

# Guide to Stimming: Parents

## What is stimming?

Stimming is a shorter way of saying self-regulatory behaviour. This means behaviour which allows you to regulate or manage your emotions, or actions. These behaviours are normally repetitive.

## Do only autistic people stim?

No! Neurotypical people sometimes stim, for example by twisting a ring or twisting their hands or fingers, when they are experiencing intense emotions. Stimming is also seen in other neurodivergent people such as ADHDers. However, autistic may need to stim more than non-autistic people as environments are often less inclusive for autistic people, meaning they are more likely to need to self-regulate or self-soothe.

## What are common stims?

It is difficult to say that there is a 'common' stim because there is so much variety. However, stimming may include:

- Flapping your arms
- Biting fingernails
- Tapping fingers
- Rocking back and forth
- Clapping
- Sucking thumb
- Repeating words or noises

## Why do people stim?

People stim for many reasons. Someone might stim if they are feeling anxious or overwhelmed however someone might also stim if they are excited or happy.

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## Should you encourage your child not stim?

No! They are stimming because they need to self-regulate so you should allow them to do so. Additionally, telling someone not to stim is not neuro-affirming as it implies that there is something wrong or undesirable with stimming behaviours. However, if someone is stimming in a way which is dangerous to themselves or others they should be encouraged to engage in other stimming behaviours for their own safety.

Examples of dangerous stimming behaviours include:

- Placing dangerous items in mouth
- Headbutting a wall or other objects
- Scratching skin/pulling at scabs
- Biting

## How can you support your child when they stim?

You should show your child that you accept them by not appearing embarrassed by their stims. You shouldn't tell them off or try to get them to stop unless they are in danger as they are looking after themselves. Instead, you should praise them for self-regulating, and provide support and comfort if they need it.

If they are stimming because they are upset or overwhelmed, you should try to identify triggers which can avoid them becoming upset.

## Common triggers include:

- Bright lights
- Overpowering smells
- Loud noises
- Unexpected change to routine
- Feelings of loss of control

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