



Maintain Routines

While it is important to create time and space for all family members to process uncertainty, **individuals with autism may cope best when daily routines are only minimally interrupted.** Routines can provide increased comfort for individuals with autism (Faherty, 2008) and may allow them to better express their feelings related to the changes. For example, instead of skipping a Friday night movie tradition because of increased screen time at other times during the week, choose a movie that can facilitate a conversation about the changes, loss, and/or associated feelings (e.g. *Inside Out*, *Finding Dory*). Combining the stress of the COVID-19 related changes with the addition of changed routines--especially if the new activities are nebulous or unstructured--could potentially exacerbate or extend the adjustment process (Lipsky, 2013).

Important routines to maintain include:

Sleep/wake routines: Maintaining physical health is key for all family members and



ensuring proper sleep is an important contributor. Sleep disturbances are more common in individuals with autism, thus extra attention may be

required to support good sleep hygiene and maintain bedtime and waking routines (see more <https://www.autismspeaks.org/sleep>).

Household chores/daily living skills: Taking part in structured household chores and routines is a recommended strategy to support children and young adults coping with stress



related to COVID-19. Individuals with autism may need additional supports, such as a **task analysis**, to be able to take part in and/or complete these activities.

Several examples are provided for common

chores along with a template that can be used for a variety of daily living activities. For more information related to COVID-19, see https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf.



Expanding the use of a **visual schedule**, and using one more regularly throughout the day, may help facilitate participation in activities at home and reduce anxiety. Many

caregivers use elements of a visual schedule already (e.g. a calendar on the refrigerator, a list of errand locations, a photo of which therapist is coming to visit) and these can be

extended for use across the day. The format and length of the schedule may vary based on the individual's needs, and several examples are included.

Resources include:

[Tips for Creating Task Analyses](#)

[Task Analysis: Unload the Dishwasher](#)

[Task Analysis: Make a Snack](#)

[Task Analysis Template](#)

Tips for Creating a Task Analysis

1. Choose a task with a definitive start and end (e.g. set the table, get dressed, make bed)
2. Write down the steps as you do the task or as you watch another adult do the task
3. Give the steps to someone else to try to follow and make sure they are clear.
4. Write the final steps on a piece of paper to guide instruction for teaching the task to your son/daughter.
5. If needed, draw, or take picture cues for each step to post as a visual schedule for your child to reference.
6. Teach the task using the prompting strategy that fits your child best. Some learners who get easily frustrated may do best with most-to-least prompting in which you assist more, while other learners may reach independence with the task more quickly using a least-to-most prompting strategy.

Most-to Least Prompting	Least-to-Most Prompting
Full Physical	Visual Prompt
Partial Physical	Verbal Prompt
Modeling	Gestural Prompt
Gestural Prompt	Modeling
Verbal Prompt	Partial Physical
Visual Prompt	Full Physical

Unload the Dishwasher

Target Steps	Date					
1. Open dishwasher						
2. Pull out bottom rack						
3. Remove plates one at a time						
4. Place plates in appropriate cupboard one at a time						
5. Remove any pots/pans						
6. Place pots/pans in appropriate cupboard						
7. Remove utensil basket						
8. Place utensil basket on counter near utensil drawer						
9. Place each utensil in appropriate matching drawer section						
10. Replace utensil basket in bottom dishwasher rack						
11. Push in bottom dishwasher rack						
12. Pull out top dishwasher rack						
13. Remove glasses one at a time						
14. Place glasses in appropriate cupboard one at a time						
15. Remove mugs one at a time						
16. Place mugs in appropriate cupboard one at a time						
17. Remove any other items one at a time						
18. Place other items in appropriate cupboard one at a time						
19. Push in top dishwasher rack						
20. Close dishwasher						
	#/#					
	%					

Make a Snack

Target Steps	Date					
1. Go to kitchen						
2. Get a plate from cupboard						
3. Place plate on counter						
4. Take banana from basket on counter						
5. Place banana on plate						
6. Get cracker box from cupboard						
7. Open box						
8. Sprinkle an appropriate number of crackers onto plate						
9. Close box						
10. Put box back in cupboard						
11. Get a cup						
12. Fill cup with water						
13. Take water cup to table						
14. Get napkin						
15. Take napkin and plate to table						
16. Sit down and eat						
	#/#					
	%					

Task Analysis Template

Target Steps	Date					
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
#/#						
%						