



Top tips from the Autism Team

In terms of talking about the virus, it helps if children understand the reasons for the measures we are all taking but it's also important to keep it short and factually based and dependant on your child's intellectual ability. Try to answer any questions factually and simply. Try to stay calm and remember children may overhear you talking to other adults.

Well being

- Set up a **routine** for the day- pace demands with rest and enjoyable activities. It might be you all have slightly different routines in the family. It has to work for you. Keep the routine flexible- it is there to help and guide, not to add to stress! Some children may prefer to work at normal school time, others may prefer to switch it round a bit and work later. As long as all things get included in the routine and bedtime and getting up time are reasonable, does it really matter what order things are done in right now?



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- Try to go **outside for exercise**- things to try- **ball** activities such as football or catching games, **Frisbee**- try a plastic plate if you haven't got a real one- make an **obstacle** course for younger ones, put music on and

dance. These can all be done in the garden if you are staying at home. If you are able to go for a walk or run or cycle this is good too. For younger ones, try a visual **scavenger hunt**- e.g. hunt the rainbow- can they find something red, orange, yellow etc. or adjectives- something spiky, smooth, bumpy etc.-make the adjectives more complicated if they are older. They shouldn't pick any of the objects up but they could take photos of them or note them down. Try some creative writing with what has been found when you get home! Older children may want to plan the route and may want to play music to help motivate them.

- **Inside exercise**- Joe Wicks of course- also Oti Mabuse dance classes, and there are lots of Pilates and yoga videos for all the family. Obstacle courses can be done inside too.



School

- **Visual timetables** might help. **Task strips** can be useful, with a more fun activity at the end. Put in approximate timings. Could use a favourite character to physically move along the task strip as items get completed. Schools will guide you as to how many hours a day they think is reasonable to be working.



- It may help youngsters who see school as school and home as home to have a designated part of the house for school. School equipment can then be left ready for use. It may be that there seems to be too much work. It doesn't matter if your child can't do it all. The main point right now is to keep the brain working – it is like a muscle and needs practice. If you are really struggling to get a child down to work- aim for 3 hours a day broken up. This can include quiet reading. Aim for some covering of core subjects such as English and Maths and then a bit of what else is available. If school work is a real struggle, think about school in a wider sense. What **life skills** can be practised right now? Cooking, bed making, cleaning, Hoovering, gardening--

Leisure Time

It's Ok for young people to have some time on their own- they probably need time to process what is going on and need time to just be. Some limited screen time is also OK! It's a good opportunity to try out those family board games again and practise all those social skills such as turn taking. If your child struggles with game rules and turn taking, keep it short but try not to give up as these are good life skills. Lots of families are spending more time with relatives via technology- encourage your children to join in at these times- maybe play a quiz or charades online.



Distraction activities are good too- jigsaws, Lego, craft activities like origami, painting- maybe even do a big mural if you have an old roll of wallpaper, tidy up the bedrooms and you'd be amazed at what gets re- discovered! Children of all ages can develop their cooking skills during this time, whether it's baking or helping with meals.

With younger children, set up your **own café** one afternoon- make a menu, cook the cakes and biscuits, lay the table, take the money—Older children could be persuaded to help younger children. You could also try going **10 pin bowling** with tin cans and soft balls.

Managing stresses and wobbles

Manage them in the way you normally would. Work out where the stress is coming from – unpick what has been going on and work on that. Make sure you find ways to cope with your own stress too.

Look at the National Autistic Society Website for further information.st

Do contact us if you need support:

Lesley.Botchway@westberks.gov.uk

Ava.Menzies@westberks.gov.uk

Melissa.Hutchings@westberks.gov.uk