

# **Proactive Interventions and Supports For Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

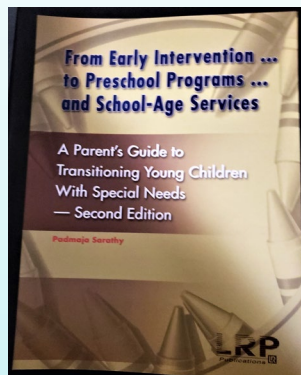


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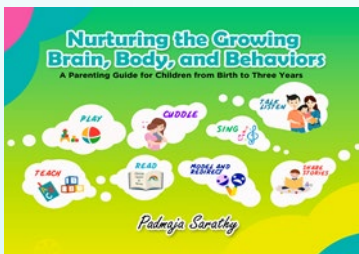
**AbleNet University Webinar**  
**April 8, 2021**

# Session Focus and Objectives

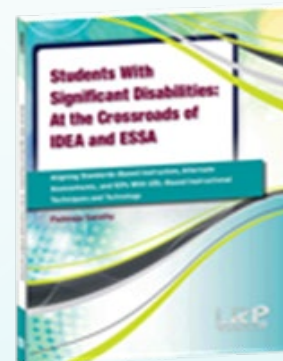
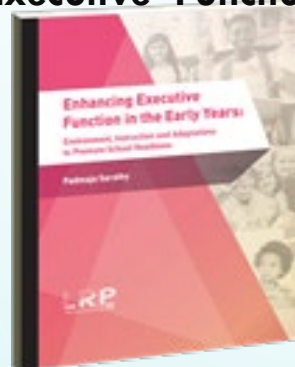
- This session will present proactive intervention techniques and carefully crafted and personalized support tools and tips to create a supportive learning environment for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
- Participants will gain knowledge and skills in decreasing the challenging behaviors and meltdowns through implementing:
  - **Environmental interventions and supports**
  - **Instructional interventions and supports**
  - **Calming supports**



## Early Childhood Transition Guide



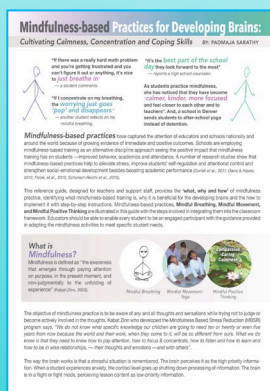
## Executive Function



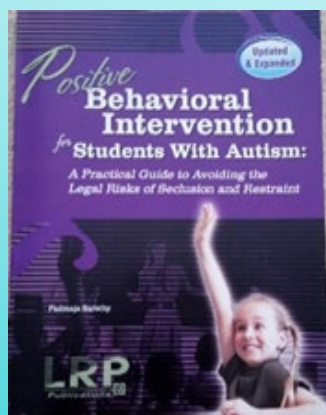
## Severe & Multiple Disabilities

## Padmaja's Sarathy' Books and Publications

- ❑ **Autism: Support Strategies & Interventions, Autism Seven Steps of Support; Music CD – Transitions**
- ❑ **Behavior Guide (Preventive and Positive Approaches) and Mindfulness Guide**
- ❑ **Early Childhood: Transition; Parenting Guide; Executive Function - Early Years; and STEM Teaching Strategies**
- ❑ **Paraeducator Training Guide and DVD**
- ❑ **Severe and Multiple Disabilities; Significant Disabilities and ESSA**



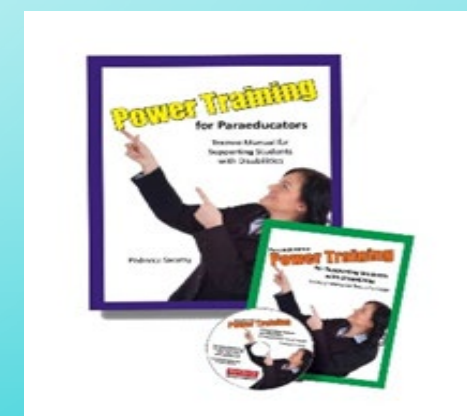
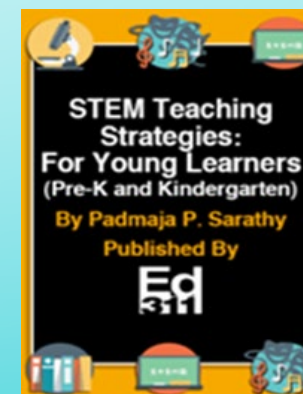
## Mindfulness Guide



## Autism Spectrum Disorders New- Second Edition



## Behavior Guide



# A First Step: Understand the Behavior

## Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)

### Antecedents that trigger problem behaviors

- Transitions
- Seeking attention
- Escape/avoid activity
- Teacher directions
- Difficult tasks/activities
- Needing sensory input
- Confusion about the task
- Self-esteem issues

### Behavior: Describe Behavior Precisely

- Throwing toys/pencil
- Refusing to complete an assigned task
- Fighting with another student
- Taking (grabbing) materials from another student
- Hitting/pinching adult/peer
- Running away from group adult/classroom, etc.

### Consequence/ Outcome

- Obtaining adult attention (redirection or reprimand)
- Receiving a reward/ reinforcer (praise, favorite activity or toy)
- Avoiding/escaping an undesirable activity or a difficult or boring task (example: cleaning up)

Poorly defined examples: “Jimmy was “aggressive” or non-complaint” or “disrespectful”.



# Principles of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

**Use proactive strategies to provide a supportive environment so triggering events are removed.**

*David does not like to stop playing with Lego blocks and move to a small group activity.*

**An advance warning signal is a proactive strategy.**

**Teach new skills to the student that will replace problem behaviors.**

- *Teach how to use “walking feet” (the replacement skill) for a child who runs in the classroom and hallway.*
- *Teach the student how to request a “break” when frustrated or over-stimulated.*

High-five

**Responding to Problem Behaviors: Acknowledge positive and appropriate behavior.**

Thumbs-up

- *Mark was immediately praised for hanging his backpack in the cubby although he whined all the way from the bus to the classroom.*

Positive Comment

Connecting through body language & facial expression

# **Principles of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support**

**Steps involved in the PBIS process to address challenging behaviors:**

- **Establishing a team process for addressing problem behaviors**
- **Gathering data to conduct an FBA**
- **Designing and implementing a behavior intervention plan**
- **Debriefing if crisis reoccurs and make informed modifications and corrections**

**Prevention is the Best Behavior Intervention and Support Strategy.**

**Positive Classroom Climate**

**Close Supervision and Monitoring**

**Teaching Classroom Rules  
Keep it Simple & Pair with Photos**

# **Environmental Interventions and Supports**

For students with ASD

## **Physical environment to facilitate active learner engagement and be proactive in preventing problem behaviors:**

- Ensure classroom physical environment is designed to prevent sensory overload.
  - Eliminate unnecessary auditory and visual distractions.
  - Provide clear visual boundaries with clearly defined areas.
  - Label various activity areas of the classroom paired with pictures or photos.
  - Rearrange the seating to prevent potential problem behaviors.
    - Seat competent peers that can model good attention, focus and self-regulation.
- Provide study carrels for learners as needed.

# Physical Environment

## *Essential for a supportive physical environment:*

- ❑ *Clearly defined and labeled work areas*

**Math  
Area**

**Science  
Area**

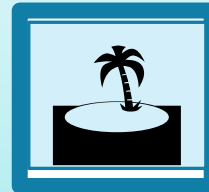
**Reading  
Area**

**Rules posted  
with visuals**



**Visual Boundary  
Personal Space**

**Mark's Work  
Area**



**Designated 'Safe Space'**

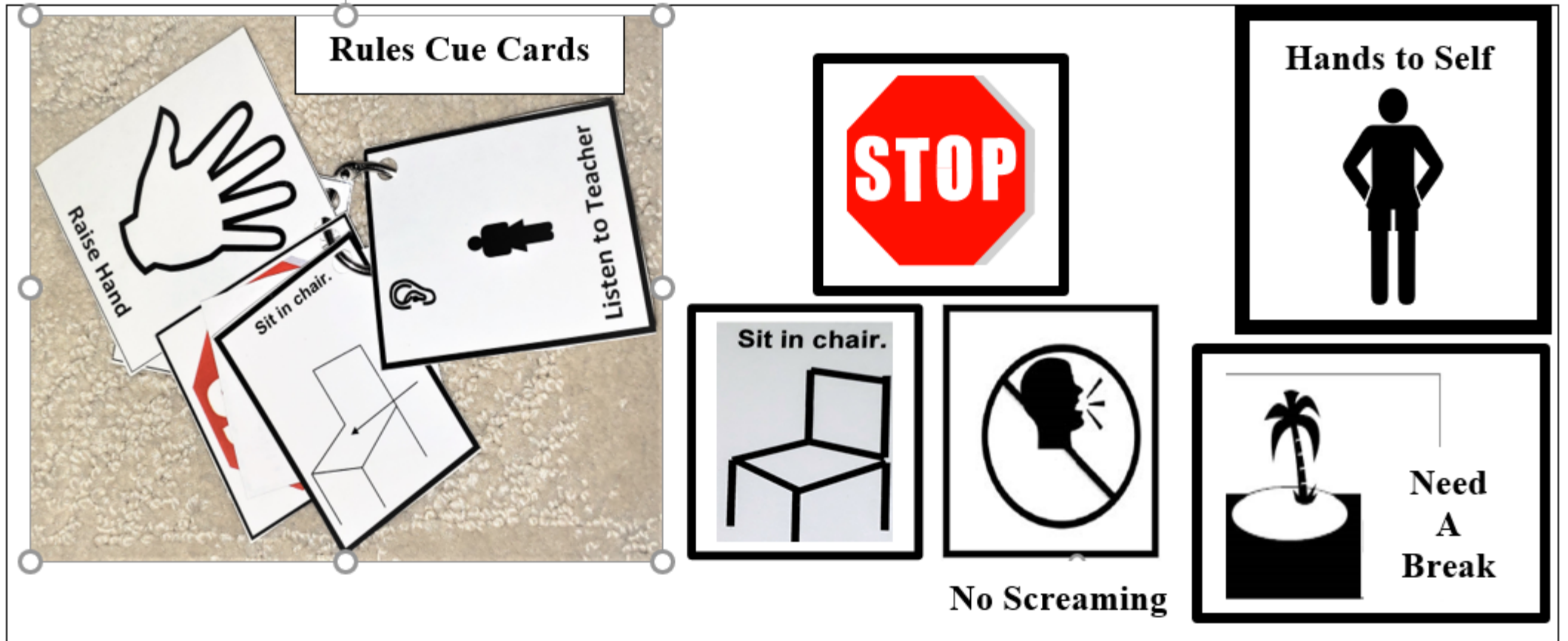


**Visual Supports  
Consistently Implemented**

- ❑ *Limit visuals on the walls.*



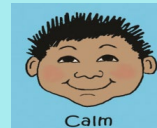
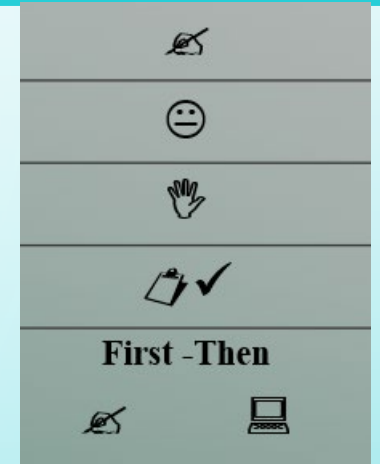
# RULES CUE CARDS



Adapted from *Proactive Interventions for Students with Autism* by Sarathy, LRP Publications

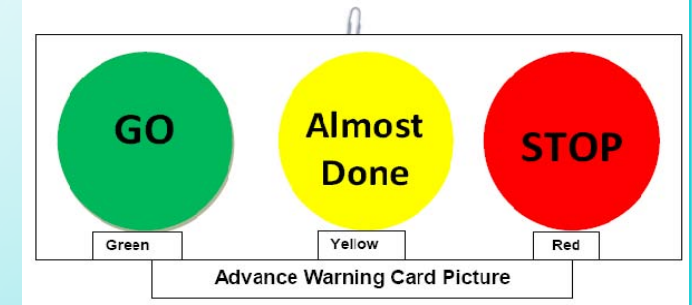
# The Classroom: Structure and Predictability

- **Provide consistency in the classroom.**
- **Institute predictable routines.**
- **Ensure that classroom rules are simple and concrete.**
- **Use visual cues to inform students of the rules, their schedule, and any changes in their routine.**
- **Have a designated 'safe space' in the classroom for students to go to for calming down.**



# Coping with Changes and Transitions

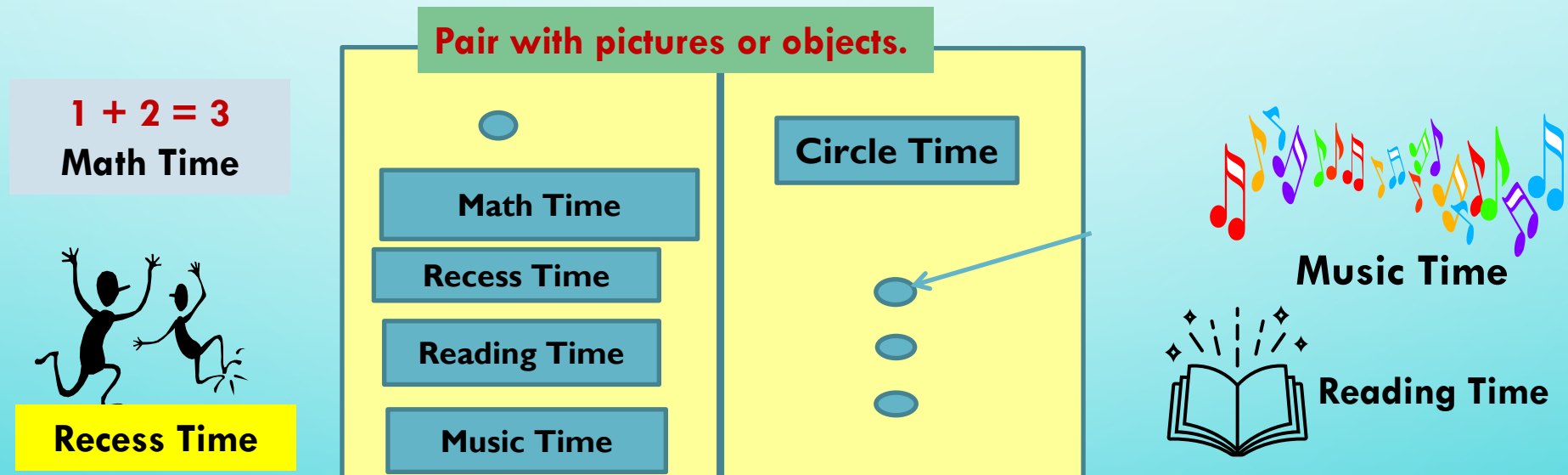
- **NOTE:** Children with ASD experience heightened stress and anxiety levels (Lytle & Todd, 2009) exacerbating their difficulty handling changes to their routine.
- **Prepare your students in advance to cope with changes and transitions:**
  - For transitions between activities and environments.
  - Provide prior warning/alerts before the next activity.
  - Pair visual cues with verbal cues (a set of pictured cue cards)
    - Show the sequenced steps to follow in responding to a fire or tornado drill Have
  - Use a song as a transition cue.
  - Ring a chime or play a musical instrument as a transition signal
- **Provide visual supports in the form of a visual schedule to facilitate smooth transitions.**



# Visual Schedule

- Decide which type of schedule to use.
- Decide on the format.
- Train the student to use it.
- Use a mini-schedule for within-activity tasks.

## Activities to do    Activities done



Provide visual supports during unstructured activities and times (Gym, Lunch time, Recess time).

## Students with ASD Need a Predictable Environment.

*Mark is a high functioning six-year-old kindergartner with ASD. His favorite activity is reading. He was particularly fascinated with reading space exploration books.*

*Mark had a major **meltdown** when the furniture in his classroom was (suddenly) rearranged. It was different from when he left school the previous afternoon. His favorite area, the book center, had been moved. Mark got so agitated that he started throwing books, blocks and even knocked down the chairs. From Mark's perspective, his world had changed, he was confused and did not know what to expect. He was anxious about what will happen next.*

**Immediate consequence:** Mark was sent to the office to be disciplined.

**The long-term consequence:** Mark was moved to a more restrictive, less inclusive setting.

### **Prepare Mark in advance for change**

Mark should have been primed for the changes by showing him the new locations for the book center and the other furniture in the classroom a week or two in advance, preferably aided with photos.



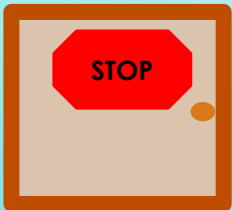
# Student Scenario

## Problem Scenarios and Pursuing Personalized Solution

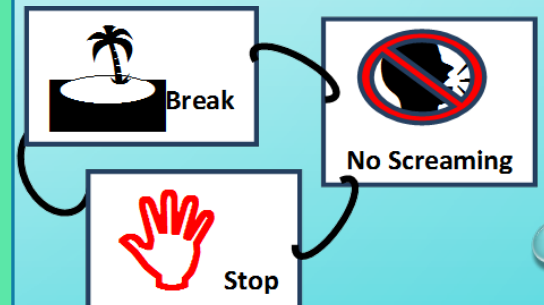
### **Student takes off during transitions between activities: A safety concern**

Brian, a kindergartner with significant cognitive strengths, is highly verbal and reading at first-grade level. During transitions he runs around the room and hides under the table and sometimes, runs out of the classroom.

*Adults respond with chasing Brian around the classroom and in the hallway to stop him from running. Once they get him, he is usually sent to (placed in) timeout!*




- Adults Response to Problem Scenario: *Reactive or Reflect?*
  - Use Preventive Strategies.
  - Pursue Positive Approaches and Flexibility.
  - Teach New Skills to the Student.



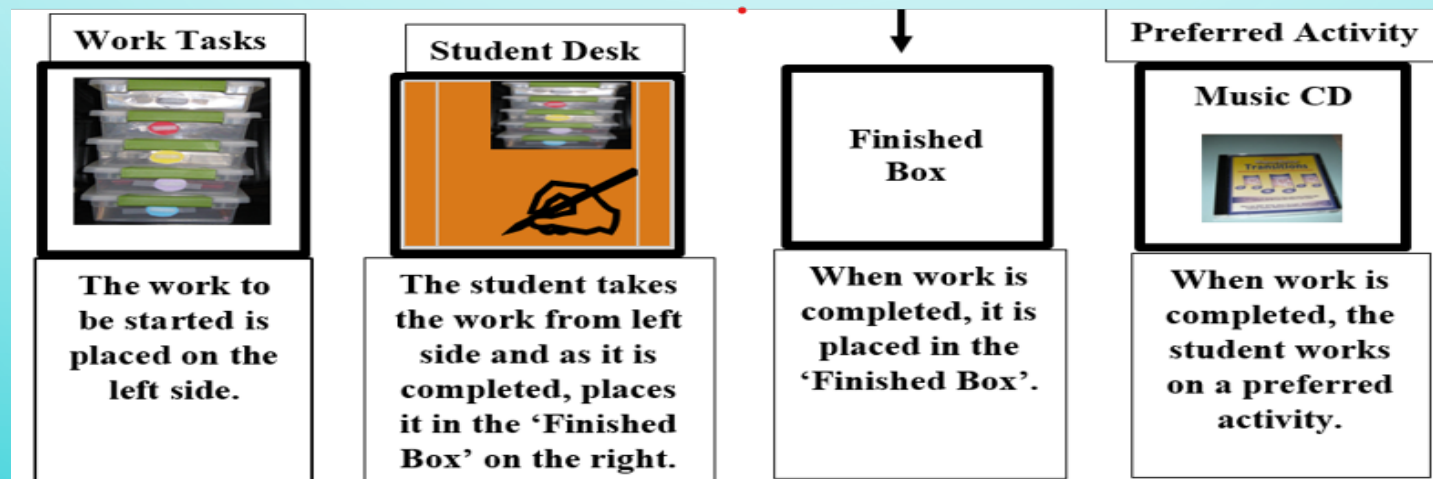
# Student Scenarios

## Problem Scenarios and Pursuing Personalized Solutions

- *You suddenly discover that the usual route you take to the playground is blocked. Taking a different route could trigger a meltdown in a student with ASD.*
- **Announce that you are going to measure the distance (count the number of steps or feet) between your classroom and the playground using a different route. Then, when you arrive at the playground, stay there for a short recess.**
- *Student is extremely agitated because she did not want to get off the trampoline in the gym. Since the gym class is over, the rest of the students are returning to class. Student is refusing to leave the gym, and the paraeducator is with her.*
- **Use advance 'Cue' card to remind student of the next activity. Play a transition song or a musical instrument to signal transition from gym.**
- **Show her the visual schedule when she will have gym again and get on the trampoline.** 
- **Have her go to the designated calming location in the classroom – the “safe space” – once she returns to class.**

# Instructional Support

- Apply universal design for learning (UDL) to increase access, engagement, on-task behaviors and to decrease problem behaviors.
  - Provide multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation and multiple means of action and expression.
- Offer student-specific tactile, visual and verbal supports.
- Consider altering the task or reduce the task demand or complexity level.
- Use structured teaching using a visually based approach.



# Instructional Support

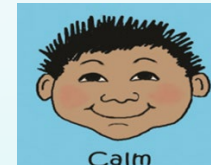
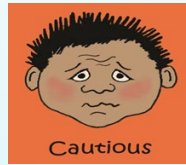
- **Determine if you offer sufficient instructional flexibility and supports to increase their active participation.**
- **Accommodate to the social, communication, and academic needs of students.**
- **Personalize academic support.**
- **Modify task characteristics:**
  - **Modify a complex task by simplifying it. Break down tasks into component parts.**
  - **Offer an 'If-Then' option (Complete 10 problems, then work on preferred activity)**
  - **Teach the student how to request help (if and when needed)**
  - **Provide choice-making opportunities routinely.**

# Proactive Instructional & Emotional Supports

## Music & Joyful breaks



## Build Learner's Emotional Competence.



## Visual Supports

## Communication and Participation Tools



## AT Support



## Physical Movement



Have a designated 'Safe Space'

Lots of Highly Engaging  
Hands-on Activities

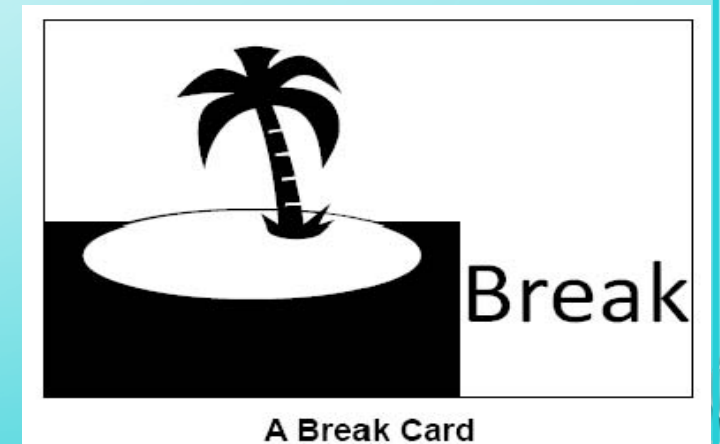
## Role-Play & Drama





# Instructional Support

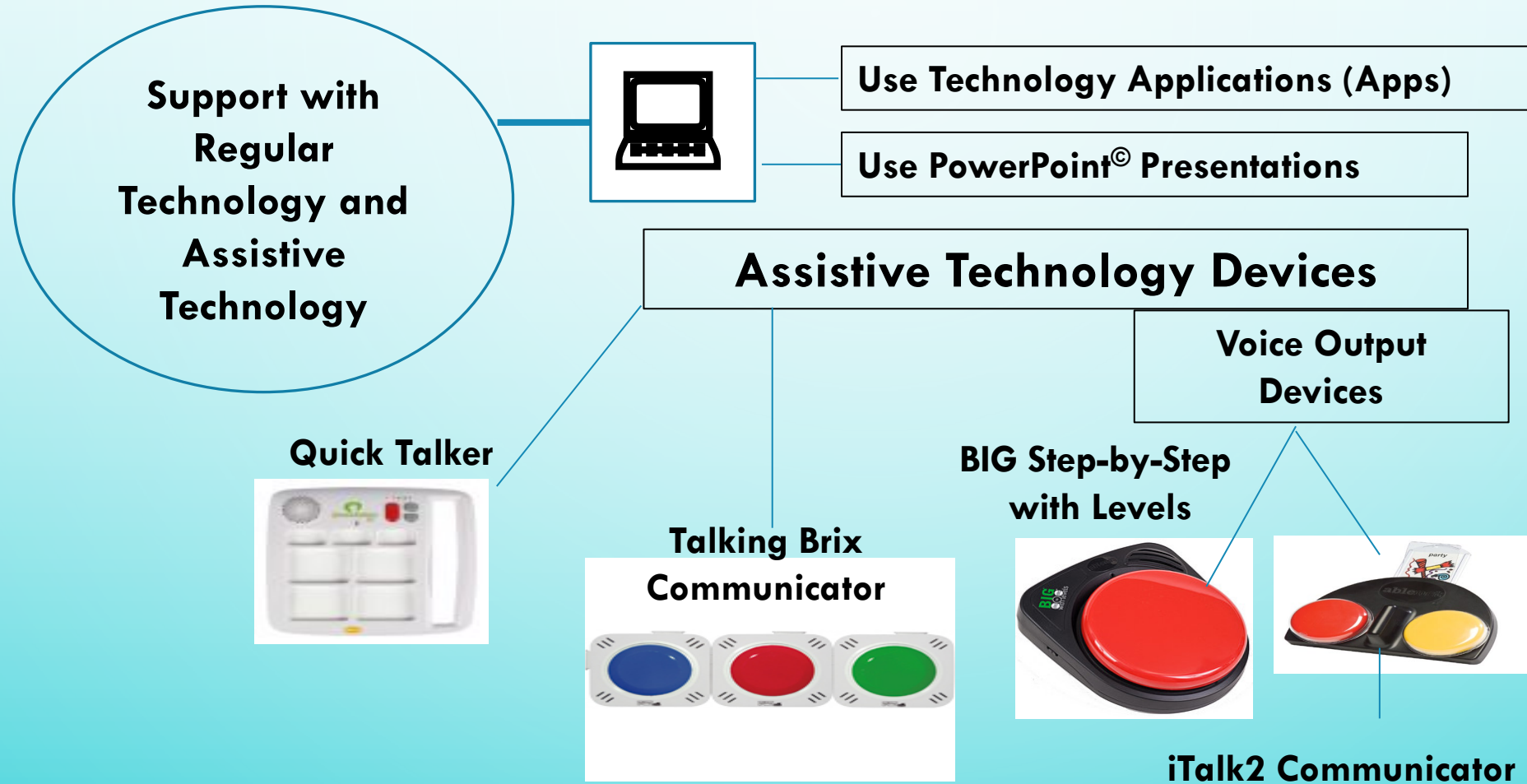
- **Built several timed breaks into the student's schedule for stress relief and to prevent meltdowns later in the day.**
- **Predetermine the amount of time and the number of breaks that the student can use.**
- **Gradually reduce the number of breaks.**
- **Set up a visual timer to indicate when the break will end.**



# Instructional Support

- **Watch out for situations that can trigger problem behaviors and tantrums:**
  - **An inadequate level of assistance is provided to the student, or the directions provided are unclear.**
  - **Difficulty with understanding multi-step directions or comprehending verbal directions.**
  - **Activities requiring a long time to complete or that do not have clear ending point.**
  - **Activities that are too difficult or too easy (perceived as such by the student).**
  - **Activities that are non-preferred.**
  - **Activities the student might not perceive as relevant or useful.**

# Reduce communication frustration with the use of assistive technology matched to student's needs.



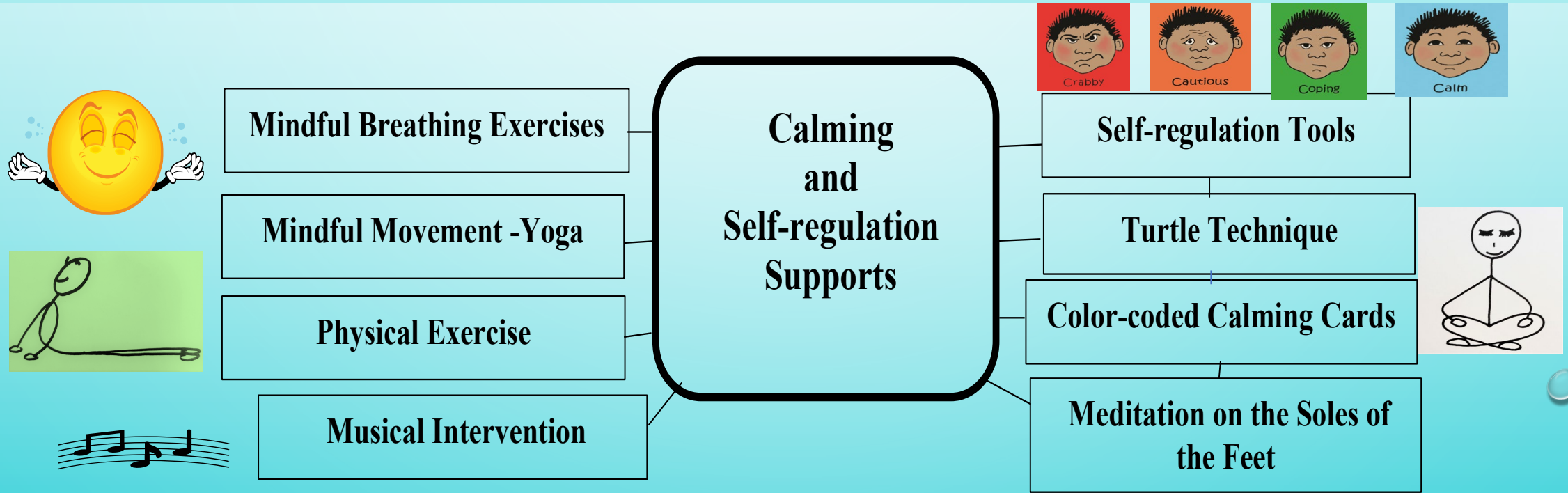
**Technology for Personalized Support**

Downloaded photos used by permission from AbleNet  
([www.ablenetinc.com/Assistive-Technology](http://www.ablenetinc.com/Assistive-Technology))

# Calming Support

“Children will need to pay attention, how to focus and concentrate, how to listen and learn and how to be in wise relationships, including with themselves - their thoughts and emotions – and with others”(Kabat-Ziinn, 2013).

❑ **Teaching calming and self-regulation techniques is an essential part of instruction.**



## Student Scenario - Calming Support

- *Taking the Alex (with ASD) to a crowded and noisy gym or cafeteria triggers a meltdown. He doesn't have the appropriate coping skills to handle a large assembly, gathering or noisy cafeteria.*
- Choose a lunchtime when the cafeteria is less crowded.
- Prepare in advance if the gym is going to be noisy. Provide a quiet personal area.
- Remind the student to practice mindful breathing to make transitions to the noisy environment less stressful and easier to manage.
- Arrange to sit at a quieter location. Be prepared to leave if Alex exhibits fidgety behaviors.



### Teach Turtle Technique.

Recognizing  
that you feel  
upset/angry

Thinking 'Stop'



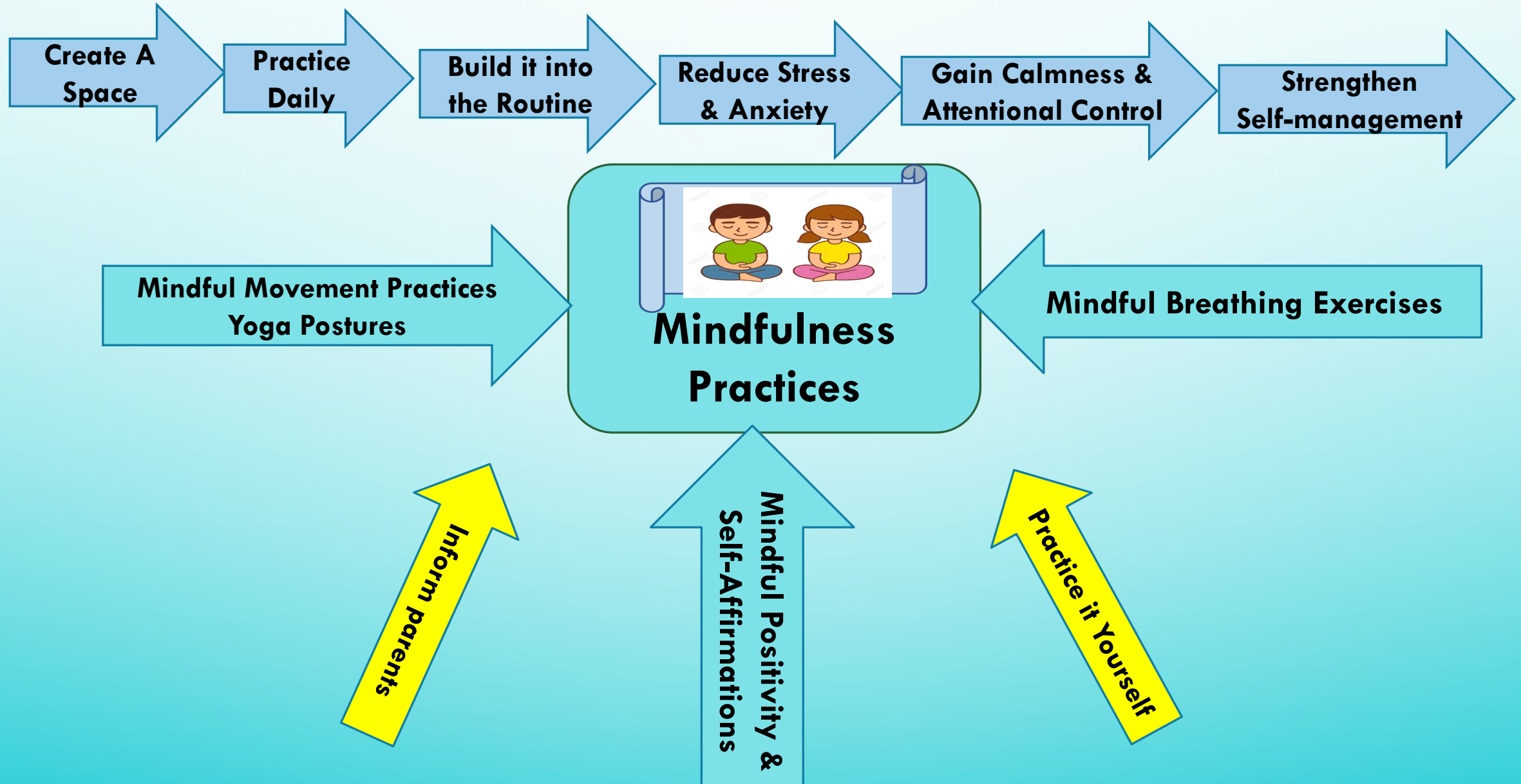
Going into the shell,  
taking deep breaths,  
calming down



Coming out of shell  
when calm, and think of  
solutions to problem



# TEACH: HOW-TO CALM DOWN AND DEVELOP SELF-REGULATION



# Resources

- Lytle, R., & Todd, T. (2009). **Stress and the Student with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Strategies for Stress Reduction and Enhanced Learning**. Teaching Exceptional Children, VOL. 41, NO. 4, PP. 36-42.
- Sarathy, P. (2021). **Positive Behavioral Intervention for Students with Autism: A Practical Guide to Avoiding the Legal Risks of Seclusion & Restraint**. WEST PALM BEACH, FL: LRP PUBLICATIONS.
- Sarathy, P. & Lipsett, A.B. (2019). **P.R.E.V.E.N.T. Problem Behaviors: Seven Contemplative Discipline Steps**. Education 311, Austin: TX.
- Sarathy, P. (2020). **Mindfulness-based Practices for Developing Brains: Cultivating Calmness, Concentration and Coping skills**. A quick reference guide, Austin, TX: ED 311.  
(<https://ed311.com/>)
- Sarathy, p. (2015). **Autism Spectrum Disorders: Seven Steps of Support**. Naples, FL: National Professional Resources, Inc.



**THANKS.**

**A special thanks to AbleNet University  
for hosting the webinar**

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**Upcoming Webinars:**

***Paraeducator Role: Instructional Support for Learners with Significant Disabilities***

**On September 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

***Engaging and Interactive Literacy Journey for Learners with Severe and Multiple Disabilities***

**On October 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

***Making Math* Relevant and Meaningful: Hands-On Activities to Engage Learners with  
Severe and Multiple Disabilities On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**