



Specialists Training in Autism and Raising Standards



## How to Use a Five Point Scale

A 'Five Point Scale' is a visual support designed to help a young person to spot the signs of emotional escalation and implement strategies to reduce the anxiety or anger that has been triggered. It also aims to reduce the need for verbal language and make the strategies visual and more accessible. People with autism tend to be visual learners, they also tend to be hyper-sensitive to sound especially when stressed; talking could make things worse.

The first part of the work consists of identifying and labelling the steps in between being OK and being in crisis, with 1 ok and 5 the meltdown point. Physical responses and emotional reactions are then assigned to each of these five steps. When this work is completed and understood we make the final scale, which merges the information from the first scale into two columns; 'feelings' and 'good choices'. The 'good choices' are strategies that the young person will use to reverse the escalation process. The scale is minimised so that it fits into the young person's planner: staff who support the young person are asked to get it out when they see the young person beginning to be upset, asking the young person where they are on the scale, and reminding the young person of the strategies needed to return to a lower level of arousal.

When the young person is beginning to show signs of becoming angry or stressed, they should be directed to use the strategies on their scale, using as little verbal language as possible; hopefully just pointing to the scale should do. When you have directed them, move away and give them time to use the strategies.

Strategies should be looked at now and again when the young person is not stressed, so they become familiar with them. The scale should be viewed as a working document and should be revised if strategies stop being effective.

Note: consider using a 3 or 4 point scale where a child is not ready for a 5 point scale.

See examples below:

**Please note: These resources are to be used once you have an understanding of how to implement them after attending training or following advice from your autism outreach team. If you are not sure how to use them then seek advice first!**

Akeel	Feelings	Good choices
5	<b>Sad/ guilty/ panicky/ fearful</b> Thinking the very worst, tears	Tell myself firmly: 'This is thinking the worst, it is not real, it will pass' Stress tangle 5 deep breaths
4	<b>Sad</b> Withdrawn, detached, memory goes, prickly behind my eyes	Build a Mine Craft structure in my head Stress Tangle
3	<b>Stressed</b> Super fidgety, snappy responses, tension	Think of funny things – cats on the net, computer game 'in jokes' Deep breaths, stress tangle
2	<b>Uncomfortable</b> Can't breathe through my nose	Think of funny things – cats on the net, computer game 'in jokes' Deep breaths
1	<b>Happy</b>	

Joel	Feelings	Good choices
5	Uncontrollable rage Adrenalin takes over, brain shuts down	Get away from the annoying people quick, deep breathes, tell staff how I am feeling.
4	Upset, enraged, embarrassed, brain is beginning to be taken over by anger	Get away from the annoying people quick, deep breathes, tell staff how I am feeling.
3	Pretty tense Limbs tense, heart faster	Deep breathes Look at Positive Thoughts book, think of Nyan Cat
2	A little bit tense, limbs tense	Breathe deeply Think funny thoughts (Nyan Cat)
1	Everything is perfect	Carry on enjoying life!

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Jodie	Feelings	Good Choices
 <b>3</b>	Mega Red Face	Use my Red Beast Box 
 <b>2</b>	Frustrated	Stroke furry fabric in my pocket Get a drink of water Take 10 very big deep breaths Look at my happy book
 <b>1</b>	Calm	Just staying how I am

Lily	Feelings	Good Choices
 <b>3</b>	Moderately annoyed	Think about 'Avoiding Spoilers' Youtube and other funny videos
 <b>2</b>	Mildly annoyed	Think about The Simpsons Draw pictures
 <b>1</b>	Calm	Fiddle with things, e.g. tangle

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