Autism ONTARIO

Creating Comfort at Home

Coming home from school can be a big transition after spending the day managing sensory input, social situations, and learning. Some children may look for sensory input to help their bodies feel calm (like moving, jumping, or touching objects). Others may avoid sensory experiences that feel overwhelming (like loud noises, bright lights, or busy spaces).

Autistic children may experience sensory information differently, including sounds, lights, movement, textures, and touch. Calming after-school strategies and sensory supports can help children feel comfortable, tune into what their bodies need, and take time to recharge.

1. **Emotional Awareness:** A visual feelings wheel paired with a mirror can help your child notice and name their emotions by matching how they feel with different facial expressions. This can be a helpful tool to use after school when your child is checking in with their feelings and support conversations about their day.

2. **Sound and Listening Tools:** Noise-cancelling headphones block overwhelming sounds, while a Bluetooth speaker can play calming music or white noise to help your child feel settled.

3. **Cozy Corner:** A cozy, enclosed space with soft seating such as a bean bag chair or a pop-up tent gives your child a safe place to retreat and self-regulate when they feel overwhelmed.

4. **Feel Better Box:** A go-to box filled with sensory tools like fidgets, clay, colouring, printed breathing exercises and yoga blocks gives your child something calming to reach for in tough moments.

5. **Blackout Curtains:** Blackout curtains reduce visual stimulation from outside light, creating a calmer environment especially for children sensitive to brightness.

6. **Books:** Stories about feelings and coping strategies give your child relatable language to understand and express their emotions. For book suggestions check out Autism Ontario's Let's Talk About Autism: Caregiver's Guide to Books for Children, Youth and Young Adults.

7. **Alternative Seating:** A yoga ball or wobble cushion gives your child gentle movement. This can help them feel calm and settled. It can be another way to sit instead of a regular chair.

