What Happens Next? Strategies to help individuals with autism and their caregivers proactively overcome anxiety surrounding COVID-19 re-openings

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Meeting ID is 998-5539-1257
Agenda

• Introductions
  • Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
  • Danielle Halpern, PsyD

• Life after Lockdown

• Strategies to deal with uncertainty and change
  • Visual Strategies
  • Behavioral Strategies
  • Cognitive Strategies

• Question and Answer
What Happens Next?

• Be kind to yourself and do what works for you and your family.

• **Accept uncertainty.**
  - Focus on the things that we do know. We might not know when school will start but you know that on Fridays we will eat pizza and have family movie night.
  - Limit intake of news and focus on trusted sources.

• **Practice and encourage flexibility.**

• **What do we do for individuals with ASD who do not handle uncertainty or change well?**
Visual Strategies to Help Us Deal with Uncertainty and Change

• Utilize Social Stories.
The Seaver Autism Center will be posting a social story on life after lockdown over the next few weeks

• Prepare the child for what to expect

• Be specific when possible

• Create new schedules
Social Stories: For both wearing a mask and seeing others wear a mask


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q_U&feature=youtu.be&t=5
Social Stories: Hand Washing


Social Stories: Social Distancing

My Social Distancing Story
This is a social story to explain social distancing to children with autism.

Social Distancing Social Story
Courtesy of the Autism Research Institute
www.autism.org

Right now, some people around the world are sick with a virus called COVID19.

The virus can make some people very sick. I can help keep myself, my family, and my friends safe by social distancing.

Social distancing means I can only be near the people I live with. When I stay away from people that I don’t live with, I am helping the world get better.

Use concrete visuals such as tape measures or Legos to display 6 feet
Behavioral Strategies to Help Us Deal with Uncertainty and Change

• If there’s anxiety around leaving house → Plan short outings to highly motivating places
• Keep some parts of routine/schedule consistent
• Do activities that make you feel happy
• Do activities that make you feel calm
• Do activities that give you a sense of control
Cognitive Strategies to Help Us Deal with Uncertainty and Change

- Validate and label your own emotions and those of family members
  - Ex: I am feeling overwhelmed right now and that is okay.

- Be Kind To Yourself
  - “What would I say to my closest friend if they were in this specific situation?”

- Challenge unhelpful thoughts

- Utilize self talk to help you through stressful situations
Questions & Answers

- Thank you for your attention and participation!
- Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
- For copies of slides, please email: audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu or bari.britvan@mssm.edu