

## **Activities that you can do at home while social distancing**

People who have a learning disability can find routines helpful. Many of these routines might be disrupted just now. If you can, try to maintain a routine within the home. For instance, have regular meals, do some home exercise at the times that you might have gone to a class or for a walk, sing at home if you went to a music group.

Being active and taking part in activities that are enjoyable and meaningful helps the wellbeing of both people living with a learning disability and their carers/family. Now that strict social distancing is in place, you might find that a lot of the activities that you regularly enjoy are not available. Consider whether you can change them in any way to make them possible within your home environment.

A lot of people with a learning disability may find unstructured times particularly difficult. The concept of passing time is often provided by their weekly schedule and when this is disrupted, as is now the case, it is more difficult for many to stay orientated in time and space. With not knowing what is going to happen next, anxiety levels often rise. When we are confronted with free time we are able to choose an activity after weighing up pros and cons of others. This is a difficult concept for some people with a learning disability and therefore it is often advisable even to 'structure unstructured time' to an extent, e.g. by offering two appropriate choices to a person.

It is also important that activities are communicated in a similar way as the person is used to. Some people use visual timetables set up for a half day or a full day, whereas others can only cope with 'now and next' or objects of reference. Nearly everyone with a learning disability benefits from clear and simple instructions. This will help people settle more easily into their new routine as well as accepting change again when the crises is over.

### **Physical**

- Take a walk, cycle or jog.
- Walk around the garden and find/identify items.
- Feed the birds, do some weeding or digging, plant seeds, water plants.
- Get up from your chair at least once an hour.
- Chair based exercise!
- Housework – dusting, wiping down surfaces and tables, sorting laundry, hoovering.
- Spread chores across the week (i.e. on Monday do the hoovering, Tuesday change the bedsheets, Wednesday do the dusting).
- Play some of your favourite music and dance.
- Balloons and ball games: Use balls of different sizes and textures to kick, throw, pass around.
- Learn a dance or make up actions to a favourite song.

## **Social activities**

- Make a telephone call to a friend/family.
- If you use technology, make video calls so that you can also see the person that you are calling.
- Speak to neighbours from a safe distance (over 2 metres).
- Draw a picture for a friend or family member.

## **Technology**

You-Tube

- On-line chair based exercise.
- On- line exercise class (if able).
- Easy relaxation videos.
- Videos on your favourite topics/hobbies.
- Music.
- Start a daily challenge with likeminded friends (e.g. plant a flower, develop a dance move etc. and share it in your safe group online).

## **Sensory Activities**

- Circuit of exercises: Press ups, sit ups, squats, push up from chairs, wall push.
- Pamper session with a hand massage, fragrant hand crème.
- Create a 'hideout space' – consider the lighting, noise levels, different items to sit on.
- Heavy jobs – carrying laundry, stacking cans, heavy watering can to water the garden.
- Water or sand play.
- Quiet time.
- Rummaging – boxes or containers holding a range of objects such as everyday household objects, or items of interest such as workshop tools.
- Using a homemade sensory box with a variety of items (tactile, visual, sound, smell).
- Use a head massager or massage roller.
- Messy art activities – painting with hands or feet, salt dough, clay, etc.
- Daily living activities that encourage helping (for example, laying or clearing tables, wiping, drying cutlery, dusting and polishing brasses).
- Reminiscence boxes based on a range of topics.
- Work-type activities (for example, sanding, varnishing, sorting).
- Tasks that have familiar movements (for example, tearing, winding, folding).
- Activities that involve natural movement and music, dance.
- Dressing up, using props such as clothes, hats and accessories related to a theme or topic.

- Short repetitive stories with familiar repetitive sounds can be read by the carer - this activity can be calming.
- Sensory type books (touch and feel books) or add your own sound effect or tactile input to favourite stories.
- Therapeutic cooking even at a basic level- involve person in smells and sounds and involve them in filling baking cases and mixing.

### **Creative Activities**

- Colour and draw pictures.
- Flower Pressing.
- Painting and printing: Marbling, printing (potato or leaf), string painting, calligraphy, stencilling, silk painting, paint effects, glass painting (producing light catchers to hang at windows).
- Paper activities: Decoupage, collage (using magazine cuttings or old greetings cards), making cards, quilling.
- Candle making.
- Frame making.
- Needlecrafts: Cross-stitch, patchwork, quilting, tapestry, knitting, crochet, rug making.
- Pottery: Use air-drying clay if you have no access to a kiln.
- Papier mâché: Use to model objects that can be painted and varnished.
- Salt dough modelling.
- Textiles: Making wall hangings, collages.
- Wax rubbing.
- Weaving: Basketry, stool and tray making, weaving paper strips.
- Woodwork: Kits to make bird tables, toys, models.
- Make up a story on your own or with a carer or family member.
- Make up a song.