivity
- ☐ Avoid or resist physical contact
- ☐ Have unusual fears or obsessions with things like flashing lights, sirens, K-9s
- ☐ Not answer questions
- ☐ Need time to process questions or demands
- ☐ Try to run away or hide
- ☐ Appear to be under the influence
- ☐ Not be properly dressed for the elements
- ☐ Have the mental capacity of someone much younger



How Do I Approach Someone with Autism?

- If there is no imminent danger, give the individual time and space
- Maintain a calm and relaxed demeanor
- Look for a medical ID, contact caregiver immediately
- Speak in a normal tone of voice using simple phrases
- Use first/then approach to ease anxiety: "First, we are going to sit in the car, then we'll see your Mom."

My Fire Safety Plan

We have fire alarms in our home to keep us safe.



When the fire alarm beeps, I will leave the house and wait at the mailbox.

The mailbox is my family's emergency meeting area.



Even if I do not smell or see smoke, when the alarm beeps, I will go to the mailbox.

I will wait at the mailbox until my parents, or a firefighter come to get me.

This will help keep me and my family safe if there is a fire.

AUTISM & WANDERING PREVENTION TIPS

promoting safety in the home & community



Similar to the wandering behaviors in seniors with dementia or Alzheimer's, children and adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are prone to wandering away from a safe environment. Because many children with ASD have challenges in areas of language and cognitive function, it is critical for parents to understand ways to keep their child or adult with autism safe.

■ *prevention*
■ *education*
■ *response*

Install Home Safeguards



Install secure locks (exterior doors), home security system or door/window chimes; fence yard; secure gates; keep garage opener out of reach; use baby monitors and visual prompts like simple stop signs.

Identify Triggers/Teach Self-help



Be aware of any known triggers that could prompt fleeing (loud noises, bright lights, fears, etc.) and work towards teaching your child safe alternative ways to respond.

For an individual who demonstrates bolting behaviors due to fear or stress, etc., use aids, such as noise-cancelling headphones, and teach calming techniques using favorites topics or items.

Secure Personal Safeguards



Have wearable identification on your child; Temporary Tattoos are great for field trips and other outings; Check with local law enforcement to see if they offer Tracking Devices.

Teach Safety Skills



Enroll your child into swimming lessons. Final lessons should be with clothes and shoes on.

Use social stories to teach individuals with autism ways to stay safe, and use favorite objects or tools to demonstrate when it's outside time versus inside time.

Create Community Awareness



Alert trusted neighbors, and introduce them to your child; fill out an alert form for local police, include a current photo and unique characteristics, likes, fears, and behaviors; alert the school, and bus drivers.

Call 911



Remain calm and always call 911 immediately if an individual with ASD is missing; law enforcement should treat each case as "critical."

Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) for additional assistance.

Remain Hyper Vigilant



Stay on extra high alert during warmer months, holidays, vacations, camping trips, transition periods, outdoor gatherings, a recent move to a new home or school, visiting an unfamiliar setting, public outings.

Initiate a "tag, you're it" system during family gatherings and transitions. Tag one responsible adult to closely supervise your child for an agreed-upon period of time.

Search Water First



Immediately search areas that pose the highest threat first, such as nearby water, busy streets, train tracks, and parked cars.



For more tips and resources, visit nationalautism.org.



Tips for hosting a Sensory Friendly Touch-A-Truck with First Responders

PLAN AHEAD

SET THE ENVIRONMENT UP FOR SUCCESS. ONLY INCLUDE ITEMS THAT ARE SAFE FOR KIDS TO TOUCH & PLAY WITH.



CREATE A NATURAL BARRIER



SET UP VEHICLES, TABLES, AND ACTIVITIES AROUND THE PERIMETER CREATING A NATURAL BARRIER AND REDUCING THE RISK OF ELOPEMENT.

SENSORY SAFE

LIGHTS & SIRENS CAN INCREASE STRESS AND RISK OF SEIZURE.

WHEN CREATING A SENSORY SAFE ENVIRONMENT, DON'T FORGET TO TURN DOWN OR MUTE OTHER ALARMS & WALKIES.



HUDDLE-UP



BEFORE THE EVENT BEGINS HAVE A MEETING WITH YOUR TEAM TO HELP CLARIFY THE EXPECTATIONS AND GIVE MEMBERS AN IDEA OF WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES.

CREATE A BREAK SPACE

DESIGNATE AN AREA AWAY FROM LOUD NOISES & CROWDS WHERE INDIVIDUALS CAN TAKE A BREAK IF NEEDED.



USE VISUALS



USE VISUALS SUCH AS STOP SIGNS TO IDENTIFY AREAS THAT MAY BE OFF LIMITS. OTHER VISUALS HIGHLIGHTING WHERE TO WAIT, WHERE TO TAKE A BREAK, & DIFFERENT ACTIVITY AREAS CAN BE HELPFUL.

SUSPEND JUDGMENT & COMMENTS

SENSORY FRIENDLY EVENTS ALLOW FOR FAMILIES TO INTERACT IN A JUDGMENT FREE ZONE CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES.



TAKE THE PARENTS LEAD



MELTDOWNS HAPPEN! IF A KIDDO HAS A HARD TIME CHECK IN WITH THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER HOW YOU CAN BE HELPFUL.

Public Safety Special Needs Coalition

For more helpful tips and information visit

www.pssncrri.com







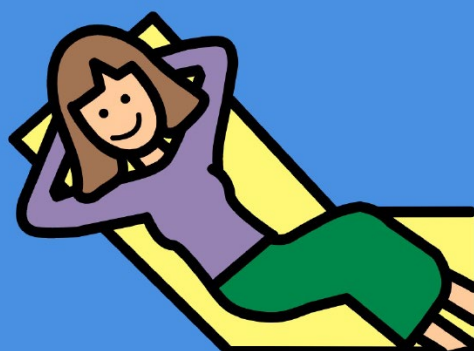
BREAK



BREAK



BREAK



BREAK



BREAK



BREAK

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This will help keep me and my family safe if there is a fire.

FIRST

THEN



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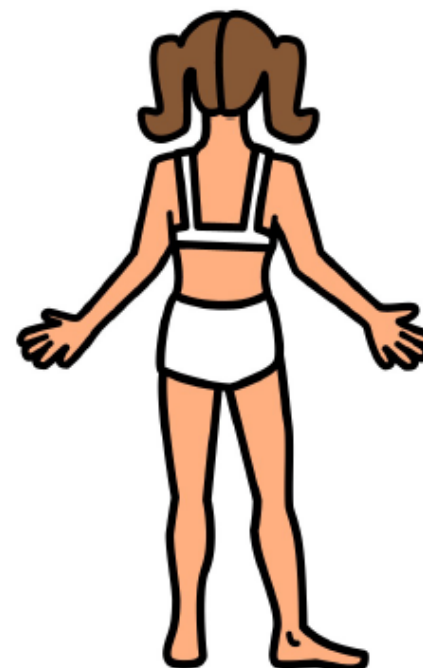
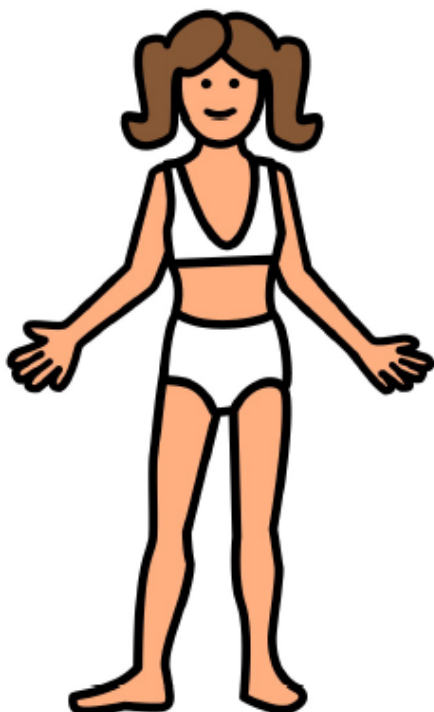
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Done



Where does it hurt?



Where does it hurt?



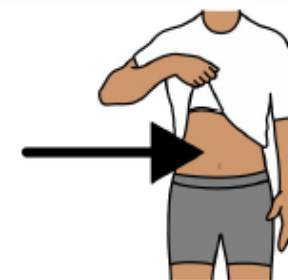
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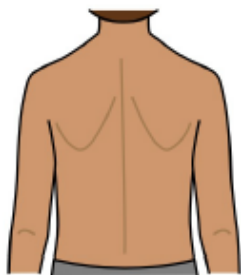
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STOMACH



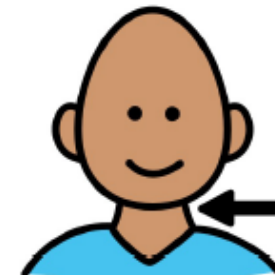
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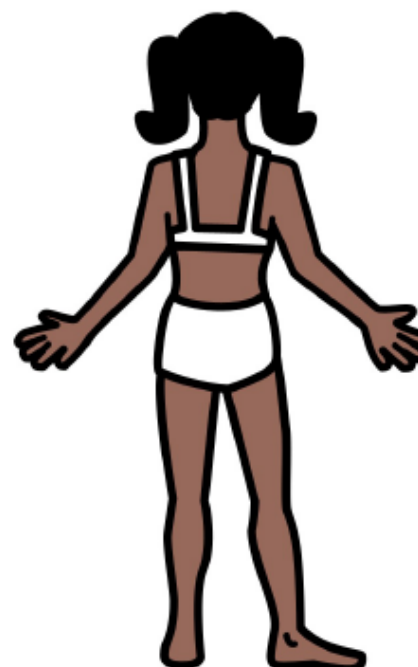
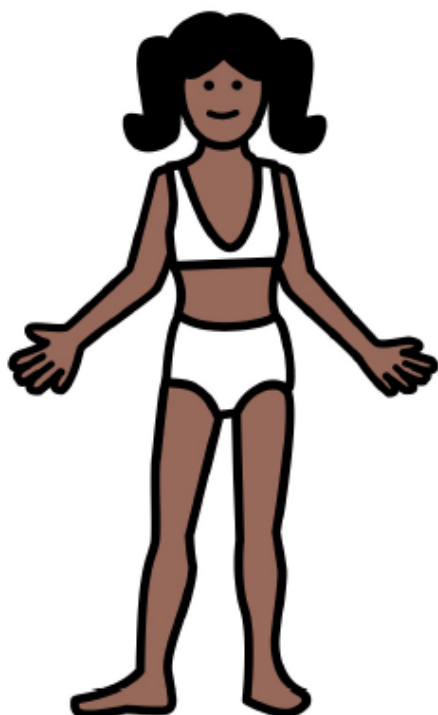


FOOT



NECK

Where does it hurt?



Where does it hurt?



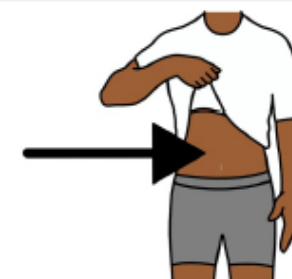
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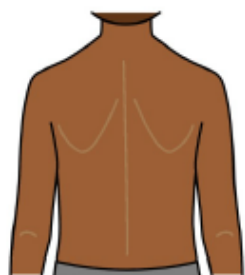
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ARM



STOMACH



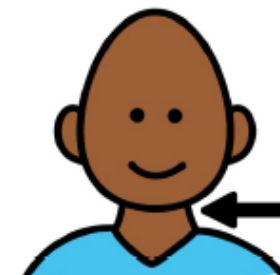
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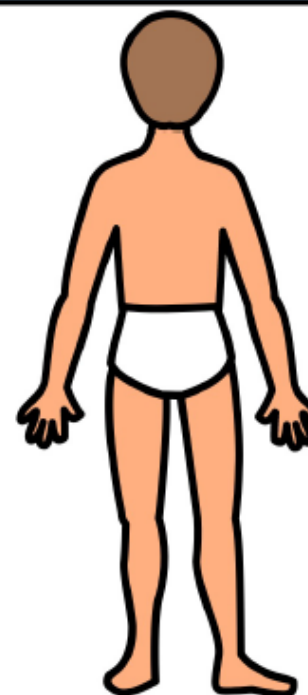
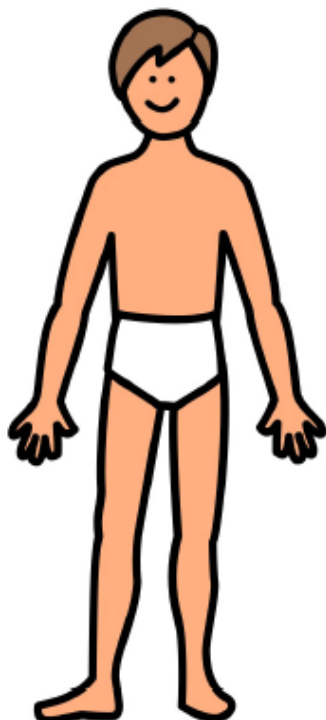


FOOT



NECK

Where does it hurt?



Where does it hurt?



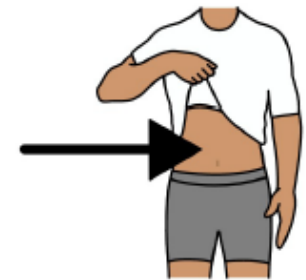
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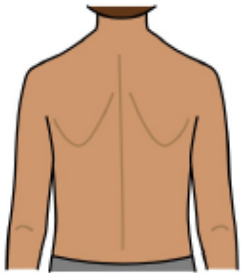
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ARM



STOMACH



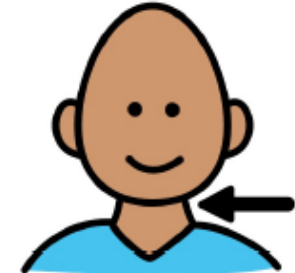
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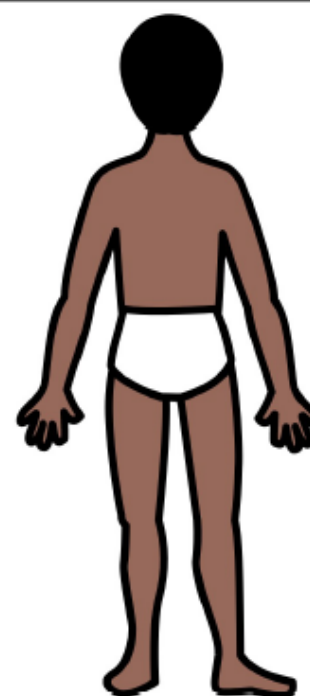
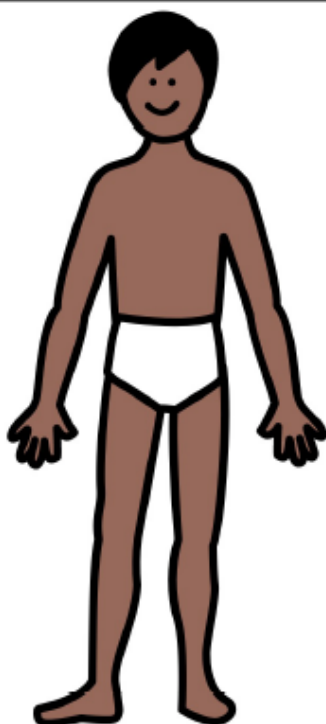


FOOT



NECK

Where does it hurt?



Where does it hurt?



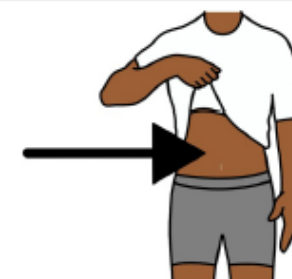
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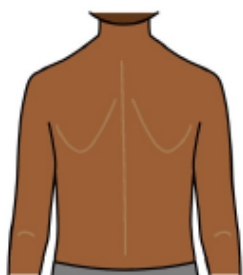
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ARM



STOMACH



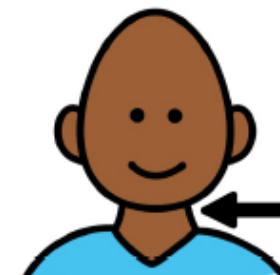
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HAND



FOOT



NECK

Where does it hurt?



EARS



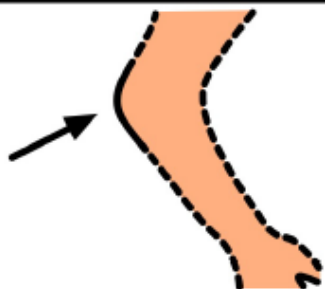
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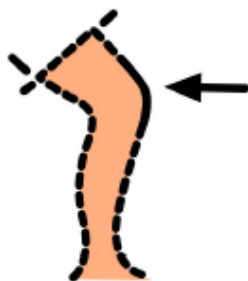
THROAT



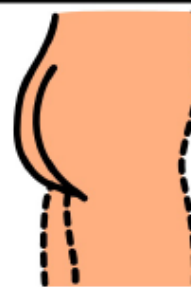
TEETH



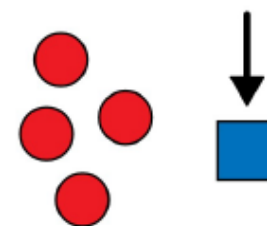
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KNEE



BACKSIDE



OTHER

Where does it hurt?



EARS



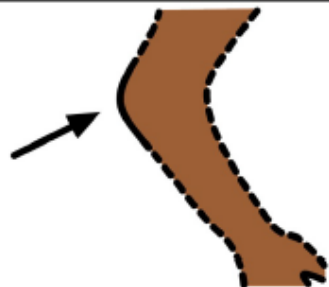
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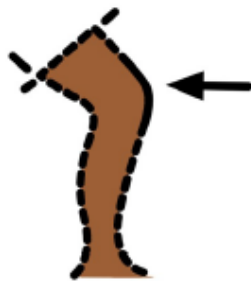
THROAT



TEETH



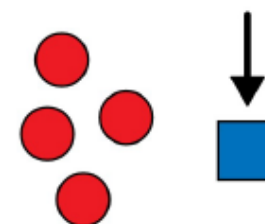
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KNEE



BACKSIDE



OTHER

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ME

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Verbal
- ☐ Pre-verbal
- ☐ Non-verbal

You can communicate with me best by using:

- ☐ Simple language with extra time to process the information
- ☐ Pictures
- ☐ Written words
- ☐ Technology



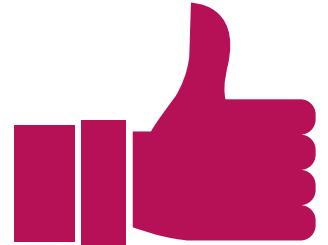
When I am calm I am able to:

- ☐ Follow verbal and nonverbal directions
- ☐ Use visuals to help follow directions
- ☐ Indicate my likes and dislikes
- ☐ Request what I want or need

STRENGTHS

I'm really good at or I really like:

- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Movement
- ☐ Video Games
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Other: _____



CHALLENGES

I have challenges with:

- ☐ Self-regulation
- ☐ Yelling or swearing
- ☐ Wandering or running away
- ☐ Aggressive behavior
- ☐ Self-injurious behavior
- ☐ Spitting
- ☐ Repetitive rituals
- ☐ Maintaining personal space
- ☐ Other: _____

WHEN I AM UPSET YOU CAN HELP BY:

- ☐ Increasing space
- ☐ Offering choices (visually)
- ☐ Using visuals, written words, or pictures
- ☐ Reducing language (including stop talking)

- ☐ Reducing demands
- ☐ Offering a break or fidgets
- ☐ Other: _____

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ME



Likes & Special Interests



TRIGGERS



SENSORY CHALLENGES



HELPFUL TOOLS

For more information contact:



**1516 Atwood Ave
Johnston, RI 02919
401-785-2666
www.TheAutismProject.org**