



# AUTISTIC WELLBEING





# SELF-CARE: AUTISM EDITION

PRIORITIZE YOURSELF, ONE STEP AT A TIME!

## 1 Stimming

Fidget toys, flappy hands, dancing singing, echolalia, stimming with food, listening to music on repeat

## 2 Reduce Demands

Doing essential tasks only, simplifying tasks, doing activities that feel safe and familiar, pacing, rescheduling non essential tasks, energy counting, task pairing, focus on the basics (food, water, sleep, meds)

## 3 Special Interests

Daily time to engage with special interests, gain rest and recovery from flow states, meet others who share your interests and passions. Info dumping with safe people. Decor incorporating your special interests

## 4 Rest

Remember rest can look different for different people! Spoon theory, gradual transitions, pacing, breaks, sensory rest, social rest, creative rest, spiritual rest, naps, screen breaks/phone breaks

## 5 Sensory Needs

Align your environment as much as possible with your sensory needs! - **sensory seeking** (candles, mints, blankets, aromatherapy, tactile input, music, hot drinks, weighted items, hot baths, ice cubes, sour sweets, tactile fidget toys) **sensory reduction** (eye masks, noise cancelling headphones, blackout blinds, warm dim lighting, minimise visual clutter, sitting in silence, earplugs)





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## Predictable and familiar

Knowing what you are doing, when and how can be really comforting. This can mean following the same routines and patterns or finding out information about an activity before you do it. For example eating the same foods, walking the same routes, wearing the same clothes, favourite box sets or asking lots of questions or researching, morning routines, evening routines, planners/calendars.

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## Self Compassion

An important part of wellbeing is learning how to be self compassionate and acknowledge the trauma caused by the world around us. Accepting that our body-mind connections work differently and therefore need us to respond to them differently and that is okay. The world can make us feel flawed, broken and like we are failing at wellbeing. Taking time to remind ourselves we are not broken, that we are worthy of self care and compassion is important. Practice radical acceptance of where you are and challenge neuronormative self beliefs.





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## Accessible Movement

Movement may look different for you if you have proprioception difficulties, co-occurring health conditions, energy differences or sensory differences. Movement could look like bed exercises, seated exercises, floor exercises, gentle stretching, low impact, gentle movement such as walking or swimming, moving from room to room, gardening, yoga, pilates, using resistance bands, body weight exercises, physiotherapy, housework, taking breaks from sitting. Every minute counts, all movement is good movement. Work with your body and needs, engage in movement that feels enjoyable and safe.

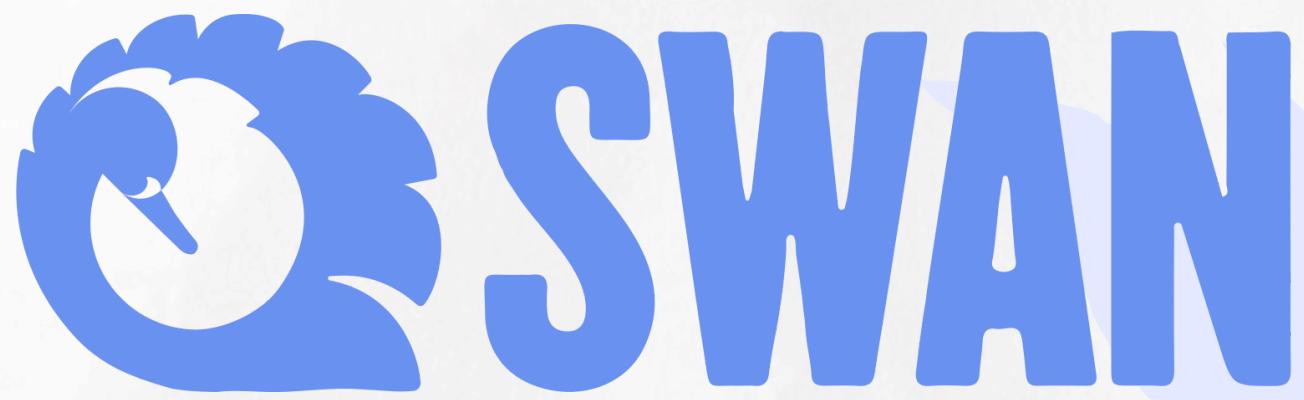
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## Connection

Are there people around you - in person or online, that feel safe and validating, that share (or respect) your interests? Could you spend sometime with them, connect in a gaming world, attend a meet up space, link into a webinar about a topic you are passionate about, or connect with the autistic community through an online forum or online content creation etc? For some this might be connecting to a spiritual or faith community

Connecting with pets, animals, nature and other non-human elements of the living world can be equally restorative and nourishing





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## Connecting with self

Have you checked in on how you are doing physically? Has your body changed from its normal? Have you noticed any differences? Do you need tools to do this like a tracker for how much you are drinking? Have you thought about co-existing health conditions, hormone cycles and how these affect you and your self care needs?

Try some activities that help you connect with yourself. This might be movement activities, sensory activities, creative activities, food based activities, body scans. All the time working to notice how your body responds and tuning in to what it needs, validating your own sensations, emotions, expressions and experiences. It can be as simple as washing your hands and noticing the water and soap on your hands, listening to the sound of our breathing, holding an ice cube, trying different flavours of icecream etc

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## Support and boundaries

Support might come from individuals online, in person, professionals, relating to others experiences in books or in videos.

It's also important to build in boundaries. Saying no, prioritising yourself, advocating for your needs, asking for accommodations, can feel very difficult for many autistic people. Start with the small and it's okay to have help from those around you





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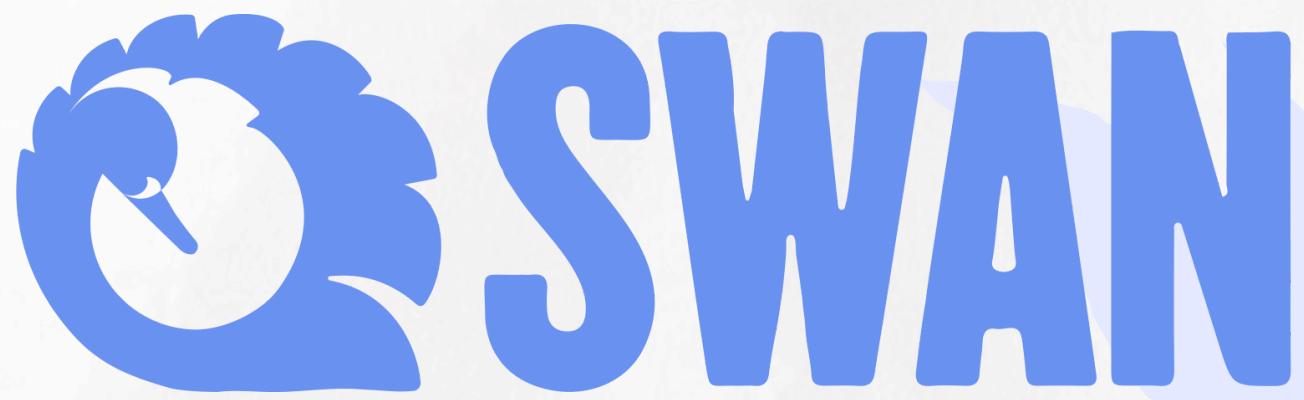
PRIORITIZE YOURSELF, ONE STEP AT A TIME!

Some things to think about. You may want to make some notes so that on days that are harder you have some ideas to refer back to...

## 1. What and who is important to me?

Some people find it helpful to make a box or a book full of photos, sensory items or keepsakes of important and positive things to bring out on difficult days





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2. What are some regular signs that I am struggling physically and/or emotionally? These might be physical things or behaviours you notice like being able to concentrate less on your interests or passions or being able to tolerate less sensory and emotional input





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3. What are strategies or people that I know help when I am really struggling? These might be foods, activities, places, people, sensory items, environmental needs etc





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## Crisis Contacts:

This document contains links to pages for crisis support both nationwide and locally in Scotland. In an emergency, please contact the emergency services on 999.

### Emergency Support:

NHS24: <https://www.nhs24.scot/>

- Call for 24-hour support: 111
- If you ask, you can access the Mental Health Hub for mental health specific incidents
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Samaritans:

- <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>
- Call for 24-hour support: 116123
- Webchat <https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/chat-online/>

Breathing Space:

- <https://www.breathingspace.scot/>
- Call: 0800 83 85 87
- Opening times: Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am. Friday 6pm-Monday 6am

Shout:

- <https://giveusashout.org/>
- 24-hour Support through Text
- Text: 85258

CALM:

- <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>
- Call: 0800 58 58 58
- Opening times: Everyday 5pm - midnight





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### Emergency Support:

#### LGBT Health

- <https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/lgbt-helpline-scotland/>:
- LGBT+ helpline: Call: 0800 464 7000
- Open: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays (12-9pm) Sundays (1-6pm)

#### Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline:

- <https://www.sdafmh.org.uk/en/>
- Call for 24-hour support: 0800 027 1234

#### Shakti Women's Aid: Support for Black and Minority Ethnic women who have faced or are facing domestic abuse

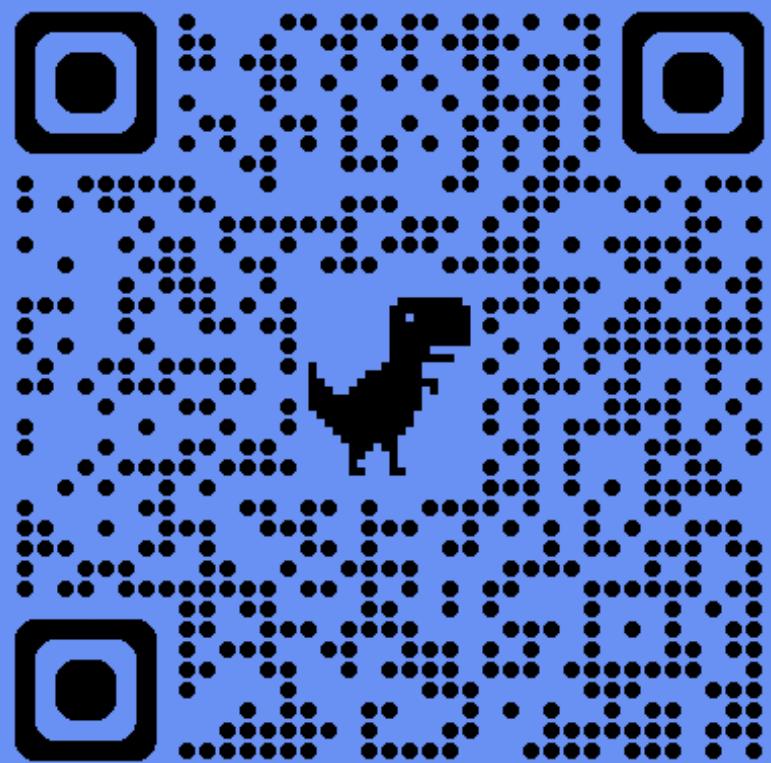
- <https://shaktiedinburgh.co.uk/>

#### Scottish Women's Aid: <https://womensaid.scot/>

- Call for 24-hour support: 0800 027 1234
- Find your local group: [Find your nearest WA group | Scottish Women's Aid](#)



Visit our website



for more info

## Who we are

**SWAN is an autistic-led Charity delivering services, information and support for and by autistic women, girls and non-binary people across Scotland since 2012**

## What we do

**SWAN runs a range of autistic-led groups and activities, both in-person and online, including:**

- **In-person meet-up groups across Scotland**
- **Online peer-support Facebook group**
- **Wellbeing walks across Scotland**
- **Autistic Discovery group**
- **Autistic Identity course**
- **Wellbeing webinars**
- **Training and consultancy**

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