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Full Article:

<https://q13fox.com/2020/04/02/parents-of-children-with-special-needs-navigate-new-routines-amid-covid-19/>

## Parents of children with special needs navigate new routines amid COVID-19

Miriam Reyes said her son has autism and is nonverbal. She said she is doing the best she can to keep her kindergartner active. Reyes, also a child behavioral therapist, said time away from school and therapy can cause regression, mixed emotions and lots of questions.

“What am I doing? What’s my schedule? Why isn’t my therapist coming? So, for them, it’s a huge thing to get used to having a new normal,” said Reyes. “Even if it doesn’t look close to what your usual normal is, try to be there for your child emotionally and make that a priority right now.”

A new normal doesn’t have to be challenging. Therapists with Seattle Therapy Skills for Life said what matters is routine.

“The more that we make it predictable for kids, they will probably just feel more in control of their day. The less unknown, the less uncertainty in these times for them, too, is really important,” said Shelley O’Donnell, Seattle Therapy Skills for Life director. “This can be a confusing time for them too, of course. Just getting down to their level and talking to them and providing some stability and comfort in daily routines would be the first priority.” O’Donnell said her team is helping parents build schedules using basic daily tasks.

“We can create new routines in the home, where it’s waking up, and what time breakfast is, and what happens after breakfast, and even just the getting dressed and having some activities,” said O’Donnell. “Whether it’s playtime or maybe it’s some school based structured activity—that’s the kind of stuff that we’re really trying to help with.”

“I hope that in the next few weeks, maybe months, we’re able to turn the tide, turn the corner on all of this. And start to create that real human-to-human support connection that kids like my son really need,” said Prasad.

**The Arc of Palm Beach County  
Community Inclusion Program**

