

COVID-19: Tips for Supporting Your Child with Intellectual Disability
Developmental and ASD Psychology Service, Carlow/Kilkenny

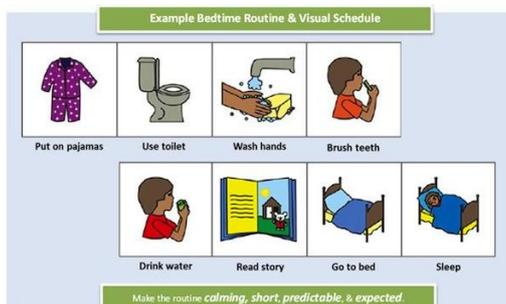


Parent Self-Care

- You will be able to look after your child best if you first make sure to look after yourself. Children depend on adults to regulate their environment and to help them regulate their moods.
- Relax and manage stress
 - Deep breathing
 - Practising mindfulness
 - Focusing your attention
 - Visualising a happy/calm place
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings
 - Practise self-compassion

Preparation

- Do as much preparation for changes in routine as possible.
- Use visuals where possible:
 - First and Then charts
 - Calendar with pictures of what is coming up
 - Personalised book outlining what will be happening
 - Visual schedule outlining daily activities



Structure and Routine

- Children benefit from a consistent routine. When routines are abruptly broken children can become distressed and this distress can lead to an episode of challenging behaviour. Where possible a child's routine needs to be consistent.
- Break routines it into small steps.
- End the routine with a natural reward.
- Routines can be formulated using a timetable, which can be made by objects or pictures as well as words. Activities which could be included on the timetable are structured playtime and speech and language activities.
- Keep the same bedtime and wake time if possible.
- Keep a lot of the meals the same.
- Try to incorporate outdoor time as appropriate.
- Allow time to relax, play, special time.
- Avoid over-stimulation where possible.
- Give them something to do e.g. Busy bag, sticker book, colouring, picture books, etc.
- 'Routinefactory' app may be useful.

Connecting with Your Child

- Daily Time together
 - ✓ Lie down and listen to quite music together
 - ✓ Watch a favourite tv programme together
 - ✓ Walk the dog together
 - ✓ Set up a favourite physical game
 - ✓ Chat in the car
 - ✓ Shared activities
- Connect during routines

Supporting Positive Behaviour

- Pause
Pressing the Pause button means taking time to stop and how you want to respond instead of reacting.
- 'Tune in' to what is happening
Try understand why your child might be engaging in a particular behaviour to find the best way to respond.
- Create a Plan
 - Prevention Plan (e.g. change routine, relaxation strategies)
 - Response Plan (e.g. connect with feelings, distraction, count breaths, offer physical contact, give time/space)



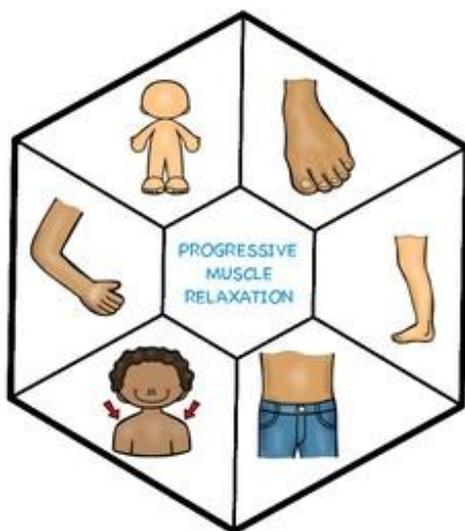
Organise Daily Relaxation

Children with disabilities may have few alternative methods to alleviate anxiety/stress (e.g. than explosions or becoming fixated on routines) and so need to be provided with others. These need to be build into the everyday, ordinary routine. Examples include:

- Create a consistent, quiet, relaxing space
- Deep breathing (belly breathing)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Cosmic Kids Yoga - Youtube
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Gentle lighting
- Deep breathing
- Music
- Solitude
- Spending time with nature
- Special interest
- Looking at calming pictures (make a scrapbook)
- Some children may benefit from completing repetitive tasks which they find calming e.g. threading beads



SQUEEZE, COUNT TO 5, RELAX



Star Breathing

Start at any "Breathe in" side, hold your breath at the point, then breathe out. Keep going until you've gone around the whole star.

