



## 10 Tips to Support Someone During Times of Change

Below are tips and ideas to support someone during times of frequent change. These tips may be modified as needed to fit the preferences of the person and to complement strategies that are already known to be effective.

- **Create structure.** Routine often helps reduce anxiety. Create visual schedules and prompts as needed.
- **Lower demands and participate in familiar and preferred activities.** During times of change it can be helpful to reduce tasks that have multiple steps or are usually difficult for the person to complete. It can be beneficial to provide opportunities for participation in activities that increase the person's confidence, such as playing a game that the person usually wins.
- **Provide a quiet space.** Choose a room or space in the home where family members can go to take a quiet break. This space can be a room, an indoor tent or fort, and can include mood lighting, sensory items, relaxation music, scenic images, etc. This is not a "time-out" space but rather a break room that all family members can use.
- **Increase physical activity.** Increase exercise and movement activities that the person is comfortable with. This can include jogging in place, relay racing, jumping on a trampoline, bouncing on a yoga ball, helping move furniture, reorganizing books on a bookshelf, etc. If the person has difficulty with balance and/or coordination, modify the activity as needed, such as exercising one part of their body at a time.
- **Create a list of "break" activities.** Identify the activities that help the person be calm. Consider age-appropriateness and personal interests. For examples: blowing bubbles, baking, coloring, sorting activities, listening to music, watching a favorite movie. Use these activities often to help them stay calm.



- **Create a picture album.** Visual images can help someone recall positive memories and focus on calm thoughts. Have pictures available of the places and people the person enjoys and loves. They can be personal pictures or images found on a magazine or online. Encourage them to share what they see, what they remember, and to tell you what they like best about the images they have chosen.
- **Write comforting words or phrases.** Positive affirmations are words that help us keep calm thoughts. Choose words or phrase that can help the person remember that they are safe, loved, and taken care of, such as, “I am safe”, “My family is together”, “My family loves me”, “I can ask for help”, “I can take deep breaths”, “I can slow down”. These words can be written with colorful markers on mirrors, post-it’s, small canvases and placed in different places in the home.
- **Journaling.** Writing or drawing can be a way of expressing our thoughts and emotions and can help us stay calm. Encourage the person to use tools that they are most comfortable with. Adapt them for what the person needs – for example, the person can type instead of writing and use large markers or paint brushes instead of small pencils and colors. They may choose to keep their work in a notebook, hang it on a wall, or gift their work to someone they love.
- **Keep a list of phone numbers.** Identify a list of people that the person enjoys speaking to and have their phone numbers available for them to contact through phone, FaceTime, or other options.
- **Have a plan.** When things are often changing it can be very important to have plans in place. For example, who else would come over to care for the person if needed? What would they do if the lights went out during a power outage? It can be helpful to think about who to call in case of an emergency and what each person could do to help. Consider making this plan with the person, share it with them, and then prepare the person as needed.