



The Theme for WWY in June was planning a holiday.

Many thanks to our guest, Kathryn Cook, Travel Counsellor – Kathryn is one of many specialist travel counsellors who work directly with families who have additional needs to arrange holidays / trips in the UK and abroad.

**Main themes:**

- Taking young people with an Eating Disorder or ASC (Autistic Spectrum Condition) can be complicated.
- **Sunflower Lanyards** are available for free for people who have a hidden disability. They are available at a range of larger stores including Sainsburys, Tescos, M&S, Argos and Morrisons. However not everywhere recognises them. Ask at the Customer Services. There are no official requirements for using a Sunflower Lanyard and you do not need proof of disability. It is also possible to buy a sunflower lanyard online.
- **RADAR Key** - a radar key gives you access to public disabled toilets. You can apply for a RADAR Key through the County Council and they cost £5.
- If your child goes into 'flight mode' when they are feeling overwhelmed, they are not using the rationale part of their brain. Try to work out what the triggers are for going into flight mode so you can distract them before it happens.
- Try to work through some problem solving with your child. ( see link for problem solving worksheets).
- Try to reduce anxiety and bring down arousal with simple breathing techniques. 3-4-5 Breathe in for the count of 3, hold your breathe for the count of 4 and breath out through your mouth for the count of 5. There is scientific evidence to show that doing this repeatedly has a calming effect.
- Booking a trip / holiday early can give you more choice.
- It is normal to everyone to experience anxiety and to worry. This is a natural response that can help to keep us safe. If your child experiences increased anxiety, try to normalise it.
- The acronym VAN can be helpful **Validate Acknowledge Normalise**
- It is important to remember that a holiday should be relaxing for the whole family. Booking a holiday through an agent such as Travel Counsellors can take some of the stress out of planning a break. You will be dealing with one person who is there to support you.

**Flying:**

- How you book your holiday can influence what support is available.
- If you have booked directly with the airline, talk to their Special Assistance Team about arrangements they offer. Travelling through an airport can be overwhelming but support can be put in place to e.g. have a wheelchair to get through quicker, boarding the plane first to avoid the crowds, being met at check-in, request particular seats.
- Airlines are currently experiencing difficulties due to staffing shortages. Special Assistance is still available but they may not discuss plans until 48 hrs before the flight.
- If you have booked and paid for your flight directly with the airline

## Young Minds

Young Minds have a Parent Help Line and webchat along with a wide range of resources for parents to use with their child / children.

[Parents Mental Health Support | Advice for Your Child | YoungMinds](#)

## Links to Self Help Tools

<https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/PkiRCoZLrhvY8q9u1VY5r?domain=google.co.uk>

**Autism Friendly Airports – Improving Assistance for passengers with Autism.**

<https://www.airport-parking-shop.co.uk/blog/uk-airports-need-step-assistance-autism/#:~:text=Autism%20Friendly%20Airports%3A%20%20%20Airport%20,Friendly%20Aw%20...%20%2018%20more%20rows%20>

## Travel Counsellors

**Travel Counsellors provide you with individual support and guide you through the process of booking a holiday. Travel Counsellors work as independent businesses. For more information about Travel Counsellors go to**

<https://www.travelcounsellors.co.uk>

you can not make any changes to the detail of the flights. If you book a holiday package through an agency you can negotiate payment until you know that your family member is well enough to travel.

- If you book through an agent such as Travel Counsellors, they will make the special arrangements for you. You will have someone to contact who will guide you through the whole process.
- Travel Counsellors is just one of many companies that offer this one to one support
- Physical space can be difficult. Try to book seats with extra leg room.
- Airports often have quiet lounges or quiet zones that you can use before a flight. These may cost a little extra

## Car Journeys

- Physical space in cars and hotel rooms can be challenging. One parent shared that their daughter becomes highly dysregulated when travelling which can result in her attacking her sister.
- Music can be a comforter. Make up a play list for travelling that can be used when anxious or ask our child to choose the music played in the car.
- Prepare a self soothe box to take on journeys. These can include small items such as fidget spinners, squiggy toys, a hanky / piece of material with a nice smell
- Breathing exercises can be helpful to provide a distraction from what is happening around them
- Play car games e.g. how many cars can you spot of a particular colour, I Spy
- Explore what your child's sensory needs are. These can help to ground them.
- One parent shared that they always sit their child behind the driver – this is their seat that no-one else can use.
- Another parent shared that their child always sits in the front. This helps them to go to sleep.
- Hang an organiser on the back of the front seat with activities / items that can be used as a distraction.
- Make your child feel important. Involve them in planning the trip / journey – what route are you going to take, how many stops should you have, where should you stop and for how long,
- Try to break up your journey with stops.

## Service Stations

- Think about how long you are going to stay at the service station.
- What do you need to do there? Are you just stopping to use the toilets, do you need to buy food?
- Try to minimise contact with other people. If there is a large coach that has just arrived, wait until they have used the service station before entering.
- Headphones can be helpful in blocking out noise at the Service Station.
- If your young person is self conscious about wearing noise defenders, try noise cancelling ear buds. There are cheaper versions than Apple.
- Keep paper towel / hankies in your pocket so you don't have to use the hand dryers. The noise from hand dryers can

## Links to useful organisations

### Oxfordshire CAMHS

<https://oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/oxon>

### Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum

<https://oxpcf.org.uk>

### Autism Family Support

[www.afso.org.uk](http://www.afso.org.uk)

### Autism Oxford

[Homepage - Autism Oxford UK Limited](http://Homepage - Autism Oxford UK Limited)

### Be Free Young Carers

<https://befreeyc.org.uk>

be very difficult for some people to tolerate.

- One parent shared that they take a laminated out order sign & some blue-tac with them and put it on the hand dryer to stop it being used while their daughter is washing their hands.
- Eating in the car can be easier and safer. Parking so you face grass / trees, if possible, and away from other cars & people can help to reduce stress.

### Hotels

- Check out room types that are available.
- Hotels will not always guarantee availability of a particular room but it is worth asking what options are available. Do you need two rooms together and adjoining rooms with a door linking them, are there different sizes?
- Explain where you are staying in advance. Showing your child photos of the hotel / room can be helpful.
- If the information is too overwhelming, write it down and share it with our child.
- One parent shared that every time they stay in a hotel their daughter goes through a routine of throwing themselves on the floor, rolls around and rearranges the furniture.
- If you know that certain things are likely to happen build them into your routine and expectations. This can help to reduce the stress around it. Make sure this reaction doesn't have consequences. Give your child some control in the situation.
- Several parents shared that always booking the same type of hotel e.g. Premier Inns and looking for regular fast food outlets helped with predictability.



