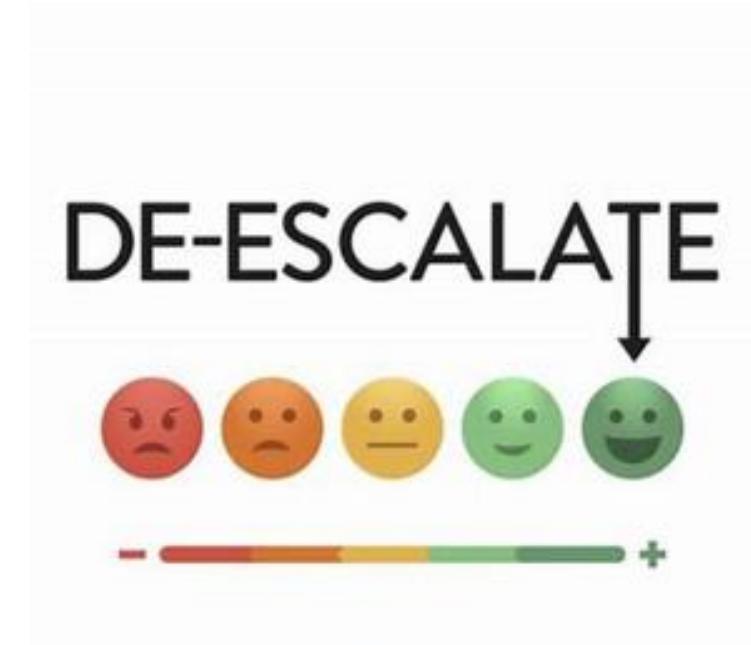


De-escalation techniques for sensory overload



Adult ASD Service

Introduction and aims of session

- ▶ Introductions – a quick hello
- ▶ Basic recap of our alertness levels
- ▶ What is sensory overload?
- ▶ Triggers
- ▶ Sharing some strategies

Understanding and learning how we process sensory information as individuals

Our bodies are like a car engine. Sometimes you may feel like your body is running in.....



High speed

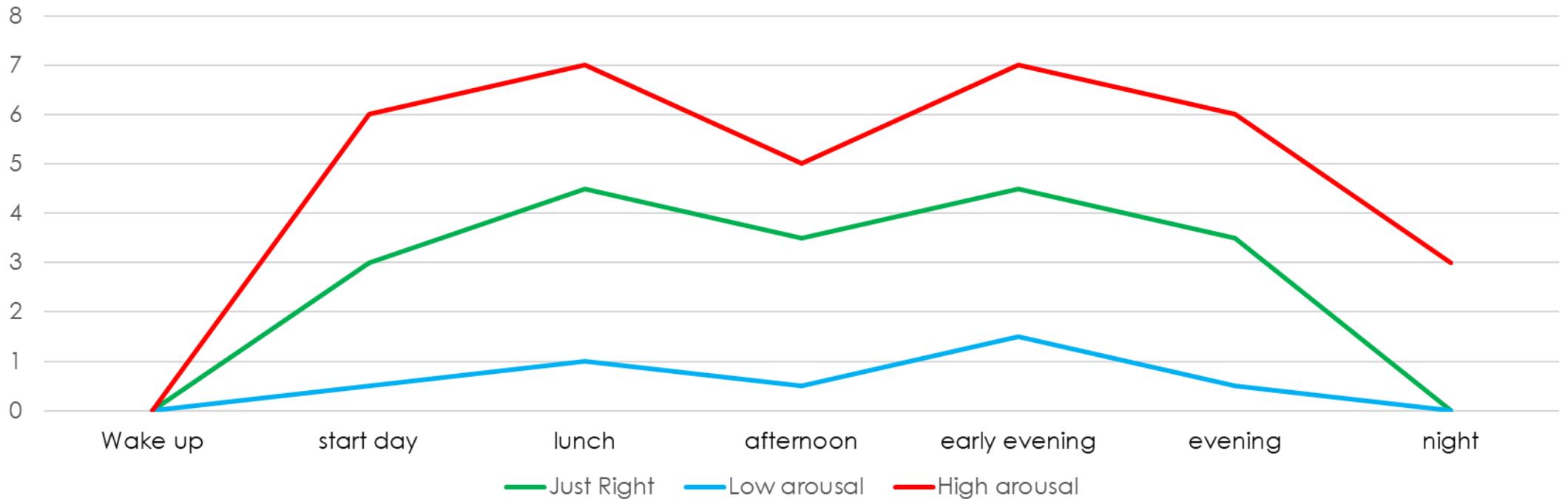


Low speed



Just right

Ebb and flow of sensory modulation



Understanding how we process sensory information can help us to identify helpful strategies

- ▶ When your engine is high speed you may find it difficult to pay attention, to sit still, quietly and get your work completed
- ▶ When your engine is low speed you also may find it difficult to concentrate, you may daydream easily.
- ▶ When you are in the “just right” place, its usually easier to pay attention, to get your work done.



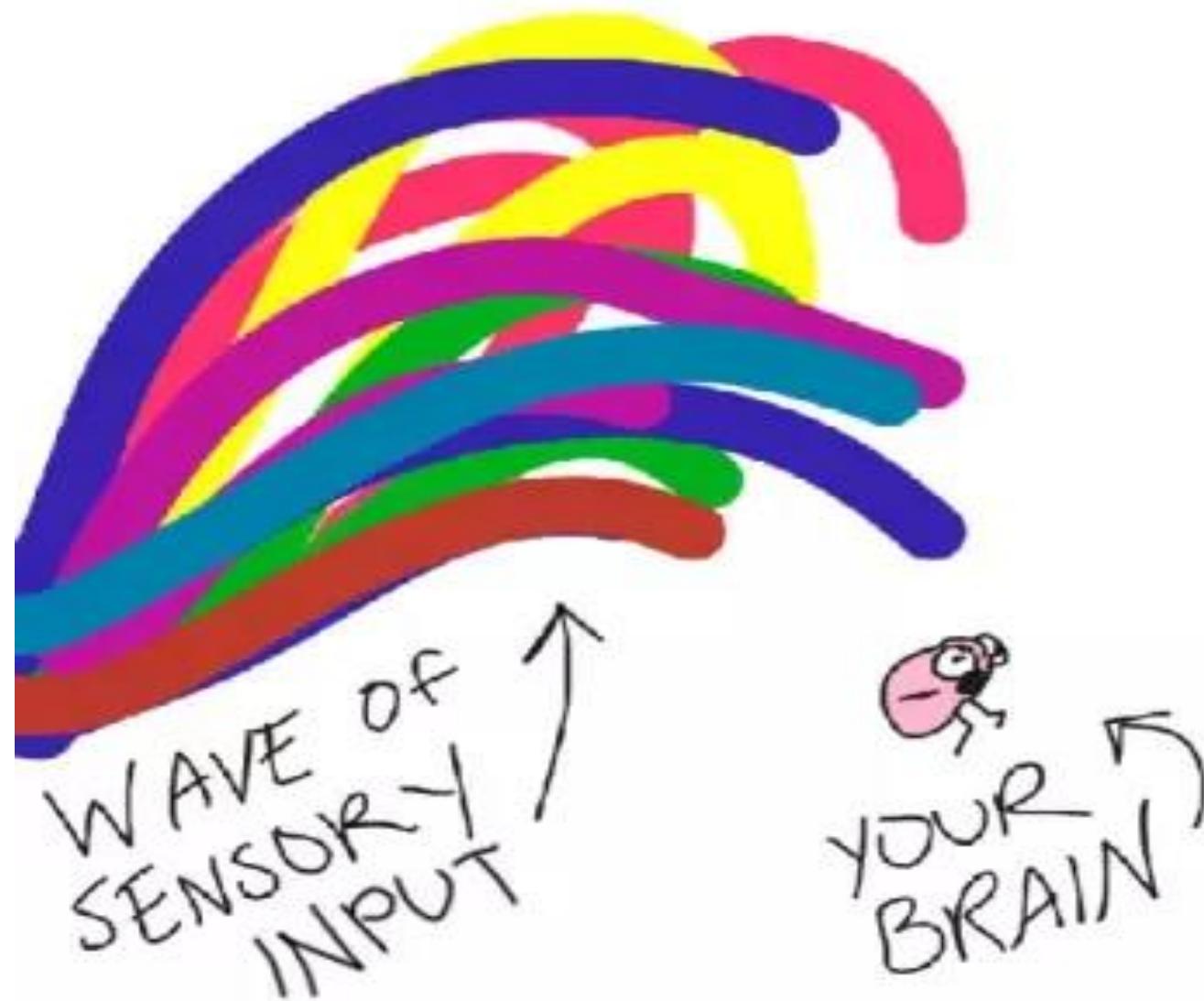
But what can happen when we get stuck in the wrong gear?



Too much information

A person who struggles to deal with everyday sensory information can experience overload, which can cause stress, anxiety, and possibly physical pain. This can result in withdrawal, challenging behaviour or meltdown.





Discussion: What is sensory overload like for you?

- ▶ Freeze – withdrawal, can't talk, rooted to the spot....
- ▶ Fight – clenched fists, angry, shout, cry
- ▶ Flight – hide, raised heart rate, escape

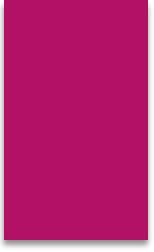
Think about how your response affects your **EMOTIONS**,
PHYSIOLOGY and your **BEHAVIOUR**

Your sensory profile

	What it looks/feels like	What I can do to feel better	What others can do to help me feel better	Triggers
RED				
YELLOW				
GREEN				
BLUE				

When does overload happen?

- ▶ In certain situations/at certain times, more likely to experience overload
- ▶ Our responses are unique to us and may fluctuate dependent on other factors
- ▶ When we are already ill/stressed, we reach sensory overload much faster and more frequently....and more intensely.



Awareness of Your Triggers ?

Discussion

- ▶ What are your triggers?
- ▶ Sensory?
- ▶ Non – sensory?
- ▶ Do you notice any fluctuation in how you respond to the same triggers in different situations?



Triggers can be sensory or not....may just be the extra little trigger that is too much....

Examples of non sensory triggers

Saying NO

Going somewhere new

Being the centre of attention

Public speaking

Making phone calls

Speaking up in a meeting

Attending parties or social gatherings

Stating your opinion

Talking to 'important' people or people in authority

Meeting new people

Making small talk

Being teased or criticised

Eating or drinking in public

Attending an appointment

Being assertive with family



VIDEO

<https://youtu.be/Z8Vc4rznd4I>



How can you help yourself ?

- Awareness of your own triggers
- Preventative rather than reactive whenever possible (spot when you're already in the yellow zone)
- Understand and accept that sometimes you may go into the red zone, be overwhelmed. You may feel tired and exhausted afterwards – have a 'recovery plan' to help ensure you are kind to yourself
- Consider which of the sensory strategies as part of your toolkit suit you....and in which zone.

HERE ARE SOME TO CONSIDER.....

Recommendations for sound: compensatory

- Wear noise muffling headphones (Important not to cancel out all noise)
- Use calming strategies during/after the noise- listening to music
- Put headphones in and listen to music – something you associate as regulating
- Warning of loud noises is helpful, as well as soft closing door/drawer closers
 - Retreat to quiet space that you know feels safe
- Ear plugs can also be helpful (eg mouldable silicon ones) if noise sensitivity is great.
- A repetitive noise that is tolerated, such as fan, rainfall, try different apps for one you like

Recommendations for sight and visual stimuli

- ▶ Try using a bubble lamp / mood lamp / colour changing shimmer lamp.
- ▶ Use black out curtains/blinds
- ▶ Wear sunglasses or peaked cap
- ▶ Tinted or anti-glare glasses
- ▶ Be aware of the amount of visual processing you are engaged in throughout your day (eg gaming, consider changing the pace of games, varying the games etc) Sometimes our body's need to catch up with the amount our vision is taking in...do you need some movement to balance things out?

Recommendations for Smell

- ▶ Use unscented detergents or shampoos
- ▶ Put your favourite smells in a sensory box- lavender, mist spray, hand cream, smelling essential oil
- ▶ Having a nice smelling perfume or air freshener that you like which can be helpful covering some smells
- ▶ If there is a smell you like, something you can put into a hanky, wrist band, scarf and sniff? can be helpful for covering a smell you dislike
- ▶ Remember smells are closely linked to our memory and emotion centres and therefore can evoke strong reactions....can you use this positively when you're trying to regulate?

Recommendations for Touch

- ▶ **Deep pressure** – consider how you can use weighted input, weighted blanket or jacket or compression clothing (think shaping underwear, cycle vests etc that are tight fitting but comfortable), backpack with heavy objects in it
- ▶ -Stroking pets (it may be helpful if they lay on you gain the deep pressure too)
- ▶ -Tight hugs from family members, wrapping yourself in a blanket, sitting in a beanbag, squish yourself into small space (simulating effect of cuddle swing)
- ▶ - Fidget items in your pocket could help you keep calm when out and about – think fabrics, smooth pebbles, squeezable items/stress ball
- ▶ Consider how temperature impacts on calming you – eg warmed wheatie bag on shoulders or icy drink in thermos flask
- ▶ Massage – your own hands with lotion you love – see recipe in resources

How to regulate through vestibular and proprioception:

- ▶ -Stress balls, fiddle objects that involve exerting pressure, use of muscles and joints
- ▶ Swimming, walking the dog, carrying shopping bags, gardening, sweeping
- ▶ Jumping on a trampoline or trampette, climbing, exercise in general
- ▶ Carrying heavy objects or wearing a heavy bag
- ▶ Yoga / pilates (swaying side to side on a yoga ball)
- ▶ Riding a bike (think working against resistance), drumming
- ▶ Lifting weights, cleaning, chores involving pushing and pulling

REMEMBER: linear motion e.g. up and down/back and forth...= calming (**green**)
spinning/multi – directional = stimulating/alerting (use in **blue** zone)

Using our mouths to help regulate

- ▶ Foods that are **crunchy**-carrots, apples, pretzels, crunchy nuts
- ▶ Chewy/sour sweets- starburst, sour patch kids, chewing gum, Dried fruit like Mango
- ▶ 'Chewelry' or 'chewies' can be purchased from amazon
- ▶ Electric toothbrush – Vibration can be calming or alerting
- ▶ Intense flavours- sour, minty, spicy.
- ▶ Sucking to calm and regulate (just as we did as babies) – thick smoothie through a straw, lolly, drinks bottle where you need to suck drink.

Think about which of these you can have with you whilst you're out and about as part of your toolkit.

Other strategies to self-regulate

- ▶ Try some breathing techniques
- ▶ Mindfulness
- ▶ Fidget/ASMR apps for distraction

(see choice of apps in resources)

How others can help you....

- ▶ Realistic expectations of how much you can communicate your distress
- ▶ Give you space, time to process, reduce demands on you
- ▶ Not touch you
- ▶ Try to provide/show you a safe, low stimulus environment or can they change the environment? (eg turn down lights, reduce background noise)
- ▶ Don't express judgement
- ▶ Try to empathise and understand why you may be distressed
- ▶ Have an understanding of what calms or distracts/helps you
- ▶ Give you time...**remember** cortisol can remain in bloodstream for up to 60 minutes...going in to soon to help could trigger you further
- ▶ **SEE SENSORY PROFILE ON HOW SOMEONE COULD INCREASE THEIR UNDERSTANDING ON HOW TO HELP**

How your sensory profile may look

	What it looks/feels like	What I can do to feel better	What others can do to help me feel better	Triggers
RED	I look 'zoned out', I'm in freeze, I can't talk	I need de-stim time, I can rock, I can listen to some calming sounds on my phone	Use limited language Don't touch me Show me a quiet space where I can go	Fireworks Stressful transitions Smells Someone hugging me
YELLOW	I can be defensive, irritable, anxious, tearful, angry, I may start pacing, be more fidgety	Deep pressure – self massage Stretching of arms and hands Walk, doodling, gardening	Notice that my mannerisms have changed Know about reasonable adjustment	Change in routine Increased noise in work, Too many demands
GREEN	I am focussed, I am able to converse typically for me. I feel calm but awake	Re-arrange furniture, brush or pet the dog, go for a bike ride, swim, drink out of a straw, chewy snack	Understand how they can make the environment less stimulating. Support me to access my sensory programme activities	
BLUE	I have slumped posture, propping myself. I'm bored, low, disengaged	Use high energy music to alert me. Eat chewy or crunchy food with strong flavours. Strong smells – citrus etc	Suggest a movement break Understand that I am understimulated and need to alert myself	Low stimulating environment or too long in one position, too long engaged in same activity

Bob

I am autistic and I have slight learning difficulties and I struggle with numbers.

This short video explains autism: [Amazing Things Happen - by Alexander Amelines - YouTube](#)

What people appreciate about me

- I am interested in pedal steel guitars. (this is not an actual guitar)
- I am interested in people
- I like to listen to people rather than talk
- I have recently found extended family members

What is important to me

- That things are planned in advance to avoid sudden unexpected change.
- My personal space, so people don't shake hands or hug me, or expect me to do this.
- Sometimes I need to remove myself from the situation and go outside for air, this is because I feel overloaded. If I don't, it will lead to a meltdown, but you want see me have a meltdown. A video on meltdowns is here: [What Is An Autistic Meltdown? - YouTube](#)
- to use a strategy (eg have a drink and listen to my vinyl) before going to a social activity.
- That people talk to me using clear, unambiguous, literal communication, so I can understand it.
- I tend to act my way through things to get through them.

How to support me

- I need support with reading and writing and using technology.
- I need support to help me when things don't go to plan.
- I struggle with social and interaction and communication. I don't understand social rules and norms, so these need explaining to me. Because of this, I could come across at times as rude or blunt, but I don't mean to.
- I need to plan everything in advance. Give me time and all the information to prepare. I like things going to plan. I can't be spontaneous or do anything unexpected as it leads to greater anxiety.
- An agreed code word can be a helpful strategy that I can use when feeling overloaded, as you won't be able to pick this up from my body language.
- If you can talk to me about my interests in music and guitars, it makes me relax and I can talk more easily about these.
- I struggle meeting unfamiliar people in my house, and prefer to meet elsewhere.
- I struggle in large groups and manage better one-to-one.

My One Page profile



Resources that can be used to communicate sensory needs

- **Autism alert card**

This card is a great way for people to let the public know they are autistic and that they may need some extra time or help in certain situations. Download the I Am Autistic Card for free, here: [I am autistic card \(autism.org.uk\)](https://autism.org.uk/get-support/i-am-autistic-card/). You can also get an autism alert card from Amazon or Ebay and CHAPS: <https://www.cheshireautism.org.uk/news/attention-card/>. The CHAPS alert card is linked with Merseyside and Cheshire emergency services.

Other examples of resources include:

- Hidden disabilities lanyard scheme
<https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/shop.html>
- Hospital passport
<https://www.hidden-disabilities.co.uk/hospital-passport/>



Hospital passport

My Hospital Passport

For people on the autism spectrum



Hospital staff, please consult this passport before you assess me or carry out any interventions.

Please keep this passport with my notes at the end of my bed and return to me when I am discharged.

Personal information

Name:

I like to be called:

Date of birth:

NHS number:

If I am admitted to hospital there are matters that will need to be dealt with urgently.

Please assist me by contacting:

Name:

Relationship:

Phone number:

Other people I would like you to contact in connection with my treatment and care:

Name: Relationship: Phone:

Name: Relationship: Phone:

Name: Relationship: Phone:

Some autistic people find going to medical appointments or hospital overwhelming. A hospital passport is a helpful tool to help communicate your needs and takes into consideration sensory processing difficulties such as interoception.

How I would like you to communicate with me:



How I communicate:



Please do not assume there is nothing wrong with me if I don't express pain the in the same way.



How I experience pain:

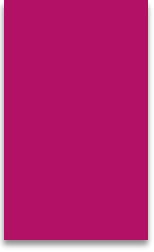


How I communicate pain:



End of Presentation

Thank you for attending



Appendices

Sensory Resources

- Apps: look on websites For mindfulness – breathe.com, calm.com, headspace.com
- Apps: both in Google play and Apple store for fidget apps: Fidget toys 3D – antistress, ASMR Studio 3D, Pop it fidget 3D, satisfying stress relief games.
- Apps: for white,brown noise etc – Mynoise, Relax Melodies, Rain rain sleep sounds, White noise lite. (free for android and IOS) Alexa.
- Lighting- Lumie Lights (amazon also sell) for gradual way to wake and settle for sleep in sync with circadian rhythm
- <https://www.sensorytoywarehouse.com>, <https://kaikofidgets.com>
- https://www.sensorydirect.com/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw--GFBhDeARIsACH_kdZkPj5Y3cWaF4oKdgx4ZVI8644Q_b_QIdIFJeD_cR8PEdBJWuINSDsaAm64EALw_wcB
- <https://www.sensorytoysuk.co.uk>,
- The Works high street shop usually sell affordable fidget toys
- **Basic DIY salt scrub recipe:** 1 cup (300 g) salt (table salt is fine) ,½ cup (118 ml) oil (vegetable,olive,almond, grapeseed, walnut), 5 - 15 drops essential oils (optional) – alerting- lemon, orange, grapefruit, calming – vanilla, chamomile, frankincense
- Sensory toolkit: <https://thespiralfoundation.org/adults-and-adolescents-toolkit/>
- Grandin, T. (2006) *Thinking in Pictures*. Bloomsbury Publishing
- Purple Ella, Sensory processing video: [AUTISM AND SENSORY PROCESSING | Purple Ella - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyfJyfJyfJy)

Where to signpost for help

- Hubs and Advice calls
- Crisis support

ASD Hubs and Advice calls

We input post diagnostic provision into the local autism hub at :

Space 4 autism (Macclesfield)

The West Cheshire Hub (Chester)

Wirral autism hub.

Through the hubs we offer a monthly topic based discussion group and access to some bookable 20 minute advice calls. We also send out helpful information occasionally.

To register to receive an email of what the hubs offer you are advised to make contact

with: Karen.McGuinness@westcheshireautismhub.co.uk / info@space4autism.org
cwp.ASDservice@nhs.net and request to be added to the adult hub mailing list.

Crisis support:

Local

- CWP Crisis line – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 0800 145 6485. For text support Text Shout to 85258
- Crisis support Shropshire - 01743 255895
- NO MORE suicide- Website offers clear and immediate support options to those who may be suffering with thoughts of suicide or people who know someone or may be struggling. It offers early intervention information. The website can also be helpful to those who have been bereaved by suicide. <https://no-more.co.uk>

- **Crisis cafes:**

A crisis/safe space for people struggling with emotional and psychological distress. A non-clinical mental health resource.

- **Chester** - No.71 spider project/crisis café Chester Open 10am-12pm with last entry at 10:30pm and home support until midnight. Based at 71-77 St Anne street Chester
Enquiries 01244 393139 chester@spiderproject.org.uk
Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/Number-71-Spider-Project-Chester-104086068011632>
Twitter link: <https://twitter.com/number71chester>
Instagram link: <http://www.instagram.com/number71chester>
- **Wirral** – café companeros 2a Price Street, Birkenhead, CH41 6JN Open 1pm – 10pm last entry 8.30pm (however hours may now be extended beyond this)
Enquiries 0151 488 8135 enquiries.comp@spiderproject.org.uk
- **East Cheshire** – The Weston Hub is located at The Weston Centre, Earlsway, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 8RL will be open from 10am to 10pm, seven days per week and can be accessed by referral from health and social care professionals, as well as through other voluntary organisations.
Enquiries 01625 440700
- **South Cheshire** – Crewcial' will be open will be open 1pm-10pm, seven days per week and people aged 18+ will be able to self-refer into the service by simply turning up on the day or by referral from a health or social care professional. The new café is located at 3 Partridge Close, Flat 2, Dunwoody Way, Crewe, CW1 3TQ.
Enquiries 07516 029 050 crewcial@isl-uk.org

National Crisis Support

- www.hubofhope.co.uk – a national portal to access support
- <https://youngminds.org.uk>
- stay alive app
- Calm harm: <https://calmharm.co.uk/> (app)

Some of these apps enable you to text or email or live chat instead of having to speak on the phone, although this is also an option.