

## Resources for Social Skills/Acquired Skills

### For children with ASD

- The activity “**How would it feel to be...?**” involves asking children to fill in the blank after asking, “How would it feel to be...[insert fictional or nonfictional character depending on age group].”
- Characters such as “Cinderella” or a superhero can be used or also a villain to allow children the opportunity to place themselves in multiple scenarios and understand the feelings that are unique to that character. Children are required to describe how it would feel to be that character, what the character thinks, and how the character behaves.
- This teaches children with ASD empathy and imagining themselves in another person’s shoes or imagining what different situations feel like. It also helps with recognizing emotional cues. For children who can write, they can fill out the worksheet themselves.
- For those who can’t, this is an activity that parents can do with them by asking them the question, “How would it feel to be...?” It is pretty easy for parents to do this and it is a good opportunity for parents to talk to their child about various feelings and emotions.

### For both ASD, as well as typical children

- **Word Search** <http://www.cccoe.net/social/SAwordsearch1.htm>. This is a link that provides several word search games related to vocabulary words associated with social situations
- **It’s a Match!** <http://www.cccoe.net/social/SAmatch.htm> This link is to a matching game where young children are required to match the word that depicts an emotion to the picture that depicts three options of emotions through facial expressions.
- **Scholastic Learn at Home-** Provides 20 days of learning journeys designed to reinforce and sustain educational opportunities for those students who are unable to attend school. <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

### Skills to Cope with Anxiety, Fear, Depression, and Being Isolated

#### For typical children and children with ASD

- Children with ASD can do **brief grounding techniques**. Some examples include an activity where they must listen to relaxing music (either from a pre-selected list of titles provided to them or their parents can select the music) and ask them to write down (or say aloud to a parent) the instruments that they hear in the song.
- This activity gives the child a specific task to complete (identifying the instrument) while also engaging in a relaxation activity. Listening to music is very effective in combatting stress and anxiety for adults and children alike.

- Another great meditative activity is having children build/create their own “**calm down drawer**” in their room.
- They can do this on their own or with a parent, but the point is for the drawer to contain items that help to calm or soothe the child when they feel anxiety or other overwhelming emotions. When they become sad, anxious, etc. their parent can encourage them to go to their calm down drawer or they can be instructed to know when they need to go to the drawer.
  - A few things that can go in the drawer include playdough/clay, stress balls, a weighted blanket, aromatherapy pillow, puzzle-type toys, a stuffed animal

### **For typical kids**

- Creating a **gratitude jar** is very effective to cope with various emotions. Research has shown that practicing gratitude on a daily basis helps decrease/alleviate depression.
- The child can be instructed to write down on a small piece of paper something they are grateful for right now, fold the paper, and place it in the gratitude jar. “Right now” and “today” will be emphasized in the directions to avoid children from thinking in terms that are too general. I want them to focus on the present or things they are grateful for during this pandemic and social isolation period to really get them to think about what they do have rather than focusing on all the things they can’t do right now.

### **For both typical children and ASD children**

- This is an online game called ‘**dealing with feelings.**’
- There are four total games: <http://www.kidvision.org/feelings/fun.html#>
  - These games help children understand and interpret facial expressions that show various emotions and allow children to guess feelings

### **Social Skills Apps for phones and tablets**

- **HappiMe for Young People (Free):** Using a kid-friendly approach (ages 11 and up), this app walks kids through four steps: Learn, Recognize, Deal With Your Emotions and Replace. It helps kids picture their thoughts as something separate from themselves such as the chimp, the computer and more. This is a psychological method that allows people to deal with negative thoughts at a distance.
- **Mindful Minutes by Oops Yay (\$1.99):** Mindful Minutes is a series of relaxing meditations designed to help children slow down and focus on one simple activity. It can help children regulate their own emotions, improve concentration and get into habits of taking mindful moments when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- **Positive Penguins (Free):** This app is an interactive, educational tool to help children understand their emotions and to experience them in a positive way. It also provides children with practical ways to understand and cope with these emotions and change the way they think in a better way. This app is for students who have reading skills.
- **Three Good Things- A Happiness Journal (Free):** This app uses the method of expressing gratitude to improve mood and well-being. Every day, children list three things they’re grateful for and can add photos and emojis to their entries.