

Looking to the Future: *Building Resiliency and Managing Anxiety Post-Pandemic*

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Goals & Objectives

- This program is intended to provide an overview and understanding of strategies for managing anxiety and related concerns within families during and as we look forward to post-pandemic times
- Learning Objectives:
 - How to effectively engage with your loved one to maintain healthy connections
 - Communication strategies to address disagreements or stressful situations
 - Alternative supports and strategies to manage stress for the whole family



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Create Opportunities & Support Understanding

- Talk about what is happening
 - Use strategies appropriate for the child's language and comprehension level
 - Use aids to assist in processing and reinforcing the information

Communication Do's

- Keep open communication about updates
- Use concrete language and terms
- Use visual supports
- Provide multiple levels of communication

Communicating Effectively

- Understanding of current situations will vary and so will support needs with the continued changes within society
- Avoid flowery or abstract phrasing
- Communicate to their strengths
- Check for understanding

Other Communication & Memory Aid Strategies

- Adapted communication style
 - Create and maintain structure
 - Reinforce expectations and information
 - Consistency with school/community sites
- Structured days
 - Stress management for the individual
 - Navigate transitions and change difficulties
 - Maintain family quality of life



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Use Schedules

- Schedules minimize anxiety and challenges by creating expectations and providing information
- Provide information and expectations
- Use what already exists
 - Templates online
 - School, work, life skills, activities, etc.
- Use what works



Schedules Available

- Create multiple schedules
 - Weekdays
 - Weekends
 - School / Work
 - Family Time
 - Task Analysis within Schedule



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Balanced Time

- What was “normal” *then*? What is “normal” *now*? What do you hope for the future?
 - *What is realistic?*
- Individual Time
- Family Time
- Breaks
- Use of technology



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Changes in Routines

- Adhere to schedules and expectations as best as possible
- If the supports are not helping, check to make sure they make sense or that the schedule is happening how it is indicated
- **Expect, Validate, and Normalize Difficulties!**



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Emotional Regulation and Difficulties in Communication

- Behavior is a form of communication
- Environments affect behavior of everyone
 - Increase activity, amount of people, noise may contribute to difficulties
- Monitor signs of increased stress and anxiety
 - Increases in self-stimulating or repetitive behaviors



Communicating during Stressful Times

- Limit reinforcement of challenging behaviors
- Provide what is expected
 - *Lower expectations and understand that right now, things are not as expected*
 - What you want to see
 - What is available
 - Use supports such as “first, then”
- Avoid power struggles and negotiations during challenging times
 - Engage in collaboration when everyone is calm
 - Parents are impacted by their child’s anxiety just as the child is impacted by the parents
 - Imperative to stay as calm as possible

Understanding & Supporting during Difficult Times

- May not only be experiencing increased anxiety or frustration related to continued changes but also about the future
- It's hard to understand, just like for most of us, why dates and expectations are frequently changing
- Provide positive reinforcement when opportunities present
 - Catch them being good
 - Praise sandwich



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Setting Safe Limits and Providing Consistency

- Set limits as appropriate
- Provide instructions meeting communication needs
- Give clear, concise expectations
- Allow for 2-3 choices
- Repeat once then follow through
- Redirect and de-escalate
- Decrease talking and give time/space
- Help to calm and recover
- Model calm and use of skills during interaction
- Follow through on positive and negative consequences

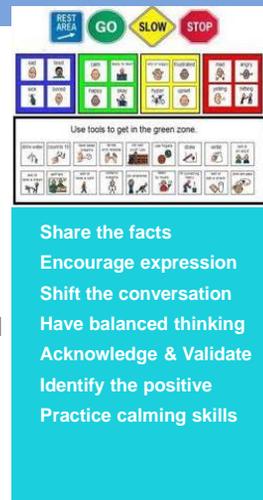


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Encouraging Positivity and Emotional Well-being

- Encourage interaction and communication
 - Verbal
 - Expressive
- Listen and problem-solve
- Encourage use of calming tools
 - Schedule opportunities in the day
 - Teach new tools during specific calm times
 - Have tools *accessible* to limit escalation and encourage independent use of skills



Collaborative Communication and Empowering toward Regulation

- If the individual disagrees with situation:
 - *if the opportunity is appropriate because sometimes a situation is one in which a parent needs to be the parent*
 - Remain calm
 - Listen
 - Repeat back for understanding check
 - Use “I” statements to take ownership of your perspective
 - Validate through saying sorry ****apologizing does not mean accepting fault/blame but validates and empathizes****
 - Attempt to problem solve by offering and exploring for alternatives you can do as well as what you’d like to them to do

(Laugeson & Frankel, 2015)

Family Self-Care

- Acknowledge the many roles caregivers are filling right now and changes overall within the family
- Caregivers also need to take care of themselves in order to take care of others
- For the family:
 - Identify individual self-care activities and times
 - Share in interests
 - Compromise



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Self-Care Opportunities

We all have some time throughout the day.

SELF CARE MENU

SECONDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a break while walking around the car after putting the kids in their car seats • Turn your phone off • Moment of silence • Congratulate yourself on doing something small • Savor the moment when something good happens • Wear your favorite perfume 		
MINUTES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burn a candle • Have a cup of tea or coffee • Take 10 deep breaths • Quick meditation or prayer • Put music on (and dance!) • Stretch • Call someone you love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation with a friend • Give a compliment • Write a thank you note • Buy some flowers • Go outside! • Create relaxing morning routine • Do something creative • Go for a walk • Mini pamper session.sheet masks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bubble bath/hot shower • Unplug from technology for an hour • Social media break • Make your favorite meal • Order out dinner • Try a new, healthy recipe • Write down 5 things you are thankful for • Heat up buckwheat neck pillow in microwave
HOURS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declutter a space/clean • Watch your favorite movie again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read a good book • Take a nap • Get a massage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga • Date night (in or out) with partner or friends • Have an intense workout session
LONGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try a new hobby or restart an old one • Try something new! • Therapy • Mindfulness, meditation 		

Do something for you!



(Autism Research Institute, 2020)

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HOW AMITA CAN SUPPORT FAMILIES



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Caregiver Support and Other Activities or Services

- **Virtual caregiver support groups for parents and/or legal guardians of individuals with neurodevelopmental concerns**
 - Offered in English and Spanish twice per month
- **Monthly family art activity**
 - Special focus group adapted for children 3-5 years
- **Virtual game night and interactive group**
 - middle school, high school, adult ages
- **Collaborative virtual expressive therapy group**
 - Monthly for the whole family
- **Other services offered in-person or via telehealth:**
 - Community resource identification
 - Educational webinars and information sharing
 - Social learning groups
 - Behavioral and resource support consultations
 - Individual outpatient therapy
 - Caregiver training for behavior management
 - Nondiagnostic autism screenings
 - Diagnostic autism evaluations

- All identified activities and groups require registration through the AMITA Health Autism Spectrum & Developmental Disorders Resource Center
- Therapy and ongoing parent training services require additional screening to determine eligibility
- Visual supports can also be accessed through email, arranged pick up at the office, or possible mailing



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Additional Services and Supports through AMITA

- The AMITA Health Behavioral Medicine Institute offers an array of child and adolescent specialties that span the continuum from prevention to inpatient treatment to address concerns related to mood or behavioral regulation, anxiety disorders, school anxiety and refusal, chemical dependency, self-injury, eating disorders and other mental and emotional health needs
 - Specialists include child/adolescent psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, nurses, expressive therapists, mental health counselors, teachers, school liaisons and consulting doctors
- Our treatment is based on the latest research and is evidence-based, solution-focused and family-oriented
 - Treatment of children and adolescents must be understood in the context of their development, family and cognitive/behavioral strategies
- Our programs are located throughout the northwest suburbs
- Receive more information by calling 855.383.2224
- Visit the Parent Resource page for more information:
 - <https://www.amitahealth.org/services/behavioral-medicine-institute/mental-health-resources#parent>
 - Also available are past webinar recordings for additional information and strategies
 - Recommended books, articles, and websites



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THANK YOU

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