

# Maintaining a sense of Calm in Covid-19: A family Guide



**This family guide has been devised by the behaviour support team in SOS Kilkenny with input from Nicola Spendlove ,OT in WIDA. The pack contains some useful information on supporting your loved one during the day service closures due to COVID-19.**

**While all of our routines are likely to change at this time, the benefits of maintaining calm and creating a sense of structure and purpose for our family member's daily life will help the levels of stress and worry for all living at home.**

**The need for a routine and structure will continue to become more important as the days pass so having a schedule of activities/jobs/plans for each day will help the people we support have purposeful days.**

**Purpose is a fundamental component of a fulfilling life. With a sense of purpose and predictability in their day, your loved one can focus on the activity at hand and by being focused, reduces the space for negativity to come in.**

**It will be then less likely we experience a sense of unease which can lead us to become bored, anxious and experience low mood.**

**We have included some guidance with examples and links attached to make it quick and easy to access and use over the duration of day service closures.**

**The behaviour support team is made up of Emma Woods and Mary O Connor and we will be available to speak to you about utilising this pack in more detail should you have any questions.**

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## Provide Routine:

While everyone's routine is likely to shift, try and create a sense of structure within the home environment for service users. Many service users we support have intolerance for uncertainty, meaning that they find it difficult to cope if there are uncertain events ahead. By providing a routine in house, we can help alleviate stress that is elicited by uncertainty. Using a communication system that the service user can understand is important.

For example visual supports etc. Routine in house might include meal times, artistic activities, movie nights, music sessions, Zumba class, mindfulness colouring, meditation and also implementing hand hygiene breaks to wash hands etc

### Example home routine below:

9am – breakfast

10am – arts & crafts

11am – Handwashing & cup of tea

11.30am – cleaning or organising task

1pm – Handwashing & lunch

2pm – walk, Handwash after walk

3.30pm – meditation or exercise video

4.30pm – phone call to loved one

5pm – Handwash & dinner

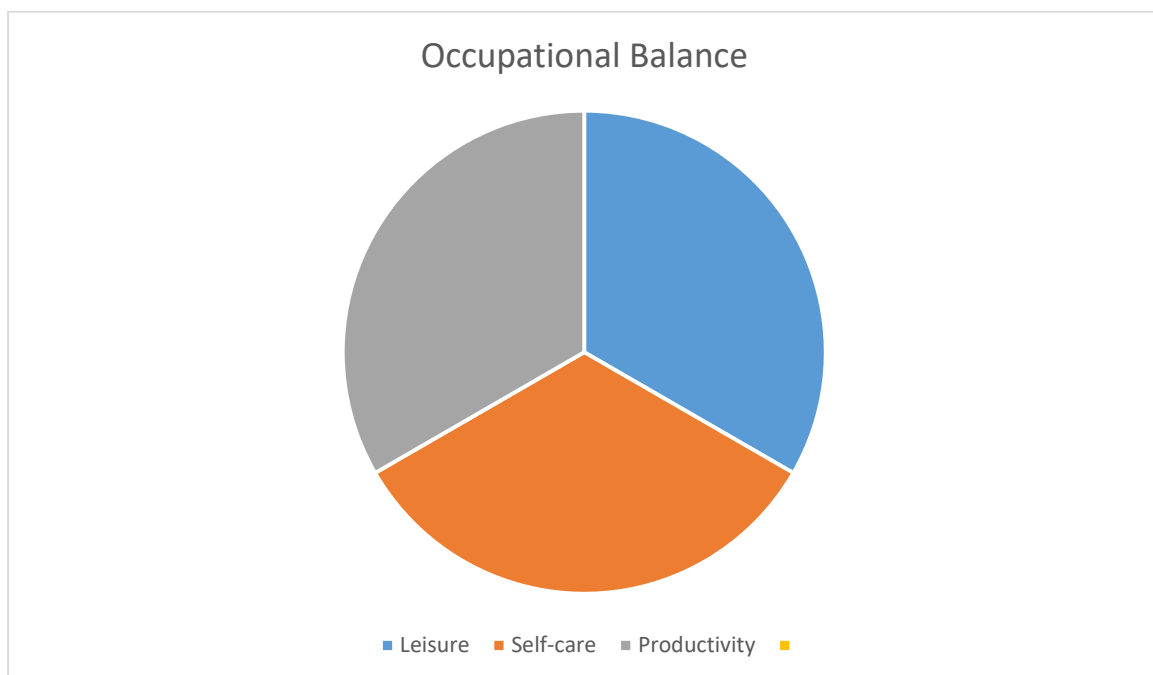
## 6pm – movie night

We recommend incorporating relatively equal elements of leisure, self-care, and productivity activities into your home schedule insofar as possible. This encourages occupational balance.

Examples of leisure might include board games, exercise, or a favourite TV show.

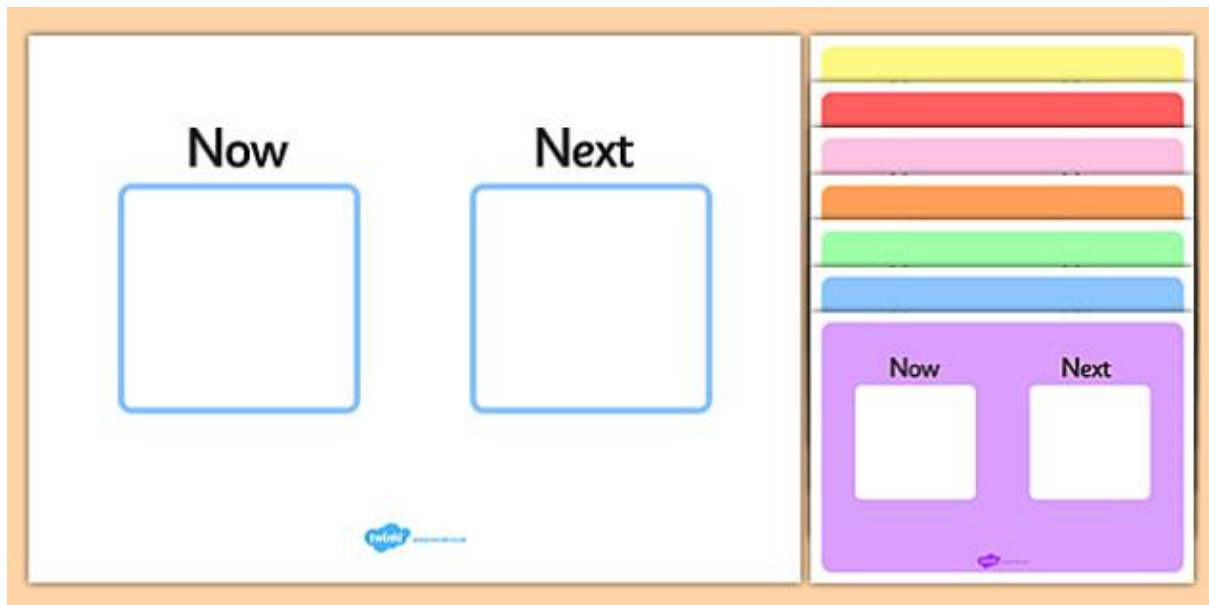
Examples of self-care might include guided meditation, self-massage, or a hot bath.

Examples of productivity might include cleaning, organising, or learning tasks.



## Example of Visual Supports:

### Now & Next Board



## Example Morning Schedule:



## Example Nighttime Schedule:



## Creative & Artistic Activities:

**Creative and**

**artistic activities can help us to**

**tune out and get into a flow state.**

**These can reduce anxiety and help**

**us ground ourselves. These can be**

**completed with the help of parents**

**and can create a positive shared**

**experience. More importantly, if you have found an activity where your child is in their flow state, use this time to make a cup of tea and take a break.**

**Examples of artistic activities can be found at the following link:**

<https://www.happinessishomemade.net/quick-easy-kids-crafts-anyone-can-make/>





## Meditation:

**The use of a Meditation throughout the day will help ground both ourselves and our loved ones.**

**Using simple meditations can help to begin with. Apps such as Insight Timer, headspace and YouTube can be helpful**

**for finding an appropriate meditation.**

**Please find this link below that is a short, accessible and has clear guided instructions.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEfs5TJZ6Nk>**

## Move a Muscle:

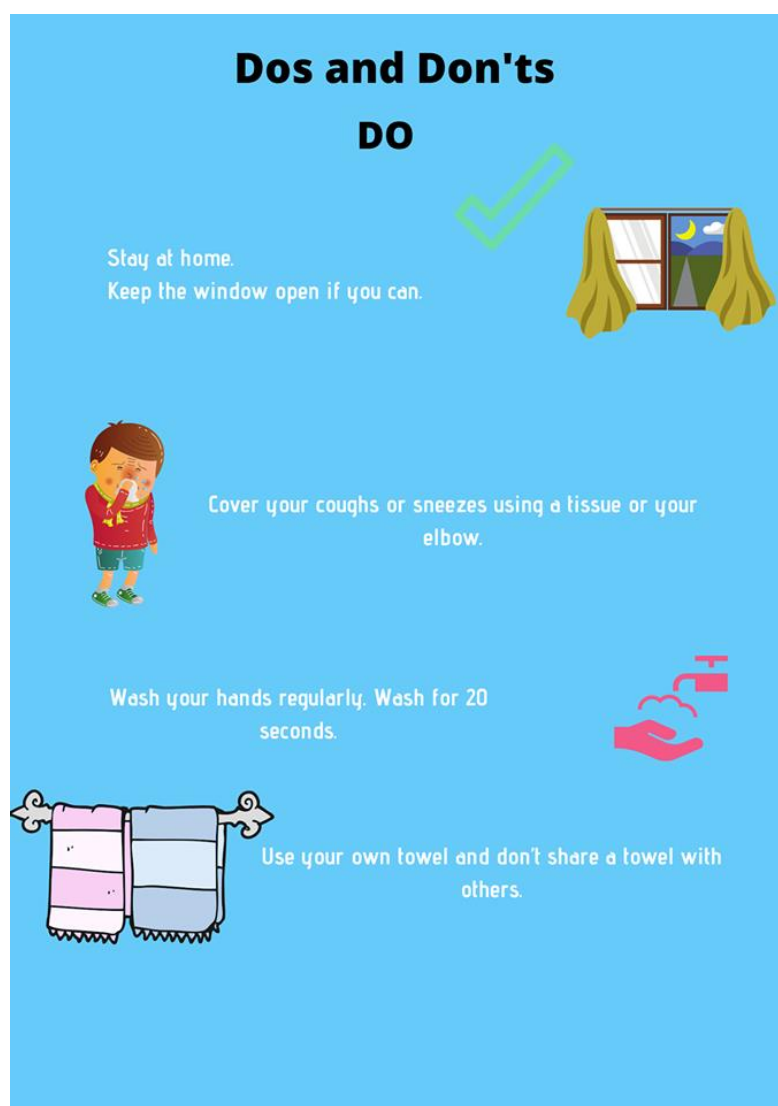
Exercise is a powerful tool for stress reduction. Whether you are indoors or outside, make sure to keep moving. Indoor exercises include some of the following and all movement is included.

- Zumba
- Chair exercises
- Completing chores around the house eg. Wiping down tables or hoovering
- Lifting something from A to B eg Moving logs into a wheelbarrow or helping carry the groceries



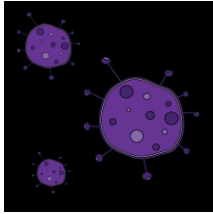
## Use of Social Stories:

It may be a very confusing time for loved ones who can't comprehend why they are not attending work or their day service for a period of time. The use of social stories will help create clarity and will provide an explanation for the closure of services and the change of routine. This will also provide everyone with a consistent message.

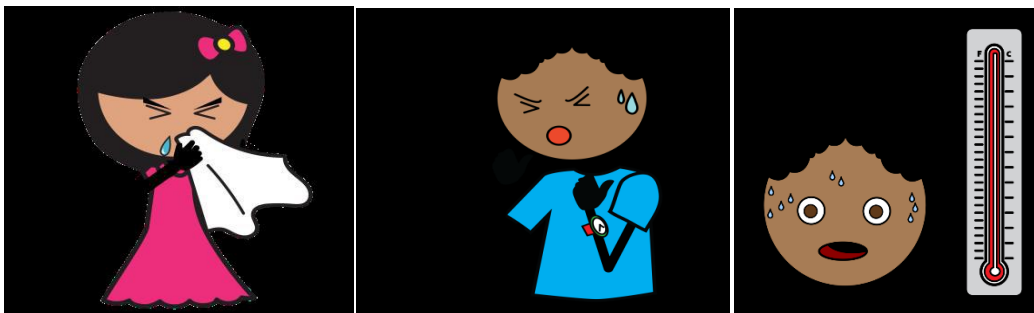


## Corona Virus Social Story

The Coronavirus is a virus that can make people feel unwell. The Coronavirus can also be called “COVID 19”



People who have the Coronavirus may have: Sore Throat/Cough Fever Runny Nose



Most people who have the Coronavirus will stay at home to get better.



Some people who have the Coronavirus will go to the hospital to get better.



**I can help stop the spread of germs by washing my hands with soap and water.**



**I can take my time when I wash my hands, making sure I wash between my fingers and all over my hands.**

**If I can't use soap I can use Hand Sanitizer.**



**There will be NO day services/work for \_\_two weeks\_\_**

**Day services/work will reopen again.**

**I will stay at home while work/day services are closed.**



I can do lots of things while I am at home. I can go for walks to get exercise and fresh air. I can ring my friends and family.

I know that I will be safe and I don't have to feel afraid.



I will be safe and happy at home.

## Create a relaxation Box:

Below is an example of a relaxation box

### Relaxation Box

In here you will find



SOMETHING TO **TOUCH**...

SOMETHING TO **HEAR**...





SOMETHING TO **TASTE**...

SOMETHING TO **SEE**...





SOMETHING TO **SMELL**...

This is an example of how to use a relaxation box in the home. You can be as creative as you would like

Something to  
Smell.....

Lemon, Lavender  
, Coffee beans, chocolate, flowers,  
shampoo

Something to Hear...Rain

Sounds, The clock, Music, laughter, the  
washing machine, the Hoover, The birds

Something to  
Taste..... Lemon, limes,  
curry, spicy nuts, basil, hummus,  
salsa

Something to  
Touch..... Sensory  
Toys, Play-doh, flour,  
shaving foam, messy  
play

Something to see...The  
clouds, the trees, cars,

## Deep Pressure

Deep pressure is one of the most calming sensations for our bodies when we are anxious. This is partly why we relax during hugs and massages.

It can be hard to give someone deep pressure when observing social distancing.

Techniques such as joint compressing exercises (anything involving heavy lifting or jumping), self-massage using hand cream, back massage with a yoga ball, using a back baller or foam roller, or using weighted blankets and lap pads can give this calming sensation. Using techniques like this means the person you support can experience deep pressure without physical touch from others.

### Deep Pressure



Bean Bags



Body Pillows



Cushions



Sleeping Bag



Pressure  
Vests



Hugs



Message



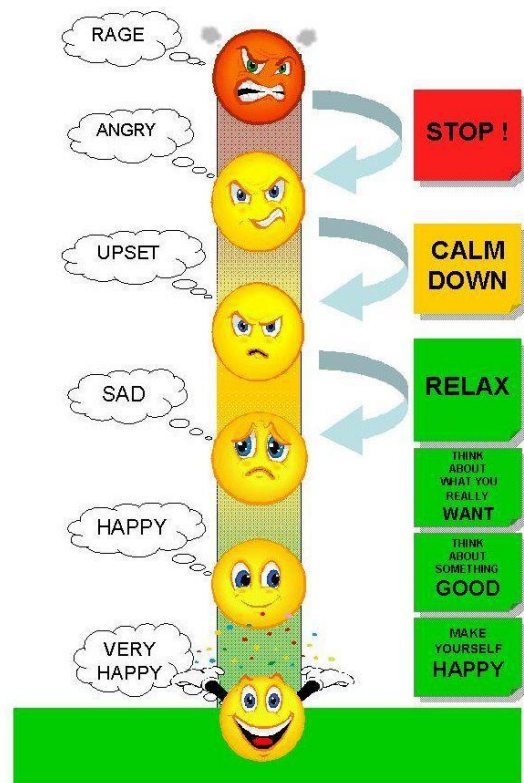
Brushing



Therapy Ball

## Complete an emotional check In:

As I discussed above, this can be a confusing time as routines have completely changed. Checking in and asking our loved ones how they are feeling is helpful. The use of emotional thermometers or emoji charts can help to identify how they might feel. This can open up a dialogue and coping strategies can be offered depending on the emotion they have described.



## Low Arousal Techniques in the Home

### A Predictable Environment...

Keeping the environment predictable is key when providing a low arousal environment. Since loved ones are now at home, and there is an air of uncertainty, it is important to maintain a level of predictability. Creating a predictable environment might involve sharing everyone's plans for the day. For example Dad will be going to work and will be back at 5pm.

### A Quiet Retreat...

Setting up a designated area in the home for relaxation and quiet time is advisable. Make sure there are always opportunities to withdraw and regroup throughout the day.

### Routines.....

Routines create predictability and lessen anxiety.

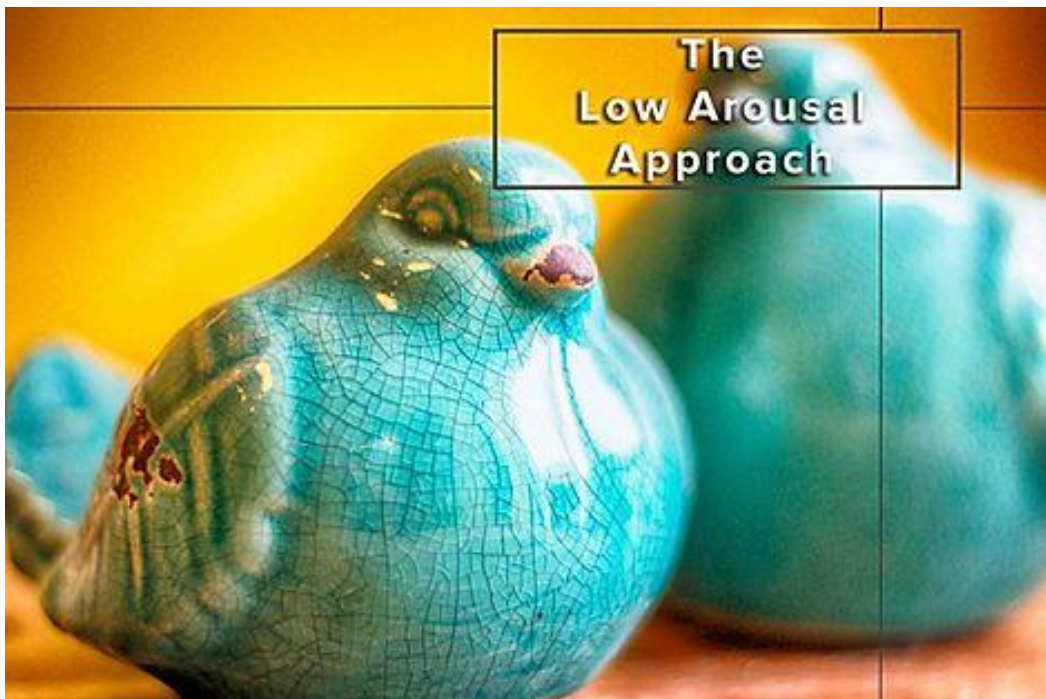
They also encourage autonomy and help with task completion. For example, if snack time is at 4 pm, it allows a 10 minute window for preparation before.

It is advisable for everyone to have a routine daily. The example shown above illustrates how a daily routine can be implemented in the home.

### When Stress elevates....

When there are tense moments, there are several strategies that can be used. Speak slowly, softly and calmly but don't overuse language. Reduce household noise, increase personal space, and generally don't touch when agitation is present.

Also reduce requests or demands when stress levels are rising. Also try to pull back on demands if a transition is occurring. With an unprecedented event such as the Corona Virus emerging, new routines will be going into place. Keeping stress levels as low as possible and reducing demands at this time is crucial.



## And lastly....

### The power of Language: Try to choose

words carefully. Using positive language will reduce fear and stress. For example, saying **that 'cleaning your hands will keep you healthy'** is less anxiety provoking opposed to saying **'if you don't clean your hands you'll get sick.'**



### **Resources for Families:**

[www.sensoryintegration.org.uk](http://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk)

[www.thinkingtoys.ie](http://www.thinkingtoys.ie)

[www.asiam.ie](http://www.asiam.ie)

[www.studio3.org](http://www.studio3.org)

<https://www.amazon.com/Managing-Family-Meltdown-Arousal-Approach/dp/1849050090>