

Welcome to issue 10! Half Term is just around the corner and whilst it's a challenge for many of us to inject a dose of novelty into our lives at the moment, with so many of the usual places not being available to us. We have attempted to collate a small list of some options to brighten up the half-term, [here](#).

Southwark's Autism Support Team are available to offer support to parents/carers and educational staff during current school closures, including half term.

We have a telephone support service from Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm. More information can be found: [here](#).

Training

These are available online. If you wish to register your interest or find out more please email:

AutismSupportTeam@southwark.gov.uk

- **Cygnnet (over 5's)**
- **Next Steps (under 5's)**

Games Corner

Visual supports

Visual supports for game playing can be found [here](#)

Thinking about sharing....

While it is important to teach children how to share, it can be reassuring to establish separate, or 'safe' zones so that siblings learn to respect each other's spaces and can lessen anxiety. It can help in daily life as well as during specific activities.

For example, why not get boxes (like shoe boxes that have a lid or any box you have on hand) that your children can decorate and label with their name to keep essentials in: pens, pencils, scissors, a glue stick for school or art and crafts activities. Same for toys: you may want to establish together which toys are for sharing and which are not.

Having a safe, separate and special box can help reduce anxiety and alleviate some stress.

[Here](#) is a list of fun games to develop communication.



Activity Routines

A new feature for the newsletter! We will regularly be providing two different activity routines with the suggested resources required for the activity. We have tried to take into consideration what may be available to you at home or at school.

Activity routines are everyday activities that can be repeated with your child. By repeating the activities it makes the routine predictable. The purpose of the activity routines is to support the development of shared attention and the use of language in a functional, communicative and fun way.

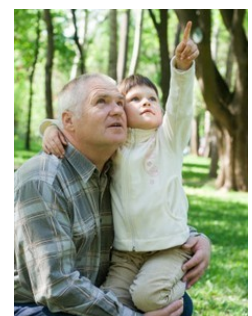
Once your child is familiar with the routine, they know what they need to do, because of this predictability it helps them relax, participate and communicate in the activity. The routines can then be changed by adding new words or actions, taking parts out or doing unexpected things. Your child may comment, ask for something or disagree with the change.

When first introducing a script it is important to follow the script and to minimise any language that is not in the script so they will actively participate in the routine.

Below are two different activity routine scripts. The routines do not have to be used every day, but the idea would be to repeat them at least a couple of times during the week to see how your child may respond to the opportunity for repetition and rehearsal.

Face Toast [here](#)

Blowing bubbles [here](#)



Supporting Communication

Getting and keeping their attention

- Always use their name at the beginning so that they know you are talking to them.
- Position yourself so that you are closer, sometimes it helps to be at eye level, but consider how 'close' is comfortable
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction. The signs that someone is paying attention will be different for different people.
- Use their hobbies and interests, or the activity they are currently doing, to engage them.

Processing information

An autistic person can find it difficult to filter out the less important information. To help:

- say less and consider your pace of speech, too much at once can overwhelm a person
- use specific key words, repeating and stressing them
- pause between words and phrases to give the person time to process what you've said, and to give them a chance to think of a response
- use visual supports (eg symbols, timetables, Social Stories) if appropriate
- be aware of the environment (noisy/crowded) that you are in. Sensory differences may be affecting how much someone can process.

Avoiding open-ended questions

- Keep questions short
- Ask only the most necessary questions
- Structure your questions, e.g you could offer options or choices
- Be specific. For example, ask "Did you enjoy your lunch?" and "Did you enjoy maths?" rather than "How was your day?".


Being clear

- Avoid using irony, sarcasm, figurative language, rhetorical questions, idioms or exaggeration as autistic people can take these literally. If you do use these, explain what you have said and be clear about what you really mean to say.

Super Seven



Focussing on fun activities to try at home!

- Watch my eyes find a surprise! Have your child close their eyes while you hide some treats. Tell your child to open their eyes and ask them to find the treats by looking at your eyes. Use exaggerated eye pointing to get them to find the items.
- Play 'Who am I?' [here](#)
- Make paper cup telephones 
- Pairs -Using paper plates or card/paper make matching pairs (could be TV characters, words, Pokémon anything!) turn all the plates/card over and spread them out, take it in turns to find 'pairs'
- Practice attention and listening skills with musical statues [here](#) is a video with instructions
- Story Stones—decorate stones and use these as prompts to make up different stories
- Play Bingo, make your own boards (it doesn't just have to be numbers!) or get some [here](#)

Resources to Support Communication

Research shows the use of sign supports the development of language for children with autism. Specifically the combination of using sign whilst saying the associated words is an approach that can increase vocal and non-vocal skills of children with autism. It's also great as you don't need any resources, just your hands!

Makaton website has information about using Makaton to communicate and has videos of the signs [here](#), other videos can be found on YouTube e.g. [here](#)

Mr Tumble on Cbeebies has a site on Makaton [here](#) with words and songs to learn!

To be added to our newsletter mailing list or to contact the team with an enquiry : AutismSupportTeam@southwark.gov.uk

Clicking on links in this document take you to a webpage or to google drive where the resources can be downloaded.