

Support for Parents/Carers during Lockdown

As lockdown and restrictions drag on, the pressure to stay productive and achieve can build. This can be especially true for parents of children with special needs, with the extra parenting pressures this can bring.

Have I done enough with my child today?.....but I'm too tired to do anymore.....can become the daily cycle of thoughts.

Here are some tips, given to me from parents of children with special needs, to help make lockdown a little easier for you and your child.

Recharge yourself

Interaction batteries can become low. Look for opportunities to recharge. You may be lucky enough to get time on your own for a walk, or a bath, but if this does not happen it can increase frustration. Look for moments throughout the day, when your child is occupied. Take a moment, remember to breath, whatever you are feeling is ok. Guilt can creep in to ruin these moments, but remember, the more charge in your interaction battery, the more able you will be to interact with others and the more you will want to do so.

Allow your child to Recharge

Children can also feel the pressure to achieve and become tired of interacting. What does your child do to recharge their batteries? It may not seem productive or meaningful and can leave parents wondering if they should be persuading them to do something else instead. Yet, it is this lack of productivity which can allow them to recharge and be more ready to interact.

It's ok to Be

It is ok just to be in the same room as your child without feeling a pressure to actively engage with them. Parents have told me, that simply by being with their child, being available, but not doing anything, has lead their child to make the first move interacting. This may take time, as children get used to

patterns. It's about providing the opportunity, without having to make it happen.

Change

We all get stale. Stuck in a way of thinking. Sometimes it's difficult to get our child to do anything but their one favourite thing. Parents have told me that when they change what they do it can boost their own mood. Maybe you're trying to persuade your child to go in the garden and run round/splash in the puddles. Show them what you mean – go out yourself, run round, have fun! Don't try to persuade them, just let them watch you. If they don't join in, at least your mood will be lifted from the change. It doesn't have to be going out. Balance Tupperware boxes into the biggest tower you can make.....put plastic bags down and squirt shaving foam.... blow up balloons and let them go. Whatever you feel might interest your child and you don't mind doing. It's ok if your child does not join in today. Sometimes they need to watch and get used to something, so they can predict what might happen.

Dealing with rejection

Sometimes children literally push their parents away. Parents tell me this can be difficult to deal with, but when they have retreated to a safe distance and spent some time just being there, without asking anything from their child, things can start to change. This takes time. There is no time limit. Be reassured that you are doing what your child needs today and are investing in the future.

Pulling out the good bits

And then it happens. That fun spontaneous interaction. Celebrate and enjoy, even if it is only 30 seconds, or a fleeting moment. Parents tell me, that "pulling out the good bits" and initiating that again, at a different time, can help to build on the fun. It might be an activity like tupperware box towers or something very small and simple like a hand movement or facial expression you did together. It does not always "work" and that's ok, sometimes the moment has passed. Just offer. It's like saying "Remember when we did this.

That was fun wasn't it". You don't need to make it happen. There will be other moments, other good times.

If you would like to chat about any of this, or if you have ideas you would like to share with parents, feel free to contact me at

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