

## Transition Pack following Lock Down

All children and young adults require support from caregivers during times of stress and uncertainty, such as those we are facing now with the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Coping with the unknown and navigating school closures, abrupt changes in routines, loss of connections with teachers and friends, and fear around contracting the virus- are burdens for all, and caregivers play an important role in helping children and young adults understand the changes and process their related feelings. Individuals with autism may need additional support to process the news and adapt to the many changes.

The government have published a plan which will show when schools/colleges are due to return. An individual with ASD needs time to adapt to another huge change within a short time, and may also have concerns and anxieties due to the constant news and media reports surrounding the pandemic.

This pack contains strategies to support transitioning a young person with ASD back to school or college when the lock down ends. These strategies are designed to meet the unique needs of individuals with autism transition back to school, college or a different environment from that during lock down.

We have included ready-made resources to help implement these strategies quickly and easily. The materials purposefully represent a variety of styles, designs and complexity to model the range of what may be most meaningful across ages and skills. Specific adaptations and additions may be necessary to best meet the varied needs of individuals.

The strategies are intended to be a toolkit of ideas that may be helpful. Introduce one strategy at a time and be consistent. Address the issue that is creating the most immediate stress. Consider involving the young person in the decision making process and making the tools.

Printable resources, such as a social story for New Rules in School, are at the end of this booklet.

## Strategies that you can use to support transitioning back to school:

### Explain Covid 'Rules'

- Use social stories/scripts
- Explain about Covid & 'new rules' socially
- Outline social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands etc

### Prepare well in advance

- Start preparing weeks in advance, and on a daily basis
- Introduce social stories/social scripts about going back to school, new social rules etc
- Put a calendar on display to count down dates

### Clear communication

- Use all channels of communication-written, spoken
- Visual strategies help for all ages & stages and incorporate with technology e.g. iPad, smart phone etc
- Encourage connecting with peers (from a distance)

### Use Coping and calming tools

- Calming routine
- Self management
- Exercise choice board
- Mindfulness

### Re-establish, maintain, introduce new routines

- Daily routines
- Weekly routines
- Weekly choices and goals
- How to transition off screens

# Understanding Covid & New 'Social Rules'

## Give basic facts depending on age and stage of understanding

- **Describe the virus and current situation (e.g. closures, social distancing) in concrete language and terms** and avoid flowery or abstract phrasing. The understanding of abstract phrases and metaphors such as “she is under the weather”, “she caught the virus”, and “he is scared stiff about this” can be difficult for individuals with autism and can create confusion. Using direct and clear language is recommended. Though stark-sounding, factual phrases like “The coronavirus is a type of germ. These germs are very tiny, and when they get inside your body, they can make you sick” may be easier for individuals with autism to understand
- Use a **social narrative**, a story/script that clarifies a situation and possible responses through modified text, photos, or the use of technology. Individuals on the autism spectrum benefit from receiving information in multiple formats, pictures, written, spoken etc. Several example social narratives have been included in this pack to give individuals more information about COVID-19, help them understand how to reduce risk, provide insight into how they may be feeling, introduce the new social rules, and offer assurance that those feelings are normal. Reading the narratives to/with the young person regularly across several days/weeks is helpful. Revisit and adjust as needed and circumstances shift. There are lots of websites with social stories already written, or write your own specific to the concerns that you know your child will have
- Provide **visual supports** to offer guidance on coronavirus specific actions and behaviors. The “rules” around how we greet people (e.g. no more handshakes), how we interact with people, even family members (e.g. social distancing), and how often/when we wash our hands (e.g. every time we come inside) are changing. Using visual cues to break down the steps of these new expectations may be helpful, as individuals with autism may respond best to a more explicit and concrete explanation. These ‘rules’ are especially important for when schools/colleges re-open. Several examples are provided
- Offering **visual cues to clarify the passage of time** may be helpful. Individuals with autism may have trouble perceiving the passage of time, an invisible concept, and the use of a monthly, weekly, and/or daily calendar may assist in tracking time out of school/in a quarantine situation. We have to prepare for an “end” date to lock down uncertainty, so marking the passage of time as well as including favorite activities, such as shows, online meetups, or game night on the calendar can be a helpful coping strategy and, once official, can show an exact day for when school may re-open.

# Prepare

Many individuals on the autism spectrum need preparation in order to cope with changes and surprises. The following are strategies that can be used to prepare the young person for transitioning back to school after being off for a long time:

## Countdown!

Put a calendar on display to count down to the date. The young person can be involved by ticking off the dates.



Offering visual cues to clarify the passage of time may be helpful. Individuals with autism may have trouble perceiving the passage of time, an invisible concept, and the use of a monthly, weekly, and/or daily calendar may aid in tracking time out of school/in a quarantine situation. Marking the passage of time for return to school/college on the calendar can be a helpful coping strategy

 Monday	 Tuesday	 Wednesday	 Thursday	 Friday	 Saturday	 Sunday
					 home	 home
					 home	 home
					 home	 home
					 home	 home

## Uniform and Supplies

- A few weeks before school commences start looking at uniforms, sorting school bags, books etc.
- Encourage your child to choose items and be involved in the preparation process



## Visit the School

- Drive past the school from time to time
- If the school is open your child's teacher might allow a visit using safe social distancing



## Social Stories

Use Social Stories/social scripts to explain why we have to come out of lock down and how we do this safely

Read and re-read these on a daily basis and for several weeks prior to the start of school

There are some printable examples at the end of this booklet

Visit our Pinterest site for more examples.

# Communication

The social aspects of returning to school can also be stressful to the young person so practising communication, conversations and social scenarios can be helpful.

The following are strategies that can be used to support communication:

## Use Social Stories/social scripts

- to explain social situations such as what to say when meeting classmates after a long time in lock down.
- when asking for help etc
- to explain new rules to follow in school such as social distancing, hand washing, use of masks if necessary

## Encourage communication with school peers/ foster connections

- Individuals on the autism spectrum can be more susceptible to social isolation and loneliness, so to have been in lock down for months, and then to have to return to an educational environment with a lot of other pupils, can be daunting. Positive social contact is important prior to returning to school or college as it can help reduce anxieties and fears. Parents and caregivers may need to check in to ensure social contact is continuing in a safe way through texting, messaging etc and build in social contact with extended family/friends within social distancing guidelines to practise communication skills.




## Communicate through visuals

- Provide visual supports to offer guidance on coronavirus specific actions and behaviors. The “rules” around how we greet people (e.g. no more handshakes), how we interact with people, even family members (e.g. social distancing), and how often/when we wash our hands (e.g. every time we come inside) are changing. Using visual cues to break down the steps of these new expectations may be helpful, as individuals with autism may respond best to a more explicit and concrete explanation.

## Visuals to help communication



## Calling with FaceTime

	<b>1. Select the FaceTime app.</b>
	<b>2. Select who to call.</b>
	<b>3. Wait for them to answer.</b>
	<b>4. Talk with them. You can ask questions such as:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What shows have you watched?</li><li>• Have you played any fun games inside?</li><li>• What books are you reading?</li></ul>
	<b>5. Say, "Bye." Then end call.</b>



# Coping & Calming Skills

Ideally, individuals with autism have some coping and calming strategies in their repertoire of skills to access with support during their most anxious times. These may include rocking in a rocking chair, listening to music on headphones, deep breathing, watching a preferred video clip, brief periods of vigorous exercise, or accessing a favourite activity or material. If coping or calming strategies are not yet part of the routine, caregivers can prioritize the teaching of these skills during this time of uncertainty.

Strategically choose times of the day when the young person is calm to initiate the instruction.

Create a concrete and visual routine to support the use of these strategies.

Many free apps are available for calming strategies and guided meditations such as Calm, Headspace, Breathe2Relax

Make a Calm Down Kit!  
Ensure that the individual with autism has ample access to these calming activities.

Teach a self-management plan that helps individuals track their anxious or worried responses and identify when the calming strategies are required.

Exercise/physical activity is a proven strategy to reduce anxiety symptoms with the broader population, as well as with individuals with autism.





## Calming Routine

1. Take 4 deep breaths



2. Clench fists 4 times



3. Count to 10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Good job!



## FACE COVID



### **Focus on what you can control**

Say to yourself "I can control what I am doing here and now."



### **Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings**

Silently and kindly acknowledge any thoughts and feelings



### **Come back into your body**

Slowly stretch your arms or neck, shrug your shoulders  
Take slow, deep breaths



### **Engage in what you are doing**

Notice 5 things you can see, 3 things you can hear, 1 thing you can smell, and what you are doing

Repeat the above 2 to 3 times



### **Commit to action**

What can you do this week to help yourself? Or others?  
Write it down in your schedule.



### **Open up**

Acknowledge that your feelings are normal and that it is okay to feel what you are feeling



### **Values**

How do you want to treat yourself? Others? Values include love, humor, kindness, honesty...



### **Identify resources**

Identify 'Who' and 'Where' to get help, assistance, and support






### **Disinfect and distance**

Wash your hands and practice social distancing

## Exercise Activities

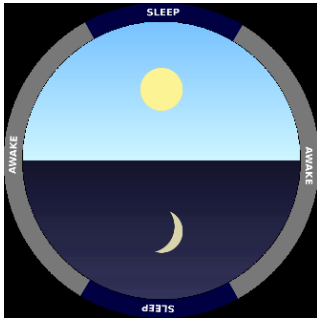
 Inside	 Outside
 Use food items (e.g., cans) or cleaning supplies as weights	 Take a walk or ride a bike
Learn a dance from YouTube, Tik Tok, Instagram, or GoNoodle...or freestyle to your favorite songs	 Gardening or yard work
 Do heavy work like carrying heavy items up and down stairs	 Go on a nature scavenger hunt
 Try yoga or animal poses/walks like crab walks, bear walks, frog jumps...	 Play catch or jump rope

## Exercise Activities Choice Board

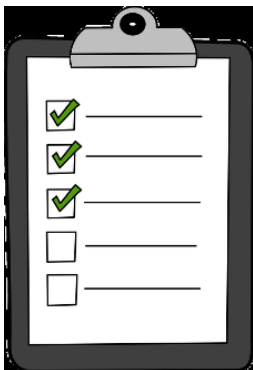
 Inside	 Outside
 Lift weights	 Play ball
 Dance	 Yard work
 Climb stairs	 Take a walk
 Yoga	 Go on a nature hike

# Re-establish, maintain, introduce routines

Individuals with autism cope best when daily routines are only minimally interrupted. Routines can provide increased comfort for individuals with autism.



**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, especially leading up to times of transition.



**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. And returning to school. Several examples are provided for common chores along with a template that can be used for a variety of daily living activities.

Daily Schedule Example

Task	Done
Wake Up	
Brush Teeth	
Get Dressed	
Eat Breakfast	
Read (30 minutes)	
Exercise (30 minutes)	

**Expanding the use of a visual schedule,** and using one 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 fridge, a list of jobs to do), 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.

It may also be necessary to create new routines prior to transition back to school/college:



**Transitioning off screens:** For many reasons, including those listed above, children and young adults may access screens more often and for longer periods of the day during this time. Transitioning away from a device, especially after a period of extended use, may be difficult for many children and young adults; however, the behavioural rigidity and inflexibility often characteristic in individuals with autism may make these transitions problematic. Establishing a clear, consistent, and concrete routine for this transition can better prepare the individual for the coming transition and offer support throughout.



**Use a visual timer.** It may be helpful for individuals with autism to “see” how much time remains of screen time before they will be expected to transition to off the device. Concepts related to time are fairly abstract (e.g. “You have a few minutes”), often cannot be interpreted literally (e.g. “Just a second” or “We need to get off in a minute”), and may be confusing, especially if time-telling is not a mastered skill. Presenting information related to time visually can assist in making the concepts more meaningful.



Another **visual transition strategy** to use is a visual countdown system. Like the visual timer, a visual countdown allows an individual to “see” how much time is remaining in an activity. The countdown differs, however, because there is no specific time increment used. This tool is beneficial if the timing of the transition needs to be flexible call but does not know when it will end). A countdown system can be made with numbered or coloured squares or sticky notes, or any shape or style that is meaningful to the individual. As the transition nears, the caregiver can pull off or cross off the top item (e.g. the number 5) so the individual is able to see that only 4 items remain. The caregiver decides how quickly or slowly to remove the remaining items depending on when the transition will occur. Two minutes may elapse between the removal of number 3 and number 2, while a longer amount of time may elapse before the final number is removed. Once the final item is removed, the individual is taught that it is time to transition. Several examples are provided, and these can be used to support any transition.



**Offer choices.** In a time of crisis, when most people feel like so much is out of their control, providing choices can increase a sense of autonomy and motivation. Creating regular opportunities across the day where family members have a voice about what happens and when it happens can serve as an effective anxiety reducing strategy and a communication tool. These choices might include the route for the nightly walk, meal options, order of activities for the day, and/or preferences for activities. Several examples are provided for use across the day and age range.



**Create a workspace with a to-do list.** For the first time, many individuals with autism will have been expected to complete schoolwork in the home setting. This structure will help with returning to school as it ‘sets the scene’ both visually and physically of structured working. Individuals with autism may have difficulty generalizing the strategies and skills they used in the school environment to the home environment (e.g. organizing materials, attending to work activities, submitting assignments online). Thus, it will be helpful to set up a designated workspace to help clarify expectations and reduce distractions. This may be a spot at the dining room table designated by a coloured placemat and facing away from the television or window. A visual “to-do” list can be given in several different ways—a) placing the individual worksheets to be completed on the child’s left and a small basket on the child’s right to put them in when they are finished, or b) writing a short list on a sticky note of the tasks to accomplish during the work session (e.g. 1 science story and 15 minutes of TV). These can be crossed off when they are finished. Older children and young adults can likely generate their own to-do lists but may need some initial support to set up a workspace and launch these routines. This will help to re-establish a transition back to school work.

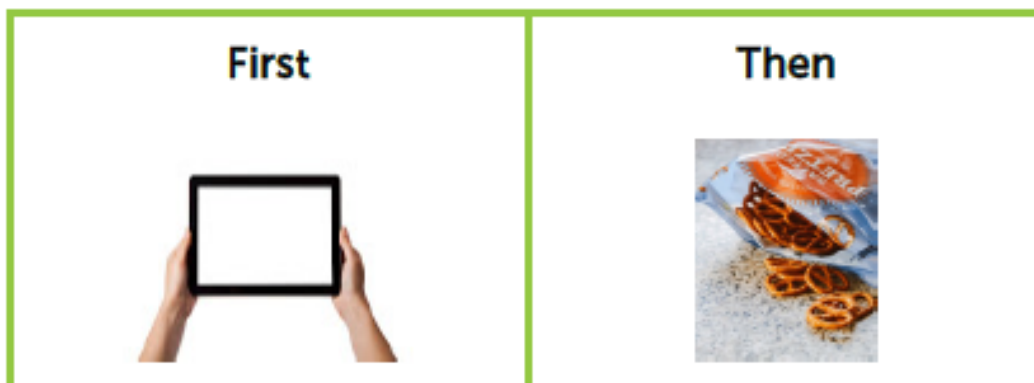
## How to Transition Off Screens

1. As much as possible, try to plan for screen time in the daily schedule. Make the times reasonable for your child's age.

2. Use a timer or clock to let your child know how much screen time they have so that they know what to expect.





3. Try to avoid planning screen time before non-preferred activities. For example, it might be easier to transition your child from screen time to snack than it would be to transition from screen time to an academic task.





# Signposting



	<p>Education Authority(Right click on link below and select 'Open hyperlink')</p> <p><a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/autism-advisory-intervention-service-aais">https://www.eani.org.uk/services/pupil-support-services/autism-advisory-intervention-service-aais</a></p>
	<p>Visit our Pinterest site for printable advice, support &amp; resources</p> <p>(Right click on link below and select 'Open hyperlink')</p> <p><a href="https://www.pinterest.co.uk/CYP_ASD/">https://www.pinterest.co.uk/CYP_ASD/</a></p>
	<p>Please check that you are on the database for receiving emails from South Eastern Trust 'Children's Autism Training'</p>
	<p><u>National/Regional Charities e.g.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middletown Centre for Autism</li> <li>• National Autistic Society: <a href="http://www.autism.org.uk">www.autism.org.uk</a></li> <li>• Autism NI: <a href="http://www.autismni.org">www.autismni.org</a></li> </ul>



## CYPASD

Children and Young People  
ASD is a guide developed by  
the Autism Intervention Service  
giving hints and tips for  
supporting individuals with a  
diagnosis.

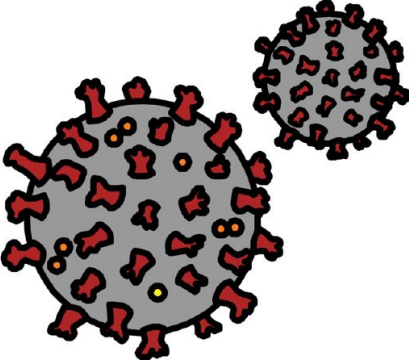
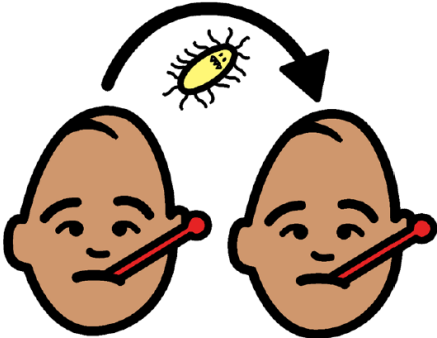




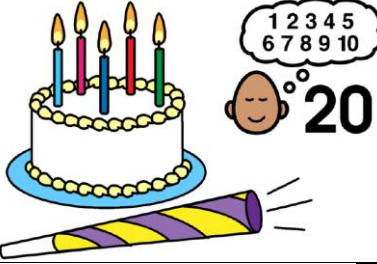

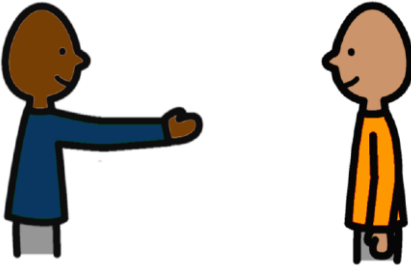
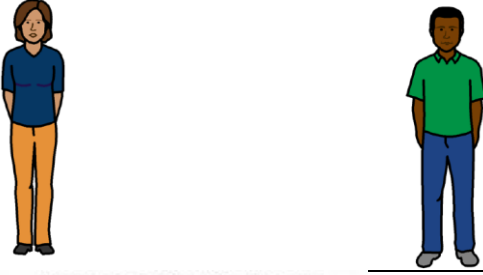
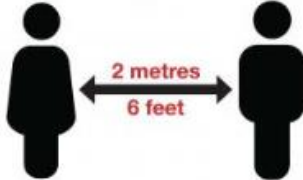

## CYP-ADHD



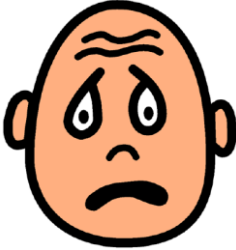

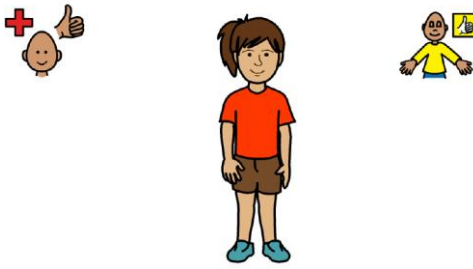



# **PRINTABLE RESOURCES**

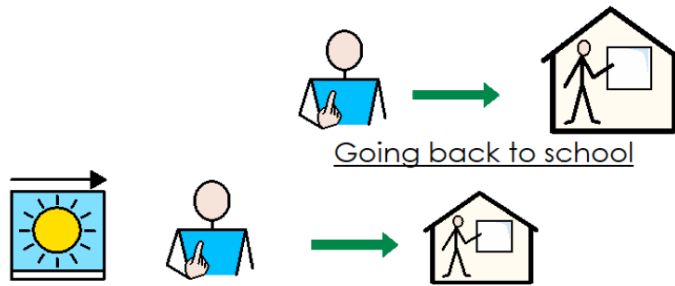
## Social Story about New Rules Going Back To School

<p>A lot of people are talking about Coronavirus</p>	
<p>Coronavirus germs can spread easily</p>	
<p>There are some new rules that will help me to stay safe and healthy</p>	<p>Coronavirus: Changing the Rules</p> 
<p>When I go back to school there will be some <b>new rules to follow</b>. These will help me stay safe and well.</p>	<p>The <b>new</b> School Rules</p>
<p>I need to <b>wash my hands</b> a lot with soap and water for 20 seconds to stay healthy</p>	

<p>When I wash my hands I will sing the <b>Happy Birthday song</b> or count to 20.</p>	
<p><b>I will cover my nose and mouth when I sneeze or cough</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will cough and sneeze into a tissue, put it in the bin, and wash my hands.</li> <li>• If I don't have a tissue I will cough and sneeze into my elbow.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>CATCH IT.</b></p> <p><b>BIN IT.</b></p> <p><b>KILL IT.</b></p>
<p>Another thing that I can do to stay healthy and safe is called <b>Social Distancing</b></p>	
<p><b>Social Distancing</b> means I cannot sit or stand close to other people</p>	
<p><b>Social Distancing</b> means stay at least 2 metres away from other people</p>	<p>Everyone in Northern Ireland should now be using social distancing</p>  <p>Stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people</p>
<p><b>Social Distancing</b> means that I will have to queue outside shops and supermarkets</p>	

<p><b>Social Distancing</b> means that crowded places like shops and cinemas may be closed</p>	
<p>Some people in school and other places might wear a face <b>mask</b>. Masks can help me to stay healthy and safe from the virus.</p>	
<p><b>Social Distancing</b> might make me feel worried, sad or scared.</p>	
<p>If I feel this way I can always <b>talk</b> to someone and this will help me.</p>	
<p><b>Social Distancing</b> will keep me healthy, happy and safe!</p>	
<p><b>When I go back to school I will follow my new rules and this will keep me safe and healthy</b></p>	 <p>safe</p>

## Social Story



Going back to school

Tomorrow I am going back to school.



I will see some of my friends and staff and I will do some fun activities.



I can only go to school if I feel well. If I am poorly I will stay at home.



The staff will help me to be safe by reminding me to catch my sneeze



or cough in a tissue and washing my hands often with soap



I will have fun at school with my friends.

# Hand Washing



Step 1.

Turn on **warm** water



Step 2.

Get hands wet



Step 3.

Get soap



Step 4.

Rub hands for **20 seconds**



Step 5.

Rinse hands



Step 6.

Turn water off



Step 7.

Dry hands

## Hand Washing

1. Turn on **warm** water

2. Get hands wet

3. Get soap

4. Rub hands for **20 seconds**






5. Rinse hands

6. Turn water off

7. Dry hands



## Daily Schedule Example

Task	Done
 Wake Up	
 Brush Teeth	
 Get Dressed	
 Eat Breakfast	
 Read (30 minutes)	
 Exercise (30 minutes)	

# Daily Schedule

Task	Done

## Daily Schedule Example

Task	To Be Done	Done
 Read (45 minutes)		
 Computer (30 minutes)		
 Eat lunch		
 Walk the dog		
 Complete homework		
 Eat snack		