TIME for KIDS SERVICE STARS

MINI LESSON

CALMING KITS

In this lesson, students will learn about autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and read about a child who is helping first responders better support individuals with ASD.

Grade Levels 3–6

Note: Lessons are designed to support multiple grade levels.

Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

SOCIAL AWARENESS
SELF-AWARENESS
SELF-MANAGEMENT

Social Studies Standards (NCSS)

Individual Development and Identity
Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Essential Question(s)

- How do you regulate yourself in times of stress?
- Why is it important to consider how to comfort others in times of stress?

Learning Objectives

- I can list strategies for regulating myself.
- I can explain how individuals with autism might process the world.
- I can think of ways to help make kids with autism more comfortable in emergency situations.

What You'll Need

"Packed with Care" article from TIME for Kids (***ti.me/PackedwithCare***); "Sensory Differences" handout (***ti.me/SensoryDifferences***); "Plan a Drive" worksheet (***ti.me/PlanADrive***, optional)

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INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Introduce It

Start the lesson by having students think about a situation in which they feel stressed or overwhelmed. Are there strategies they use to calm down? Allow students to share some experiences. Explain that their calming strategies can help them regulate their nervous system. Different people have different ways of regulating themselves. Pass out copies of "Sensory Differences," on the next page, to introduce students to autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Consider how individuals with ASD might regulate themselves.

Read About It

Have students read ***"Packed with Care."*** As they do, have them note the objects that Ledger Mann puts in the backpacks he donates. Have them write how each item might help an individual self-regulate.

Discuss It

Ask students to share some of their notes. Then discuss the following:

- What is the purpose of the bags Ledger makes?
- Why is this idea important to Ledger?
- What steps has Ledger taken for this project?
- What items would you like to have in an emergency situation? Why?

Act on It

After reading, talk about why Ledger Mann's work is important or necessary. Point out that his backpacks are given to police officers and other first responders. Have students ever been in an emergency situation that involved police officers or firefighters? Have them consider what brought or might have brought them comfort in that situation. Discuss the things that Ledger puts in his bags. Refer back to "Sensory Differences" to help explain why these items might be helpful. Then have students work in small groups to complete the "Apply It!" section of the worksheet.

Take It Further (optional)

To extend the lesson, have the class consider other people or places that might benefit from backpacks or kits like these. These could be medical offices, barber shops—even principals' offices. Encourage kids to do research and plan a drive to collect items to be donated. You can use the "Plan a Drive" worksheet at ***ti.me/PlanADrive*** to help.

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Name _____ **Date** _____

Sensory Differences

Directions: Learn about a developmental disorder called autism spectrum disorder. Then read "Packed with Care" (October 23, 2026), about backpacks that help first responders supports people with autism.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
ASD, or autism, is a developmental disorder. Developmental disorders can affect language, learning, behavior, and physical traits. They often are identified in childhood. ASD can affect the way someone processes the world around them. It is a spectrum because no kid with autism is exactly the same as another. But most have sensory differences or preferences. That means they experience the senses differently from others. Some senses can be heightened (hypersensitivity), while others can be lessened (hyposensitivity). Learn more below.

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Hypersensitivity: Kids might notice more details in their surroundings. Bright lights and lots of movement might be overwhelming.

Hyposensitivity: Kids might notice fewer details in their surroundings. They may seek out flashing lights or objects with lots of movement.



Hypersensitivity: Kids might notice sounds that others do not. They might hear the hum of a fan or the buzz of a television.

Hyposensitivity: Kids might be under-sensitive to certain sounds. They might enjoy loud sounds and might put certain sounds closer to their ears to better experience them.



Hypersensitivity: Kids might be sensitive to certain tastes and textures. They may only eat very specific foods.

Hyposensitivity: Kids who are under-sensitive to taste might seek out strong flavors. They might chew on inedible items.



Hypersensitivity: Kids might find smells unpleasant that others don't notice or pay attention to.

Hyposensitivity: Kids might appear to have no sense of smell, or they might seek out specific smells.



Hypersensitivity: Kids might be uncomfortable with touch, like hugs or high fives. They might not like touching certain materials or getting their hair brushed.

Hyposensitivity: Kids might seek out contact with people or objects. They might enjoy tight squeezes or being wrapped in a blanket.

Apply It! On the back of this page, list aspects of travel (bus, plane, car) that might be difficult for someone with sensory needs. How could these be made easier?

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