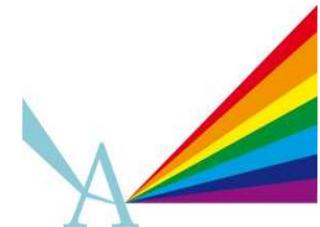




# Skills for life: Getting things done

Lucy Wells – Highly Specialist Occupational Therapist

Simon Braybrook – GP with Autism



# What this workshop will cover:

- Why we are doing this workshop
- How to decide what to do first
- How to remember what to do and when
- How to stay on task and keep focussed
- How to sustain your new skills

# Why are we doing this workshop?

Because difficulties with 'executive functioning' are common for autistic people.

Executive function is a term for functions such as planning, problem solving, mental flexibility, working memory, impulse control, inhibition, multi-tasking, and switching focus, as well as for the initiation and monitoring of actions.

## **How does executive function affect our daily lives?**

We all need to perform tasks or activities that require executive processes.

Executive function allows us to:

- Make plans and organise appointments
- Keep track of time and finish work on time
- Prioritise multiple tasks
- Solve unusual problems
- Keep track of more than one thing at once
- Evaluate ideas and reflect on our work
- Change our minds and make mid-course corrections while thinking, reading and writing
- Learn rules

*In today's society, everybody appears to be on the go much of the time, trying to juggle many things at once. Any person can feel pressured under these circumstances, but people on the spectrum may feel even more overwhelmed by the demands of daily adult life than typical people. They (autistic adults) describe how getting through the day, trying to complete the simplest things, seems so difficult and taxing. Even when a day is considered successful, they feel completely exhausted by the end, as if a supposedly simple set of tasks had drained all of their resources.*

From: 'Living Well On the Spectrum.' by Valerie L. Gaus. 2011 The Guilford Press.

# How to decide what to do first.

Make a list of your problems or tasks you need to do:

For example:

*I need to tidy my room*

*I have trouble keeping up with the cleaning*

*I can't fall asleep at night and stay up late*

*I have trouble paying my bills on time*

*I forget to do my laundry*

*I need to read my letters*

*I don't know how to plan my meals*

# How to decide what to do first.

Use a rating scale to decide how much stress each problem is causing you:

**How much distress is this problem causing in my life?**

- 1) Almost none**
- 2) Some**
- 3) A moderate amount**
- 4) A lot**
- 5) Extreme**

# How to decide what to do first.

Give each problem a distress rating:

Problem	Distress rating
<i>I need to tidy my room</i>	2
<i>I have trouble keeping up with the cleaning</i>	1
<i>I can't fall asleep at night and stay up late</i>	4
<i>I have trouble paying my bills on time</i>	5
<i>I forget to do my laundry</i>	2
<i>I need to read my letters</i>	3
<i>I don't know how to plan my meals</i>	2

- Level of distress:
- 1) Almost none
  - 2) Some
  - 3) A moderate amount
  - 4) A lot
  - 5) Extreme

# How to decide what to do first.

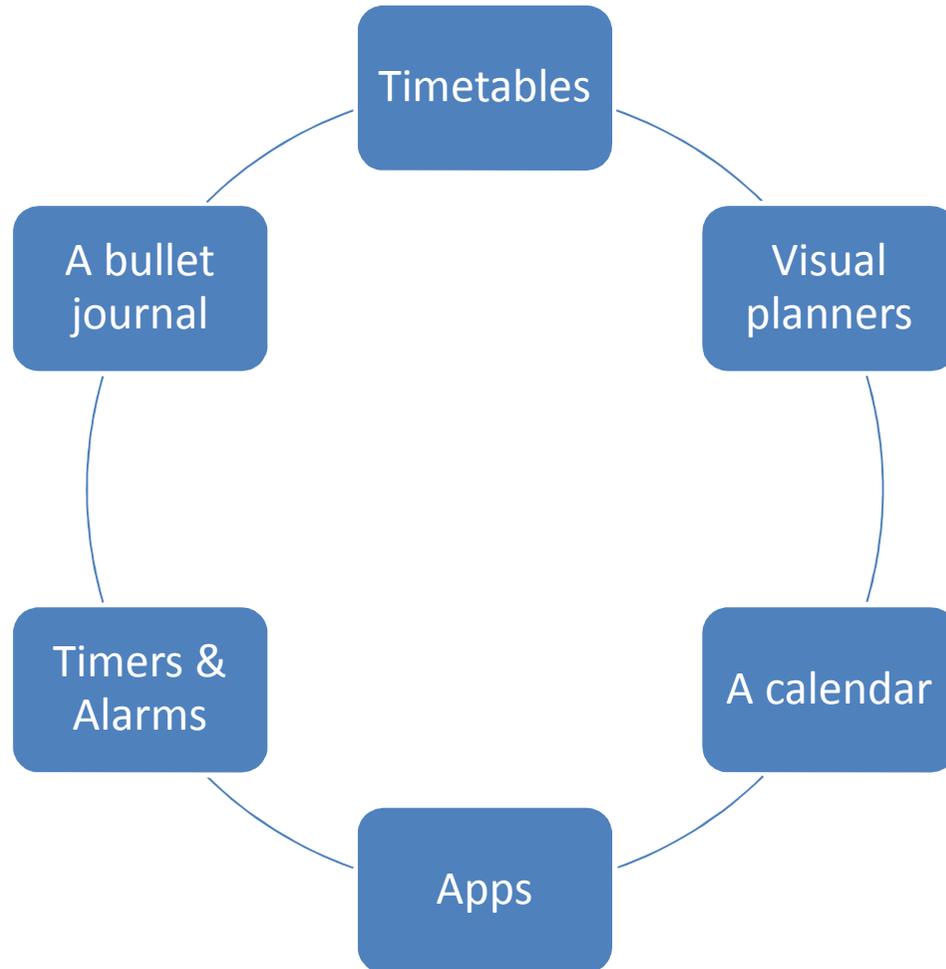
Put your problems in order. You will do those with the highest distress rating first:

Problem	Distress rating
<i>I have trouble paying my bills on time</i>	5
<i>I can't fall asleep at night and stay up late</i>	4
<i>I need to read my letters</i>	3
<i>I need to tidy my room</i>	2
<i>I forget to do my laundry</i>	2
<i>I don't know how to plan my meals</i>	2
<i>I have trouble keeping up with the cleaning</i>	1

# How to remember what to do and when

Now you know what you need to do, plan when you are going to do it.

Try using:



# How to remember what to do when

## Break tasks down

For example:



# Bullet journals

To find out more about Bullet journals go to:

- <https://bulletjournal.com/>
- Here's a podcast episode about it:  
<https://ultimatehealthpodcast.com/tag/bullet-journal/> Bullet Journal Archives - The Ultimate Health Podcast

# How to remember what to do and when

- Write on your calendar or planner when you will do each part of the task.
- Set a reminder for the time when you need to do the task.
- You could try an auditory alarm, a visual reminder, or the vibration of a mobile phone or smart watch.



**DATE:**

To do this week:

To do next week:

To do monthly:

To remember:

DAY TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
MORNING							
AFTERNOON							
NIGHT							

## Skills for Life Planner

Integrated Autism Service



Gwasanaeth Cyfun Awtistiaeth

Phone: 029 218 24240

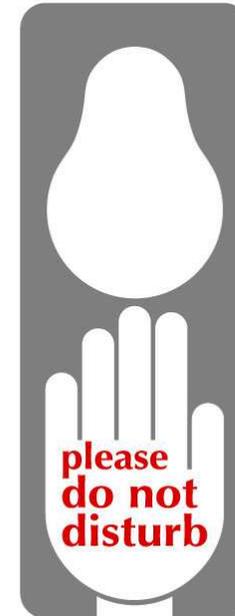
Email: [CAV.IAS@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:CAV.IAS@wales.nhs.uk)

# How to stay on task and keep focussed

## Think about your environment

Minimise distractions:

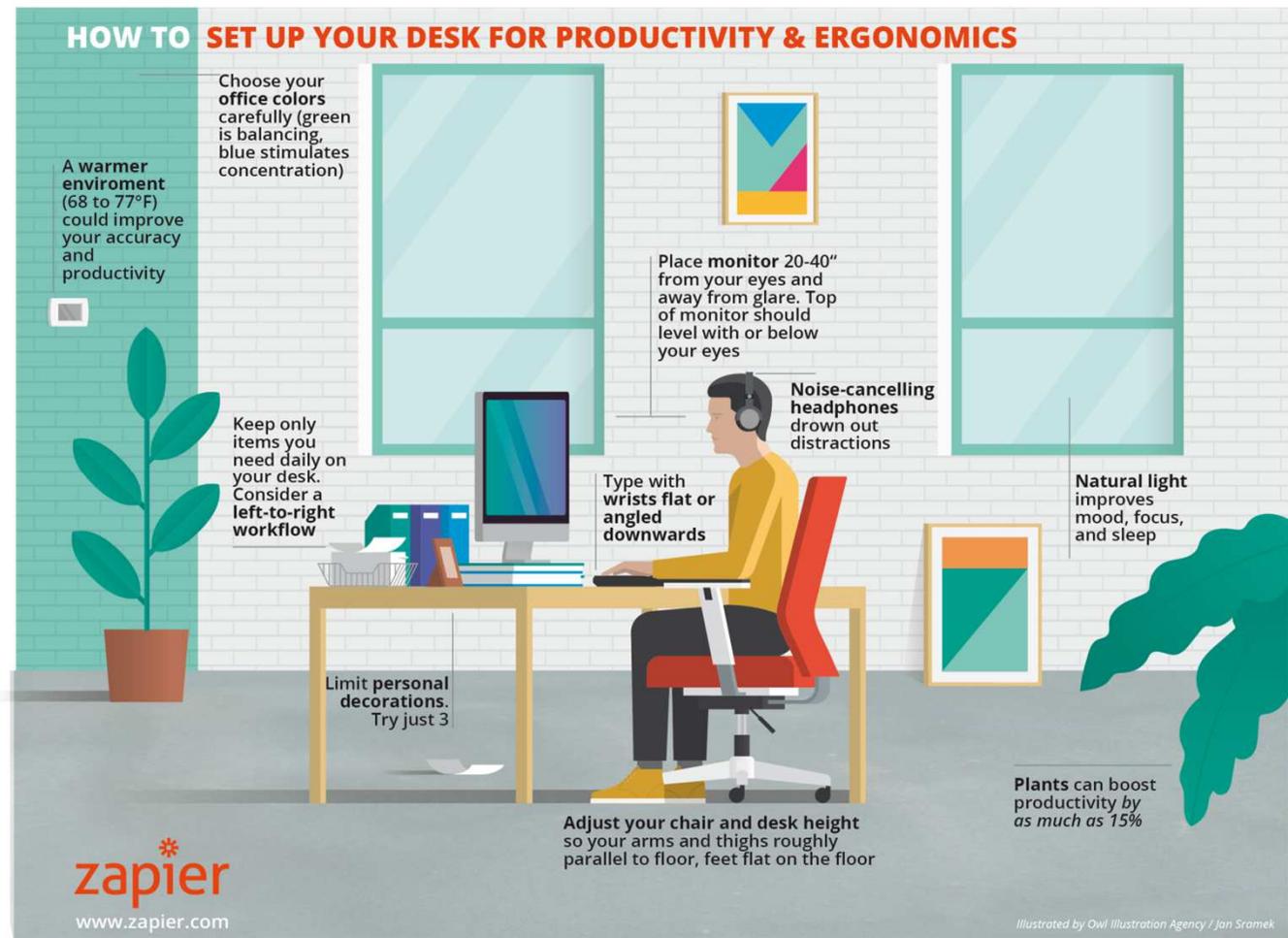
- Wear headphones or earplugs
- Minimise clutter
- Switch off your phone
- Put-up a 'Do Not Disturb' sign
- Switch-off notifications on your computer & phone



# How to stay on task and keep focussed

Make your environment suitable for your senses & think about:

- Lighting
- Temperature
- Noise
- Space
- Seating
- Movement



# How to stay on task and keep focussed

Work to your strengths:

- Choose the time of day when you have most energy
- Use tools or other people to help with things you find difficult
- Don't try to do too much
- Give yourself breaks and rewards – set a timer for every 20 minutes to have a 5 minute break. **And** set a 5 minute timer to tell you when the break is over!



# How to stay on task and keep focussed

Some things that can help concentration & attention:



**Weighted lap pads** are used to help reduce fidgeting, encourage focus and can be calming and soothing.



**Blu-tac or putty** can be used as a toy, a stress ball, a squeeze toy, or as therapy putty.



**Fidgets** often reduce stress and will help maintain focus and concentration



# How to stay on task and keep focussed

Some things that can help concentration & attention:



Using **exercise-bands** can help you to stay calm and alert in times of stress.



A **move 'n sit** cushion can really help to improve attention and focus in seated activities.



Sucking or chewing can help improve focus, concentration and attention.

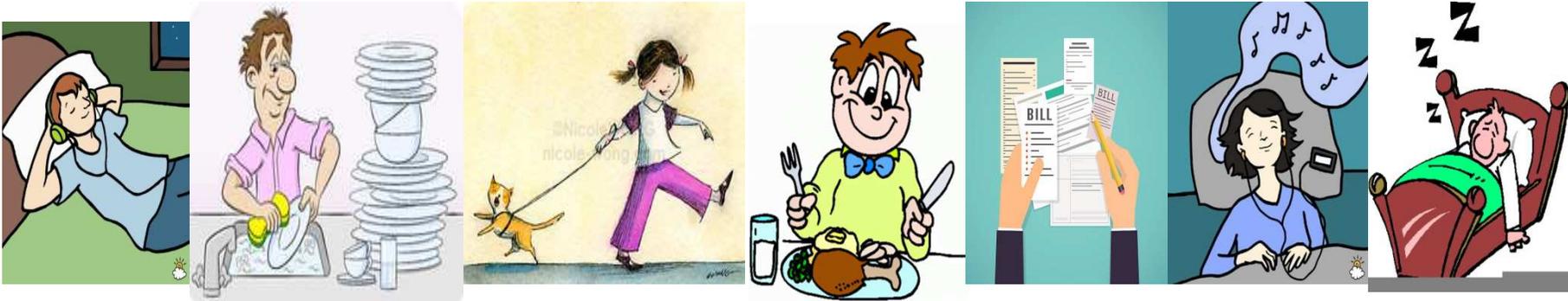


# How to sustain your skills



Pace yourself and think about your energy levels. Just like a battery you need time to 'recharge' by resting and doing things that are relaxing and enjoyable.

Each day schedule some boring activities and tasks in between enjoyable and restful activities:



Any questions?

