



Learning at Home During the Pandemic

Some Helpful Advice for Parents and Carers of Children with ASD

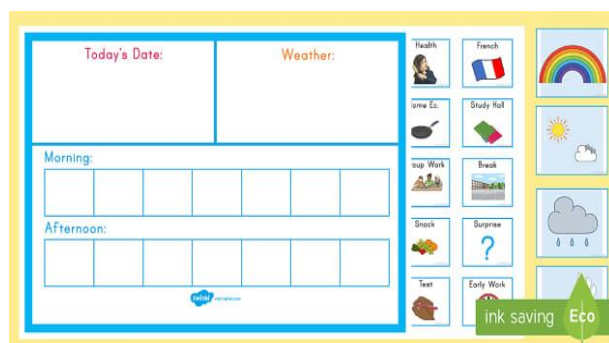
Spending time at home and supporting children in these times of uncertainty can be challenging for everyone. Schools are supplying a variety of home learning materials and have given information to parents and carers about how to access and complete this work. The Pembrokeshire Early Help Team have compiled this resource to provide some support and strategies to help in these times of distance learning. We hope you will find them useful.

Routines

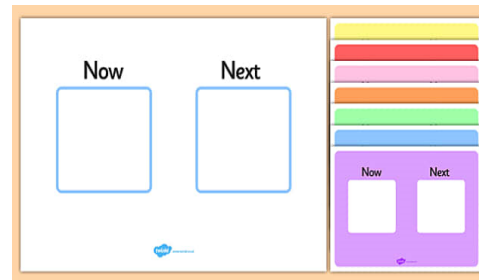
Children find it reassuring to have a routine. It may be helpful for you to continue with the normal pattern – for example working Monday to Friday during the day and have time off from school work on the weekend. It may also be useful to set up a working area and having a clear structure to the day, including break times.

Visual Planning

Using a Visual planner and a visual structure will be helpful for many children with ASD. Younger children may benefit from using a calendar like the ones below. These visuals will help them understand where they are in the week or month and the tasks they have to complete.



For younger children using objects of reference for transitions can be helpful as they are concrete and relate to the activity e.g. cup for drink, paintbrush for painting, small car for going out, ball for garden play etc. and can also limit frustration by being used to communicate needs and wants. A Now and Next Board can also be useful and simplifies the requests. You can add a reward.



Older children may prefer to use a calendar where they can tick off the days. Also using a daily plan will be of benefit. Children could use tick lists, post it notes or white boards to structure the day or small work tasks.

March 2020						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



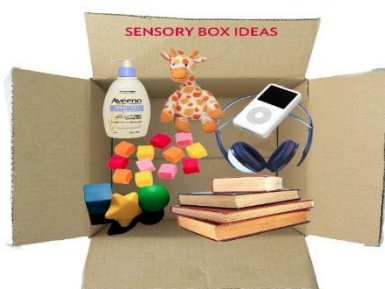
Some children with ASD may find being given a fixed routine difficult and it may add to their anxiety. For those children who do not like demands put on them, it may be helpful to have a more flexible daily structure that you agree each day. Keep in mind the negotiables and non-negotiables of each day. Also think about some of the non-negotiables that may be included from your child's perspective and how to keep these at a reasonable level (for example, in terms of computer/screen time). You can use post it notes and the child choose the tasks. An example of this is shown on the next page.



Learning at Home

Schools have given guidance for parents on completing work at home. You may be using HWB, Google Classroom or something different. Some children on the spectrum may find learning from home difficult. Your role from parent/carer to teacher will be strange for both you and your child. **Remember you are doing the best you can in these very strange and worrying circumstances. Be kind to yourself.** To begin with, spend some time together completing some fun activities. This could help your child understand that you are going to be there to help and work with them.

Sensory strategies - These are important and may be very helpful for your child. You could make with your child a sensory/fiddle tool/calm down box for your home (if you haven't already got one). These help with anxiety too. Your child may like to make the sensory box themselves. You could use an old shoe box and cover it in paper. Your child can decorate it and choose the items to go inside. Some ideas for items to go inside are – bubbles, play dough or putty, stress balls, bubble wrap, bits of fabric, scratch and sniff stickers, MP3 player with music, noise cancelling headphones, colouring books, books to read, visual calm down cards, light up toys, plastic snow globe etc.



Movement Breaks – incorporate into the day some movement breaks. These could be simple like playing a game outside or dancing to your favourite song. Every Monday to Friday during school closures, Jo Wickes is delivering a P.E session. You can watch the PE lessons with Joe on his YouTube channel The Body Coach TV. Darcy Bussel will be live streaming every day at 1:30pm on Facebook live, delivering a 10 min shake up, providing children with a short active boost before the afternoon ahead.

Staying in Contact – You can help your child to stay in touch with their friends. You could use social media, apps like Skype or Face time and email to stay connected with family and friends.

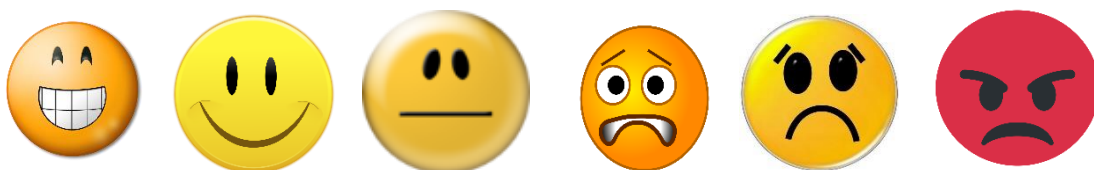
For many children with ASD their teacher and/or Learning Support assistant (LSA) are extremely important to them. You could arrange with school to have a weekly or fortnightly communication with these staff. This could help your child with the separation from school and can then be planned into their week/month.

Screen Time – this can be added to the daily timetable and also be used as a reward to reinforce behaviour/completing tasks. It could be useful to make some screen time rules and set boundaries for every ones screen time at home.

Coping with Anxiety

Try to keep explanations about the virus simple. If your child has lots of questions, they could write them down on a post it note or record themselves asking the question on a tablet. Very anxious children will need the answers to the questions written down (or audio recorded) to refer to again and again. This will help alleviate their worries. There is a lovely story on www.mindheart.co/descargables explaining the Coronavirus and it has been used to support many children around the world.

Visual Check-in – These can be helpful to assess how your child is feeling, using visuals such as emoji's or numbers instead of words. You may find it useful to have a daily check-in.



If you or your child or another family member has a more complex health situation then it is important to address this in a simple, honest way and with an appropriate level of reassurance about the support and care that is available.

Monitor your own anxiety – it is surprising how much children pick up on adult's anxiety. Be aware of the adult conversations you are having and what you child is over hearing.

Take time to relax with your child and take your mind off the pandemic. Play a board game, colour a picture together or play a computer game together.

Useful Links

Coronavirus:

Carol Gray Coronavirus Social Stories:

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus-1.pdf>

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Watching-a-Pandemic-on-Television-by-Carol-Gray.pdf>

<https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-I-Can-Help-1.pdf>

CBBC: Video and Questions

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51861089>

ELSA: Coronavirus Story for Children

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>

Young Minds: Feeling Anxious about Coronavirus

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus>

Emotions and Feelings:

Something Bad Happened: A Kid's Guide to Coping with events in the News
Dawn Huebner. How to process different world events (ages 6-12).

The Day the Sea Went Out and Never Came Back
Margot Sunderland. A story for children who have lost someone they love (ages 4-12).

Draw on Your Emotions
Margot Sunderland. A resource to help people express and communication their emotions.

Have You Filled A Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids
Carol McCloud. Encourages positive behaviour and expressing kindness and appreciation.

General Resources:

www.twinkl.co.uk

Please contact Claire Bullock at claire.bullock@pembrokeshire.gov.uk if you require any support or have any concerns relating to resources or supporting pupils with ALN .