

Tips for supporting autistic friends, colleagues and family members during the Covid-19 pandemic.



- Encourage each other to limit the amount of time spent focusing on the situation and seek reliable information and advice
- Encourage each other to prioritise self-care
- Accept that some people's reactions to the pandemic may appear socially inappropriate. This doesn't mean they don't understand or don't care – we all process things differently
- Answer people's questions honestly and acknowledge there are different perspectives on the situation
- Use accurate language that can be understood literally e.g. “catching” a virus can seem confusing
- Explain new terminology if need be, don't assume everyone understands what self-isolating and social distancing means
- People may be anxious about things that seem unusual to other people – try and find out why it is important to them
- 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
- On a sensory level, the person may be experiencing hyper or hyposensitivity due to stress, and the world is appearing very different anyway:
 - o Smell – less traffic means towns smell different and people are using highly scented cleaning products
 - o Hearing – places are quieter, people are often speaking in different tones because they are anxious
 - o Sight – familiar places look different because there are less people or they are shut and there are extra notices everywhere about coronavirus
 - o Touch – people are discouraging touching products in shops and touching their faces, this can be distressing if a person seeks sensory regulation through touch. Handwashing can be distressing for some people
 - o Taste – favourite brands of food may be unavailable, handwashing products can taste unpleasant for a person who likes to suck their fingers or thumb
 - o Proprioception – people are avoiding physical contact which may mean some people are not getting the sensory regulation they need through touch and hugs
 - o Interoception – some people are less able to identify symptoms of ill health within themselves e.g. a fever so may not seek medical treatment or recognise the need to follow guidance on self-isolating