



developing language, behavior, and social skills

# Coping Strategies: COVID-19

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# Welcome

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# Agenda



- The impact of COVID-19 on families
- Strategies for helping your child understand
- Strategies for creating structure and routine
- Strategies for breaking down tasks
- Strategies for establishing motivation
- Strategies for teaching independence
- Strategies for responding to frustration
- Resources



# **The Impact of COVID-19 on Families**



# The New Normal



- Parents working from home
- Children at home
- Virtual learning from home
- Evenings and weekends at home
- Social distancing
- More talk about washing hands, germs, staying healthy



# Challenges



- Juggling work and children
- Keeping your children entertained all day, every day
- Keeping your children engaged in independent activities
- Helping your children participate in virtual learning
- Ensuring learning is happening outside of virtual learning
- Helping your children understand the new normal



# Strategies to Help Your Child Understand



# Help Your Child Understand



## Social Stories™

- Written and/or visual guide describing various social interactions, situations, behaviors, skills and/or concepts first developed by Carol Gray
- Used to teach new skills or expected behaviors and shouldn't be used in response to your child's challenging behavior



# Help Your Child Understand



## Washing My Hands

To keep my body safe from germs, it's important I wash my hands.

It's expected to wash my hands before I eat, after I eat, after I go to the bathroom, after going outside, after I touch my face and after I cough or sneeze. The more I wash my hands, the more I will protect my body!



It's expected to use soap when I wash my hands and scrub for a long time. Some people sing Happy Birthday two times while they wash their hands. Other people like to sing the ABCs or count to 20.



When I wash my hands, it's expected to wash the front, the back, and between my fingers.



When I wash my hands, I keep my body safe. I also help others feel safe and comfortable.





# Help Your Child Understand



## Writing your own Social Stories:

- Consider your child's age, learning style, interests, and attention span
- Use a positive and patient tone
- Describe first, and then provide direction and guidance



# Help Your Child Understand



## Resources for Social Stories:

- [Parts of a Social Story](#)
- [Carol Gray Social Stories](#)
- [PBIS World Social Stories](#)



# **Strategies for Establishing Routines and Structure**



# Structure and Routine





# Structure and Routine



- As children are spending more time at home and doing schoolwork online it can be challenging to predict what will happen next and what is expected of them.
- Many children engage in challenging behavior during transitions from one activity to the next.
- Maintaining a predictable schedule is one of the most effective ways to prevent challenging behavior.



# Structure and Routine



During the week create a general routine for your child to follow

What should your routine consist of?

- Individualized for each family
- Driven by your family's goals and needs
- Designed intentionally to set your child up for success
- Can be a routine/schedule for the whole day, or can be a routine/schedule for specific activities or times of the day



# Structure and Routine



Things to consider when creating a schedule or routine:

- Make it visual! Write it, draw it, print it, use pictures, use Velcro; whatever works for your child
- Arrange activities so that preferred or motivating activities follow tasks that are more difficult or less preferred
- Avoid having your child transition from their favorite activity to their least favorite activity; give them a buffer



# Structure and Routine



## Things to consider when implementing a schedule:

- Reference the schedule throughout the day, before and after each activity
- Get your child involved; have them cross out activities or take them off the schedule as they're completed
- Provide lots of help up front and fade your help as your child learns the expectations
- Use a timer to show your child how much time they have left at an activity
- Make cleaning up part of your child's routine
- Stick with it! Consistency is key in teaching your child to follow a routine



# Structure and Routine



Things to consider when implementing a schedule:

- While sticking to the order of the schedule and maintaining expectations, you can still make it novel and fun. Create novelty and variety within the schedule by:
  - Rotating activities/toys throughout the week
  - Changing it up before your child becomes bored with an activity
  - Build in movement activities/outside time
  - Take advantage of virtual activities but don't let these overwhelm you, pick 2-3 to add to your routine



# Structure and Routine



## Weekly Schedule:

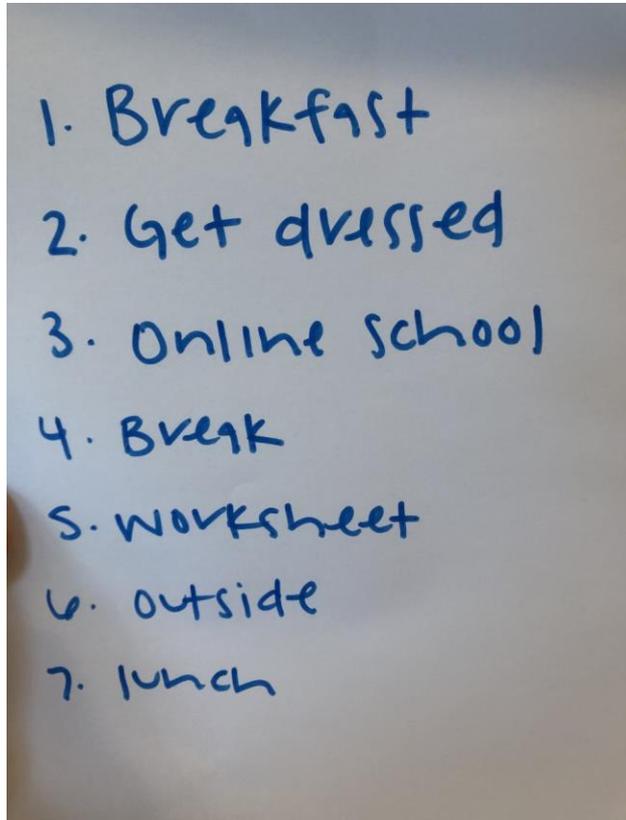
★ My Weekly Schedule ★						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
school 	school 	school 	school 	school 	no school 	no school 
breaktime 	breaktime 	breaktime 	breaktime 	breaktime 	make cookies 	special activity 
lunchtime 	lunchtime 	lunchtime 	lunchtime 	lunchtime 	lunchtime 	lunchtime 
rest 	rest 	rest 	rest 	rest 	rest 	rest 
dance class 	family walk 	piano lesson 	call grandma 	free choice 	movie night 	backyard campout 



# Structure and Routine



## Daily Schedules:



### My Morning Schedule

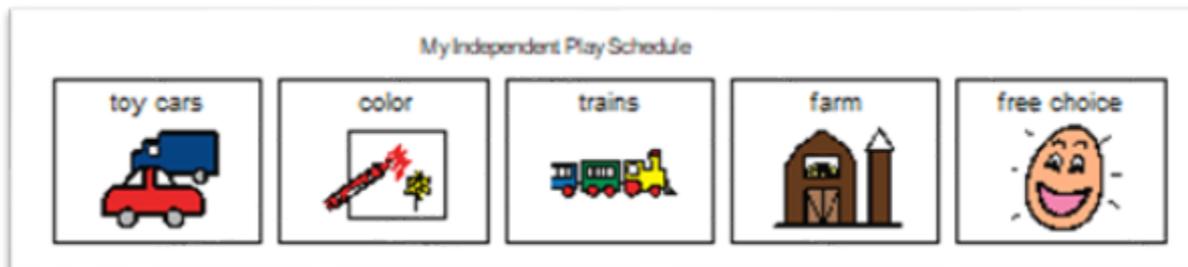
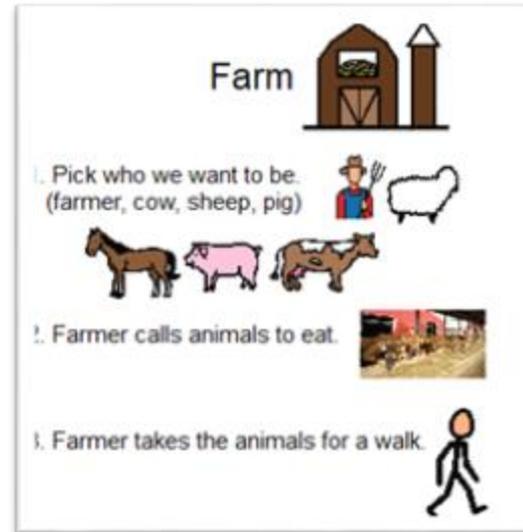
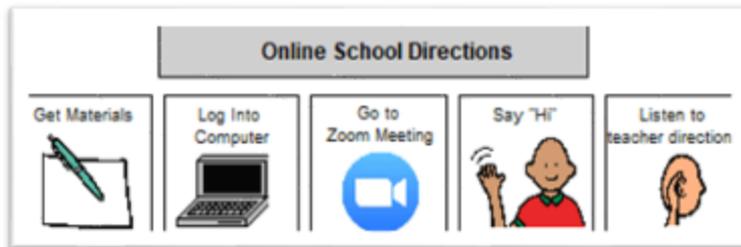
1. Eat breakfast and get dressed 
2. Online School 
3. Take a break 
4. Independent school work 
5. Play outside   
 lunchtime 
6. Eat lunch 



# Structure and Routine



## Activity Schedules





# Structure and Routine



## Schedule Resources:

- [Boardmaker 30 Day Free Trial](#)
- [Boardmaker Community](#)



# **Strategies for Breaking Tasks Down**



# Breaking Tasks Down



- Executive functioning is the ability to organize, plan, sequence, time manage, and prioritize information
- Children with executive functioning needs may have difficulty organizing information, which could lead to anxiety and confusion in completing tasks with multiple steps. For example, homework, independent play, online classes, etc.
- Task analysis is the process of breaking a skill into smaller, more manageable steps

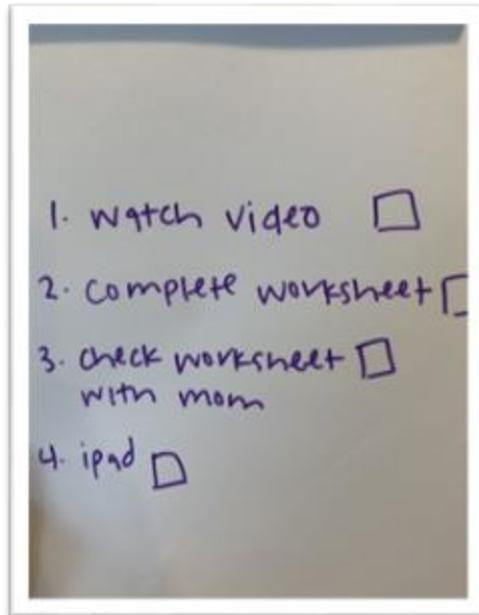


# Breaking Tasks Down



## Checklists

- Used to show each step of a task or activity that your child needs to complete



Language Arts Checklist

1. <input type="checkbox"/>	Write spelling words	
2. <input type="checkbox"/>	Read 5 chapters in my book	
3. <input type="checkbox"/>	Write 3 paragraphs in my journal	
4. <input type="checkbox"/>	Draw a picture in my journal	



# **Strategies for Establishing Motivation**



# Establish Motivation



- Before presenting a challenging activity or task, make sure your child is motivated.
- Offer choices: this gives your child a sense of control and autonomy which motivates them to engage in the activity or do what you asked.
- Offer breaks and free time: By using highly preferred items during difficult or nonpreferred tasks, we capitalize upon our child's interests and motivate them to participate.
- Use "first/then" statements to remind them what activities are coming up after a challenging activity.
- Reduce the amount of work you expect your child to do if it's a particularly challenging or difficult task.



# Establish Motivation



- Provide praise and attention to your child when they are on task, following directions, playing nicely, doing what is expected.
- Give your child lots of attention by being silly or more engaged with them as often as you can, and systematically give attention when you need them to complete a task more independently.



# Establish Motivation



## Token Boards

- Used to show your child how much of something they need to do





# **Strategies for Teaching Independence**



# Teach Independent Skills



## What is Independence?

- Doing things without help
- Occupying your own time
- Doing things without being told to
- Knowing what to do next

Teaching your child skills of independence and autonomy are always important, and more time at home is a great time to focus on these skills



# Teach Independent Skills



## Start Small:

- Identify 2-3 skills or routines you want your child to become more independent with
- Identify your child's current level of independence
- Set a goal for how independent you want your child to become with a skill or routine
- Determine what level of support is needed to teach the skill or routine (visuals, token boards, timers, etc.)



# Teach Independent Skills



- **Example: Attending to online class**
  - Child currently attend for 2-3 minutes before walking away from computer
  - Goal: Child will attend for 5 minutes
  - Use a visual schedule to show the child when class is during the day
  - Identify reinforcers: give the child choices of activities to earn after
  - Use a token board and countdown timer to show the child how long they need to attend, after each minute provide a token
  - Before class starts remind the child "First school then coloring"
  - For the first week sit with the child and provide frequent praise and tokens every minute
  - After the child reaches the goal increase time to attending for 10 minutes and provide a token every 2 minutes



# Teach Independent Skills



- **Example: Playing independently**
  - Child knows how to play functionally with several toys but only wants to play with mom or dad
  - Goal: Child will play with 3 toys/activities independently for 5 minutes each
  - Set up an activity schedule with the child, give choices
  - Read a social story explaining the child's expectations for "Playing by Myself", remind the child after the last activity they will get to play with you
  - Set a five-minute timer and tell the child when the timer goes off, they can check their schedule and move on to the next activity
  - Provide frequent praise for playing independently
  - After the child reaches the goal increase the time to 7 minutes with each activity



# Teach Independent Skills



- Example: Doing a worksheet
  - Child gets upset when they see a worksheet
  - Goal: Child will calmly complete 3 steps of a worksheet with assistance
  - Read a social story explaining the expectations for doing worksheets
  - Give the child a choice of what they want to earn after they complete 3 steps
  - Use a token board to show them how much work they need to do
  - Use a checklist to break down the steps of completing the worksheet
  - Provide frequent praise for tokens for each step
  - After the child reaches the goal increase to completing 5 steps of the worksheet



# **Strategies for Responding to Frustration**



# Responding to Frustration



- Teach your child functional communication they can use to meet their needs.
- For example, ask for help, ask for a break, ask for a hug or ask for your attention, etc.
- Model language for them before they become overwhelmed or upset.
- For example, if you notice your child becoming frustrated by a worksheet encourage them to say "Mom, I need help"



# Responding to Frustration



## Cool Down Cards:

- A tool to help your child when they become frustrated or overwhelmed by an activity or task
- Cool down cards provide coping skills, suggestions and steps for calming down
- During challenging activities or tasks have your child's cool down cards present before getting started



# Responding to Frustration



## Creating Cool Down Cards:

- Personalize for your child
- Provide a variety of options to choose from to allow autonomy in their decisions
- Brainstorm strategies with your child
- Have your child help create



# Responding to Frustration



## Using Cool Down Cards:

- During challenging activities or tasks have your child's cool down cards present
- As soon as you notice frustration gesture to the cool down card to remind your child of their strategies
- Help your child use the strategy they selected and provide praise for staying calm



# Responding to Frustration



Examples:

**USE A "CALM DOWN" OBJECT**

Often when we are upset, squeezing a stress ball or playing with something soothing can help to calm us down. Try it! Calm down objects can be anything from sparkle bottles and stuffed animals to stress balls and playdough.



ask for a break



count to 10

10



deep breaths





# Additional Resources



- Social Stories and Visuals (available via Autism Society):
  - Covid-19 Social Story
  - Washing Hands Social Story
  - "Wearing a Mask" Social Story
  - Online School Social Story
  - Token Economy System template
  - First/Then visual template
  - Cool Down Card template
  - Washing Hands activity schedule template
  - Links to a variety of educational resources



# Additional Resources



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**QUESTIONS?  
COMMENTS?**

