



**National Institute for the Empowerment of persons with  
Intellectual Disabilities  
REGIONAL CENTRE NOIDA**  
(Deptt. of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities,  
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India)  
C 44-A Sec-40, Gautam Budh Nagar, NOIDA, U.P



## **ADVISORY FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Around the country, as cities have gone into lockdown to break the chain to stop the spread of COVID-19, the effort to save lives have put one vulnerable group more at risk – children with special needs!

Talking about emotions and situation is essential for mental health but this gets especially troubling with children with Intellectual Disabilities. Their limited and undifferentiated means of expression and impaired understanding makes it debilitating for the parents to make them understand the gravity of the situation, to settle their anxieties &/or behavioral problems due to disturbed routines and their repeated urge to move out of their homes.

People are social distancing to protect their medical health, but parents and/or care givers of children with special needs (CWSN) need to understand the urgency to protect the mental health and physical health of themselves and their children. With working from home to keep a job, or coping up with no jobs for a daily wage worker, doing all household chores by self and maintaining standards of sanitization along with attending to the varied special needs of their child puts every parent on an emotional overload with practically no respite care.

The following advisory may help parents &/or caregivers of CWSN to combat the present lockdown situation:

- 1) DO NOT BREAK THE ROUTINE-CYCLE OF THE CHILD:** Make a daily time table which should be predictable. Structure your child's daily activities in the same order as the child was following in the institute . Also, try and maintain the same routine that the child usually does. This will help them be comfortable with the transition.



2) **MAINTAIN A BASIC ROUTINE FOR SLEEP-WAKE TIME, EATING TIME, PLAYTIME, TV TIME, ETC:** Altered sleep patterns like sleeping during the day & not sleeping well at night are common during such times. Don't make the child sleep for longer hours than needed.



3) **TEACH DAILY LIVING SKILLS:** Involve the child in doing a few ADL activities by self like Washing Hands, Toileting, Brushing, Bathing, Dressing, and Eating. Learning these activities needs repetition and the lockdown has provided us time to repeat them during the day. Also, mastering these basic ADL skills promotes the child towards independence.



4) **ENSURE THAT THE CHILD FEELS SECURE & NOT ANXIOUS:** Do not over stress on teaching many new things at this time. Encourage activities that the child is comfortable & familiar with & that which relaxes a child. Combine every activity with appropriate reward.

5) **ENSURE ADEQUATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIME IN THE SCHEDULE:** Include motor activities, play activities & structured simple home games that will provide both physical & mental well-being and relaxation – both, in parents and children. Like:



- crawling under a tunnel made by chairs.
- jumping on mats kept at a distance
- climbing stairs (with COVID precautions)
- Aerobics or dancing to the rhythm
- Pushing and/or lifting some weight from one target to other
- Slow bouncing on therapy/gym ball
- Continue with your child's basic exercise and activity plans given by the institute

**6) USE ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD INVOLVE TURN TAKING like :**

- Ludo
- Snakes and Ladder
- Pass the parcel / pass the ball
- Playing basket ball (indoors)
- playing simple cricket inside the house
- kicking a ball in a goal (indoor)



**7) INVOLVE CHILDREN IN SIMPLE HOME ACTIVITIES** – this makes them feel inclusive and fruitful for family. Like:

- folding and keeping washed clothes
- wiping washed utensils with a cloth
- making bed
- watering plants
- Arranging table for meals
- Clearing the table after meals



**8) INVOLVE THE CHILD IN STRUCTURED ART ACTIVITIES** -art and making crafts can be used to promote reading, math and fine-motor skills, relaxation. This makes academics a fun-learning activity too.

**9) KEEP THE CHILD’S SCREEN TIME TO THE MINIMUM:** Parents in order to finish up the household chores may end up giving access to mobile phones or TV sets for longer duration, it should be avoided.

**10) DO NOT SKIP OR CHANGE THE MEDICINE ROUTINE:** If the child is on medications, do not discontinue without consulting the doctor. Maintain adequate stock of medicines at home.

**11) CAREGIVERS PRACTICE TAKING TURNS:** Primary caregivers/Parents/family members should practice taking turns in doing household chores and to engage in activities with the child.

**12) MAINTAIN HYDRATION:** Provide good amount of water and home-made fresh fluids to the child and to yourself to beat the effect of changing weather and of stress on our bodies.



Parents of children with special needs are more vulnerable to develop mental health issues because they have additional responsibility for CWSNs to engage them purposefully at home during lockdown period. It is equally important to take care of their own mental and physical health. The following do's and don'ts activities can help them to reduce their stress and anxiety during lockdown period:



## DO's

1. Be realistic about the present condition and learn from experience
2. Make and follow proper activity scheduling for self and others
3. Make a calendar for special activities at home
4. Simple physical exercise at home



5. Practice Meditation or yoga
6. Express your joy and happiness with other family members, even during simple household activities
7. Write a blog/ story
8. Listen to music



9. Watch movie with family members
10. Share your old photograph and your childhood/old memories with your children
11. Grow a plant
12. Make a time for nap

13. Give some free time to your spouse



14. Express your affection, love and care towards spouse
15. Read story books/magazine
16. Nurture a hobby
17. Chat with your friends over phone
18. Praise your spouse, children and other family members during support in household work
19. Make a diary or collect your memory even for little achievement of your CWSN

20. Take an opportunity to become an artist and develop creative work at home

21. Consult a Psychologist/ Psychiatrist over phone if required.

## **DON'TS**



1. Do not make unrealistic plan
2. Do not eat unhealthy diet
3. Do not change/ disturb your sleep-wake cycle
4. Do not feel anxious or sad
5. Do not keep lying in bed unnecessarily
6. Do not watch TV specially COVID 19 news all the time.
7. Do not criticize your spouse or children for doing nothing
8. Do not worrying about missed out events
9. Do not take any substance/ alcohol etc.
10. Do not change your medicine without consulting your doctor
11. Do not feel hesitant to talk to Psychiatrist/ psychologist on phone if anyone has anxiety, depression or other mental health issues

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### Prepared by

**Dr. Anupama Khanna (OT)**  
Senior Occupational Therapist  
NIEPID RC NOIDA

email: anupamakhanna.ot@gmail.com

### Conceptualized by

**Dr. Amrita Sahay**  
Asstt. Prof. in Rehab Psychology  
and Officer In-Charge  
NIEPID RC NOIDA

email: amritarm@gmail.com  
nimhrc86@gmail.com

### Inputs:

Dr. Amrita Sahay, Dr. Anupama Khanna, Dr. Akhtar Hussain (Assistant Librarian) and Mrs. Sabari Ghosh (Sr. Social Worker)