

## What is CARD USF?

**The Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at USF** provides free coaching, training, guidance and assistance to increase knowledge and make life better for individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum across their lifespan. We connect families and professionals to services and resources. As a community based program, we work across all settings where people live, learn, work and play.

To receive training or technical assistance for your business, please contact us!



*Florida's First Choice for Autism Support*

CARD-USF provides support and assistance with the goal of optimizing the potential of people with autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities.

<https://usf.to/autism>



CARD-USF

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# THE DISTRACT Pak<sup>®</sup>

*A Program of*





## What's a Distract Pak®?

The Distract Pak® is a “tool kit” with small toys or sensory items that can help prevent distress and provide relief from anxiety and sensory overload in a variety of situations for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Sometimes people with ASD are overwhelmed by long waits, crowds, busy places, and unexpected changes to routines. Too much noise, light, movement, odor, or other sensory experiences may cause feelings of panic, anger, anxiety, or behaviors such as repeated rocking, pacing, head banging, or crying, and hiding/running away.

Items in Distract Paks® assist to prevent or distract from those uncomfortable feelings and sensations and help a person to be calm.

## When to use a Distract Pak®

- Use when individuals are challenged with waiting for long periods of time.
- Use when individuals are uncomfortable with noises, bright lights, touch, smells, etc.
- Use when an individual needs to spend some time quietly calming down.
- Use when an individual is anxious or upset.
- Use when an individual needs a break between activities.

## How to use the Distract Pak®

We recommend inviting the user to a quiet, calm place.

- Show and tell the individual that they are welcome to borrow 1 or 2 items from the Distract Pak® to use for a specified amount of time (determined by you) and that they must return the item to you before leaving.
- Check on the individual periodically and make sure they are using objects safely. Intervene only if they need redirection for safety purposes.
- Distract Pak® may also be used with communication boards or other visual aids as needed. Contact CARD for technical assistance to create the right visuals for your setting.
- You can modify or make your own individualized Distract Pak® for a particular need or preference.

**CARD is pleased to be able to provide our Autism Friendly Business Partners with a complimentary Distract Pak®.**

If more supplies or Distract Paks® are needed, we strongly suggest purchasing and including the following items:

- A fidget spinner, tangle toy, switch and button cube or dynamic squeeze toy for the sense of touch and visual stimulation.
- Puzzle cube to engage the mind, hands and eyes.
- Sound-muting headphone for more comfortable hearing. You may choose to add other items such as sunglasses or a visor for sunlight or a small fan to keep cool.
- Nylon earphone covers (nylon foot socks to be slipped over headphone for keeping clean).
- Coloring book and crayons for doodling drawing or coloring.
- Paper and pencil for written communication.

Additional items such as allergy-free snacks or water may be added if desired.

## Important

Please avoid using items that pose a choking hazard. It's best to supervise they use of items in the Distract Pak® to be sure they are used in a safe manner.