



Supporting children and young people with ASD during the Covid-19 pandemic: Visuals to Support Understanding

The Coronavirus has resulted in a lot of change in people's lives in recent weeks. This change can lead to feelings of uncertainty and lack of control. This can be particularly true for children and adolescents with autism. The following are suggestions to help to create some structure within the unpredictability of daily life at present time.

Maintain a daily routine.



Although the usual routine of going to school may have changed, try to maintain other usual daily activities as much as is possible.

Focus on things that are stable and will stay the same e.g. get up, get dressed, have breakfast, do homework, have dinner, play a game etc.

Use a visual schedule to help children and young people know what they can expect from the day.

You will find more information on visual schedules from Middletown Centre for Autism at <https://best-practice.middletownautism.com/approaches-of-intervention/the-teacch-autism-programme/visual-schedules/>

Visual Schedule



Include any new activities that your child may be participating in, in his/her visual schedule e.g. baking, playing in the garden, painting etc.

If you are supporting your child to engage in online activities such as, participating in exercise classes or yoga; reading or watching TV; watching videos etc. add a visual for these in your schedule. Use google images, cut outs from newspapers or magazines or simply draw a visual.

For days that you may not be sure what you shall do, fill this gap on your schedule with a question mark to help children and adolescents to expect something.



Social Stories

Use Social Stories™ to clearly explain the Coronavirus and how children can try to stay healthy.

See NCSE Social Stories™ leaflet (<https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Supporting-children-and-young-people-with-ASD-during-the-Covid-19-pandemic-Social-Stories.pdf>) for further information on pre-written Social Stories™ and information on how to create your own personalised story for your child.

See social story on understanding what to expect at a test centre as created by Dublin North City Primary Care Speech and Language Therapy Team who have kindly agreed to share on <https://ncse.ie/online-resources-for-parents>.

Supporting the concept of time



Time can be a confusing concept for lots of children and adolescents, particularly when normal weekly activities have changed.

Create a calendar which highlights the different days of the week or month depending on your child's level.

Try to add in any scheduled activities e.g. shopping being delivered, bins being collected etc. to differentiate between the days. Some children may simply need a visual reminder that they will be at home such as the one below.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
home	home	home	home	home	home	home

Further Information is available from:

<https://asiam.ie/changes-routine-i/>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>