

At-Home Support Tips:

1. Creating Routines That Help Neurodiverse Children Thrive

Neurodiverse children, including those with autism, ADHD, and sensory processing differences, benefit from structured routines that reduce anxiety and improve executive functioning (Hwang et al., 2020). Below are evidence-based strategies for establishing effective routines:

Key Tips:

- i. **Use Visual Schedules:** Research supports visual supports (e.g., picture schedules, apps) to enhance predictability (Knight et al., 2015).
- ii. **Incorporate Transition Supports:** Timers and verbal warnings ("5 more minutes") reduce distress during activity shifts (Sterling-Turner & Jordan, 2019).
- iii. **Break Tasks into Steps:** Task analysis improves independence in daily activities (Wong et al., 2015).
- iv. **Maintain Consistency with Flexibility:** While routines should be stable, gradual flexibility helps adaptability (Adams et al., 2018).
- v. **Reinforce Positive Behaviour:** Reward systems (e.g., token economies) increase routine adherence (Mazefsky et al., 2021).

2. Resources for Sensory-Friendly Spaces

Sensory-friendly modifications can significantly improve comfort and participation for neurodiverse individuals (Little et al., 2018). Below are research-backed strategies and resources:

Key Tips:

- i. **Adjust Lighting:** LED dimmers or natural light reduce sensory overload (Ashburner et al., 2019).
- ii. **Provide Noise-Reduction Options:** Noise-cancelling headphones or quiet zones help sound-sensitive children (Robertson & Simmons, 2015).
- iii. **Offer Sensory Tools:** Fidget toys, weighted blankets, and textured seating aid self-regulation (Schaaf et al., 2020).
- iv. **Designate Calm-Down Areas:** Low-stimulation spaces with soft seating improve emotional regulation (Bishop-Fitzpatrick et al., 2017).
- v. **Use Sensory Rooms:** Schools and clinics with sensory rooms report improved behaviour and focus (Pfeiffer et al., 2019).

3. How to present instructions to your child in a way that will increase their likelihood to comply:

- i. Using **commands** will increase the chances that your child will do what you tell him to do. A command is not a request. Commands make it clear that you expect cooperation. You do not ask your child if he would like to brush his teeth, you give him a command that "it is time to brush your teeth."
- ii. In giving a command, you must first **decide** that the behaviour needs to be done and it is not something you can let go or ignore.
- iii. You need to have a **consequence** in mind to use if he does not comply.
- iv. Then you must decide if you are willing to **follow through** to the end. IF NOT, DO NOT GIVE THE COMMAND.

Example: Put your command in a positive direction, telling your child exactly what to do. "Take your feet off the coffee table" may result in the feet ending up on the couch. A more direct command is to say, "Put your feet on the floor please." An immediate "thank you" will increase future cooperation.

4. How to implement an effective time-out:

- i. Time-out is the behaviour modification technique of giving a child "time away" from any positive action. It is a highly effective technique in stopping inappropriate behaviour in its tracks. Time-out is a management technique, not a cure. With proper understanding that it is intended to stop behaviour in the present and prevent it for a brief period of time afterward, you will find the usefulness of a time-out.
- ii. The idea of time-out is to make the time away **unrewarding**.
- iii. The command to go to time-out should be **direct and not involve any discussion**.
- iv. While the child is in the corner/chair, there is **no contact** made with them.
- v. After the time-out is over, there is **no lecture, discussion, or affection**. Your child simply **returns** to their activity or, if they were requested to do a task, they must now do the task that caused the time-out.
- vi. Conducting time-out this way ensures that you don't make the aftermath a rewarding experience.

5. How to prevent power struggles with your child:

- i. The best way to stay out of a power struggle is to **not enter it** in the first place.
- ii. Understanding your child's **motivation** for a power struggle helps you to remain **detached** during the argument. As long as your child can keep you arguing, they **delay/escape** having to **comply** because the only thing that matters to them is "right now this very second." If he can avoid complying for a moment, in his mind he is **winning**. He can't see the bigger picture.

6. How to implement a reward system that works:

- i. A well-organized reward system can cause dramatic improvement in your child's behaviour.

- ii. In order to make the point system **motivating** for your child, you need to have a **variety** of rewards and privileges for them to **choose** from.
- iii. Ask your child to help you make a list of **desired** activities, food treats, and items to buy. While some rewards will entail money, the majority of rewards should be free or very low cost. Regardless of your income, rewards are to promote good behaviour, not to overindulge.
- iv. **Fun** activities can be considered rewards. Despite children believing that the use of television, computers, and video games are rights, they are actually privileges earned by good behaviour. Special food treats can also be powerful motivators.
- v. A weekly **chart** of all the tasks your child must do, alongside a row for each day of the week is an easy way to keep track of what points were earned.
- vi. **One point** per task or behaviour makes the point system simple for parents and children to follow. (Equal point value also helps to ensure that children will not pick and choose which behaviours they will do based on the amount of points.)
- vii. Count the point total with the child at the end of each week/day.
- viii. **Encourage** your child that tomorrow is always a new day try to earn points for the behaviours that were missed on the previous day.

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