autism
wellbeing

Unique ways your autistic child may soothe themself.

The world seems very confusing, frightening, and unpredictable to many of us at the moment. We may also be feeling excited, relieved, and hopeful about the future. We may have experienced losses due to the pandemic – reduced income and financial stress; loss of loved ones because of coronavirus, illness, accidents, or aging - maybe we didn't get to say our goodbyes. Many of us will be missing our friends, families and hobbies and could be looking forward to socialising again – or perhaps we are dreading that and would prefer to stay more distanced.

Everyone has experienced a huge period of change that looks likely to continue for a long time yet. Some things may be permanently changed, and we will have to live in the "new normal".

Autistic people are often cited as struggling with changes to routine. We may find the predictability and structure of routine gives a sense of order in an otherwise chaotic world. The autistic world may be experienced as more chaotic because of the way autistic people process information, social situations, and sensory input. This world that can be challenging for autistic people in "normal" times may feel even more challenging in the "new normal".

Help! My child seems more autistic – are they regressing? What's going on?!!!

Here at Autism Wellbeing we have heard many families say these words or express similar concerns. We have also listened to first-hand testimony from autistic adults and children who are able to articulate why it may look like this to observers.

Some families have witnessed an increase in repetitive behaviours. Some have found that distressed behaviour that feels challenging to support their child through has increased too. Other people have said they are needing to stick to routines rigidly and are finding any inconsistencies very difficult to cope with. Many people may be finding repetitive self-soothing activities are helping them regulate their senses – this is sometimes referred to as self-stimulatory behaviour/stereotypic behaviour or 'stimming'.

Here at Autism Wellbeing we are hearing about people feeling overwhelmed and overloaded, or detached and apparently unaffected. 'Meltdowns' and 'shutdowns' are frequently referred to.

It is likely that each of us will do more of whatever brings us comfort, distraction and relief. Coping strategies are as individual as people are. Seek help if these are harmful, so that less damaging alternatives can be explored. Make time to regulate your own and your family's emotions and senses throughout the day. These are unprecedented times and support is available – please see our resources page.