autism
wellbeing

Supporting an autistic child or young person with emotional and sensory regulation under Covid-19.

Many young people have lots of questions and concerns about Covid-19 and coronavirus. Answer them honestly and acknowledge there are different perspectives on the situation. It can feel distressing to see other people not following the rules around social distancing and our children may need support to accept that other people choose not to follow rules.

Use accurate language that can be understood literally e.g. "catching" a virus can seem confusing. The use of language in the media can be very emotionally loaded or can use terminology that is unfamiliar. Spend time checking that all your family understand what is being shared in the media.

People may be anxious about things that seem unusual to other people – try and find out why it is important to them. Autism Wellbeing has some tips on PPE and distress, anxiety and taking language literally and other topics on our Facebook page. Please see the resources at the end of this pack.

Create opportunities for focusing on hobbies and interests not related to Covid-19.

The lack of predictability and the change in routine will be extremely distressing for some people. Create opportunities for things that will be predictable e.g. we will still have a bedtime story or walk the dog. Make routines that suit your family.

On a sensory level, our children may be experiencing sensory responses that are unusual for them, due to stress and the vastly different world we are living in. We have included information on each of our senses and some suggestions for regulating activities in this pack.

Some families find a set time each day to discuss anxieties is helpful and enables them to focus on enjoying the day without feeling overwhelmed by the pandemic situation. This may work well just before an evening meal and then settle down for food and a relaxed evening. Whatever works best for your circumstances and reduces distress rather than adding to worries – reflecting on the day just before bed may not be helpful.

Use everyday tasks to help yourself and your family be in the "just right state". Incorporate sensory activities into your day. Climb, jump, swing and carry a heavy bag on your walks; smell favourite smells; listen to your favourite music or sing together; play with water or sand or do some washing up; make a cake without using a spoon or mixer – just your hands(go on try it!); have a hug; give each other space when you need it.