



VILLA ESPERANZA SERVICES

*Where Hope is Hard at Work for Individuals  
with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities*

## **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (OT) TIPS FOR PARENTS AT HOME**

*Provided by the occupational therapists at Villa's Occupational Therapy Clinic*

### **1) Focus on quality time with your child**

All of us are feeling anxious, our children included. Take quality time with your child to read a book or play a game they like. These moments of connection will ease your child's anxiety and build resilience for the days and weeks ahead.

### **2) Create and stick to a schedule**

Our children thrive on routines. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Set regular meal times, regular times for school work or work on therapeutic goals. Keeping even small things consistent can help kids feel regulated and calm.

### **3) Get Moving!**

Being stuck inside can be especially hard on children. Find a kids yoga video on Youtube, or just put on music and dance together. Moving your body can improve your mood and help you stay positive.

### **4) Talk to your child about COVID19**

Children know that things are not normal, no matter what their level of disability. Explain the basics of the situation to your child, even if they seem they may not understand. Assure them that doctors are working on a solution and give them a feeling of control by teaching them to follow hygiene steps like washing hands or sneezing into an elbow.

**5) Work on Self-Care Skills**

This is the perfect time to work with your child on all of those self-care skills you usually rush through on the way out the door. Take the extra time to allow your child to dress themselves or brush their own teeth. Use a technique called “Backward Chaining”. Give your child the feeling of success by allowing them to do the last step of an activity, then, once they master that step, the last 2 steps, and so on. Narrate each step as you do it so your child has a chance to learn as you go.

**6) Get your children helping around the house**

Kids can help with many activities around the house; they can help you cook by measuring out ingredients, setting the table, or preparing simple components of the meal, such as a salad. They can help fold laundry by putting clothes on hangers or folding towels and wash cloths, which are simpler than articles of clothing. Think of small ways your child can feel like they are contributing to the care of the home.

**7) Monitor screen time and media exposure**

Screen time will be necessary for school work, entertainment, and connection with friends and family. However, try to limit your child’s exposure to frightening news stories or images. Build time for screen-free activities like coloring or playing games into your routine.

**8) Take on a project together**

While you have extended time at home, think about taking on a larger scale project with your child. This could include something big like doing yard work together, or something small like drawing pictures or writing cards for family members or for senior citizens in nursing homes who are not currently able to receive visits from others. Find ways to be creative together.