

Distance Learning Life Skills with COVID-19 changes.....

Lesson one - What is COVID-19 / How can we cope better with disrupted routines

This week we will attempt to address new concerns with changes in our children's daily routines. Understanding what COVID-19 is and how to cope with daily routine changes will create a sense of peace in your home.

1. What does my child with special needs need to know about COVID-19?

Our students / your child is given cognitive information every day at school that he / she may not be able to comprehend in depth the first time. This does not stop his / her teacher from introducing the topic / information. Multiple introduction / re-teaching a topic is a traditional approach to learning that works great for children with special needs. Our ultimate goal is having the student function better at school, in the community and in your home. In language / pragmatic therapy we always try to think of where we want to see our student in five years and begin with little steps to get there.

With that being said, your child may benefit from some knowledge about COVID-19 and how to stay safe. See the attached video created for students in the Life Skills classroom.

<https://youtu.be/xkZ23tDzN4c>

2. How can I cope with disrupted routines?

With social distancing / staying home to stop the spread of COVID-19, you and your child are trying to cope with significant disruptions and changes in daily routines. *To ease the related challenges, experts suggest developing a modified version of your child's typical school routine that you adapt to your home environment. The routine should also consider the other demands on caregivers/parents, siblings or other family members, and self-care. A balance of structured activities is ideal along with setting the expectation of what happens next. You can use a **visual schedule to support children with communication needs**.* [autismspeaks.org / <https://www.autismspeaks.org/news/how-cope-disrupted-family-routines-during-covid-19>]

At the middle school and high school level, your student may be use to reading a 'social script' of what is about to occur in his / her therapy session prior to the session beginning. This cuts down on difficulty transitioning from the classroom to the activity at hand. Some students even enjoy receiving a school email to let them know what will occur in therapy that week.

For students who struggle to read, try a visual schedule like the one below.... Begin the night before allowing your child to look over the first part of the next day's schedule. Refer back to the schedule several times a time. If you need a specific picture that is not listed, please contact your SLP and we will be happy to look for one that meets your need. Try applying these daily routine pictures to help maintain a schedule.

Let us always ask ourselves the questions, 'What skills do I want to see this child being able to do five years from now and what do I need to do today to get there?' -hm

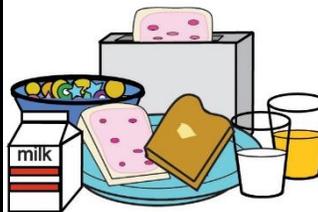
get up



dress



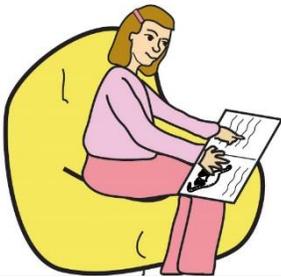
breakfast



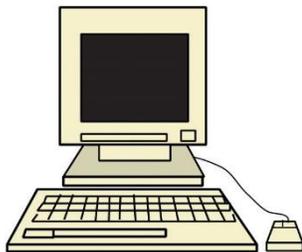
wash hands



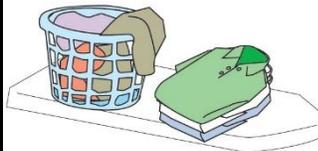
read



computer



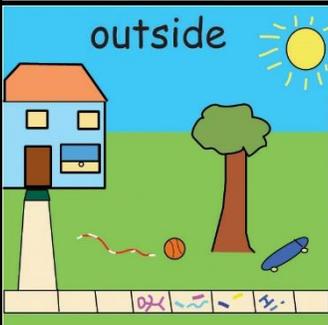
fold clothes



clean



outside



wash hands



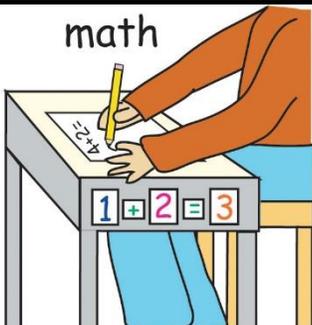
lunch



science



math



quiet time



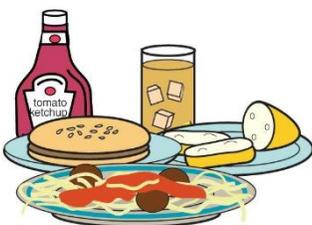
watch



wash hands



dinner



bathe



brush teeth

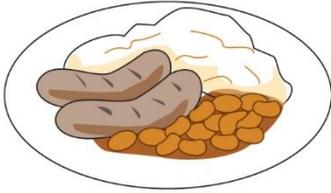


sleep

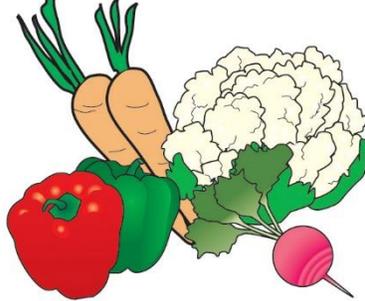


Lesson 2 - Addressing picky eaters and language in chores

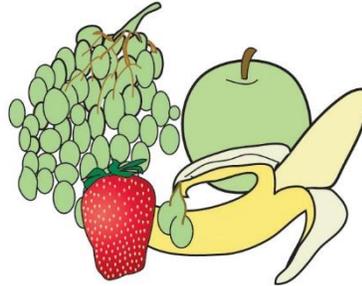
sausages, beans
and mash



vegetables



fruits



This lesson will attempt to provide helpful hints in dealing with changes in current food supplies and all the ways to make daily chores a language lesson. A rising reality from social distancing precautions is dealing with limited food choices at the grocery store while trying to keep a picky eater healthy at home. See attached some guidelines for introducing / keeping track of new foods introduced. By now stores are running low on many items our students are accustomed to having daily. Tips for Picky Eaters by [The Spotted Speechie](#)

- **Start small!** - Introduce a new food without expectations. Give positive praise every step of the way. Did your child allow a new food to be on his/her plate? Great! Work up a hierarchy with small steps. This includes first looking at the food, touching it, putting it to his/her lips, tasting it and finally chewing/swallowing it. It is OKAY to taste a food and not want to swallow it. Keep it positive all the way!
- **Analyze!** - What kinds of foods does your child typically eat? Are they sweet, salty, crunchy, smooth, etc.? Make a SMALL change to something your child already eats. This could be trying a new flavor of the same food. If your child loves strawberry yogurt, why not try strawberry-banana? These small changes can turn into big changes over time.
- **Write it down!** - Make a list of foods your child eats and come up with similar new foods to try. Get your child involved in this process if they can participate. Use charts with rating scales (e.g. I might try this again, I did not like this, etc.).
- **Have fun!** - Get your child involved in preparing food. This can be as simple as making sandwiches or helping to put fruit on a platter. Encourage any effort to touch, taste or try a new food.

How to teach expand vocabulary / conversational skills helping with daily chores.

cook



sort washing



take out trash



Everything we do in our daily routine contains language! While home during this time use the following examples as ideas of how to expand your child's vocabulary and gain a helping hand with must do chores.

- Cooking - Work side by side with your child talk about every step as you cook. Demonstrate how to measure the sugar or salt. Have your child measure. Show your child how to stir the tea, wash the grapes, roll down the top of the cereal bag, and cover food with a paper towel before microwaving. After you are sure your child understands the terms, begin to have the child help with simple cooking tasks daily.
- Sorting laundry - Working side by side with your child talk about every step of sorting, washing, drying, folding and putting away the laundry. Talk about why you separate the clothes by color; talk about what detergent or other child safe cleaning agent you use in your home; talk about what types of clothes you dry in the dryer and others you hang to dry; side by side work with your child teaching what clothes go in drawers and what clothes you hang up.
- Emptying / Taking out the trash - Working side by side with your child show them how to 'carefully' remove the bag out of the can; talk about how to tie the top in a knot; talk about how and why you must be careful with plastic bag; show them how / why to hold the bottom of the bag if able.
- Answering Questions / Asking Questions - While you are working side by side, ask your child "What are we doing?" If unable to answer within a several seconds answer the question for your child. "Washing dishes" ; "Sorting laundry" Once you've modeled the answer several times for the "What?" question try asking the question again and pause for up to a minute to see if the child can answer the question now. Go onto another question "Where do we keep the trash bags?" ...again state answer if no response after several seconds. "In the cabinet under the sink". Mix things up a bit. Move the trash bags to the pantry. Set up opportunities by playfully having your child encounter a problem so the child has a chance to now ASK a question..."Mom! Where are the trash bags?!"
- Have fun!! - Children are more likely to stay engaged in an activity when it is fun! Use this time you are home with your child to enjoy one another. ☺

Life Skills Lesson 3 - Social Play / Teaching how to think about other peoples point of view

play



shop



family



A simplified - paraphrased version of *Michelle Garcia Winner's* definition of **social thinking is the ability to consider your own and other peoples thoughts, emotions, intentions, knowledge and feelings to help interpret how to respond to the given social situation.** You may be wondering, what does social thinking have to do with my child's education?? A lot in fact...These same skills are necessary to imagine what a teacher is speaking about on a new topic, comprehend a grade level reading passage and to write an essay. This lesson will attempt to give examples of how to apply social thinking to playing games in a group, grocery shopping, and interacting with the family while we are home together during this time of social distancing.

- Board Games / Card Games / most Games that require 3 or more people - Games such as 'Go Fish', 'Greedy Granny', 'Sorry', and 'Uno' all require waiting your turn, imagining what your opponents will do, and reacting to unplanned / uncontrollable circumstances. Have one game player be 'the coach'. 'The coach's' job is to be the best model of how to wait your turn, how to not blurt out what other opponents have in their card hand, and how to be a good sport when he/she doesn't win. The other player acts as the narrator or the facilitator, "Look at Zoe waiting patiently for her turn"..."Shh! Zoe's not telling what Gabe has in his hand", or "Zoe, thank you showing how grown up you are. You are a good sport. Being a good sport means you don't tantrum or pout when you don't win." Play the same game for several days in a row. Make sure the game is not so long that your child loses interest. Even putting a puzzle together can be made into a social thinking event as long as turn taking, sharing, and good sportsmanship is practiced.
- Shopping - New social skills are developing every day with limited variety in food choices, and trying to avoid coming in close contact with others. If you must go out to town, use the opportunity to point out other people's facial expressions and speculate with your child what other people may be thinking. If another shopper has a fearful look on their face, point out to your child that person may not want to 'get other people's germs'; if a shopper in a long line has a look of disgust or anger, point out that facial expression to your child and note that person may be mad / frustrated because they are having to wait a long time to check out; or if another shopper has a look of shock when approached by a stranger point out the facial expression noting that person may be surprised a stranger is talking the them because they don't know one another.
- Family - With laundry mounting, an increased desire by parents to keep their homes germ free, and extended Netflix watching, this is a perfect time for your child to deliver short messages to other family members in different areas of your home or outside the home. For example, have

your child call or text a family member outside the home to pick up one or two items on their way home from work ... like paper towels [good luck with that!]; another example is to have your child deliver siblings laundry to their room with a short message, 'Mom said to put your laundry away, here it is'. Or have your child deliver a message to a sibling that it is 'time to turn on the PS4'. Practice this message with the child 3-4 times before sending them off to deliver the message; put your child in charge of the daily FaceTime visit with the grandparents with two specific things to tell the grandparents that he / she did that day. If your child is a reader, create a simple written script for the phone call, message delivery or face time. This allows a less invasive prompt but still supports your child as he / she can look down at the written script if getting started is difficult or nervousness kicks in.

- Have fun! - A general rule we try to apply in the therapy setting is, "If it is not fun for everyone, it's not fun at all." Keeping activities fun keeps your child learning. Teaching our children with special needs how to be enjoyable to family members becomes increasingly important as we approach the reality of who will care for them in five, ten, of fifteen years. We need to think about where we want these individuals to be functioning in five years. Always keep the end goal in mind. - hm