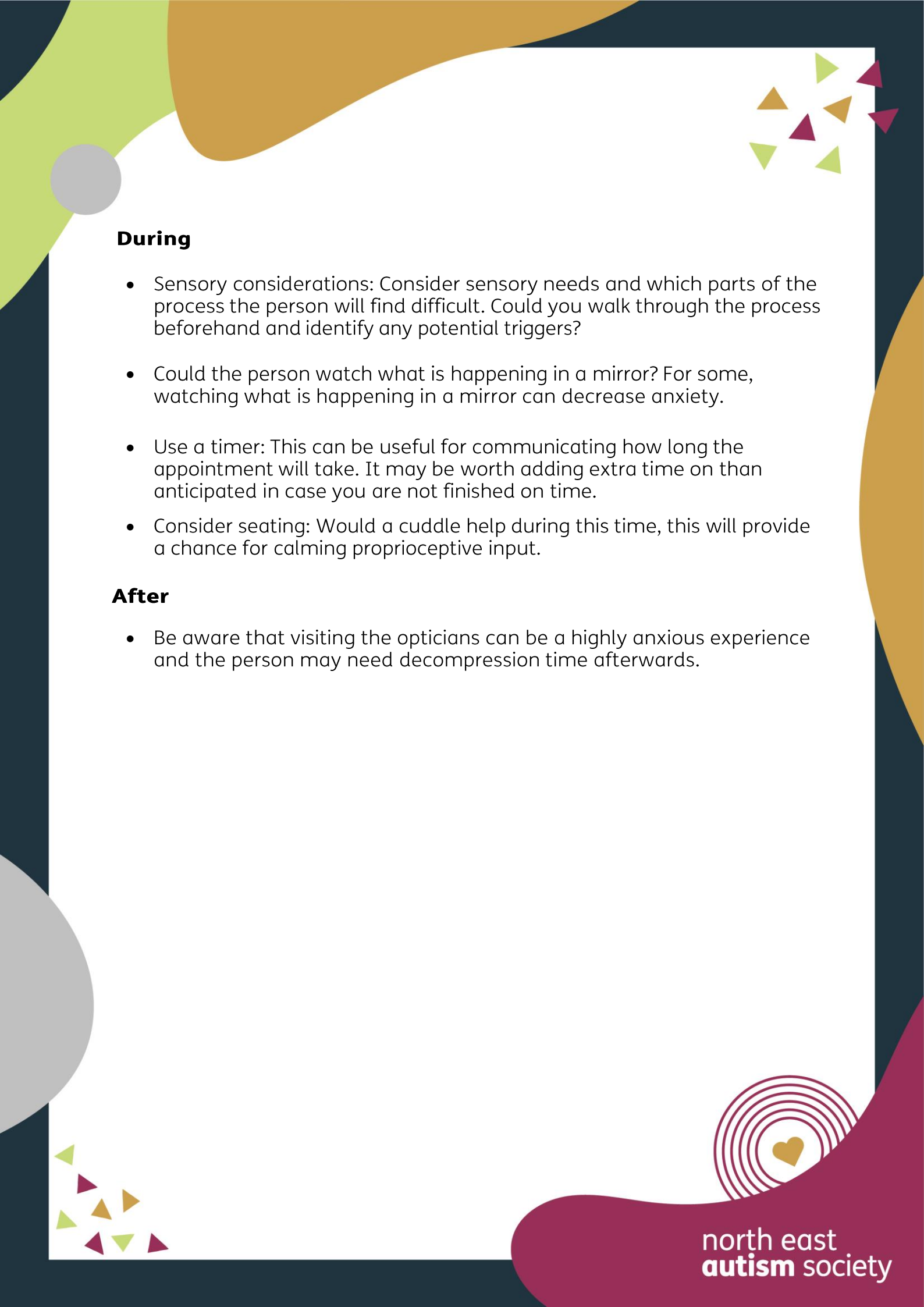


Tips for visiting the opticians

Before

- Consider the environment: It may help you to visit the opticians alone first to be able to closely look at the environment. During the visit reflect on things like sensory stimuli, the layout and any adjustments that are available.
- Preparation: This can be particularly important especially if it is the person's first visit. You may want to use visual stories beforehand. You could also watch videos together on YouTube or read story books.
- Role play: Could you act out the process? You could set up your own opticians and practice each stage of the journey.
- Use visuals: These can help to break down the process and explain what happens during an eye test. You could take along a visual timeline or checklist to the appointment to help sequence the order of things.
- Provide accessible information about why visiting the opticians is important.
- Consider the time of the appointment: There may be a quieter time of the day available at the opticians or there may be a better time of day for the person. Consider booking a double appointment so you have extra time.
- Speak to the opticians ahead of the appointment: Query what adjustments they are able to make.
- Waiting may increase anxiety, could you employ strategies like waiting in the car and ask the opticians to call you when they are ready?
- Ask the autistic community for recommendations of opticians.
- Support the person to feel calm before their appointment: This may be achieved through proprioceptive input like rolling on a gym ball or squeezing a stress ball.
- Pack a toolkit: It may be useful to pack things that help keep the person calm or distract them. Examples include ear defenders, a music player, or sensory toys.



During

- Sensory considerations: Consider sensory needs and which parts of the process the person will find difficult. Could you walk through the process beforehand and identify any potential triggers?
- Could the person watch what is happening in a mirror? For some, watching what is happening in a mirror can decrease anxiety.
- Use a timer: This can be useful for communicating how long the appointment will take. It may be worth adding extra time on than anticipated in case you are not finished on time.
- Consider seating: Would a cuddle help during this time, this will provide a chance for calming proprioceptive input.

After

- Be aware that visiting the opticians can be a highly anxious experience and the person may need decompression time afterwards.

