Pretending, and using imagination, can get too big and out of control sometimes.
Have there been times in your life when…

☑

...you made up an imaginary world in your head and spent quite a lot of time in it?

...you enjoyed an imaginary world from a show, book or video game so much that was hard to stop thinking about it all the time?

...your brain got too stuck on the pretend thing you love while playing with other people or talking with them?

...you noticed that the fantasy thing you love felt even more important in your life than most "real" things?

...some_____ like a family member ___ friend, said that you w___ stuck on the pret___ing you lov__

...you knew the names of lots more fantasy game, story or movie characters than actual family members and classmates?

...you spent a lot of time during the day pretending you were in the fantasy world, or a character in it?

...you strongly preferred to interact with others online as a "character" rather than yourself?

...you dressed or groomed yourself to look something like a favorite fantasy character (in school or in public)?

...you continued a strong __terest in a "young kid" __asy thing years after ___ had moved on to ___kid" interests?

...your ability to do schoolwork or chores was affected by the time and energy you spent enjoying the fantasy world?

...your brain got so focused on the thing you love that lots of time went by without you realizing it?

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____world?"

stressful?

~ _____te words or draw pictures ~

Joel Shaul, LCSW

Worksheets & checklists to help young people with autism to explore issues with fantasy & pretending

These worksheets are [part of a collection of free materials](#) to help young people with autism to explore how they are affected by fantasy and pretending.

[Go to this link](#) to review all of these materials so that you are selecting the combination of resources that is best for you.

This first pair of worksheets is to help explore the many normal and beneficial aspects of fantasy and pretending.

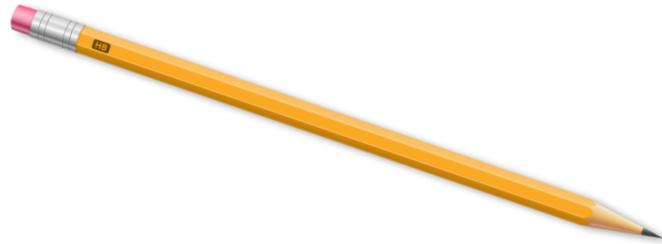Pretending, and using imagination, can be fun, important and useful.
Have there been times in your life when…

...playing video games based on fantasy characters has been enjoyable and relaxing?

...watching movies or videos about imaginary things has been really entertaining?

...watching shows and playing video games with other people has connected you with friends and family in good ways?

...making up stories about pretend things felt like fun exercise for your brain?

...drawing pictures or writing down stories about pretend things made your powers of imagination stronger?

...doing computer-based creating, like with Minecraft, taught you things about creativity and design?

...getting into a fantasy world shared by thousands of other people made you feel a connection with others?

...taking part in role-playing games helped give you the courage and structure to interact with other people?

...reading comics and other fantasy stories helped you to become a stronger reader?

...creating your own fantasy world helped you feel "in control" and gave you a little break from the "real" world?"

...going into a fantasy-based world helped you get through some times that were hard, sad or stressful?

...imagining things made you feel proud of the unusual things your mind can do?

? Are there other ways that your fantasy- and pretend-based activities have been enjoyable and meaningful for you? ?

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This set of three worksheets is to help explore problematic patterns of fantasy enthrallment.

Pretending, and using imagination, can get too big and out of control sometimes. Have there been times in your life when… ☑

- …you made up an imaginary world in your head and spent quite a lot of time in it?
- …you enjoyed an imaginary world from a show, book or video game so much that was hard to stop thinking about it all the time?
- …your brain got too stuck on the pretend thing you love while playing with other people or talking with them?
- …you noticed that the fantasy thing you love felt even more important in your life than most "real" things?

- …someone, like a family member or a friend, said that you were too stuck on the pretend thing you love?
- …you knew the names of lots more fantasy game, story or movie characters than actual family members and classmates?
- …you spent a lot of time during the day pretending you were in the fantasy world, or a character in it?
- …you strongly preferred to interact with others online as a "character" rather than yourself?

- …you dressed or groomed yourself to look something like a favorite fantasy character (in school or in public)?
- …you continued a strong interest in a "young kid" fantasy thing years after peers had moved on to "older kid" interests?
- …your ability to do schoolwork or chores was affected by the time and energy you spent enjoying the fantasy world?
- …your brain got so focused on the thing you love that lots of time went by without you realizing it?

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Have there been times in your life when… ☑

- …you spent lots of time writing about or drawing your fantasy world – but only for you to look at, and no one else?
- …you had imaginary friends more, and much longer, than other children?
- …you felt romantic "crushes" on fantasy characters that were even stronger than your romantic feelings for real people?
- …you felt bored or uninterested around people who did not share your fantasy interest?

- …you spent more than an hour a day communicating with AI chatbots that are designed to seem like friends?
- …you came to feel as if an AI chatbot was a real friend?
- …you believed that the chatbot was in some ways alive, and not just a computer program?
- …you preferred communicating with an AI companion much more than with people in your life?

- …you had strong romantic feelings for an AI chatbot?
- …you felt that the AI chatbot had romantic feelings for you?
- …you often communicated with other people online who also feel strong connections with their AI companions?
- …you felt really terrible when something or someone kept you from accessing your chatbot?
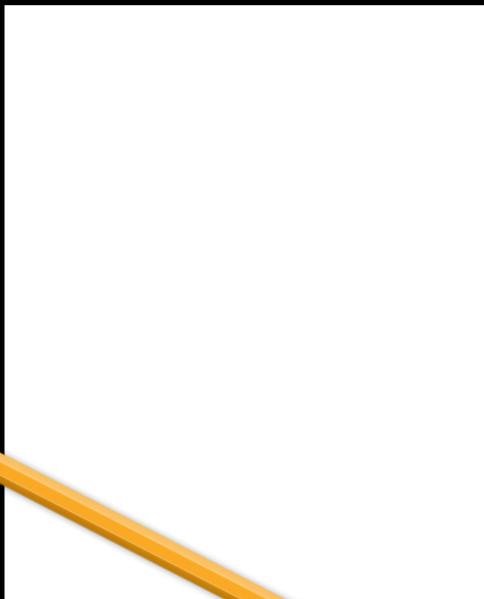
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? Were there any other times when your fantasy interests made *you* feel confused or worried? ?
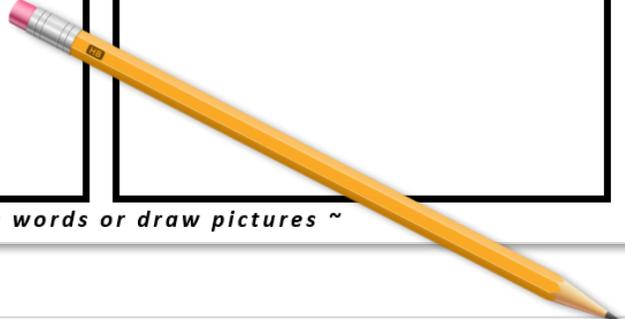
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? Were there any other times when your fantasy interests made *other people* feel confused or worried? ?

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There is no reason to use every worksheet for every child or teen you are working with. Many users will find the first four worksheets too advanced or too difficult to read. Also, some young people with ASD really enjoy drawing.

You can these two simpler worksheets in combination, or instead of, the first five worksheets, depending on the needs and preferences of the kids you are helping.

Ways that pretend, imagination and fantasy *are good for you*

Ways that pretend, imagination and fantasy *give you problems*

~ Write words or draw pictures ~

Things in your life that are based on real world things

Things in your life that are mostly based on pretend

~ Write words or draw pictures ~

Pretending, and using imagination, can be fun, important and useful.
Have there been times in your life when…

…playing video games based on fantasy characters has been enjoyable and relaxing?	…watching movies or videos about imaginary things has been really entertaining?	…watching shows and playing video games with other people has connected you with friends and family in good ways?	…making up stories about pretend things felt like fun exercise for your brain?
…drawing pictures or writing down stories about pretend things made your powers of imagination stronger?	…doing computer-based creating, like with Minecraft, taught you things about creativity and design?	…getting into a fantasy world shared by thousands of other people made you feel a connection with others?	…taking part in role-playing games helped give you the courage and structure to interact with other people?
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? **Are there other ways that your fantasy- and pretend-based activities have been enjoyable and meaningful for you?** ?

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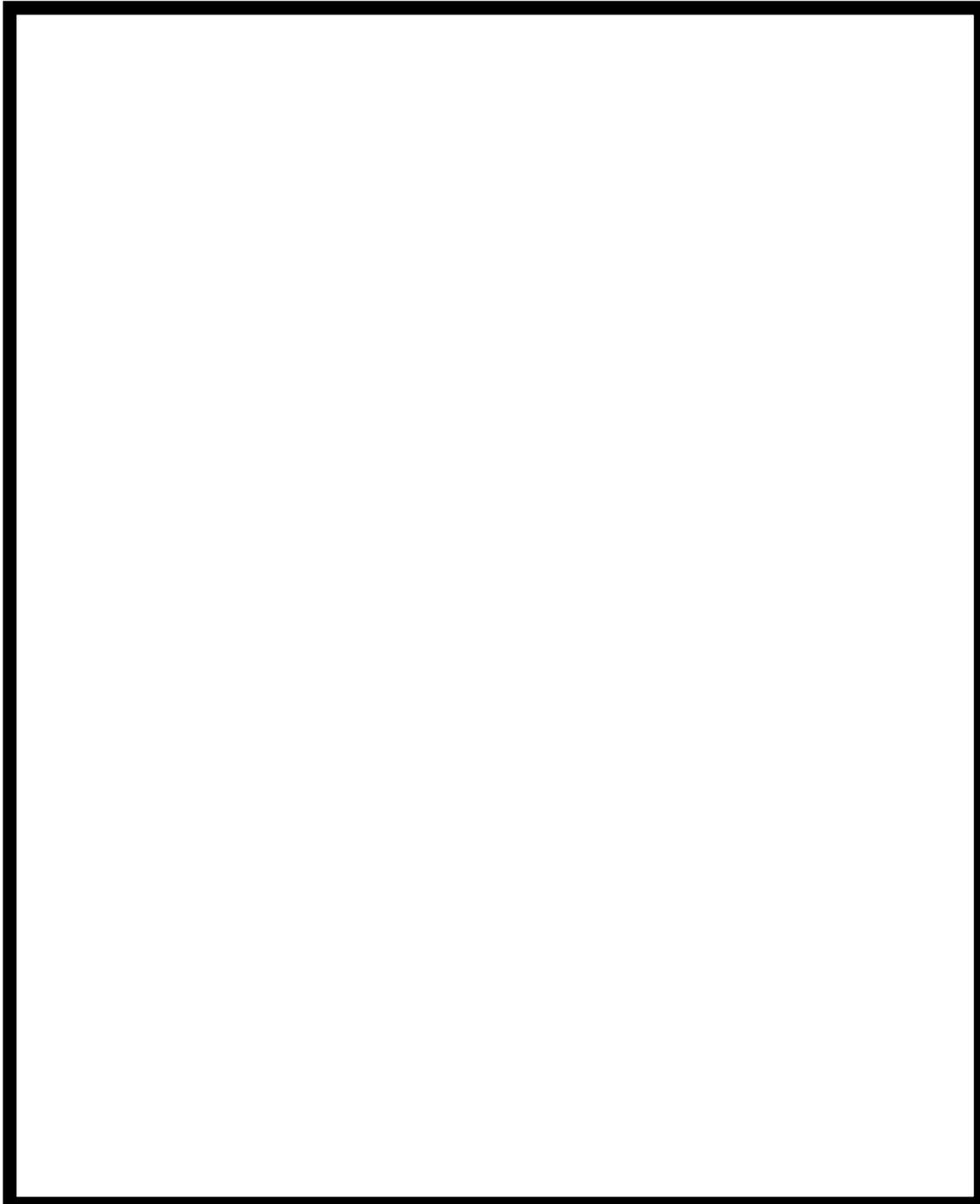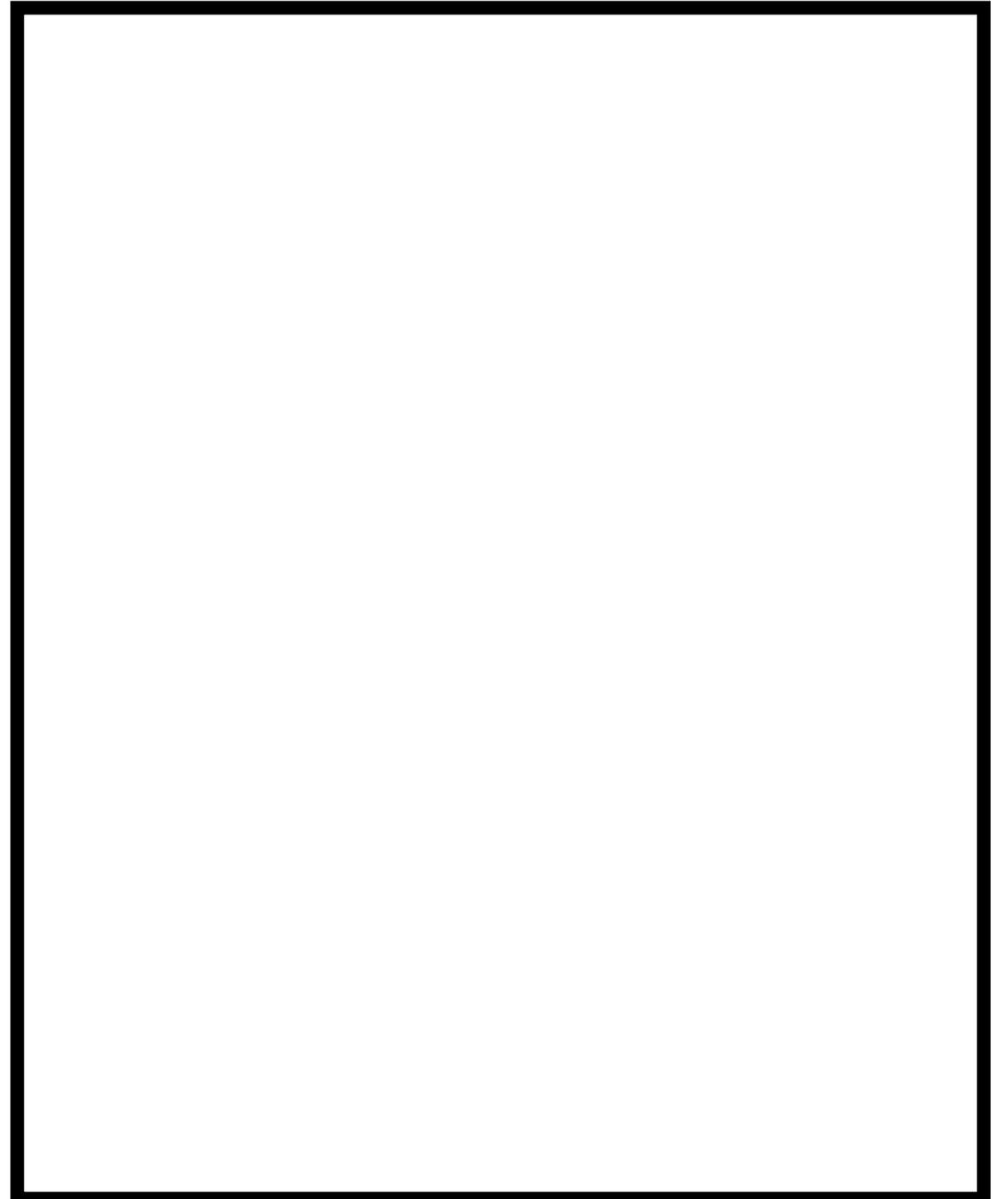
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