



Family and Children's Services

Children's Developmental Services

Routines for Children with Disabilities

Often parents of the child with a disability struggle to create even more basic schedules as they plan routines at home for self-care and other daily living skills. The child with a disability is not exempt from schedules and routines of our fast-paced society. Speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy, and social language groups all come with schedules. Here is a plan to develop a routine for the many tasks that are important for future independent living.

Choose the Self-Care or Daily Living Skill

Choose a time of day to start. Many families need a morning routine for a child with a disability to make sure that everyone gets out the door on time.

This is important that very small skills are chosen. For example, a parent might want the child to put on his pajamas independently. This is a specific skill as opposed to get ready for bed which would involve a number of skills like brushing teeth and picking up toys.

Other daily living skills or self-care skills will be added as the child with a disability masters earlier skills. Focusing on small steps is what is important here. (Parents might consider how they learned computer skills. The skills are many sequential parts of a whole.)

Break the Daily Living Skill into Parts

Using putting on pajamas as an example, what are the parts of that task?

- Willingness to put the pajamas on at the routine bedtime
- Getting pajamas from the designated place
- Putting pajamas on or asking for help
- Putting clothes and shoes in the appropriate place

Note: If bedtime is at a different time each evening, establishing a routine will be more difficult. If the evening routine is dinner, quiet play or activity, and bedtime at 8:00 p.m.; the child with a disability knows what is coming next. Predictability is important to routine success.

Make a Schedule Chart

Daily living skills and self-care are easily communicated with a chart.

Carefully Consider the Routine

Before presenting the routine to the child with a disability, parents will want to review the schedule. Is it practical given the commitments of all family members and the individual needs of the child? Small parts of a well-thought plan will offer more success than something that looks good on paper but does not really reflect how the family functions.

Teach the Daily Living Skill

Once a specific daily living skill has been chosen and represented in a schedule chart, parents of a child with a disability must teach the skill. Teaching a skill should include showing the child how to do the task and doing the task as the child attempts to do the task as well. For example, if the task is picking up toys before dinner, the parent will show the child with a disability how to pick up the toys with care to teach not throwing them and putting them in the designated place. On later days, the parent may pick up the toys as the child is doing so, again reinforcing the desired way to do so.



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Allow Time for Practice of the Daily Living Skill

It takes time to practice new skills. Initially, the child may need to be reminded to complete the task. Hopefully, that will not be the case as time continues. As the child attempts to pick up the toys on future occasions he may not get all the toys. He may be careless in how to put the toys away (by throwing them). In every instance the parent will be providing verbal reminders (or modeling of how to do the task).

Provide Rewards for Schedule Success

Determine how the child with a disability will be rewarded for completing the task. Parents of all children have the complicated task of rewarding their children and yet not offering rewards that are too lavish for a simple, daily routine.

Plan the Next Daily Living Skill to be Taught

Once a daily living skill has been taught, it is time to consider the next step. Again, success with one skill does not mean that the child with a disability is ready for a lengthy, detailed list of things to do. Parents may wish to consider one of the following options.

- Add a next responsibility that will work with the newly accomplished task. For example, if the child has learned to brush his teeth, add putting on pajamas.
- Add a next responsibility that will take place in another part of the day. For example, if the child with a disability is picking up his toys before bedtime, add taking his plate to the dishwasher after meals.

Add the same task multiple times throughout the day. For example, if the child has learned to pick up his toys before bed, expect that he will also pick up his toys before mealtimes.

With practice and repetition your child can become successful in completing daily living routines.

Sensory Solutions



Developing Partnerships for School Success - Part I **Submitted by Brenda Witherspoon**

The parent teacher interview may be a starting point for discussing how Sensory Processing affects your child's ability to function in the classroom. A teacher who does not understand SPD may interpret a child's action as being behavior rather than due to underlying sensory problems. For instance, a child may have difficulty standing in a line with others and, if bumped, may strike out verbally or physically at other children. It may appear to be a behavioral reaction, but in reality, the child has an oversensitivity to touch and physiologically experiences and interprets the touch as a "hit" rather than a simple bump. So, with a classroom of 20+ children, how can you help a teacher understand the impact of SPD? Approach the situation with an attitude of shared problem solving. Establish a good relationship with the teacher to show your commitment to being an active participant in helping her classroom function successfully.

What are the most typical challenges for children with SPD?

Challenge: Transitions

Children with SPD often experience difficulty transitioning from home to the classroom, between classes or adjusting to major changes in routines like field trips or assemblies.

- ☆ What can you do as the parent? Your child needs adequate time to get up and be up completing home routines before school. You might use a visual schedule (e.g., photos or illustrations cut out of magazines) indicating what activities are completed before school. Establish a routine to move into the classroom like saying, "See you later alligator," give a high-five or a hug and then leave. Predictability will go far in decreasing anxiety over separation.
- ☆ What can the teacher do? Teachers can also use a visual schedule to facilitate transitions within the classroom daily routines. Teachers should notify parents of special events in advance so the special activities can be discussed at home and the child can be prepared for what may seem to be a major change in routine. This often decreases a child's anxiety and eases the transition to an unusual activity.

Challenge: Sensitivity to sensory input

Some children with SPD are over reactive to visual items on walls, counters in classroom, to specific sounds, levels of noise in classroom or being touched or bumped by others.

- ☆ What can you do as the parent? Parents can provide a variety of activities during the day that might be called a "sensory diet." These activities are generally prescribed by a therapist to support the child's ability to tolerate sensory stimulation during the day which may include heavy work (use of large body muscles) or calming activities (slow rocking or deep pressure to the entire body).
- ☆ What can the teacher do? Teachers might want to seat a child with SPD in a position that minimizes exposure to high visual or auditory input. Consider facing the child away from distracting walls or sitting in an area away from the noise of other's conversations. Rules can be established that include no talking during work times or use "inside whisper" only when children have to communicate. Some children prefer to wear noise blocking headphones during seat work.

Challenge: Social Skills

Many children have difficulty communicating with teacher and peers. They may be unable to play in a group on playground, at lunch, or during academic assignments. Learning to assume different roles such as leader, follower is also challenging.

- ☆ What can you do as the parent? Parents can model how to start a conversation with others and how to sustain it, and provide opportunities in comfortable places for children to engage in conversations (with cousins, close relatives, familiar neighbors). Other ideas include 1) purposefully changing roles in playtime, such as follow the leader with taking turns being leader, 2) playing games including turn taking, winning and losing, 3) attending community activities where child has option of joining in when comfortable in doing so. Help your child "use words" to express feelings, provide simple words or simple pictures to help them identify their feelings.
- ☆ What can the teacher do? Teachers can often implement activities to support social skills in the classroom and if necessary adjust the day's routine. Morning activities might be very challenging for a child with SPD. Possible ideas include: not calling on this child first and giving him/her an option to hear question asked and formulate an answer before speaking. Consider designating a class "buddy" for social activities or using another child as a reader for the child with language problems. Engage children in imaginative activities such as making up plays that involve social situations and have all students help with what to say. Try class projects that address feelings and emphasize strategies for coping with their feelings.

Butterfly Thoughts

Welcome To Holland

by Emily Perl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....



When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.

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 at 274-7787 ext. 229 or email dbruyere@facsrr.ca

