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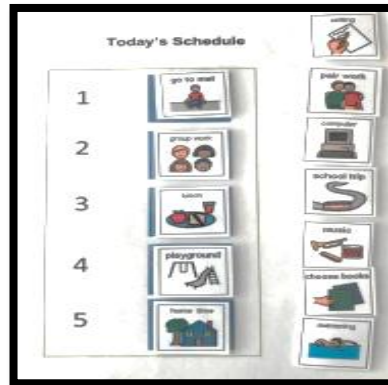
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
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NEURODEVELOPMENT TEAM

Supporting Attention, Concentration and Organisation Skills

Attention, concentration and organisational skills can take lots of practice to develop. For some children listening, concentrating and learning to organise themselves can be tricky to do. Here are some ideas to try at home to support your child to develop these skills:

Set up a schedule at home and stick to the routine



- Set specific times for the things that happen every day e.g. Waking up, playing, doing homework, doing chores, watching T.V., playing video games and going to bed.
- Talk about the schedule as a family and leave time for your child/ young person to ask any questions.
- Display the routine somewhere in your home so everyone can see it.
- You could do this by writing it on a blackboard/whiteboard or on a piece of paper and hanging it up. You could also do this visually using pictures or symbols (more information about visual schedules can be found by clicking: <https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/health-services/health-services1/services1/services/neurodevelopmental/documents/visual-timetable/>)
- Try and stick to the routine as much as possible as predictability can be really helpful for young people.

Set up a homework routine

- Develop a system for completing homework.
- Pick a regular place away from distractions such as other people, T.V., video games, etc.
- Break homework tasks down into smaller chunks and schedule in regular breaks. For example your child/young person could have a snack after school, then play or chill out for 15 minutes before starting homework time.
- Make sure to stop regularly for “movement breaks” that allow your child to get up, move and do something they enjoy, before settling back down to complete the task.
- You could use a visual timer to help them know how long they have left e.g. 20mins of work, 5mins break.
- Make sure to give your child/young person lots of encouragement.

Well done



Prepare for the day in advance

- Mornings can be a hectic time for everyone!
- Help your child/young person to be organised by helping them to get things ready the night before e.g. lay out their clothes for the next day, pack their school bag etc.
- This habit will continue to help them to be organised as they grow.



Set up house rules

- Setting up house rules, which explain what is expected in the home, makes sure everyone is on the “same page”.
- Involve your child/young person in agreeing the rules, this will help them to take ownership of them.
- Make the standards of behaviour for the family clearer, simple and to the point.
- Take time to explain the rules to the family and to explain what will happen when the rules are followed and when they are broken.



- Display the rules in the home so everyone can see them, again this could be done as a list or by using visuals.
- It is important that the rules are used consistently.
- Consequences for breaking the rules should be fair, quick and consistent.
- It is important that once a consequence has been completed that the child/young person has a clean slate.
- Do not resort to physical punishments as these can cause more harm than good.

Be Consistent

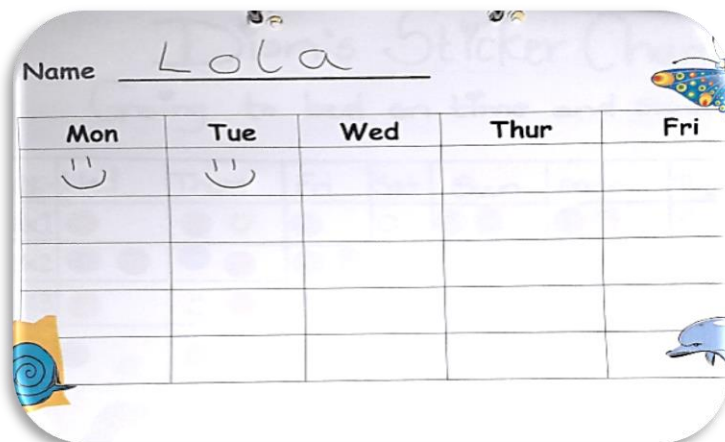
- It is important to always follow through on what you say.
- Only promise things you are able to deliver and always try to do what you say you are going to do.

- When your child/young person breaks the rules, warn them only once in a calm voice, reminding them what the consequence will be e.g. if you keep kicking the football in the lounge then the football will be taken away for the rest of the day
- If the warning does not work, then calmly follow through with the consequence.
- Try not to get into a verbal discussion about how fair or unfair it is.
- Do not resort to physical punishment as this is not effective and can cause more harm than good.



Be Positive!

- Tell your child/young person what you want them to do instead of focusing on what you don't want them to do.
- For example instead of saying "don't run" you could say "show me how nicely you can walk".
- Children who struggle with attention and concentration often spend lots of time being told what they are doing wrong.
- They need to be praised for the good things they do, no matter how small.
- Take every opportunity to **Reward and Praise** your child/young person for the good things they do e.g. closing the door quietly or getting dressed.



Focus on effort not on results

- Praise, encourage and reward your child for the effort they put into work and tasks not just the end result or grade!
- The most important thing is that you acknowledge that your child/young person is doing the best that they can, no matter what the end result is.

Be clear in what you say

- Make sure that the things you say are clearly understood by your child/young person.
- First, ensure you have their attention before speaking to them. You could do this by calling their name, gently tapping them on the shoulder or getting down to their level.
- Look at their face and then tell your child/young person in a clear, calm voice specifically what you would like them to do.

- It may help to ask them to repeat the instruction back to you, so you can make sure that they have understood.
- Try to keep your instructions short and straightforward. It can be helpful to break down longer instructions into shorter, 'bite size' chunks to help them to remember and understand what you have said.
- Make sure to praise your child/young person when they complete each step.

Face to face



Call their name

Get some exercise

- Being physically active aids attention and concentration.
- Activities that require the child/young person to focus on body movements such as gymnastics or dance can often be helpful.
- To develop their ability to focus and concentrate. Team sports can be very motivating as often young people want to win!
- Having regular 'movement breaks' within activities can help children and young people to stay focused.
- This could be having some 'wriggle time' within an activity or pausing the activity, getting up and having a move around before coming back and pressing play.



Quick tips to try

- **Avoid multi-tasking** – try to do one thing at a time, this will help you stay focused.
- **Break down the day** – Chunk the day into small blocks of time, visual timetables can be helpful for this.
- **Break down tasks and take regular breaks** – Break down work and tasks into smaller, manageable chunks. Having regular breaks will help you to focus during task time.
- **Use a timer** – Using a timer can help you to keep track of how much time is left. Knowing you only have 5 more minutes until your next break can help you stay focussed.
- **Use visual reminders** – Create reminders to help yourself remember and stay on track! You could write a list, use a sticky note, use picture cues or set a reminder on your phone.
- **Use a fidget item** – Some people find having a fidget item helps them to concentrate and makes it easier for them to listen. There are all sorts of different fidget items which can be helpful to keep your hands busy so your mind can focus.