



ADDvanced Solutions
Community Network
Supporting you to find the answers



ADDvanced Solutions Community Network

During this challenging time, we understand that keeping in touch and connecting with each other is more important than ever. We would like you to know that the team from ADDvanced Solutions Community Network are here for you if you need to talk. We are still available for 1-1 consultations via telephone or email. We are also offering information, advice and guidance through our Facebook page and closed Facebook group.

We are also pleased to announce that **from Monday April 20th we will be delivering online, interactive Community Network Groups**. These will be delivered via a secure site, Zoom for Healthcare. For those who have accessed in the last twelve months, we will be individually inviting you to join the group. If you have never attended one of the Community Network Groups or for some reason do not receive an invite, please call the office to register your interest. We are excited to get started with this new form of delivery.

HINTS AND TIPS

The next few weeks (and possibly months) will be a particularly difficult time for children and families, whilst schools are closed and we are advised to self-isolate or socially distance ourselves from our friends and family. Our normal structure and routine will be turned upside down. The following information aims to support parents of children with neurodevelopmental conditions during this tricky time and will hopefully make things a little more manageable.

Structure and Routine:

When your world is very chaotic and confusing, there is a lot of uncertainty which leads to anxiety. Children with quite rigid thought patterns require a very concrete, literal and predictable world to feel secure. Something can have a specific meaning in one situation and mean something totally different in another. For this reason many children have a strong need to control all activity and interaction around them. To help deal with this insecurity and anxiety, we have to decrease the uncertainty in their lives. The following strategies can help do that:

Use alarms:

Set different alarms throughout the day. Keep the same ones every day to create a routine. You can use different songs to mark different points in the day, e.g. start the morning routine with a good morning song.



Use a visual schedule:

If possible, provide visual (pictures or written) schedules so children can see what is coming up next and what they are doing. This provides predictable order to their day. These visual schedules provide a nice detailed path to follow. It lets them know what to expect and when to expect it. This alone can drastically reduce anxiety. You can see an example on the links and resources page.

Transitioning between tasks:

Children with neurodevelopmental conditions often have difficulty switching their brain activity between different tasks. They do much better if they have warnings or reminders when the one activity is ending and another is beginning, especially if the current activity is a favourite activity. To ease transition difficulties try to ensure that the child always knows what will be coming up next (e.g. watch TV then bath). Give the child five, three, and one minute reminders that the activity is going to end and they will move on to the next activity. Use timers if it helps.

Using Traffic Lights:

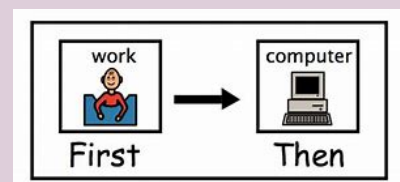
This way their brain is prepared for what is coming up next, and the reminders help bridge the transition, which is particularly useful for limiting time spent on tablets.



Using Now and Next Cards:

Shows the child what to do and what the reinforcer or preferred activity will be when they finish.

When to use: Use as a visual support for transitions. Use to show a reward or activity that may motivate a child to engage in a less preferred activity. Use with children who ask for reinforcers or preferred activities often.



LOOKING AFTER OURSELVES

Prepare to self-care:

Self-care is key to calming ourselves so we have the resources (brain power) to care and support others. We would recommend trying to implement structure, routine, and consistency to your life as well as those you care for. For self-care to be effective it needs to be sustainable and practical for your lifestyle. Suggestions for self-care:

Mindfulness:

The three main principles of mindfulness are:

- Being in the present moment i.e. focus on the right here, right now and not the future or past.
- Noticing and increasing our awareness of what is going on
- Placing no judgment on our experience, i.e. no labelling of things we notice as good nor bad, right or wrong, they just are!



There are lots of Mindfulness apps that you can access. Mindfulness practice does not have to take long, you can do it anywhere at any time for however long (even 30 seconds).

Remember to breathe:

We hear it all the time. But it's true, slowing down your breathing can really help ground you and slow things down. Try imagining blowing up a balloon in your stomach and slowly releasing it.

Do something meaningful to you:

Think of an activity you enjoy. It can be anything - what is it about the activity that you value? For example, watching a film that you want to watch (rather than Frozen!), a relaxing bath, a walk (by yourself if possible), paint your nails, skype/facetime your friend and sit and drink coffee together in a designated area of the house.

Be your own best friend:

If your best friend came to you upset and struggling what would you say to them? Write this down... pin it in a place you regularly look. This is how you will speak to yourself when you are struggling. Give yourself a break, be kind, you're doing your best in a difficult time.

Go you!

SELF ISOLATION REGULATING SENSORY ACTIVITIES

Walking:

This is a very regulating activity as it provides rhythmical and predictable sensory inputs. Try to walk at the same pace and aim to walk for over 30 minutes. Walking up hills and/or wearing a back pack with bottles of water in will increase the resistance which will provide stronger regulating proprioceptive inputs.

Family Yoga:

There are lots of fun and child friendly You Tube clips that include simple yoga poses which are regulating and you and your child could do them together.

We will be piloting online family Keep Fit/Yoga sessions and we will post more information in the coming weeks.

Trampoline:

These provide strong vestibular input which can cause rapid overstimulation. You can increase the regulating proprioceptive inputs by standing or sitting on the edge of the trampoline as will increasing the amount of effort your child uses to bounce. This should reduce the stimulating effects of the vestibular inputs.



You could also reduce the possibility of overstimulation by controlling the amount of bouncing by counting the number of bounces to 20 then say stop. Ask your child to stand still like a soldier and look at you while you count to 10 and repeat.

Obstacle Courses:

These provide great regulating sensory experiences. Encourage your child to carry/punch objects to make the obstacle course. Try to include things that will allow your child to crawl and have different body positions.

Den Building:

Use blankets, throws, tarps, etc to build as these create a regulating environment and reduce the amount of sensory input your child has to process. You could have a picnic in the den with crunchy and crisp foods which are regulating. Or play regulating games like colouring or connect four.

Heavy Work Activities:

Any activities that involves pulling, pushing, carry heavy objects provide regulating proprioceptive inputs. Some ideas include: gardening activities – digging and pushing a wheelbarrow, tug of war, cycling, helping with house work, row row your boat song, door pull up bars, wall press offs.



ANXIETY

This is a natural response to a perception that we are under threat, but many of our children and young people live with heightened levels of anxiety. Many of the ideas in our newsletter will help you and your child/young person to manage their anxious thoughts and feelings.

Overthinking, or rumination is common with our children and young people, where the same thought goes round and round in their heads. It can be difficult to distract them from this, and simply arguing that it's silly isn't helpful. The calming activities in this newsletter may help. **We asked a young person who has diagnoses of autism and ADHD how he manages this tendency:**

"What about when you get a thought or a worry in your head that just goes round a round. Say about COVID? What if you get a thought about that that goes round and round in your head?"

"Honestly, just find a distraction. Even something that's not productive, if you like, cos I have thoughts that are just mind-numbing and I can't think of anything else and sometimes I go to the keyboard, play some songs that I know to deal with it, or sometimes just go on the Xbox. A lot of things happen in games that can drown it out. Even if it comes back later - because you've had a break you can have more clarity."

"Sometimes I think, what can I do about this thought? What can I do about the situation? But really, I only get clarity when I get a break from it."

Finally, try to encourage your child or young person to talk about what is making them feel anxious or worried. They may not even know what is making them feel this way. Be patient with them, give them time to talk through their concerns – often going for a walk together and just listening is enough. Let them know that these feelings won't last forever and that you are there for them to work it through together. **If you feel your child or young person is experiencing acute distress and is deemed to be a risk to themselves or others – we have listed the local area crisis offer here: <http://www.addvancedsolutions.co.uk/home.html>**

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES:

We post lots of information onto our Facebook page and closed Facebook group, so keep checking for new updates. However, we have listed some of the links that may be of interest to those who do not use Facebook. A sample are:

We have a resources page on our website

Various social stories to help explain the virus:

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

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

If going to museums is your families favourite pastime then have a look at these virtual tours around famous museums.

A list of more virtual tours around museums, educational sites and galleries across the world.

Chester Zoo have a virtual zoo whilst you can't go and see the real animals.

Learn new fun things and keep in touch with school work on BBC Bitesize.

Make your own natural flavoured playdoh.

National Geographic Kids have fun activities and quizzes for children

Mystery Science are offering free science lessons

The Wellness Society's Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook

Most importantly, remember that we are here for you. You can contact us for support by email, info@advancedsolutions.co.uk, or by phone on:

0151 486 1788 for Liverpool, Knowsley, Wirral and Sefton

01744 582172 for St Helens

01925 320863 for Warrington

Visit our website www.advancedsolutions.co.uk



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Join our closed Facebook group for parents and carers: ADDvanced Solutions Community Network CIC