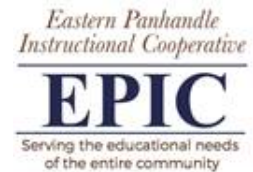




Tidbits

Winter 2022/2023



Join Us!

Please join West Virginia Birth to Three for a webinar, "**Seizure Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder**," on January 9, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In the session, Dr. Lindsey, a child neurologist at Ruby Memorial in Morgantown, WV will provide an overview of seizures and epilepsy for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. This conversation will include:

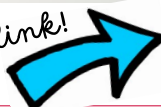
- Incidence
- Description of seizure types
- Brief overview of particular seizure disorders
- Evaluation
- Treatment and management
- Question and answer



Have you signed up for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library yet?

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading by gifting books free of charge to children from birth to age five, through funding shared by Dolly Parton and local community partners in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and Republic of Ireland.

Follow the link!



[Dolly Parton's Imagination Library | USA, UK, IE, CA, AU](#)

10 Reasons a Daily Routine is Important for Your Child and How to Set One

All families need some type of routine to get things done and to create a sense of security for their children. Children often fear the unknown – whether it's the broccoli on their plate – or a big life change like moving to a different house or gaining a new sibling. While change is a learning opportunity, it can also be stressful for children. Routines bring comfort and consistency to a child's life. Daily routines might include:

- The time to get ready in the morning
- Bath times, mealtimes, naptimes, and bedtimes
- Housework, cooking and cleaning schedules
- Play time, family time and outdoor play



Here are **10 reasons a daily routine is important for your child:**

1. Helps your child get on a schedule - Consistent routines will help your child and their "body clocks" with many day-to-day basics such as:

- Ability to take naps and sleep well at night
- Ability to eat healthy, full meals
- Regular bowel movements
- Healthy play and outdoor time
- Calm, relaxed behavior at "down times" during the day

For example, because your child and their body know it's time to sleep, they are more easily able to wind down and rest.

2. Bonds the family together - When a child knows what to expect and notices regular family activities, they begin to understand what's important. This strengthens shared values, beliefs, and interests. The child, for example, might notice that eating breakfast together on Saturday mornings is important. They can see that family time together is special. Even if your child is young, they will pick up on these traditions. The family bonds together by doing regular, important things together.

3. Establishes expectations - Rather than having a power struggle about picking up toys at the end of the day or taking a bath, a child becomes accustomed to knowing when "pick up time" and "bath time" are. Children begin to expect and complete activities without issue. As the parent, you become a partner in that routine, rather than the person who is telling the child to "do this" and "not do this."

4. Creates a calmer household - Because the child, and other family members, know what to expect, stress and anxiety are reduced. The child will know what comes next. They will feel valued because they are included in the plans and don't feel as if they're being forced to do something.

5. Gives your child confidence and independence - With a routine, a child will learn over time when it's time to brush their teeth or put on their pajamas. They will take pride in knowing what they are supposed to do – and doing it by themselves. Rather than always being told what needs to happen, your child will feel confident to go ahead and be in charge of themselves. When children feel empowered and independent, they are less likely to rebel or retaliate.

6. Establishes healthy, constructive habits - From brushing teeth regularly to completing homework every afternoon, routines help establish constructive habits. Children who practice these skills will be able to better manage their time. As they age, they'll have more self-discipline in terms of healthy grooming and eating habits, along with studying and cleaning their rooms.

7. Helps you (the parent) remember important things - Whether it's ensuring your child takes their medicine every day or remembering to pay the bills every month, a routine helps you stay on track.



8. Offers your child an opportunity to get excited about what's ahead - If your child knows what's on the schedule, they anticipate and look forward to future events – such as going to the park on Friday afternoons or visit grandparents on Sunday. When these activities are established, your child feels like a loved part of the family and the world.

9. Provides opportunity for special “daily rituals” - When you build something into your day, like snuggling and reading to your child before bed, you instill special moments or “daily rituals.” These dedicated times create increased bonding and connection with your child every day. Rather than just moving from one activity to the next, you have quality, relaxing time built into each day.

10. Offers stability during times of change or stress - Changes and stresses impact a child's life and sense of security. When the family has an established a routine, consistency is present in the child's life, no matter what is going on. A child finds calmness, stability, and love through elements of routine, such as family dinners or regular Thursday trips to the library.

The Importance of Flexibility

While establishing and maintaining routine has a wealth of benefits, it's vital to also remain flexible. Spontaneity and creativity are important factors in a child's life. For example, the breakfast dishes can wait if there is an exciting animal in the backyard or a special Saturday carnival happening in the city. Remember to stay sensitive and adaptable to the needs of each child (and adult). When a schedule becomes too regimented or strict, the benefits will be reduced, and children may feel controlled by it rather than freed by it (which is the ultimate goal).

How to Set a Daily Routine for Your Child

Routines can begin from the first day of life. If you haven't started a routine from the early days, don't worry. They can be established and start at any point. The earlier you establish a routine, the better.

Step 1: Establish the important times such as mealtimes, snack times, naptimes, and bedtime. Because these affect how well your child is able to sleep and eat, these items should come first. If you currently have no schedule, gradually move to a consistent routine. For example, you may wish to set up a regular naptime and bedtime first. Then, you can add in regular mealtimes and bath times.



Step 2: Practice patience. Setting a schedule may be hard for your child at first, but they will become accustomed to it. Try not to become impatient or frustrated if the routine takes time to become “regular” for your child.



Step 3: Add “helpful” elements to each part of the routine. For instance, you may wish to add in a regular 10 minute reading and snuggling time with your child before bed. This helps them wind down and feel ready to sleep.

Step 4: Work toward consistency and make room for flexibility. In order for a routine to stick, you'll need to make sure you keep it as regular as possible. However, stay open to flexibility, especially for holidays and special events, so your child's mood doesn't become solely dependent on eating at a specific time, for example.

Step 5: Establish special times with your child. Whether it's a regular trip to grandma's house or walking the dog together, create expectations and routine of family time.

Step 6: Adjust as needed. As the months go on, you'll start to see what's working and not working for the family. A routine is meant to *help* the family, not hinder it. Be sure your routine is healthy and positive for your child and other family members.

If you feel you need some ideas in creating a routine that works for you and your child, talk with your WV Birth to Three team members for support!

Get Outside and PLAY!

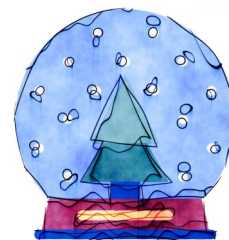
Ready to tear your kids away from the games and get them outside for winter activities? Here are a few things to know:

Before heading outside, make sure that your kids are bundled up to be warm. You should bundle up too. Be sure to wear gloves, coats and warm socks, along with weather-appropriate footwear.

Be aware of the signs of frostbite in kids. If your child complains of aching pain or numbness, most often to their extremities (hands, feet or ears) or their skin feels hard/waxy with a white color, come inside immediately and follow these instructions.

Don't worry, playing outside won't make them sick. Dr. Khan says that the idea that going outside in the cold will give you a cold is nothing more than an old wives' tale. "Just going outside doesn't make people catch colds. Of course, they should be appropriately dressed... and if it's really cold, like we get in Chicago, staying inside is better," says Dr. Khan. However, Dr. Khan does say that if someone has been exposed to the cold virus, then being in the cold weather can make the cold come on faster.

Stay hydrated. Just like any other time of the year, it's important that you and your kids drink enough. "Don't forget to bring water, even when the weather is chilly," says Mindy Pierce, director of programming for Sport & Health Clubs.



*** Build a snowman**

Do you remember rolling the snow into balls to create three parts for a special snowman? It was a lot of fun, but that's not all. Making a snowman is also awesome exercise. "Moving all that snow around takes a lot of work," says mom Alethea Smock, whose kids are ages 3 and 5.



*** Bubble time**

You might associate blowing bubbles with sundresses, bare feet and green grass. But in the winter time, it takes on a whole new (and fun!) dimension.

"My kids' favorite is blowing bubbles on freezing days and watching them turn into ice bubbles — they look amazing," says Sam'n Iqbal, a parent educator and mother of three.

*** Look for animal tracks**

Whenever it snows, it sets the stage for an ultra-fun family activity: Tracking animals. Grab a camera and your kids and check out the animal tracks in your freshly fallen snow. Take photos too, so you can compare them to photos of animal tracks later.

Mom Rebecca P. Cohen of RebeccaPlants.com, who is the spokesmom for the National Wildlife Federation's Be Out There Movement, says that

although she has a book for IDing tracks, the internet is her preferred tool. "Most of the time we just do a quick internet search when we get inside for animal tracks pictures. It's a fun way to 'investigate' the mystery of which animal track you saw and to get used to looking up answers to questions together. Outside time definitely piques kids' curiosity and they have lots of questions. So looking up questions with your child on the internet is a great way to learn together," says Cohen.

*** Shoveling help**

It goes without saying that shoveling snow is hard work. It's also awesome exercise — even for kids. Pick up a kid-sized shovel and have them help out by clearing a path in the snow, or digging to make fun patterns. Afterwards, they can look from second story windows to see their winding snow walks!

*** Flashlight Tag**

Love the game of tag? Flashlight tag is like the fun classic game, except players tag each other with beams of light, instead of hands. "We started playing flash tag just by stepping outside at night with our flashlights in winter and the kids started flashing their flashlights and chasing each other," says Cohen.

So, how does she keep track in the dark? "I'm pretty specific with them about where they can play and I stay with them for flash tag," says Cohen.

Easing the Sensory Overload of the Holidays

For kids with sensory sensitivities, travel, rich food, over- or under-activity and even hugs and faces of infrequently seen relatives can feel uncomfortable or actually painful. Thankfully, there are ways to reduce the overload:

Educate relatives

Before adjusting beloved traditions, let relatives know how the sensory overload can grate on your child's nervous system. Explain that this causes irritation similar to what they might feel if trapped in a room with strobe lights and loud dance music while wearing an itchy wool sweater and eating lemons!

Modify plans

We used to fly five hours to meet relatives and then immediately drive with them another four hours to our holiday destination. After a trip ended with our daughter screaming for an hour, we broke the journey into two days and traveled alone. Disappointing relatives is difficult, but I

learned that accommodating extended family isn't as important as meeting our child's needs.

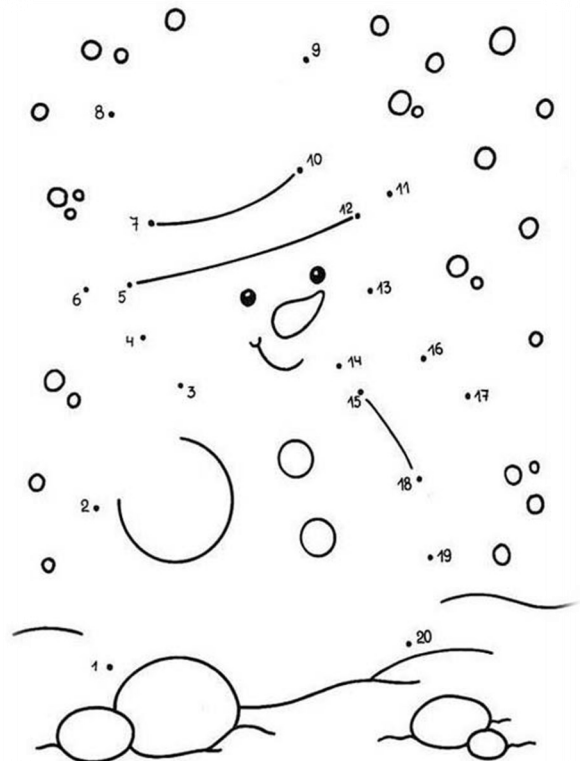
Do less each day

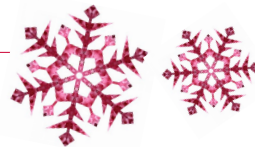
Can you schedule the fancy dinner on one day and gift-opening the next? It helped our daughter if we unwrapped fewer gifts over several days rather than all in one sitting.

Provide familiar foods, preferred clothing and frequent calming breaks

We found sensory relief by swinging outside or reading a familiar book in a quiet room. If you cannot find a soothing break for your child, seek ideas from an occupational therapist with a specialty in sensory integration.

Karen Crum is the author of Persevering Parent: Finding strength to raise your child with social, emotional or behavioral challenges.





Breathe, Balance, and Bend: The 3 B's of Calm Bodies

Our bodies need exercise, but they need downtime, too. Breathing, balancing, and bending give children (and adults!) a chance to rest their bodies and relax their minds.

Breathe

Breathing deeply and slowly is a calming strategy for anytime, anywhere.

- Ask children to place their hands over their mouths and feel their breath. Together, breathe quickly, then slowly, and ask children to compare how each breath feels in their hands.
- Then ask children to pretend their bellies are balloons. Encourage them to take long and deep breaths to fill the balloons with air, then breathe out through their mouths to let the air out.



Balance

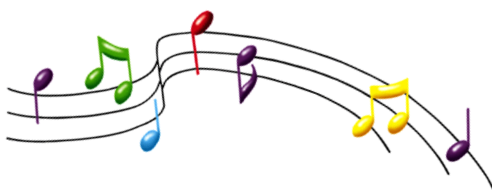
Balancing helps kids focus and relax while building strength and coordination.

- Lay down a piece of string or tape on the ground for a “balance beam”! You can make the beam wide for an easier version of the game and narrower for a challenge.
- Use your imagination. For instance, you might pretend that the beam is high up in the air or over a rocky river—be careful not to fall!

Bend

Bending and stretching helps children become more flexible... and it feels great!

- Ask kids to bend and stretch their whole bodies—from their head to their toes.
- Give clear directions, starting with the head. (Nod it “yes” and shake it “no.” Next, roll the shoulders, twist the stomach, bend at the hips, and so on.) Get creative, and do more of the things that feel good!



Wash, Wash, Wash Your Hands
(Sing to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Wash, wash, wash your hands,
Play our handy game.
Rub and scrub and scrub and rub
Germs go down the drain
(repeat)

