



Supporting Your Special Needs Child with Distance Learning

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Objectives

Managing Your Own Stress

“Taking care of yourself is taking care of your child/children & family”

How to set up your home for distance learning

Know what your child needs to do for school from home and/or through a device

Motivating your child to do schoolwork



If you've ever flown on a plane, you've heard this message: 'In event of an emergency, put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others.' Well, self-kindness is your own oxygen mask; if you need to look after others, you'll do it a whole lot better if you're also taking good care of yourself.

~Russ Harris, 2020



What We are Doing is Important and Valuable!

- We can find some comfort and control in the actions that we are taking to help others.
- We will be more effective and able to help other people cope with these troubling times if we are able to identify and accept our own emotions and thoughts.
- Once we do this, we can take committed actions to help ourselves and our patients.



What We are Doing is Important and Valuable!

- Like us, our family and friends are going to be dealing with many troubling emotions and issues.
- Anxiety and fear are normal responses, it is OK to feel this way!
- Accepting this reality helps us to take positive actions that will help us make the situation better.



Exploring Anxiety in Ourselves

How do we define Anxiety?

- Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress. It helps one deal with a tense situation in the office, study harder for an exam, keep focused on an important speech, etc. In general, it helps one cope. But when anxiety becomes an excessive, irrational dread of everyday situations, it has become a disabling disorder. (NIMH)



Controlled Breathing

**BREATHING
TECHNIQUES**



FOR ANXIETY





Controlled Breathing

Breathing is a necessity of life that usually occurs without much thought.

- When you breathe in air, blood cells receive oxygen and release carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is a waste product that's carried back through your body and exhaled.
- Improper breathing can upset the oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange and contribute to anxiety, panic attacks, fatigue, and other physical and emotional disturbances.



Controlled Breathing

- When people are anxious they tend to take rapid, shallow breaths that come directly from the chest. When you're feeling anxious, you may not even be aware you're breathing this way.
- Chest breathing causes an upset in the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the body resulting in increased heart rate, dizziness, muscle tension, and other physical sensations.
- Your blood is not being properly oxygenated and this may signal a stress response to your brain that contributes to anxiety and panic attacks.

Oxygen is the quickest elixir for Anxiety



Controlled Breathing- 4 Step Method

Here is a 4 step method for
controlling your breathing

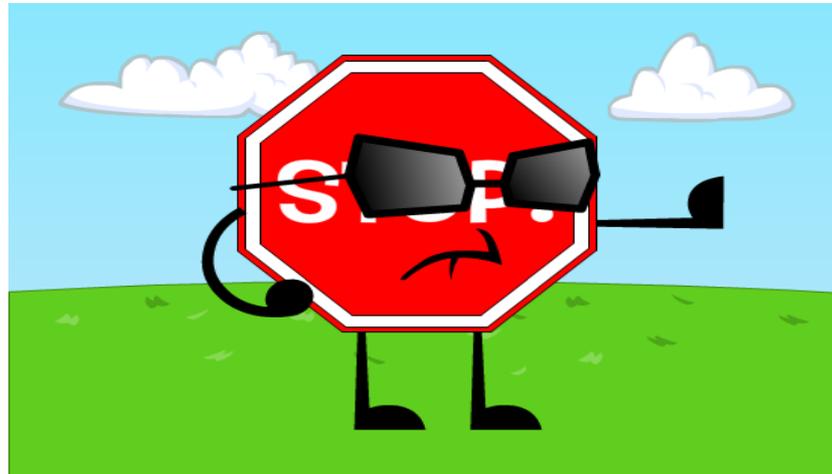




Controlled Breathing- 4 Step Method

1. Stop whatever you are doing!

- Find controlled environment that is relatively free of distractions.
- This will not take long and can be done anywhere





Controlled Breathing-4 Step Method

2. Take 10 slow, controlled breathes:

- a. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Your abdomen should slowly expand, and your chest should rise very little.
- b. Hold for 3 seconds
- c. Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, purse your lips slightly, but keep your jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft “whooshing” sound as you exhale.
- d. Repeat this slow, controlled breathing exercise for 10 or more breathes or until you feel calmer.



Controlled Breathing- 4 Step Method

A good way to remember how to do this is:

1. Always remember to smell the
flowers (inhale)



2. And to slowly blow out the birthday
candles (exhale)





Controlled Breathing-4 Step Method

3. Once calmer, think through what is causing you to feel anxious. Identify the stressor(s).

Once identified, think through the best solution or action for you! Visualize the solution and success, not the anxiety.

Set up a plan that will move you forward, not backwards.



Controlled Breathing- 4 Step Method

4. Follow through with your purposeful and thought out plan that will resolve your cause of concern and will propel you forward.

*Here you are making logical choices and resolutions, not an emotional ones!

Visualize your success, problem solve the solution, set a plan, then...GO GET IT!!!



Setting Up Your Home

- 1. Choose one place that will be “the place for school” in your home everyday**
- 2. Remove distractions**
 - If possible, choose a place that is not near a television or computer screen that may be turned on during school time. Unplug the tv or computer if your child will attempt to turn it on during school time. Power strips with on/off buttons make this easy.
 - Move any toys or other distractions away from reach of your child. For some children, the toys and distractions need to be out of sight. Out of sight can be outside of the room or in a box in the room.
- 3. Sit at a table or desk to do work is best**
 - If possible, choose a chair & table where your child can sit down with feet flat on the floor. This will prevent your child from wiggling around in their chair
- 4. Provide a clear surface to do work**
 - Move aside any clutter, books, magazines, food, toys so that the surface of the table only has your child’s school work on it.
 - Nothing distracting should be on the table. If it is, move it



How do I know what my child needs to do for school?

1. IEP – Individualized Education Plan

- IEP Goal: Every goal is assigned to a person or multiple people
- Who is responsible for each goal?
- Every goal has a measurement

2. Teacher's Instructions

- Instruction time? Is the teacher having an online class?
- Are there books or handouts you need for class time?
- Is the work written on paper or on a website?
- How can I contact the teacher? Do not be afraid to contact the teacher for help

3. Handouts / Books / Equipment / Electronic Devices

- Find out what handouts & books belong to what subjects
- If you have a device, there are often books & handouts on the device
- There is IT Support at all of the school districts if you have problems with devices and website.



What work should my child do first?

1. Create a routine for the school work

- Use a visual activity schedule, if needed.
- Use photos of their books /papers that represent school subjects and put them in the order that work will be completed. Put in pictures that represent break times so that they know what will come next. You can remove the pictures as they finish their work.

2. If you know your child cannot sit for long periods of time, don't schedule hours of work in a row.

- Start with 5 min of work.
- Give breaks even if it is only for 5 min.
- Be equitable.
 - If your child did some really hard work, give a longer break and give him/her something fun to do.
 - If your child did easy work, they can have a small break at the table.



What work should my child do first?

3. Start with something “easy” or something that your child enjoys

- Don't do all of the easy or enjoyable work first.
- Leave some easy work to go between harder subjects
- Leave something they like for the end of school time

4. If you have a child who can make a choice of what to do, give them the choice.

- For non-vocal children, you can show them objects that represent 2 different activities and have them choose what activity will be done next.
Example: Hold out crayons and a math paper in each hand and see what the child reaches for. Whatever they reach for is the task you will do next.
- But, do not do all of the easy or fun work first. Split it up.



How do I make my child sit down to work?

1. Preference Assessments

- At the start, show your child 2 things that they might want and ask them which they want?
- Write that down and show your child 2 other things and ask them which they want.
- Take the 2 objects that were chosen from the pairs that were presented, show it to the child, and ask them which they want. The one chosen has the strongest value. This means your child will work hardest for this one. Save it for the hardest subject.
 - The item not chosen in this last pairing is the 2nd most valuable item they want.
- You will have created a hierarchy of what your child wants most which will help you offer them
- You can still use all of the desired items but the one with the most value should go with the hardest or longest activity. The other items can be used in between the activities.



How do I make my child sit down to work?

2. . Rotate reinforcers or things that motivate your child to work

- Don't offer the same thing over and over until the child satiates on it and no longer wants it.
- If your child has a favorite food, save this as a snack for completing work and don't give it to him/her for their meal times.
- Remove favored items from being offered for various periods of time
- Rotate toys in and out to keep toys & books new
 - Some families will take a laundry basket fill it with toys and books and hide it for a week or a month. When they bring it back, their kids are interested in the toys again. This helps parents not have to buy new things less often!
- Feel free to reserve rewards so that only if they do their work, do they get access to certain items.
- If your child works hardest for the iPad or computer, you can block their favorite game until work is done. So, they can still go onto the device to play but their highly favored app is hidden.



How do I make my child sit down to work?

3. If your child has never sat down with you to do school work before, don't expect him or her to be able to sit down and do 30 min of homework.

- Start with small amounts / short work time such as 5 minutes.
 - Ex: One math problem or two min of work.
- Slowly increase the time / amount of work with each session or day
- Bring something that the child enjoys to do at the table so that he/she gets a break but doesn't get up from the table. May need to hide it from their view while they do work
- Best to give the child a break before he/she asks.
- Token Boards: Anything can be a token board!
 - *Most common:* A field of squares where the child earns a token (of something he likes such as superheroes) for doing a part of task. After earning a specific # of tokens, the tokens can be exchanged for reward.
 - For children who like letters or numbers, sometimes earning a number or letter in a specific sequence acts as a reward. Example: Many kids like to see 1-10 in order so, for these kids, you can have them earn one number at a time and once they get to 10, they get a reward or break.



What do you need from your Treatment Team?

ABA Providers can help with the following:

- Compliance Training
 - BCBA should work with the caregivers to get the basics of sitting, coming when called, etc during ABA sessions.
- Setting up a Reinforcement Schedule that is just for school work
- BCBA can practice putting an Activity Schedule together with your child and then generalize it to the caregiver
 - This way, any teaching that is needed can be done in the ABA session so that it is not new for the child



What do you need from your Treatment Team?

Occupational Therapy providers can help with the following:

- Sensory Diets
 - If you child has sensory issues, it is best for the OT to make recommendations based on the home environment
 - Starting your child's day with 40-60 min of sensory activities helps make the rest of the day smoother for school work
- Fine Motor Tasks that will help writing for school work
 - Are there manipulatives needed to help school work be done?



Q & A