

Tips for Managing Anxiety and a New Routine at Home

(for families)

In addition to the unsettling situation in which we all find ourselves, many of our young people with ASC will be finding any change in routine very disturbing. It will be necessary to try and explain why the change is necessary as simply and clearly as possible.

Any extended period at home will be different from school holidays. It would help if you try and set up a new routine at home, maybe giving it a name like 'School at Home Time'. You could then divide the day up into sections that will suit both you and your child. Create a visual timetable to help your child understand and become familiar with the new routine. It will be very important that they can develop a sense of a structure to their day which gives them the same security they feel at school.

Talking to your child about the current crisis

- Be prepared to answer questions calmly and openly.
- The young person may need to repeat questions either due to a lack of understanding or anxiety – you will need to repeat responses with tolerance.
- At a certain point distraction will be needed rather than risking obsessive focus from the young person. Responses like, 'We can talk about this again later but now let's.....' or 'That's enough talk now, why don't you go and.....' Be prepared to revisit the subject later but always bring it to an end when you judge best.
- Use straightforward, simple language where possible.
- Honesty is important although you may need to shield the young person from some elements.
- You will need to find a difficult balance between sharing information without raising the temperature. Remember a feeling of ignorance or being 'kept in the dark' only increases anxiety.
- Use social stories to help your child understand. SEATSS will be providing examples to support you with this.
- The young person may show increased signs of stress without directly wanting to talk about the situation. Use all the methods you normally do to help at these times.

Remember SEATSS is here to help you. If you are struggling with the situation please contact us for advice or more individual strategies.

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