

A Guide To Emotional Security On Video Calls- by Nicola Jones

Video calls can be an anxious experience. Hopefully this guide will give you a few ideas to help you video call with confidence!

Toolkit

Having a toolkit to help with anxiety ready before your call. Try to make your own toolkit and keep it in a special place so it is all ready to go before you need to make a call. This way the anxiety of finding the toolkit disappears too!

- Comfortable clothes – I have a special hoodie that I like to wear when I'm feeling insecure. I wear this for video calls because I find it helps my anxiety.
- Fidget toys – I have a fidget toy that I like to use on video calls to help me sit still and concentrate and also because it is quite so I know other people on the call can't hear it.
- Water bottle – I have a water bottle that I keep in my toolkit so that I don't get a dry mouth or have to worry about coughing or being thirsty. Making sure you have a cup of tea ready for the call can be important too.
- Something soothing – do you have a special material or soft toy or other item that makes you feel better when you touch it?
- Calming exercises – do you know any breathing techniques that help with your anxiety? Try doing some before and during a video call

Tips

These are some general tips to help with video calls

- Turn phones off – this way it doesn't ring while I'm on a video call and also I'm not distracted by it.
- It's ok to ask for breaks – everyone needs a break sometimes and it is ok during these breaks to turn your audio and video off if you need to. Remember than no one else can turn these on or off but you!
- Somewhere comfortable – I have a special spot in my house where I do video calls because there are lots of cushions and my laptop can sit somewhere safe at the right height for me
- Practice calls – do a few practice calls with a friend and ask them about the things that are making you anxious. If they can hear you when you do something you're anxious you might do and then do that thing to see how it feels! Everything becomes easier with practice
- Try not to do more than one video call a day – for people with autism concentrating on social cues that intensely can be exhausting so don't be afraid to say no and suggest another day

Etiquette

Just remember that video calls are new for everyone, not just people with autism! Usually in groups the leader will make some ground rules which makes things clearer. If not here are some suggestions.

- Turn your microphone off if you aren't speaking – there might be background noise that is distracting to other people
- Make sure you are fully dressed
- Try to have your head and shoulders on camera
- Try to have your camera somewhere stable – bouncing cameras can be distracting for people