

# Supporting a Child with Autism through COVID-19

Parenting a child with Autism has its own daily life challenges, but add on extreme transitions, disrupted routines, new social rules, and increased anxiety and you are quickly swimming upstream. There is no doubt that this is a particularly trying season for our families of children with Autism. We are here to help here are a few tools for you.

## Challenges of COVID-19 for Children with ASD:



- Difficulty communicating emotions.
- React strongly to unexpected transitions.
- Rely heavily on consistency in routine.
- Challenges with regulating emotions.
- Increased anxieties. Sometimes irrational.
- Tendency to use behaviors as a method of communication.
- Take exaggerated statements literally.

## Using your Child's ASD Strengths to Help them Cope

- 1. Visual** - Children with Autism are often considered to be strong visual learners. Communicate about coronavirus through the support of visual aids and social stories, using simple concrete language.
- 2. New Rules** - Children with Autism like concrete rules, particularly if they understand the benefit to following them. There are undoubtedly a lot of changes going on in your child's life, but explain these abrupt changes with simple yet direct explanations on why we need to follow them to keep everyone healthy and safe.
- 3. Structure & Routine** - Our routines have changed, but we can still give our children the predictability and stability they crave by mimicking their routine before the quarantine. Keep the same wake-up and bedtimes, structure morning and evening routine the same, and use visual schedules to help communicate everything.
- 4. Coping Favorites** - Make a list of your child's favorite coping strategies and offer them a picture list of choices when they begin to show signs of stress. Perhaps physical exercise, a favorite toy, listening to music, etc.
- 5. Behaviors** - Although behaviors have their challenges they also provide a window to better understand how your child is doing emotionally, especially if they do not have the language to express this themselves. Use this understanding to gain feedback on what is working and what isn't. Remember your therapist is here to help.