

How to manage children with intellectual and developmental disabilities during Covid-19 lockdown

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With the increasing number of coronavirus cases across the country, a majority of the state governments have closed down their schools to prevent the spread of Covid-19. As a result, school going children are now restricted within their homes. On one side, it is necessary to do so, keeping in view the severity of the problem.

On the other hand, keeping children with intellectual and developmental disabilities such as- intellectual disability, Autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disability and hyperactivity disorder confined inside the house becomes very challenging for parents. Restrictions to stay within the house are causing an increase in behavioural problems among children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as:

- Violent and destructive behaviours
- Temper tantrums

- Self-injurious behaviours such as hitting self, biting self, etc.

- Sleep disturbances
- Excess use of mobile phones or watching television

- Excess demand to go out of the house.

What to do?

- Contact with the teachers and therapist of the child through telephone or mobile and ask them to give information about home based program for the child.

- Delegate the responsibilities of childcare among all family members. If possible, both parents may avoid going out of the house and divide the task related with the child. In addition, work may be distributed among other family members such as grand parents, siblings, etc.

- Engage the child in household activities according to his/her abilities such as- sorting of vegetables, folding of clothes and keeping it in the almirah,

cleaning utensils, sweeping, mopping, peeling and cutting vegetables, preparing lemonade or tea, etc.

- Sanitise or clean any material, which you are giving to the child.

- Teach the child to clean his/her hands frequently with soap.

- Do simple yoga with the child.

- Do some physical exercise or dance movements with the child.

- Play some indoor games with the child such as- Ludo, Carom, etc.

- Many concepts of functional academics may be taught through household tasks such as- spoons, bowls etc. may be used for counting. Measurement may be taught through measuring sugar with spoon while preparing tea, etc.

- Prepare new schedule for the child and make him/her aware by written or pictorial presentation.

- Promote the hobbies of the child such as watering

plants, colouring pictures, painting, craft work, etc.

- Give immediate reward such as verbal praise etc. when the child performs some desirable behaviour.

- Have patience. This challenge is temporary, which will end in few days.

What not to do?

- Do not take the effect of coronavirus lightly and take all precautions.

- Do not take excessive stress. Be alert but do not panic.

- Do not give any physical punishment to the child.

- Do not expose the child to television or mobile for keeping him/her busy.

- Do not organise any party. Also, avoid any type of social gathering.

- Do not allow the child to visit the neighbour's house.

- Do not pay attention to any kind of rumours. If required inform the local administration.

Covid-19 is indeed a challenge for the society,

which may be faced through the collective efforts of the citizens of the country. It also gives you more opportunity to spend quality time with your family.

With appropriate measures, the effective management of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities is possible at home. For more information and learning resources regarding the teaching and training of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, kindly visit the website of National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disability (Divyangjan), Secunderabad, Telangana at www.niepid.nic.in

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