



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

MiNavigator

Late-March 2020

MiNavigator Newsletter Issue 41

Presented by Autism Alliance of Michigan
www.AAoMI.org

Help. Hope. Answers. Today

SURVIVING THE NEW NORMAL USING SCHEDULES DURING COVID-19



This is truly a challenging time for everyone, especially since school and workplace closures were abrupt and unplanned. As we settle into our “new normal”, the importance of setting a daily schedule should not be forgotten. Schedules allow for predictability, and when implemented, can help provide structure, reduce anxiety and decrease or prevent problem behavior. A routine that works for all members of the household, including caregivers and other children, is KEY.

If you are going to try something new this week, we would recommend starting with a schedule!

Quick Tips

- 1 Write down ALL the tasks you do in a day (brushing teeth, making lunch, doing laundry, watching TV, etc.). These should be part of your schedule.
- 2 Have your child be part of some household tasks if possible (i.e. putting laundry in the washer, unloading a dishwasher).
- 3 The schedule can be low tech. Save technology for when you really need it. It doesn't need to be Pinterest worthy. It needs to be functional, allowing your child to follow it. Think about using a dry erase board and marker or a piece of cardboard and velcro-ed picture from google image.

cont.





- ④ Visuals are key, but you don't have to use printed pictures. Even kids who can't read can follow a simple schedule of words and simple hand-drawn pictures. It's less about the pictures and more about a child being able to follow the schedule.
- ⑤ Make a schedule for the entire day or break it up by morning, afternoon and evening.
- ⑥ Try to have a variety of tasks in your schedule (i.e. table work, movement activities, time out doors, technology breaks, sensory, meals). Alternate structured tasks with movement activities.
- ⑦ Have your child help you make the schedule, if possible. This will help reinforce the routine.
- ⑧ Be sure to schedule things your child will look forward to (i.e. screen time, snacks, preferred toys).

Remember

- Don't look at this as lost time in school, but rather an opportunity for valuable time at home with your family.
- Stress less about screen time.
- Go easy on yourself, and try to have some downtime.
- The schedule may not work perfectly the first day and that's okay.
- This is not the time to work on all of the goals in your child's IEP. Just pick one or two to start.
- This is a lot of work and you may feel exhausted. Be sure to schedule down-time for yourself.
- A schedule allows your child to know when one activity is ending and another one is beginning. This is especially helpful for kids who have difficulty transitioning from one activity to the next. Use a timer or give a verbal reminder a few minutes before the end of each activity.
- Some kids prefer the same schedule every day, but schedules can also be flexible. Consider listing activities that need to be completed each day and let your child choose which one they want to work on, crossing each activity off the list once completed. This may help give your child a sense of control.
- Use screen time for when you need it (i.e. if you are working from home or need to make dinner).
- Before you start to think about a schedule for your family, take a deep breath and step back for a second. You will be ok.





Strategies to Set Your Child up for Success in the Home

Kelsey Dutot, MA, BCBA, LBA - Autism Home Support Services

Children, teenagers and even adults thrive on consistency. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, however, all consistency feels like it has been thrown out the window! While you have been navigating a life of social distancing, you may be experiencing hardships in maintaining structure and building routines for your child.

To help facilitate this, there are proactive strategies called “antecedent interventions” that can help create structure and consistency in your child’s day. Antecedent strategies can be used to help minimize problem behavior and promote structure for you and your child. Overall, these strategies focus on “modifying the environment” or in other words, changing the environment to help build success and minimize the possibility of problem behavior.

While many antecedent interventions should be discussed with your current ABA provider, there are certain strategies that can benefit everyone in your home! Below is a list of strategies to help build consistency and ease transitions for your child.

Visual schedules: A visual schedule is a graphic representation of sequential, scheduled activities. These schedules can help learners follow rules and routines. For example, you can create a morning routine schedule that represents what your child needs to complete in sequential order (such as breakfast, chore, iPad break, math lesson, etc.) or a schedule that explains a specific task (such as washing your hands: “rinse hands, scrub with soap, rinse soap off, dry off hands”).

First/Then board: This is another strategy that can be used as a visual representation to indicate the order in which tasks should be completed, or as simple, direct language to minimize confusion for your child. Typically, this type of language and visual is presented by letting your child know that “First” they must complete a less preferred task “Then” they can engage in a more preferred activity. For example, you can tell your child, “First bath time, then iPad.” This language is a great tool to use throughout your daily activities such as lunch time, “First, eat two bites of apple, then you can have a bite of cookie.”

cont.





Timer: A visual timer can be used to help your child see how much time they have left in completing a less preferred activity, or how much time they have left engaging in a preferred activity! For example, if your child has an academic-based activity they need to work on, you can set a timer up for them to see how much time is expected of them to work on the activity. In contrast, you can also set a timer up while they are engaging in a more favorable activity, representing how much time they are allowed to play on the iPad or watch TV, for example. A timer is a great tool to use to help eliminate a sense of ‘unknown’ and promote successful transitions!

Choice: Providing choices is an easy and effective antecedent strategy! Allowing your child to make choices throughout their day provides them the opportunity to have “control” over a variety of tasks and items. For example, you can provide your child a choice of a fun activity: “For creative time, do you want to paint or play with playdoh?” You can offer a choice of location in completing an activity: “Do you want to work at the table or on the floor?” You can even let them choose the order of tasks that need to be completed: “Do you want to brush teeth before the bath or after?” Providing choices promotes clear and concise language while allowing them to have control in their day-to-day activities.

Modify the environment: All of the previously mentioned supports are ways you can “modify the environment” by adding visual supports, providing choices, and using simple yet direct language to help build structure and consistency. Other ways one can modify the environment is by creating a clean and neat designated work spot (free of distractions), putting preferred items out of sight during work time to work, and/or providing organizational support for their tasks to lessen confusion.

While these are just a few of many antecedent strategies to help set your child up for success, it is just as important that parents and caregivers are taking the time to take care of themselves as well! As the saying goes, you can’t pour from an empty cup. You’ll likely find that these strategies work increasingly well when they are implemented in a calm and relaxed manner. Taking care of yourself will in return help the delivery and effectiveness of these strategies in your home, thus setting up overall success for you and your entire family. So don’t forget to recharge your own batteries!





Looking to Your Community During COVID-19

School programs and many private treatment services have been stopped abruptly. If you have questions or concerns about ways to help your child at home, be sure to reach out to those who work with your child everyday (i.e. teachers, therapists, social workers). They can be a great resource. If your teacher or therapist is not accessible, contact our navigators (navigator@aaomi.org or 877.463.2266).

Some Questions You Can Ask

- ① Do you have any suggestions for implementing a routine?
- ② What is something that motivates my child when you work with him or her?
- ③ What is their favorite activity to do with you?
- ④ How do you redirect when they do not want to complete a task?
- ⑤ How do you keep a schedule with him or her?
- ⑥ Is there anything I should keep in mind during this time?
- ⑦ Do you know of any resources that would benefit my child?
- ⑧ What strategies have worked with my child when he or she has severe behaviors?
- ⑨ What activities most engage my child?
- ⑩ How do you reward my child?
- ⑪ Will you offer tips on how to prevent challenging behaviors?
- ⑫ What are skills or tasks I should focus on for maintenance?

Telehealth Services

Telehealth is the delivery of health related services by telecommunication or digital communication device. Many providers have stopped face-to-face services, including home-based services at this time. Others have started or are in the process of implementing telehealth options, however, such as caregiver/parent training, speech, OT and parent support groups. Contact your provider to discuss telehealth options that may be available.

Many agencies are providing general counseling services via telehealth as well. Again, if you need help connecting with critical resources, CALL/EMAIL OUR NAVIGATORS!

(navigator@aaomi.org or 877.463.2266)

cont.





Parent Support Groups

Michigan Parent Support Options: Autism Spectrum Disorders

Some groups are informal while some are agency or organization sponsored. Most groups are autism-related but some contain a mix of disabilities.

Updated April 24, 2019

Statewide: B.R.A.I.N.S., LLP, 3351 Eagle Run Dr. NE Ste. C, Grand Rapids, MI 49525. Call (616) 365-8920 or www.brainspotential.com. Free parent support groups every month.

Key: ● ASA Chapters Support Groups

Heather Poll's support group for Baraga/Houghton/Keweenaw meets monthly for families of kids with any disability. Email hlpoll_5@hotmail.com or call (906) 482-4216.

Ellen Moore has started a support blog. Visit <http://maquetteadsupport.blogspot.com>

The Autism Resource Network serves 5 counties around Traverse City. Visit autismresourcenetwork.org

Northern Michigan Autism Association northernmichiganautism.org

1:1 Support for families in Gratiot county is provided by Penny at pbearden@edzone.net or (989) 847-2704.

The Boxing Autism Club of Livingston County offers a monthly support group. Visit www.workforautism.com.

Autism Collaborative Center-EMU visit www.emich.edu/acc/ The ACC offers individual, group, family and community services.

The Judson Center offers various support groups. Visit www.judsoncenter.org.

ASA/OCC offers many support group options in Oakland county. Visit www.asaoakland.org.

The SE Michigan Asperger Support Group meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Hazel Park Public Library from 6:00-8:00 pm. Visit www.meetup.com/SE-Michigan-AspergerSupportGroup/ for more information.

TACA Michigan holds Coffee Talks throughout the year. Families can informally network, share resources and speak with other parents. Meets in Ann Arbor. Email cindy.gonyer@tacanow.org for details or visit www.tacanow.org.

Jackie Martin-Sebell can help provide support in this area of the state. Email jacquelinemartinsebell@yahoo.com.

Autism Navigator Parent Peer Support sessions. Contact Carolyn Gammicchia at 586-703-3866 for information on meeting locations in Macomb/Oakland Counties.

A group meets once a month @ The Milton C. Porter Center. Call (517) 263-8905 or mpoore@LCMHA.org

Autism HOPE of Lenawee meets 1st Tuesday of each month and the 2nd Tuesday of each month. See autismhopeoflenawee.org for more info.

A2FACES in Ann Arbor has a listserv for family members. Contact Barb Byers at bubmay11@provide.net.

Newaygo County Autism Community has a Facebook page where they provide information and support. www.facebook.com/newaygocountyautismcommunity

ASPPiRE offers social coaching groups for people on the spectrum of all ages in the Lansing area. Email mpeak@asppireofmidmichigan.com

Autism Network of Muskegon County offers various monthly support opportunities. Visit www.muskegonautism.org or email autismnetworkofmuskegon@gmail.com.

The Gray Center holds groups for different ages in Grand Rapids. Visit thegraycenter.org

Autism Support of Kent County at autismsupportofkentcounty.org or (616) 752-8577.

The Center for Autism provides support in Grand Rapids. For more info, call 616-942-2522.

Jackson Autism Network provides support and information. Call (517) 392-3093 or visit www.jasn-mi.org.

ASA Chapters
Autism Society of Michigan (517) 882-2800
Contact the Autism Society of Michigan for more information about chapters in the state.

Autism Alliance of Michigan
Launching assistance across the state to help families access services and support. Visit autismallianceofmichigan.org.

Arc Michigan Chapters
The Arc Michigan has chapters across the state of Michigan. To locate a chapter near you for support and information, visit <http://arcmi.org/> or call (800) 292-7851.

The Autism Community in Action (TACA)
Providing support across the state. Visit www.tacanow.org for more information.

Michigan Listservs
Autism-Michigan@yahoogroups.com
AutismAdvocacyinMichigan@yahoogroups.com

bridges4kids
Building Partnerships Between Families, Schools, and Communities
www.bridges4kids.org

Email Jackie Igafu-Te'o at igafoteo@comcast.net with updates or changes. For other support group information, contact other disability groups in your area. Note: This map is a resource created and maintained by Bridges4Kids.org.

Movement Activity Ideas

- Have a Pillow Fight
- Ride a Bike
- Dance!
- Build a Fort
- Yoga (check out [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#))

Practical Free Resources

- Webinar: [Coronavirus Impact- Hope All Day- Basic Supports and Services to Get us Through and Keep us Sane:](#)
- Social Story COVID-19: [WHAT IS THE CORONAVIRUS? COVID-19 / CORONAVIRUS](#)

cont.





MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT STRATEGIES



SCHEDULE TIME TO STAY OFF YOUR "SCREENS" AND STICK TO IT!

STAY OFF SCREENS



COUNT 10 THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR IN THE MOMENT

PRACTICE GRATITUDE



REACH OUT TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHEN YOU NEED TO!

REACH OUT



GET THE REST YOU NEED

REST



STAY HYDRATED AND EAT HEALTHY FOODS. TRY ADDING ICE, JUICE OR FRUIT TO YOUR WATER.

FUEL YOURSELF



SUNLIGHT, ACTIVITY, AND GREEN SPACE ARE ALL STRESS REDUCERS!

GO OUTSIDE

FOR MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES:

CALL 911

OR

SAMSHA DISASTER DISTRESS HOTLINE

1-800-085-5990

TEXT TALKWITH US TO

66756

TTY 1-800-846-8517



A DAY AT HOME

TIPS FOR STAYING HOME:

- (1) HAVE A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE
- (2) HAVE BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS TO ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING CLEAN UP)
- (3) VARY YOUR LOCATION

ACTIVITY

IDEAS

8:00 AM MORNING ROUTINE	MORNING ROUTINE: GO TO THE BATHROOM, BRUSH HAIR, WASH FACE, GET DRESSED, MAKE BED
8:30 BREAKFAST	MEAL TIMES: SET THE TABLE, EAT A HEALTHY MEAL, CLEAR THE TABLE, CLEAN UP
9:00 OPEN ENDED CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY	CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY: BUILDING WITH BLOCKS, DUPLOS, LEGOS, CARDBOARD BOXES, CREATION STATION WITH RECYCLABLES, PUTTING TOGETHER A TRAIN TRACK OR CITY, BUILDING A FORT, PLAYING WITH PLAYDOH
10:00 OUTDOOR PLAY	OUTDOOR PLAY TIME: COLLECT ACORNS, STICKS, STONES, LEAVES, DO A SENSORY WALK, BRING A FAVORITE INDOOR TOY OUTSIDE, PLANT SEEDS, PICK UP TRASH, LOOK FOR ANIMALS
11:00 LITERACY TIME	LITERACY TIME: READ BOOKS, RECORD STORIES, PLAY WITH LETTER BLOCKS/TILES, SING RHYMING SONGS, WRITE A LETTER, MAKE A GROCERY LIST, CREATE A CARTOON, VIDEOCHAT WITH A LOVED ONE AND HAVE THEM READ OR TELL A STORY.
12:00 LUNCH	
12:30 DRAMATIC PLAY / PRETEND PLAY	DRAMATIC/PRETEND PLAY: TEA PARTY, BAKE CUPCAKES, PLAY CHEF/DOCTOR/TEACHER, SET UP A DRIVE THROUGH, SET UP A GROCERY STORE
1:00 GROSS MOTOR TIME	GROSS MOTOR TIME: PLAY HOP SCOTCH, JUMP ROPE, HAVE RACES, PLAY CATCH, BASKETBALL, TAG, KICK BALL, RIDE A BIKE, TAKE A WALK, JUMP OVER STICKS, OBSTACLE COURSE, DANCE PARTY, EXERCISE VIDEO
2:00 STEM TIME	STEM TIME: COUNT FAVORITE ITEMS, SORT BY COLOR/SIZE/SHAPE, DO A SIMPLE EXPERIMENT, PLAY A MATH GAME, DO PUZZLES
2:30 CREATIVE PLAY	REST TIME: QUIET RESTING, READING, SWINGING, LISTENING TO MUSIC, SENSORY BREAK
3:30 SNACK TIME	CHORES: VACUUM, SWEEP, HELP WITH LAUNDRY, DUST, TIDY UP, WASH WINDOWS, TAKE OUT GARBAGE, WIPE DOOR KNOBS
4:00 REST	TECHNOLOGY: IF APPROPRIATE-SCREEN TIME
4:30 CHORES	WINDING DOWN: BOOKS, PUZZLES, CALMING MUSIC, YOGA, MEDITATION, STRETCHING
5:00 TECHNOLOGY	BATHTIME AND BEDTIME ROUTINE: BATH/SHOWER, PAJAMAS, BRUSH TEETH
5:30 DINNER	
6:30 WINDING DOWN	
7:00 BATHTIME	
8:00 BEDTIME	





AAoM is Here to Help!

Please contact MiNavigator with any specific concerns or questions (navigator@aaomi.org or 877.463.2266).

AAoM is continuing to work on behalf of our families to assist in any way we can. This week we are conducting a survey of our families to identify your specific needs and concerns at this time. We also realize that this is a particularly difficult time for families who have a child at home with significant aggressive or self-injurious behavior, and we are working closely with providers throughout the state to identify strategies and solutions to assist you while you are at home. We are also continuing to help providers get telehealth services up and running and are working with them to create an up-to-date directory of these types of supports as they become available to our families. We are also looking at available telehealth options to support parents and caregivers such as general counseling and online support groups.

For additional resources click [here](#).



We Want To Hear From You!

Please take the time to fill out this brief [survey](#)

