



Managing Demands

Changes

Many parents will be trying to teach their child at home.

Engaging children and young people in schoolwork at home can be challenging. Some children with autism will enjoy the structure and familiarity of schoolwork, but others may refuse to engage. They may associate 'work' with the school context and cannot generalise the concept to home.

For example, you may have set out work on the kitchen table, but your child associates this with the place they eat and become upset when they see worksheets set out. The new pens and pencils you have bought look and feel different to the ones in school. The classmate who sits beside them for numeracy is not there. All these differences and changes can increase anxiety and lead to a refusal to engage in schoolwork at home.

Emotional Regulation

It is important to also remember that your child is still adjusting to the huge changes in daily routine and may not be in the emotional state to participate in formal learning. Information cannot be processed in a state of anxiety so now is not the time to introduce a new reading book or maths concept.

It is enough at the moment for your child to get used to the new routine and to gain some emotional regulation.

How can you help?

This is what you can do to help:

- Reduce demands. Schoolwork can be kept for the weeks ahead. There is no urgency to complete it all right now.
- Fill your child's schedule with lots of their favourite activities. This will help in teaching them to follow the new schedule as they will be more motivated to engage in activities which they enjoy.
- As they become more used to the new schedule, you can begin to add in less preferred activities, this may be schoolwork for some, and build it very gradually in the weeks ahead.
- If your child is having a difficult day, reduce the demands again. Schoolwork can be re-visited another day.
- A choice board is useful for some children as it gives them some independence and a feeling of control over what is happening in their daily lives. Start by filling the choice board with favourite activities, but as time goes on, you can start to add less preferred, or more demanding tasks.
- If your child is ready to engage with this insert fun tabletop tasks between ones that are more challenging.

Below is a lovely example of a choice board. This child called his the "Bored Board".

