



Family and Children's Services

Children's Developmental Services

Kids with Autism and Restaurants

PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE AUTISTIC KNOW ALL TOO WELL THE SIMPLE, EVERYDAY RESTAURANT EXPERIENCES THAT CAN RUIN A DINNER OUT. SO WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES THAT WORK?

Problem #1 – The restaurant looks different.

A child on the autism spectrum often remembers seemingly minute details. He would be likely to remember where each family member sits at a table in a restaurant. He would likely remember the nice waiter who always has red balloons. He would also remember the way his favorite fast food restaurant looks inside and that it may be very different than another restaurant in the same chain.

Problem # 2 – The restaurant is too crowded.

Typically children with autism do not like crowds. People may be too close for comfort in a crowded public restaurant. Restaurant workers may be too “pushy” or too much in the child’s face.

Problem #3 – The restaurant is too noisy.

Sometimes the child thrives on turning up the volume from a favorite movie or CD. Those are preferred sounds. The sounds from a large crowd of people and unexpected sounds (a cannon firing near a theme park restaurant) can be uncomfortable or even painful to the child on the autism spectrum.





Problem #4 – The restaurant does not serve foods the child likes.

No one likes to eat at a place where they don’t like the food, and many children who are autistic have very limited diets (by their choice), perhaps preferring only foods of a certain texture or color. Other children may be on a restricted diet to address the autism.

Problem #5 – There are too many stims for the child.

Special lighting, fun doors, and dangling decorations can be stims for the child on the autism spectrum. If they are too engaging, it may be hard to even get the child to sit at the table.

Consider these strategies before tackling the restaurant scene.

-  Know the restaurant.
-  Prepare your child to expect differences. (The burger place in your town has a western décor, but the one in the same chain in grandma’s town has a sports theme.) Using pictures to talk ahead of time can help.
-  Try to choose times that will be less congested. If possible, try to have a favorite place to sit and request it.
-  If necessary, take some preferred foods for the child.



Sometimes, consider eating out without the kids. Although a meal out can be a treat if it is the child’s favorite place, remember that not every meal out has to include the kids.

Sensory Solutions

Developing Partnerships for School Success - Part II Submitted by Brenda Witherspoon

Below is a list of ideas to help if your child has trouble sitting in class due to restlessness.

1. Sitting on therapy balls in class.
2. Give the child breaks where he can move such as taking a note to the office.
3. Crabwalk or crawl to other areas of the room if this can be worked appropriately into the classroom.
4. Make sure the child's feet touch the floor.
5. Provide different textures for the child to sit on or to put under his/her feet (e.g. different densities of rugs, tiles, sand paper, sheepskin, and beanbag). You can also do this with the child's shoes off.
6. Have the reading group done while the children are prone (lying with the face down, on the abdomen); do writing in prone; alternate with kneel-sitting.
7. Provide the child with a desk with the chair attached.
8. Provide a work station where the child can stand to work.
10. Place a bungee cord or Theraband around the legs of the desk (*or chair*) so the child has something to push or pull against with his/her feet.
11. For a low tone child, make sure things are at their eye level so they do not have to crane their necks to see.
12. Help the teacher understand that it may take so much cognitive and emotional energy to sit still, that the child may not have enough energy available for learning. Just let the child fidget.
13. Give the child a job such as cleaning off the shelves in the classroom so he/she can do this while the teacher is talking or at other times during the class. This gives the child a purpose to get up and move.
14. Provide a period when the child/children do joint compressions and provide deep pressure to themselves as they are sitting at their desk. The therapist who offered this suggestion does this exercise to the music of "Bermuda Bahama", but children sometimes bring their own songs in. During the song the teacher leads the children in:
 - shifting their weight in sitting side to side
 - press hands together
 - put hands on top of head and press down
 - cross arms and press on shoulders with opposite hand
 - hands on knees and press down
 - hands under opposite elbows and press up



- rotate shoulders side to side; rotate upper trunk side to side
 - tilt head rhythmically side to side
 - brush hands down arms firmly
 - eventually add the component of doing the above movements in sequence
 - begin with three minutes and work up to 10 minutes
 - children should remain in their seats, but should be allowed to be physical and noisy. Children were felt to be better able to settle down and work after the session.
15. Sitting in a rocking chair for periods during the day.
 16. Gum chewing or chew on a "chewy" (e.g. rubber tubing *or pencil toppers*)
 18. Let child play with a koosh ball *or stress ball*.
 20. Turn off the fluorescent lights.
 21. Put tape on the floor to mark the position for the chair.
 24. Help the child establish his/her own boundaries by using a carpet square. (Might work particularly well with preschool and kindergarten children.)
 25. Keep expectations at a realistic level; don't expect the child to sit too long.
 26. Give the child a desk at both the front and the back of the room so he/she can move between class activities.

Easter Nest Cupcakes with Speckled Easter Eggs

Ingredients:

- 1 or 2 boxes Plain white cake mix
- Ready made vanilla icing
- 1 cup Shredded coconut
- Green food coloring
- Food coloring (pastel colors)
- Easter muffin liners (optional)
- Jelly beans or M&M speckled Easter eggs optional)
- String licorice (optional)

Directions:

1. Make up a batch (or two!!) of cupcakes; plain white cake mix is fine.
2. Take a tub of ready-made vanilla icing and divide into 4 or 5 parts. Leave one part white, and color the other icing portions in Easter-like pastel colors (pink, yellow, peach, lavender, etc)
3. Ice the cup cakes with various colors.
4. Put about a cup of shredded coconut into a small bowl. Add a few drops of green food coloring until a nice spring grass-like green color is obtained for the coconut. Sprinkle in a little bit of icing sugar and a few drops of water. (This will give the coconut mixture a 'stickiness' to it so it will set well on top of the cupcakes, and hold the mini-eggs).
5. Drop a teaspoonful or so of grass mixture onto each cupcake. Top each 'grass nest' with 2-3 M&M speckled Easter eggs (available in most grocery shops in the lead-up to Easter) or jelly beans.
6. Last of all take some string licorice to make handle of basket (insert into cupcake to form handle) they are colorful, fun and the kids love them!
7. Place in fridge which will allow the eggs to sit firmly into the nests.
8. Arrange on a platter covered in Easter basket 'hay'.





THE COMING OF SPRING

And yet-winter soon will be gone.
Soon there will be no more snow.
Trees will start to turn green, as plants
start to grow.
Raindrops, Raindrops, will fall here and
there.
And flowers will blossom everywhere.
Visions of daffodils, tulips, pink roses,
blossoming all around.
The birds chirping, such a beautiful
sound.
As the days become longer, comes
wonderful things to do.
Jogging, bicycle riding, even walks in
the park too.
More rides to view the countryside in
the car.
Soon warm and lovely weather is not
far.
The beauty of April, May, and June.
For it's arrival will be soon.
The Coming Of Spring

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Are you aware that Family and Children's services offer a variety of voluntary services within the Rainy River District? These services include:

Children's Mental Health Services – Assisting children, adolescence and their families who may be experiencing emotional, social, and/or psychological problems in their school, family, and/or community life. Services are provided free of charge, for a wide range of difficulties from mild adjustment reactions to severe psychiatric problems in children ranging in age from birth up to 18 years.

Infant & Child Development – Servicing children 0 – 6 years of age who are at risk for a delay, or children with a diagnosed physical, developmental or sensory disability. Some of the services provided include early intervention programs, developmental screening and assessments, assistance with transition to school for special needs children, and parenting programs on a group or individual basis.

Community Integration – servicing children with a physical or developmental disability 6 years – 18 years and up to 21 years as long as they are in school. The primary focus of this program is to facilitate integration into the community. Some of the services provided include developmental assessments, advocacy in relation to other agencies, linkages to health, financial, and educational resources in the community.

Family Relief – a program that provides families a respite period from the responsibility of the daily care of an individual with a physical and/or developmental disability. The three options to services include In-home respite – provided in the family home, Out-of-home respite – provided in the approved worker's home, and community participation – The individual is accompanied by their Family Relief Worker into the community to participate in community events or activities.

For more information about the above voluntary services please contact

Family and Children's Services
For Fort Frances call (807) 274-7787 or 1-800-465-7764 (Toll Free), for Atikokan call 597-2700, and for Rainy River call 852-3387.

To make a referral for service, please call Integrated Services Northwest, The Integrated Services for Northern Children Program for Single Point of access. For Fort Frances, Rainy River and area call 274-9797, for Atikokan area call 807-597-4528

Do you have something to Share?

Please phone Debra Bruyere
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