



Let's Get Started

SUPPORTING YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD THROUGH ANXIETY

THIS E-BOOK IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU HELP
YOUR ANXIOUS AUTISTIC CHILD WITH SPECIFIC
STRATEGIES AND UNDERSTANDING FROM AN
AUTISTIC PERSPECTIVE





EQUALLY DIFFERENT
THERAPY

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6. *IN THIS E-BOOK, WE WILL EXPLORE
TARGETED STRATEGIES TO ASSIST
YOUR ANXIOUS AUTISTIC CHILD.
WHILE THERE ARE NUMEROUS
WORKSHOPS AND BOOKS
DESIGNED FOR ANXIOUS
CHILDREN, FEW TAKE INTO
ACCOUNT THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF
AUTISTIC CHILDREN!*





HEY, I'M SARAH

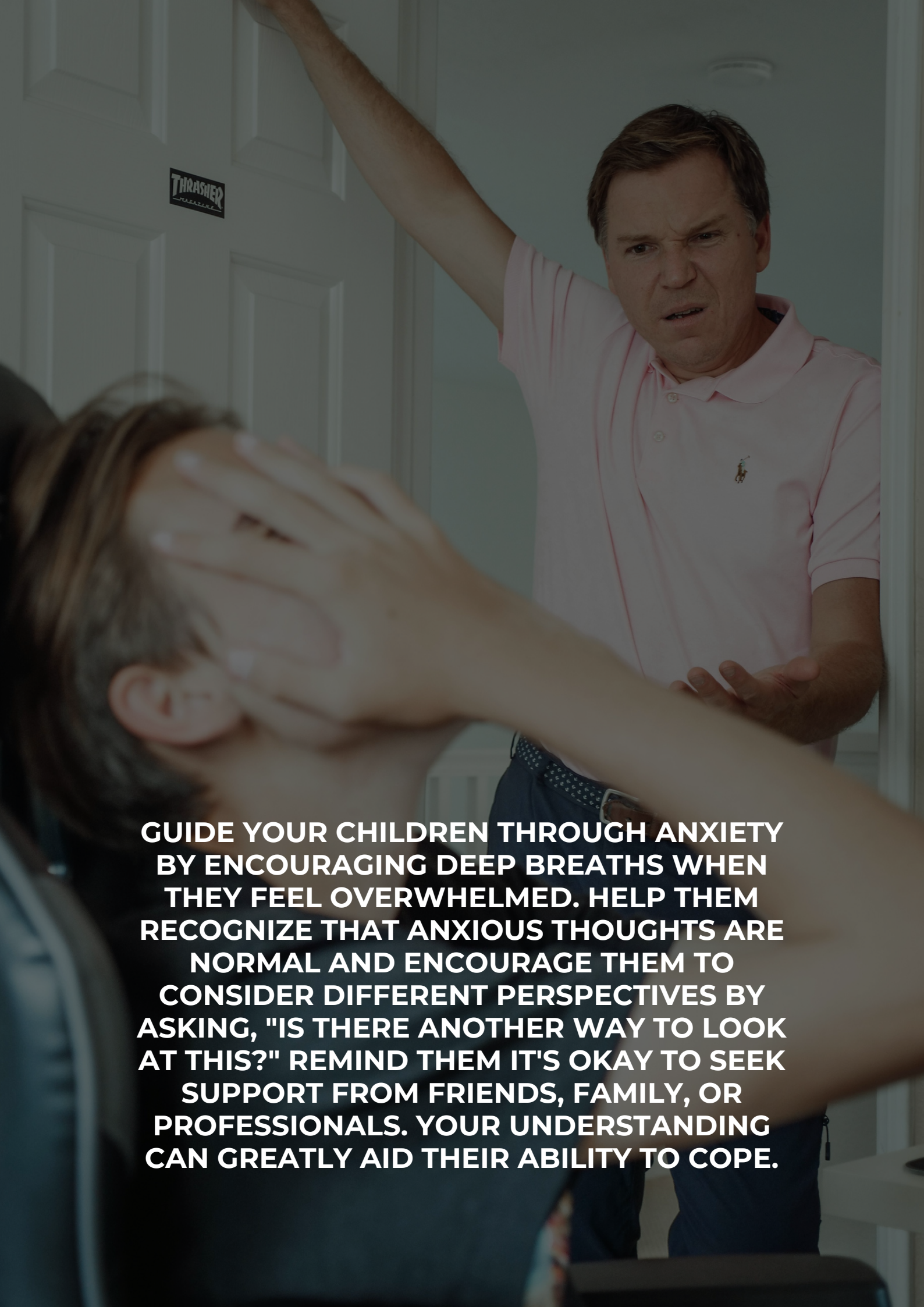
I'm a parent to four neurodivergent adults, I'm newly diagnosed neurodivergent myself and a psychologist specialising in Neurodiversity

I started my journey when I couldn't get the support my children needed as young people and did not want to see others suffer and struggle along as my children and I did.

Sarah xoxo

LET'S DO IT!



A man in a pink polo shirt with a small logo on the chest is standing in a room with white paneled doors. He has a distressed expression and his right arm is raised high. In the foreground, a child's hand is visible, partially obscuring the view. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft light source from the side.

**GUIDE YOUR CHILDREN THROUGH ANXIETY
BY ENCOURAGING DEEP BREATHS WHEN
THEY FEEL OVERWHELMED. HELP THEM
RECOGNIZE THAT ANXIOUS THOUGHTS ARE
NORMAL AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO
CONSIDER DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES BY
ASKING, "IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK
AT THIS?" REMIND THEM IT'S OKAY TO SEEK
SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, FAMILY, OR
PROFESSIONALS. YOUR UNDERSTANDING
CAN GREATLY AID THEIR ABILITY TO COPE.**



1

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a common challenge for autistic children and young people. While anxiety affects all children, autistic individuals often experience it more intensely due to differences in sensory processing, communication, and flexibility. This ebook is designed to provide practical, evidence-based strategies to help parents support their autistic child through anxiety. This resource is adapted from the Lucy Willetts anxiety intervention framework but specifically tailored for autistic young people. The strategies here will consider the unique needs of autistic children, including those with a Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) profile. Each section is divided into three age groups (5–9 years, 10–13 years, and 13–18 years), with real-life case examples to illustrate behaviours and provide effective management strategies.

LET'S DO IT!



2

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN

How Anxiety Presents in Autistic Children

- Increased repetitive behaviours (stimming, pacing, echolalia)
- Meltdowns or shutdowns instead of verbalizing worry
- Increased rigidity (insisting on sameness, avoiding new situations)
- Physical symptoms (stomach aches, headaches, nausea)
- Masking in school but releasing anxiety at home



WHY AUTISTIC CHILDREN EXPERIENCE HIGHER ANXIETY

- Sensory sensitivities leading to overwhelming environments
- Difficulty understanding and expressing emotions
- Struggles with unpredictable situations or changes in routine
- Higher risk of social misunderstandings leading to anxiety in peer interactions



3

AGE-SPECIFIC STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ANXIETY

Ages 5–9: Building Safety and Predictability

Case Example: Ellie (6 years old)

Situation: Ellie refuses to go to school due to fear of loud noises and unpredictability in the classroom.

Strategies:

- Visual schedules with clear expectations for the day
- Social stories explaining upcoming events
- Calm-down corner with sensory tools
- Gradual exposure to anxiety-provoking situations in a safe way
- Predictability-based reassurance ("First we do this, then we do that")

Ages 10–13: Developing Coping Skills and Emotional Awareness

Case Example: Jake (11 years old)

Situation: Jake avoids group work in class due to fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers.

Strategies:

- Cognitive reframing (helping him see mistakes as learning opportunities)
- Self-regulation tools (deep breathing, sensory breaks, fidget tools)
- Visual emotion scales to help label emotions
- Safe scripts to use in social situations
- Collaborative problem-solving to reduce avoidance

Ages 13–18: Encouraging Independence and Self-Advocacy

Case Example: Hannah (15 years old)

Situation: Hannah experiences intense social anxiety and refuses to attend social events or school presentations.

Strategies:

- Gradual exposure hierarchy (starting with small, manageable steps)
- Self-advocacy training (teaching her to express her needs)
- Flexible thinking exercises to help reduce rigid expectations
- Encouraging special interests as a way to engage socially in a comfortable way
- Text-based communication options for difficult conversations





4 SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH A PDA PROFILE

Signs of PDA-related Anxiety:

- Extreme avoidance of demands, even those they enjoy
- High need for control in everyday situations
- Intense emotional responses to perceived pressure
- Surface sociability but difficulty maintaining relationships

Strategies for Supporting a Child with a PDA Profile:

- Reduce direct demands by using indirect language ("I wonder if..." instead of "You need to...")
- Collaborative problem-solving rather than instructing
- Choice-based approaches to give them a sense of autonomy
- Low-pressure socialization (structured activities around interests)
- Helping them identify self-driven coping strategies

5

CREATING A LONG-TERM ANXIETY PLAN



IDENTIFYING TRIGGERS AND EARLY
SIGNS OF ANXIETY



CREATING A PERSONALIZED ANXIETY
TOOLKIT (SENSORY TOOLS, SCRIPTS,
COPING STRATEGIES)



HELPING YOUR CHILD UNDERSTAND
THEIR ANXIETY IN A
NEURODIVERGENT-AFFIRMING WAY



SUPPORTING SCHOOL
COMMUNICATION FOR ANXIETY
ACCOMMODATIONS



ENCOURAGING SELF-COMPASSION
AND ACCEPTANCE

ANXIETY TRACKER

Use the table below as a way of understanding particular triggers for your child. Think about what was going on around them just before they started to get anxious, what did the anxiety look like/what behaviour did you see, and what were the consequences of that behaviour - did it mean that they did not have to go to the event in the end, did they miss out on something they really like because of it

Day/time	What was happening around	what behaviour did you get	what were the consequences

FINAL THOUGHTS

Supporting an autistic child through anxiety requires patience, flexibility, and understanding. The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety but to **help them develop tools to navigate it in a way that works for them**.

Most importantly, all behaviour is a form of communication, so what is your child trying to tell you!

THIS EBOOK HAS BEEN CREATED TO PROVIDE A CLEAR YET CONCISE OVERVIEW OF ANXIETY IN AUTISTIC CHILDREN, EQUIPPING PARENTS WITH EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THEIR KIDS. FOR THOSE SEEKING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION AND EXAMPLES, THERE IS A COMPREHENSIVE WEBINAR AVAILABLE.

THE EXAMPLES SHARED IN THIS EBOOK ARE ANONYMIZED AND BASED ON PROVEN METHODS. HOWEVER, IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR NEUROTYPED, AND WHAT WORKS FOR ONE MAY NOT WORK FOR ANOTHER.

RECOGNISING THAT YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD BEST IS CRUCIAL; YOU CAN ASSESS WHAT STRATEGIES ARE EFFECTIVE. NONETHELESS, IT'S VITAL TO STEP OUTSIDE OF COMFORT ZONES AND MAINTAIN CONSISTENCY, AS FREQUENT CHANGES TO THE RULES CAN LEAD TO INCREASED CONFUSION AND ANXIETY.

THANK YOU FOR READING!



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