

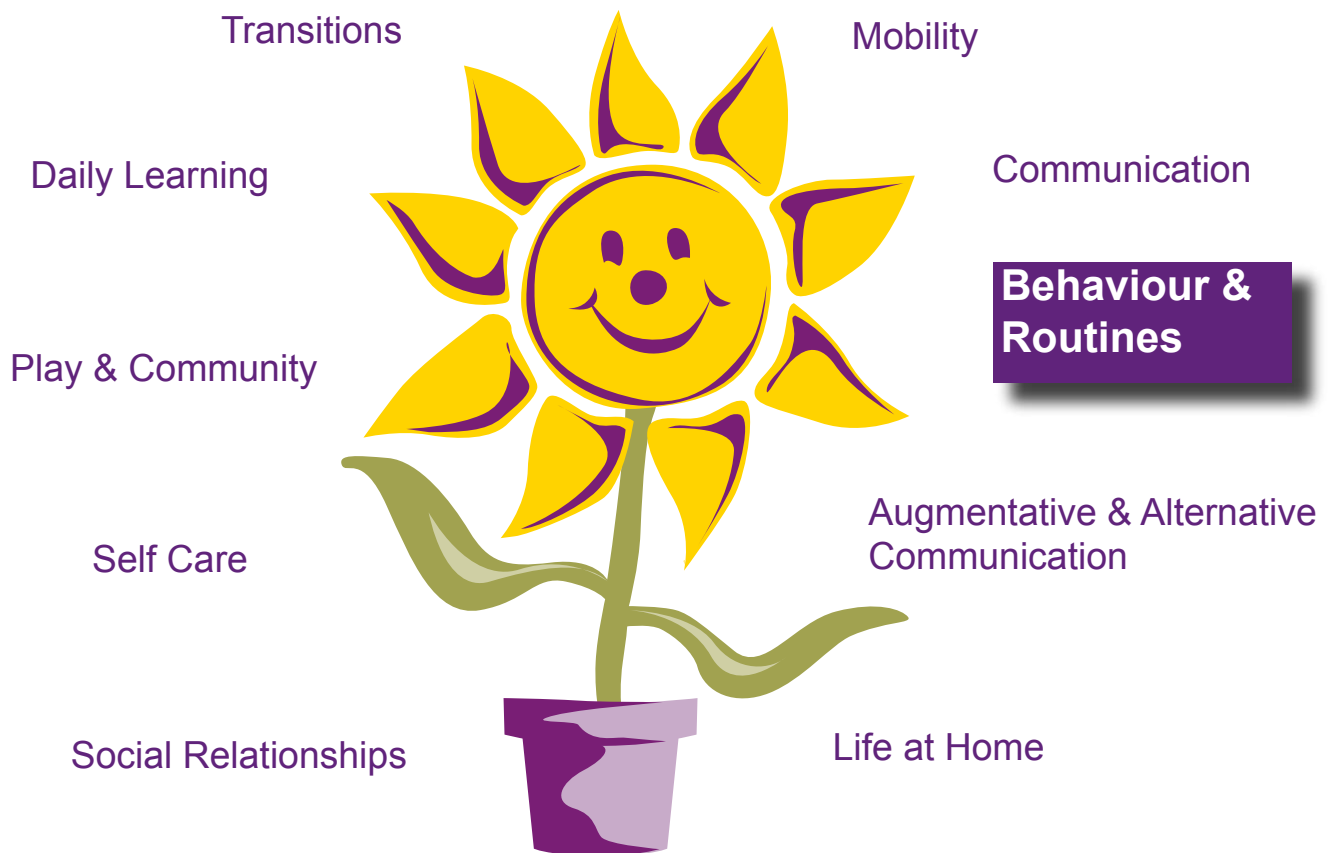
Helping you set goals for your child

At Therapy Focus, we recognise and value your role as parents being the experts on your child and family.

Our Services are a support to help your child reach their potential and enhance their participation in the community. Educating and empowering you to help your child is

an important part of our holistic therapy services.

This brochure is a starting point for discussion about your child and your family. It offers ideas to create new activities your child is able to do with encouragement and support.



The way we work

- We recognise that family is central to therapy. Families bring knowledge and expertise about their child to help identify the child's needs, develop goals and practice strategies.
- The family, therapy team and teaching staff work together to identify problems and share ideas. Each has a role to play in developing the child's skills.
- We use every opportunity in the family's and child's routine and environment to develop skills.
- Therapists work as a multidisciplinary collaborative team, sharing skills to meet the needs of the child.
- We recognise the child's strengths and how they can be developed to increase participation in the activities of life.

BEHAVIOUR & ROUTINES

Carrying out simple or complex tasks, managing time appropriately, following routines, accepting changes or surprises in routine are all skills essential to coping at school and carrying out everyday activities.



Consider the following for your child:

- Can your child independently complete simple or complex tasks like getting a drink or getting dressed?
- Can your child independently complete routine tasks that have a sequence of steps and transition between steps in the right order? For example, getting ready for school by eating breakfast, having a shower, putting on a uniform, and catching the bus.
- When given a number of tasks, is your child able to organise themselves and the materials needed to complete the tasks in sequence? For example, following a teacher's instructions to pack away their lunch, get their library bag and line up at the door.

- Can your child keep themselves amused with meaningful, purposeful activities during free play or other unstructured times at home and school? For example, when given free time, can he/she independently choose from a range of toys and activities, and independently carry out a play sequence.
- Can your child carry out a daily routine and cope with changes in the routine?
- Can your child cope with moving on to another activity before they have completed a previous task or activity? For example, packing away their toys when it is time for bed.
- When your child is placed in challenging or stressful situations are they able to manage their own behaviour and stay calm? For example, requesting a break or 'time out' when stressed by loud noises instead of becoming distressed and running out of the room.

Strategies

- **Use Every Opportunity** by allowing your child to participate whenever possible throughout their normal routine. This allows them to improve their skills through participation in everyday activities.
- **Practice** doing a small part of an activity each day. Children find it easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- **Be Consistent** with the words and signs used to instruct your child, try to keep instructions short and simple.

- Ensure that there is enough **Time** available for your child to participate in activities without feeling rushed.
- Allow your child to **Observe** other family members performing everyday activities. Modelling appropriate behaviours is a fantastic way to develop skills.
- **Use Encouragement** to let your child know they are doing a great job. This will help them to keep motivated and boost their self-esteem.
- Being **Patient and Calm** is important when teaching your child new skills.
- **Use Small Steps** by breaking the activity down into small, manageable steps, which can be learnt one at a time.

Example

“On school days, the mornings are so stressful. I have a hard time getting my son John ready for school. Even though he loves going to school, he is more interested in watching TV than getting dressed and brushing his hair and teeth. It’s like a battle of the wills, we are usually late to school, and one or both of us end up in tears. I dread school days.”

Alice, mother of John (age 6) who has an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Goal: On school days, John will get dressed and brush his teeth and hair in time to leave for school at 8.30am.

Strategies: A visual timetable was introduced to support John’s understanding of the morning routine. The sequence of activities was arranged so that if John got dressed and brushed his teeth and hair, he would have time to watch TV before it was time to go to school. In order to prepare

John to turn off the television, Alice gave him a five minute warning and turned on a timer. When the timer went off, he followed her instruction to turn off the TV and get his bag.

Outcome: The visual schedule helped John learn the morning routine for school days. Initially, he needed adult support to follow the schedule, but once he realised that he could watch TV after he finished his jobs, he was very motivated to get ready for school quickly! The timer became his cue for turning off the TV and getting his bag, without any prompting from Alice.

Resources to help your child’s behaviour and coping skills

First and Then:



If your child is often reluctant to complete a particular activity, you can help motivate them by offering something they like when they have finished the non-preferred activity. You can describe this verbally (e.g. “John, first get dressed and then watch TV”) with visual supports.

If your child is not familiar with using a visual timetable, a ‘first and then’ board is a good way to start teaching them to follow a sequence of events. You can start with two activities in your sequence and then gradually increase the number of activities.

Using a timer:

An egg timer or digital timer can be used as an auditory and visual reminder about how long an activity will last for and to signify the end of an activity. This may be useful if your child appears anxious when unsure of how long he/she must attend to an activity or at times when it is difficult to redirect them back to ‘work’ when they are enjoying a fun activity such as computer time.

Visual Timetables

Visual timetables are made of objects, photos, drawings or words that are used to represent different activities (depending on your child's level of understanding).

The schedule should be kept in the same place so that it can be easily accessed by your child. Your child will need to be taught to go to their activity schedule, point to the first item, perform the task, and then return to the schedule to see what they need to do next.

Over time, reduce the amount of prompting that you give your child so that they become more independent in using their schedule. Below are some examples of how you can utilise visual timetables.

1. Keep children occupied during free play, less structured times, or whilst you are occupied with other tasks by preparing a sequence of play activities for the child to complete, such as playing with blocks or puzzles, jumping on the trampoline or colouring in.
2. Support your child in their learning of simple or complex tasks by breaking down the tasks into individual steps within a visual timetable. Include areas such as self care comprising the tasks of dressing, toileting, and brushing teeth.
3. Help your child understand daily routines such as school preparation, after school activities and bed time preparation by listing individual activities on visual timetables.
4. Help your child to cope with changes made to usual daily routines by changing the order of activities, removing activities or inserting additional activities into a visual timetable.

Positive Reinforcement & Skill Development

When your child is learning a new skill or behaviour, one way to encourage them is to provide reinforcement.

Through constant reinforcement, it is more likely your child will perform this skill or behaviour in the future. Reinforcement must be delivered immediately after your child correctly completes a task or activity, and must be something they find motivating or rewarding.

Reinforcement can include rewarding your child with items including food treats, stickers, or allowing special privileges, or by simply using specific verbal praise.

Reward charts can also be highly motivating, allowing your child to work towards a goal. By awarding stickers after the completion of specific task and activities, or simply for good behaviour, your child can visually track their progress and work toward rewards.

Social stories

Social Stories are short stories individualised to your child to describe the best way to behave in a specific situation. These stories help to reduce anxiety which your child may feel in certain situations.

The stories are written to consider the situation from your child's view point and highlight positive behaviour, e.g. "I will try and keep my hands in my lap when sitting in a group". It is best to use only one social story at a time and include photos or pictures that illustrate the situation.