

The Incredible 5 Point Scale



What is a 5 Point Scale?

The Incredible 5-point scale was developed by Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis.

Scales are essentially an anger management tool but at the same time, can also be used to show the pupil some awareness of how their actions can affect others. Therefore it can also be described as a social understanding resource. It is intended to develop the child's awareness of escalating levels of emotion experienced by them. A chart is devised, including information personal to the pupil's experience of emotions. The chart also includes a number of self-help strategies that are developed as achievable to the young person and agreed by members of the staff team as acceptable means of supporting the pupil to remain calm.

Who is it for?

It is particularly successful for pupils with Aspergers Syndrome but can be used with those diagnosed with Autism, providing they have some understanding of their emotions. It can be useful for students with other disorders or simply for those pupils who present with 'a very short fuse'. For younger or more complex pupils, it may be appropriate to first work on a 3 point scale using the following faces:

Level	Feeling	What can I do?
3	I'm angry	1. Ask for help 2. Ask for help 3. Get to a safe place
2	I'm upset	1. Ask for help 2. Ask for help 3. Get to a safe place 4. Go to a safe place 5. Take deep breaths
1	I'm happy	1. Play with friends 2. Smile 3. Laugh 4. Listening to music

Before beginning a 5-point scale

It may be difficult for the pupil to express how they feel. Some initial work on emotion vocabulary may be required first i.e. looking at facial expressions/body language to teach the pupil that feelings can be expressed non-verbally.

It is helpful to use some pre written social situations to help the child to think about how different environments/actions make them feel and where they might be place them in a scale of 1-5.

How to create a 5-point scale

A template is attached to record the information. This should be completed in stages. The following breakdown for each level on the scale can be used as a guide:

1. I am happy, I can handle this.
2. The might make me feel uncomfortable or confused.
3. This could make me really nervous or upset.
4. This can make me mad.
5. This can make me lose control.

You may find that the child needs to experience the emotion to be able to describe the feeling. Therefore, it may be useful to use real life situations to complete the scale. After a negative experience a discussion about how they felt and what they did/could do to calm down can be noted on the template. Therefore, it can take a couple of weeks to complete a chart.

It is usually easier to begin with number 1 and discuss how the pupil feels when happy. Depending on the pupil, you can use words to describe; or ask the pupil if they would like to draw a picture of what their face might look like for each number on their scale. It is then useful to discuss how they can remain like this i.e. at number 1 keep smiling, stay focused etc. are useful. Pictures can be scanned into the document or a photo of the drawing can be inserted into the document.

It may be that the pupil escalates from number 1 to number 5. If this is the case, it will be easier to talk about and complete this section of the template next. Depending on the child, you can either move up the scale or move straight to number 3 and talk about how they feel when they may be beginning to

lose control. A word chart is helpful, giving the pupil word suggestions which may be more meaningful to them. The use of emotion symbols are helpful and can be created using communicate in print.

For the resource to be meaningful to the pupil it is important that the information gathered, as much as possible, comes from them. It may be difficult for the pupil to develop self-help strategies. Be sure to use/suggest ones that will be acceptable in the environment. I.e. if the child needs to leave the room to calm down, first ensure that they will be allowed to do this.

Once the chart is complete, it should be put onto a laminated card. The attached blank template can be created using word and can be used to gather the info by hand and then typed into later. Depending on the pupil, it can be printed in different sizes. Older pupils often find that a smaller pocket size version is more discrete than A4.

How to use the 5-point scale

All staff involved with the pupil should be aware of the child's five point scale and encourage to child to refer to it when it becomes apparent that their level of emotion is rising. Initially, it is useful to observe the pupil and identify where they might be on their scale. It may be helpful to the pupil at this point, to say..... "I think you are at number 2, what strategies have you listed at number 2 on your scale, to help you stay calm?" This will support the pupil to refer to the scale and become familiar with their emotions and what to do when they are feeling unsettled.

Pocket Scale can be used for checking in:

