INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

Strategies for managing Autism at home

Consistency is very important for individuals on the Autistic Spectrum, so try to introduce structure and routine into your home in a way which reduces anxiety for everyone in the family. 'Just this once' works for most children, but for those on the Autistic Spectrum it can be confusing and distressing to suddenly change the rules, even if it's for something nice.

Listen to me, respect me, value me and help me to feel appreciated.

These tips were developed by and with a group of young people living with neurodevelopmental conditions accessing the Addvanced Solutions Young Peoples' Group

Give yourself extra time to achieve everyday things such as dressing, eating, getting ready to leave the house. Because of their processing difficulties all of these things could take significantly longer than usual, and added time pressure will make it more difficult for all involved. This may mean reducing the number of activities that you are used to getting through in a day!

Observe your child to see if you can pick up their particular triggers – you may find a pattern to their unusual or difficult behaviour. Remember that for a child on the Spectrum the trigger to difficult behaviour could have been hours earlier. Consider sensory aspects (see below) and make adjustments where you feel it will help. For example, if your child seems over-sensitive to light, try fitting lower wattage bulbs to see if this has a calming effect.

Allow time for your child to process what you are saying; use short, simple sentences and try to give only one instruction at a time. Also, where possible, encourage friends and family members to speak one at a time and not all at once.

Use visual props, like photographs, car seats etc., to support your verbal communication, and give advanced notice of any changes to routine. For example, you could show a photograph of the Grandparents if they are coming to visit, or of the doctor's surgery if your child has an appointment.

Don't assume that your child has picked up what is going on around them – you may need to explain in detail where others will have read the social cues. Turn taking in games may be difficult to achieve but if it can be learned in the home it will make other settings less stressful when taking turns is required.

Use timers to support easier change of activity (for example, 'you can play on the game until the timer goes off'), and calendars and timetables to support structure.

Keep a selection of objects and activities to hand to prompt your child to vary what they do through the day. It will be much easier for them to stop one activity if they clearly have something to move on to. So, for example, it's not 'stop watching TV' but 'let's throw the ball / play this game' etc.

Engage friends and family in helping to support your child (and you) – the more that people understand, the more willing they will be to get involved and this will be of benefit to all.

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