

## Keeping up a routine through change – top tips

No matter what the situation is there will always be a time where you and your child are having to survive things that aren't your usual routine whether is Christmas, school holidays, exclusion or a time away from school because of a school emergency.

Here are just a few tips and hints to help you survive...

<p><b>Routine</b></p> <p>It's vital to reduce everyone's anxieties. So get up at the same time, have a wash, change clothing from night wear, have a learning and play timetable, keep games console time to normal school day expectation, go to bed at the normal time. Avoid lazy pyjamas days unless it's the weekend it's difficult to break a PJ routine when things are back to normal.</p>	<p><b>Snacks and eating</b></p> <p>Time away from school can be expensive as children appear to need to eat constantly. Every day make a snack box for each child put in what you think is a fair portion of snacks, go steady on the sugary foods make sure you include a good balance of fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates and proteins. Have a toast time when its mid-morning rather than relying on a chocolate bar to re-awaken everyone's systems.</p>
<p><b>Day and night</b></p> <p>Without a change in light our brains won't release melatonin, the hormone needed to make us sleepy, so make sure curtains are open in the day and the house is darker at night. Stick with your usual bedtime routine and remember don't introduce technology if it's not already in your bedtime routine.</p>	<p><b>Wake up your brain</b></p> <p>We all need fresh air it makes our brains feel alert and ready for the next step of the routine. So take a movement break every 20 minutes get up walk around, stand on the back garden and breath in deeply. Remember running in straight lines calms our Vagus nerve which helps us to re-regulate so set yourselves a challenge of how many times can you run up and down the garden in a minute – repeat this as often as possible.</p>

<p><b>Encouraging independence.</b> Take the chance to teach your child a new life skill that will prepare them for returning to routine. Make it a game here's some ideas – How quick can you dress yourself... lets beat the clock. Pack your own school bag in under 15 minutes, you may need to start this with a treasure hunt for necessary items. Help me to prepare tea, it's an ideal time to encourage those fussy eaters to see food in a different light.</p>	<p><b>Chores</b> It's unlikely that you'll have a bottomless purse so encourage chores as they really promote independence and financial responsibility. Identify 3 chores per day nothing big or out of your family routine, put a price on (be careful it could cost you a fortune) and let them see the pennies grow. NB: Make sure they are age/developmentally appropriate and be aware of yours and your child's safety.</p>
<p><b>Get creative</b> It doesn't have to be messy, set up a "messy zone" outside even if the weather isn't fantastic get creative, break out the pens, paper, scissors, glue, selotape, boxes, cartons etc. and just glue and stick. Hang pictures out to dry on the washing line (it doesn't matter if they drip) lay them on the grass, paint a stone and leave it for others to find next time you're out for a walk. <b>It's not about the end result it's about the process of just having a go.</b></p>	<p><b>Don't forget to play</b> <b>Yes</b> - it may feel like the impossible but re-connect with your inner child and simply play. Don't worry about the rules of the board game mix it up and let the winner be the loser for a change. Take it in turns to dictate the rules, expect things to get grumpy- sharing and empathy don't always come easy regardless of our ages so give yourselves a time limit, don't always play the favourite game and don't be scared of having no idea how it works, it's ok learn together.</p>

The situation may be stressful, you may not necessarily agree with your child being at home, you still may have things you need to get done and you're frustrated with feeling powerless.

**So remember: its ok to feel all that and it's ok for your child to feel all that .... Your child may never thank you and tell you you're amazing but you are, so just give yourself a break take a big breath because you can do this.**