

Sensitising parents of children with special needs

These are testing times for every one of us, especially for children with needs. Paediatric occupational therapists are allied health professionals who focus on their resumption of age-appropriate functions (occupation), be it eating, drinking, sleeping, talking or playing. During these challenging times, our children with needs are more likely to be disorganised because of the sudden halt of their routines. A change in routine leads to deprived stimulus, which might hamper their development. This may cause anxiety and distress even for the parents who may run out of ideas.



Dr. B. BALAJI
Senior Occupational Therapist

COVID-19

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Parents can lead by example like doing their regular chores of waking up in time, carrying on morning rituals without any delay or postponement. The above said modelling drives our children

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dren to continue their morning chores without any fuss even if they don't have to go out.

Explaining the current situation in short, simple and in clear phrases to nonverbal children with autism helps them reduce unwanted anxious behaviour and facilitates the desired behaviour; this technique is called social stories. A social story makes them ready to anticipate the day's new schedule and makes them to acclimatise it imaginatively. Morning chores such as brushing the teeth, toilet, and bathing can be facilitated through modelling, physical cues, verbal prompts and including various positive reinforcements over a period of time, since these can well become part of their ritual.

Sensory stimuli
Allowing children to observe the kitchen during meal preparation gives those rich sensory stimuli through visual, touch, olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste) inputs. Precautionary measures for hot, sharp objects have to be factored in. Mothers can teach children with real objects in more real life situations like naming, identifying

vegetables, fruits, colours, feel different textures of cereals, and smell various spices.

This can be followed by food play/messy play during their lunch time to desensitize touch, smell, and taste, visual over responses.

Avoid showing the child a mobile phone while feeding, instead go to the balcony and point to things. Parents can gradually substitute junk foods, with homemade organic and healthy snacks.

Best time for stories
Early evening are the best time for listening to stories from their grandparents or picture book stories which encourages good sitting, listening skills and expressive language. Playing music over speakers or wear noise cancelling head phones helps them to counter auditory over responsiveness and organises them. Letting loose to make funny movements and shake a bit relaxes them immensely. Dads can take over evening sessions by taking them to the balcony/terrace to water the plants, to encourage loads of sensory motor activity such as running, jumping, hopping, cycling, climbing, balancing,

and ball skills. Children who don't have access to terraces can arrange furniture for an obstacle course and climb over/crawl under to do picking and dropping tasks. This will help with the much-needed proprioceptive input. A cotton sari hammock suspended from ceiling hooks can be provided to ensure vestibular inputs so as to calm, and facilitate muscle tone especially for children with tonal imbalance, Down syndrome and Cerebral palsy. Table top activities such as drawing, colouring, pattern writing, grid diagrams, coping different geometric figures and shapes will integrate visual and motor components which are the prerequisites for academics and writing skills.

Sleep hygiene is very essential, so start with a warm bath, followed by warm food, bed time stories, lullabies in a less-distracted, cozy environment to put them to sleep. The above mentioned ideas are general guidelines and not individualised and parents are encouraged to follow their respective Occupational Therapist-given sensory diet for your specific needs.

Chennai Weather max min
Thiruvallur 37 23
Chennai Airport 35 24
Chennai City 34 24

Chennai Airport Today
34°C A warm and humid afternoon with pleasant night likely. The sky likely to remain partly cloudy over the region.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
35°C A very warm day lies ahead. Thunder clouds may develop at some parts.

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During lockdown, she goes out to serve society, and her family

Eswari, a conservancy worker, is her family's sole breadwinner

VIVEK NARAYANAN
CHENNAI

Despite the risks surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, V. Eswari, a conservancy worker with the Greater Chennai Corporation, goes out to work every day, and cleans the roads in Nolambur Phase 1. She is now the sole breadwinner of her family.



V. Eswari taking time off for breakfast. *M. VEDHAN

Due to the COVID-19 scare, Ms. Eswari's daughters have been trying to persuade her not to step out. But she is left with no choice, as her two sons and two sons-in-law, all daily wage earners, do not have any work now.

"So my ₹9,000 monthly salary is essential to run the family. Since I am a contract worker, my salary will be cut if I take a day's leave," says Ms. Eswari, while having her

breakfast, sitting on the wheel of a garbage pushcart. To date, she is not very sure about her age. "I must be in my 40s. I have been working with the GCC for the nine years and clearing garbage from the roads. My husband died 10 years ago and after struggling a lot, I managed to get my two daughters married," she says.

Wearing gloves and a mask, she cleans the roads every day from 6 a.m to 2 p.m.

The civic body provides breakfast and lunch. "Nowadays, when we ask for water many residents ask us to wash our hands before taking the tumbler or bottle. But a few just refuse, fearing that they may contract the virus. This attitude hurts me and my fellow workers," she says.

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3 die after consuming after-shave lotion



Tasmac outlets are closed due to lockdown.

The victims could not buy liquor because of the lockdown

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHI

Three fishermen died in a hospital after reportedly consuming after-shave lotion as a substitute for liquor at Kottaiappattanam in Pudukottai district on Friday night.

According to sources, M. Hasan Mydeen, 35, P. Anwar Raja, 33, and M. Arun Pandian, 29, of Fishermen Colo-

ny in Kottaiappattanam, who could not get liquor because of the closure of Tasmac outlets in the wake of lockdown, had reportedly mixed after-shave lotion in a soft drink and consumed it.

A little later Mr. Raja returned home. Mr. Mydeen and Mr. Pandian began vomiting.

On seeing their condition,

passers-by rushed them to the Government Hospital at Manamalkudi. Mr. Raja too was admitted to the hospital and died subsequently, the police said.

Mr. Mydeen and Mr. Pandian died without responding to treatment.

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Tiruvallur's Cobuddy app gets first distress message

Over 200 persons have downloaded the app

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Tiruvallur police on Saturday received the first message seeking help on Cobuddy – the platform which includes a mobile app for tracking those quarantined with COVID-19.

In Tiruvallur district, over 500 people are under home quarantine and to track them, the Tiruvallur district police, with NotionTag Technologies, launched Cobuddy last week.

Using the platform, the government can track, communicate effectively and eventually coordinate delivery of essentials to the doorsteps of the quarantined persons. "More than 200 persons have downloaded the app. On Saturday, a person from Adyar, whose permanent address is in Tiruvallur, contacted us over the application and said he had throat pain. We referred him to a private hospital in Adyar and alerted the health officials," said P. Aravindan, Superintendent of Police, Tiruvallur.

Mr. Aravindan has requested home quarantined persons in Ti-