

Caregiver Tips for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual Disability, Learning Disorders, Communication Disorders, Prenatal Substance Exposure, and Other Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Possible Special Considerations for this Population of Children:

- Difficulty understanding cause and effect
- Lack of age-appropriate friendships
- Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine and transitions
- Communication challenges
- Adaptive behavior challenges

Common Reactions to COVID-19 might include:

- Emotional and behavioral dysregulation
- Sleep disturbance
- Regressive behavior (e.g., toileting problems, co-sleeping)
- Anxiety/increased repetitive behaviors
- Clingy behavior
- Withdrawal
- Negative affect
- Aggressive behavior
- Increased hyperactivity/impulsivity

What Caregivers Can Do for Their Children:

1. Create a social story related to COVID-19 that includes concepts such as handwashing, social distancing, and shelter in place.
2. Promote security – be predictable, patient, clear, and calm.
3. Establish a daily routine – have a consistent wake time, meal time, work time, and bed time.
4. Create a visual schedule of daily tasks.
5. Promote positive caregiver-child interaction through child-directed play.
6. Use praise often.
7. Create a reinforcement plan or token system – focus on 2 to 3 positive behaviors that your child can receive stickers/points for that may lead to a small prize or privilege.

8. Connect your child to social supports.
9. Provide your child with sensory opportunities – tactile, auditory, olfactory, and visual.
10. Focus on the positive – identify one positive aspect of your day, correct child misconceptions, and discuss something to look forward to.

Stress Management for You and Your Children:

1. Practice taking deep breaths. Coach your child through this process by explaining that you breathe in through your nose like smelling a flower and breathe out through your mouth like blowing out a birthday candle.
2. Stretch and relax your muscles. For example, stretch your arms up and bring them down, clench your fists and relax your fingers, and point your toes and relax your legs.
3. Be mindful. Pick something to focus on using your 5 senses and describe it.
4. Read a book or look at pictures of something that relaxes you.
5. Let your child cook or bake with you.
6. Color or draw.
7. Keep a journal of positive things that happened each day.
8. Learn about your child's interests.
9. Exercise and take breaks from sitting for extended periods of time.
10. Spend time with pets.



Identify 3 activities for promoting positive caregiver-child interaction:

Identify 2 to 3 behaviors you can reinforce: _____

Identify a stress management plan: _____

Create an attitude of gratitude. Identify what you and your child are thankful for:
