

Guidance and Resources for Parents

The need to self-isolate has had an impact on all of our lives. For pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Diagnosis (ASD) the impact on family life can be profound. Here we try to offer some guidance, strategies and resources that might support families during this difficult time. You know your child/young person better than anyone and you will know which strategies will work for you, which ones you can adapt/modify and which ones won't work for your situation.

Try to Establish Routines

Routines are important in all of our lives. Routines make our days structured and predictable which can be especially important for children/young people with an ASD. Establishing a routine can prevent/limit unhealthy habits (helping to limit computer or TV time), can promote healthy sleep patterns and can provide a structure/routine which can limit anxious behaviours.

Resources to support this strategy can be found on **page 2-5**.

Reward Desired Behaviours

Establishing healthy routines in the home environment can be problematic. Reward strategies are key to success. Try to follow a directed activity with an activity preferred by the child/young person. Use timers to support your routines and use a reward chart with an incentive to work towards.

Resources and guidance can be found on **page 6-7**.

Plan for Sensory Differences

You will be aware of any sensory differences that your child/young person has. Plan regular time to follow a short exercise routine if your child/young person enjoys movement breaks (online videos see page 4). Plan some time in the garden or in a different space in the property to change the environment. Engage in some tactile activities such as messy play or cooking.

Resources and Guidance can be found on **Page 8-9**.

Learn Online

There are lots of learning resources online that can support pupils to continue their learning at home. As well as a library of online books and competitive maths games there are fitness/yoga/mindfulness videos all of which might help to form part of daily routine.

A guide to some of these useful online resources can be found on **page 10**.

Talk about what is happening

Your child/young person might understandably be upset or anxious about the changes and about what is happening around them. There are resources such as sensory stories which can help them to understand the situation a little better. It is a difficult and confusing time for us all but addressing your child's concerns might be the best approach.

Resources can be found on **page 11-17**.

Get Support When you Need it.

This will be a difficult time for many people and especially so for families living with a child who has Autism Spectrum Diagnosis.

There is help and support available. Your child/young person's school may be able to help, there is information available and the Autism Advisory Teacher Service are also able to support.

More information can be found on **page 11**.

Establishing Routines

There are many benefits to having set daily routines. It can improve sleep patterns, limit unhealthy habits and support wellbeing. School is driven by routines. Timetabled lessons, structured classroom practices, set times for break and lunch...the list goes on. These reliable routines make daily life predictable and reduce anxieties about what will happen and when. Establishing routines at home is not something that most of us are used to but it could be a very powerful way to support your child/young person. It is not all about work, simply timetabling everyday activities can help establish a routine. Here is a short guide and some resources on how to establish some routines in your home during the school closure period.

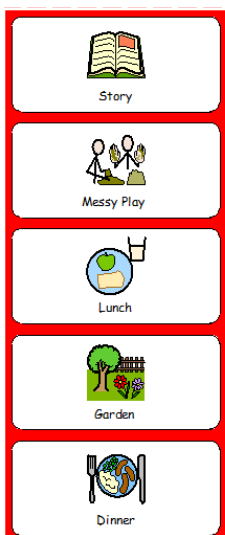
Draw up a Timetable

This is not all about timetabling learning activities as if your child/young person were at school. It is about establishing predictability and routine in daily life. The timetable might include everyday activities such as meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner), time in the garden, time phoning a family member, some routine exercise, bath/shower...etc. Just by timetabling everyday activities there is an established routine of activities that happen predictably at a similar time each day.

Try to timetable preferred activities to happen immediately after a not-preferred activity. It is much easier to get a young person to engage in an activity if they know it will only last half an hour and then they can do something they like! It is a great opportunity to learn some key life skills. You might consider timetabling 'cooking' or other daily life skill type activities.

Make the timetable visual. For older children and young adults this might mean that it is written into a table similar to a school timetable. For younger children this might mean using symbols. Talk about the activities at the beginning of the day with your child/young person in order to make the day predictable.

Example Timetable For Younger Children



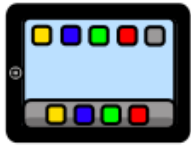
This is a symbolised Timetable for use with younger children. It can be displayed somewhere in the house and each activity can be taken off once it has been completed. You may choose to include more or less activities depending on your child. The symbols are available on **pages 3-4**.

Example Timetable For Older Children/Young Adults

The example for older children looks more similar to a school timetable. Included on some days are activities like 'cooking' and 'phoning a relative'. A blank timetable is available on **page 5**.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00 - 09:20	Exercise Routine	Reading	Exercise Routine	Reading	Exercise Routine
09:20 - 10:10	Project	Online Learning	Project	Online Learning	Project
	SNACK	SNACK	SNACK	SNACK	SNACK
11:00 - 11:30	Outdoor Time	Outdoor Time	Outdoor Time	Outdoor Time	Outdoor Time
11:30 - 12:00	Call Relative	Exercise Routine	Call Relative	Exercise Routine	Call relative
	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
13:00 - 13:30	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
14:00 - 14:30	Yoga/Mindfulness	Yoga/Mindfulness	Yoga/Mindfulness	Yoga/Mindfulness	Yoga/Mindfulness
13:30 - 15:00	Online Learning	Free Time	Online Learning	Free Time	Online Learning
15:00 - 17:00	Free Time	Cooking	Free Time	Cooking	Free Time
	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER	DINNER

Timetable Symbols



Ipad Time



lunch



Art



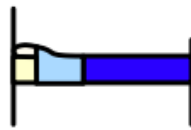
colouring



Garden



dinner



bed time



shower



bath



Gaming



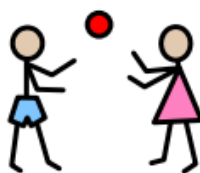
lego



snack



work



play



jigsaw

Timetable Symbols



board games



cooking



baking



drawing



painting



music



relax



something new



walk dog



Go for walk



park



call friends



wash hands



read



Television

Rewarding Desired Behaviours

In school the behaviour expectations are clear and there are established reward systems and strategies that teachers use. At home the expectations are different. It is the place where your child/young person can relax and very few demands are made of them. The period of self-isolation may last for a prolonged amount of time. Therefore it is important that healthy routines are adopted. Children/young people that might spend long periods isolated in a bedroom might find it much harder to re-integrate back into school life later on. Here are a few strategies that might motivate your child/young person to engage with the timetable and help promote healthy behaviours.

Think about your Timetable

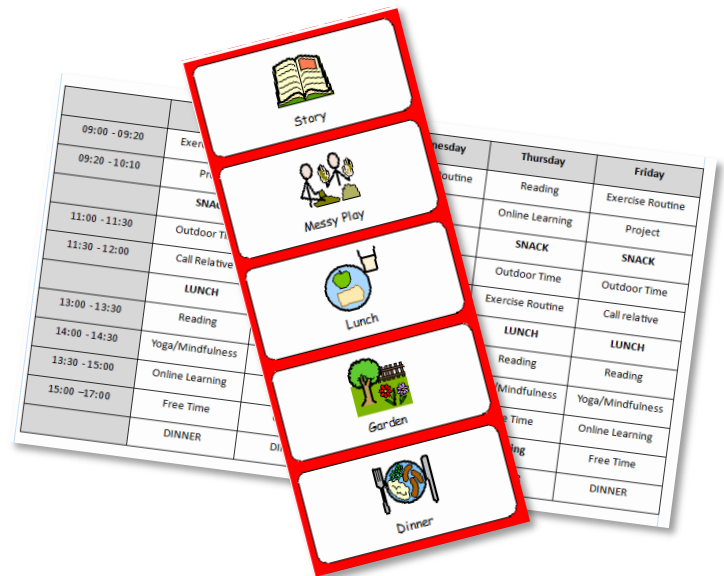
Don't try to do too much at once, it is not all about work! Timetable the activities that are already happening (breakfast, play, lunch, garden, dinner, gaming, bath, bed). This will provide structure, routine and predictability which will promote some desired behaviours.

Consider what is most important for your child/young person. Do you wish them to spend more time outside? Do you wish them to engage in some learning activities? When you first add an activity try to follow it with something that you know your child/young person will enjoy. You may use a timer so that the child/young person knows how long they will do the activity for. Reward their success with praise.

Your child will need time to do activities of their own choosing too and this should also be included in your timetable.

The timetable might be negotiated with your child/young person. They might choose certain activities or which order they are in. They might then be more likely to follow it.

You may need to be flexible. If your child/young person is struggling you may need to change an activity or allow some extra free time. It is about making it work for you and your child/young person. If it isn't working, change it.



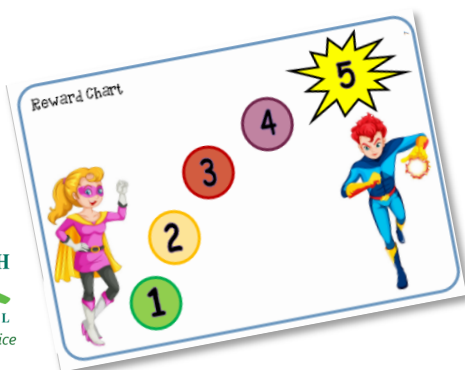
Use Rewards

Use rewards to motivate your child/young person. This might be in the form of a reward chart (see page 7) where children gain points and when they get enough points they get a treat such as a sweet, chocolate biscuit or something that will motivate them.

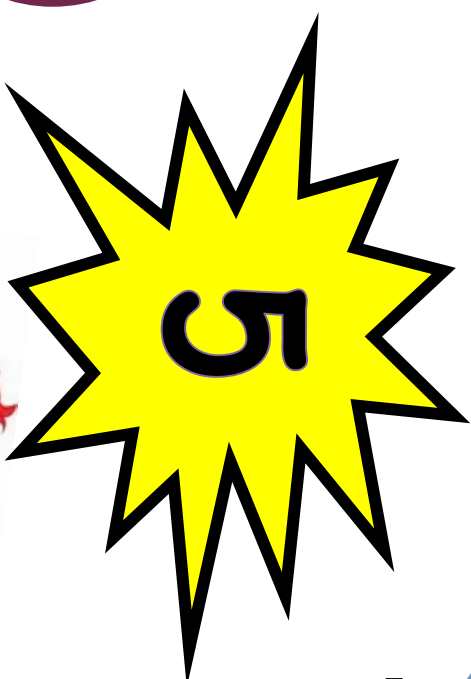
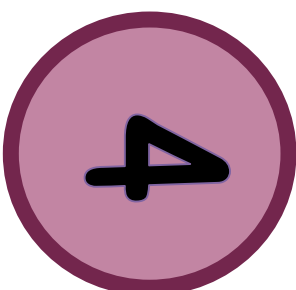
Giving children/young people a choice rather than a command can also be effective. They might choose from a choice of two activities that you would like them to engage with.

Make a deal with your young person. If they do the activity that you wish for them to do for an agreed amount of time then they can have extra time on the computer for example.

If you want a strategy to be successful it is important that the child/young person buys into it. This means ensuring that they are successful initially and rewarding their desired behaviours promptly and frequently.



Reward Chart



Planning for Sensory Differences

For some children/young people the hardest thing about being isolated will be the difficulty in regulating their senses. The inability to go outdoors, to run, to jump to swing...etc can cause problems for some. Other children/young people need tactile activities to help them regulate their sense of touch or deep pressure activities to assist with their senses. Some Children/young people will seek out sensory activities to help them regulate their senses; however, their sensory seeking may not always be appropriate and might become problematic. Below are some simple sensory activities that might help support your child/young person's sensory differences in a safe and controlled way.



Sensory Shakers

You will need:

An old bottle or plastic cup.

Rice, sand, marbles, similar small items

What to do:

Part fill the bottle with different items e.g. rice, sand, marbles. Make sure the lid is secured tightly. Experiment moving the bottle side to side, upside down quickly, slowly etc



Tasting and Sorting



Select a few types of food that can be sorted into groups. This could be by colour for example carrot, an orange and cheesy crisp. banana, lemon and a plain crisp and a green apple, lime, and courgette.

Ask your child to sort them into groups, once this is complete then you can experiment with eating the items!



playdough

You will need:

- 8 tbsp plain flour
- 2 tbsp table salt
- 60ml warm water
- food colouring
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil



Mix the dry ingredients together, in separate bowl mix the liquids together. Then combine the dry and liquid together to form a soft doughy ball.



Bubbles

You will need:

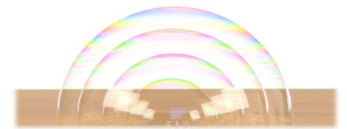
240ml Warm Water

Tablespoon of sugar

2 tablespoons of washing up liquid.

Straws (or tightly rolled card/paper to use as a straw).

Put the sugar into the warm water and mix until the sugar has dissolved. Add the washing up liquid, mix very very gently trying not to make any bubbles in the mixture. Leave for 24 hours.





Ice Cubes



Save your bottle tops and then freeze them in ice cube trays. Children can then sort the ice cubes by colour and enjoy the sensory experience of ice and water. The same activity can be applied to any toy, or common house hold item that is small enough (but still safe) to be frozen in a similar way. Or get a big Tupperware and freeze a number of toys within the ice, children can have fun trying to melt/chip away at the ice to reveal the toy.



Guess the Smell



Use jam jars, cups, pots or something similar that can have something placed into it and temporarily covered/ sealed. Place smelly items inside each container – for instance coffee, lemon, a strong smelling perfume (sprayed onto some cotton wool) and the children have to identify what the smell is without looking.



Sensory Circuits

Sensory circuits is a sensory motor set of exercises to aid regulation and a positive attitude. It can be used at any time of the day to ground a child who is becoming dysregulated or upset, though usually it is used by schools at the start of the day to 'set up' for the day, or after lunch to start the afternoon. There are three sections of activities: Alerting, Organising and Calming. Chose three activities from each section and complete each 'set' in order. Spend approximately 2 minutes per activity. You may wish to use music during the session, which can help to signal the beginning and end.

Alerting

Bouncing, jumping, skipping	Star jumps	Throw a bean bag or ball up in the air and catch	Step up and step down on a step/ raised platform
Jump sequence: 5 big jumps, 1 little jump, repeat	Mirror jumping/copying gestures	Marching on the spot	Log rolling- lie on the floor, stretch arms up and point toes, roll from one side of the mat/rug/area to the other and back again

Organising

Egg and spoon walk	Aim bean bags/balls into buckets which are placed at varying distances	Draw a line of chalk on the floor, lay out a scarf or put a line of masking tape on the floor to create a 'balancing' line, children to walk forward/backwards, crawl, hop or jump across the line.	Pass an item, bean bag, ball or similar around body, behind back, round legs.
Stand inside a circle (hula hoop, drawn on the floor with chalk or created using rope/scarf) spin round without stepping outside of the circle	Bend a rope/scarf something similar into different shapes, walk along it/jump over it side to side	Commando crawling along the floor	Balancing on one leg whilst raising arms up and down, if feeling confident at this lean forwards whilst balancing on one leg.

Calming

Parent massages child on neck, shoulders, upper back and upper arms.	Child lies of tummy, roll a gym ball along their legs, arms and back avoiding the head and any sensitive areas. Could attempt this with a rolled up pillow or similar, if no gym ball available	Sit under a couple of blankets – creating the impression of a weighted blanked	Calm press ups on the wall -
Sit on a chair, hands beside on the edges of the chair, use arms to push body slightly up from the chair	Lying on the floor with gym ball, cushion/pillow under tummy, roll over the top to reach a point on the floor in front, then roll back again	Child sits on a chair and pushes their hands together, palms facing. Push and hold together for 10, then release, repeat	Parent places hands on the shoulders of a seated child, press firmly down on the shoulder for 10 seconds, release then repeat.

Online Learning

Below is a list of free to access online learning resources that can support your child during the period of school closures.

English:

Oxford Owl Online: *Pre-school/Primary*

Oxford Owl Online offers a free library of e-books for children aged 3-11 which are book banded so you can find books at the appropriate level for your child. It also has helpful guides for parents on how to support your child with phonics and spelling. There are also some interactive maths activities.

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/>

Mr T's Phonics YouTube Channel:

Pre-school/Primary

Mr Thorne's Phonics is a YouTube channel that offers phonics sessions to support your child in learning to read. There are also tutorials to support the teaching of spelling and grammar, guides for parents and story starters to inspire writing activities.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/breakthruChris/featured>

Maths:

SumDog: *Primary/Key Stage 3*

SumDog have made all their services free during the school closure period. It is an online platform where children aged 5-14 can take part in online maths and spelling games. Collect points, earn rewards and bling out your online avatar.. You can compete against friends and there is a downloadable app for tablet computers.

<https://pages.sumdog.com/>

PE:

Joe Wicks Body Coach:

Pre-School/primary/Secondary

Joe Wicks' YouTube Channel offers physical exercises that you can do in your own front room. There are videos aimed at primary age children right up to adults:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1/playlists>

Wellbeing:

Cosmic Kids Youtube Channel:

Pre-School/primary

The Cosmic Kids YouTube channel is targeted at Primary aged children and offers a range of Yoga, mindfulness and wellbeing activities that are very accessible.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga/featured>

Talk about what is Happening

This is a very anxious time for many of us and the future is very uncertain. Our children and young people will also be anxious about the situation. Talk to your child/young person about what is happening and why we are required to stay at home.

For older children/young people, so long as it won't raise their anxieties, you might read news articles together or watch the news on TV and talk about it. Talk about how staying at home is helping to keep everybody safe. The CBBC news round website can be a good place for some children to read and talk about the news <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

On **pages 12-17** we have included a hand washing activity and a social story to read with your child/young person that might help to explain what is happening more clearly.

Get Support When You Need it

This is a very difficult time for all of us but there is support available.

Your Child/Young Person's School:

Your Child/Young Person's school may be able to offer support in the first instance. Contact them for advice and support.

The Local Offer

The 'local offer' pages on Peterborough Council's website has lots of up to date local information and provides details of services which may be able to support you.

The National Autistic Society Website

The National Autistic Society website offers helpful advice and support and their online community can help connect you to other parents and carers.

www.autism.org.uk

The Autism Advisory Teacher Service

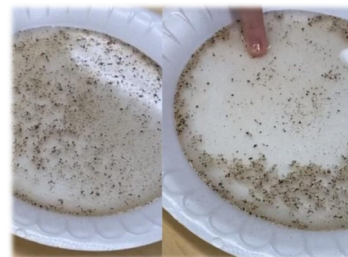
During the school closures the Autism Advisory Teacher Service is running a parent hotline between 10am and 11am each day to offer support and advice.

07961 240384

Washing Hands Activity

What you will need:

- Shallow dish (preferably white)
- Ground Pepper
- Water
- Liquid soap



Put approximately 1cm of water into the shallow dish and sprinkle liberally with ground pepper. Put some soap on the tip of your finger and dip onto the surface of the water in the centre of the dish. The pepper should magically disperse to the edge of the dish.

This is a great way to show children how soap can combat germs. Explain to the children that the pepper represents germs. When the pepper is sprinkled onto the water get the child/children to gently dip their finger onto the surface of the water, when they pull their finger away there should be pepper on the tip of the finger. Explain the pepper represents germs. When the soapy finger is dipped into the pepper water and the pepper/germs have gone to the edge, tell the children that the soap combats the germs and makes them go away, hence why we need to wash our hands well with soap.



Turn tap on



Wet hands



soap



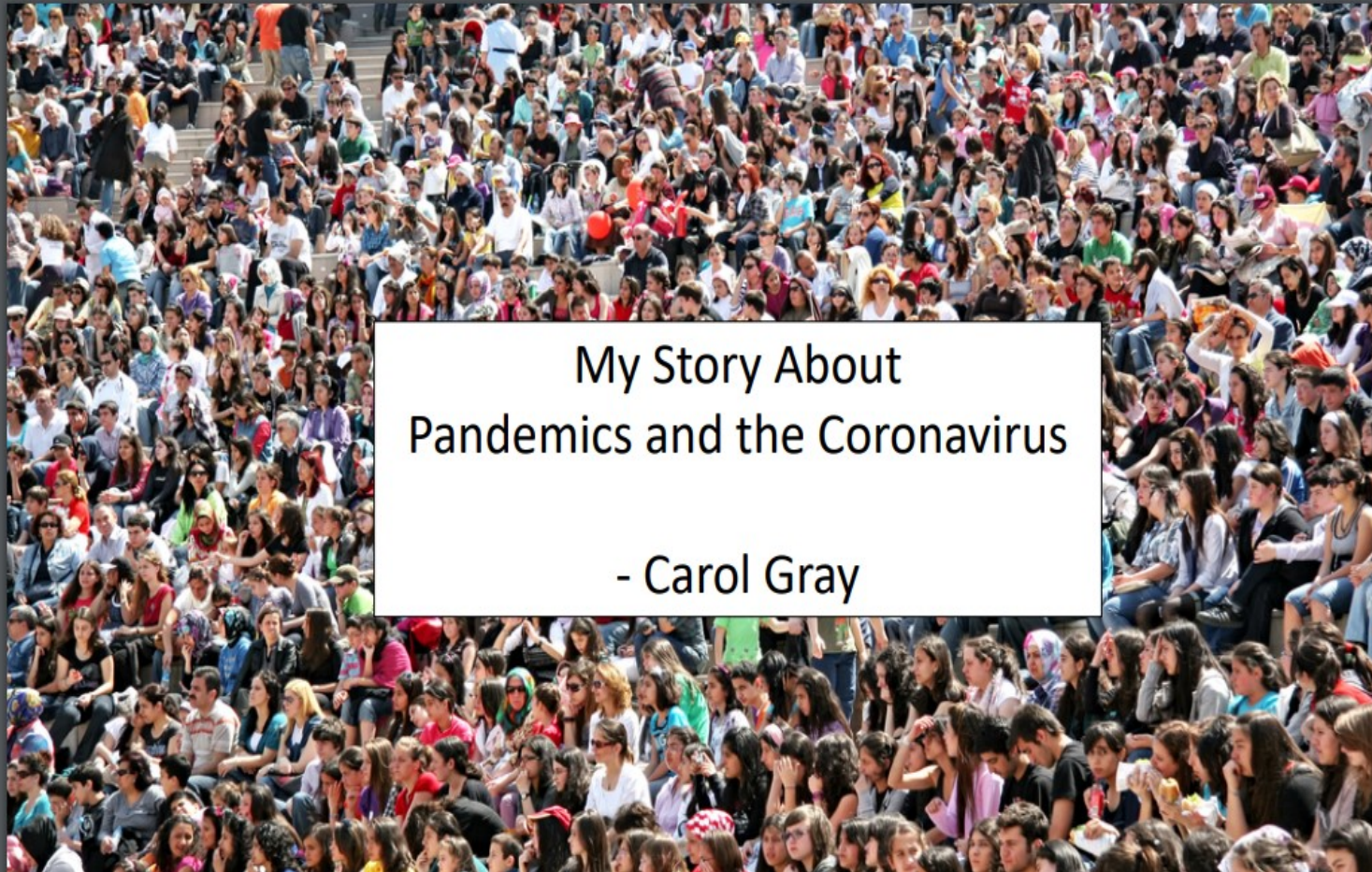
Rinse



Turn tap off



Dry hands

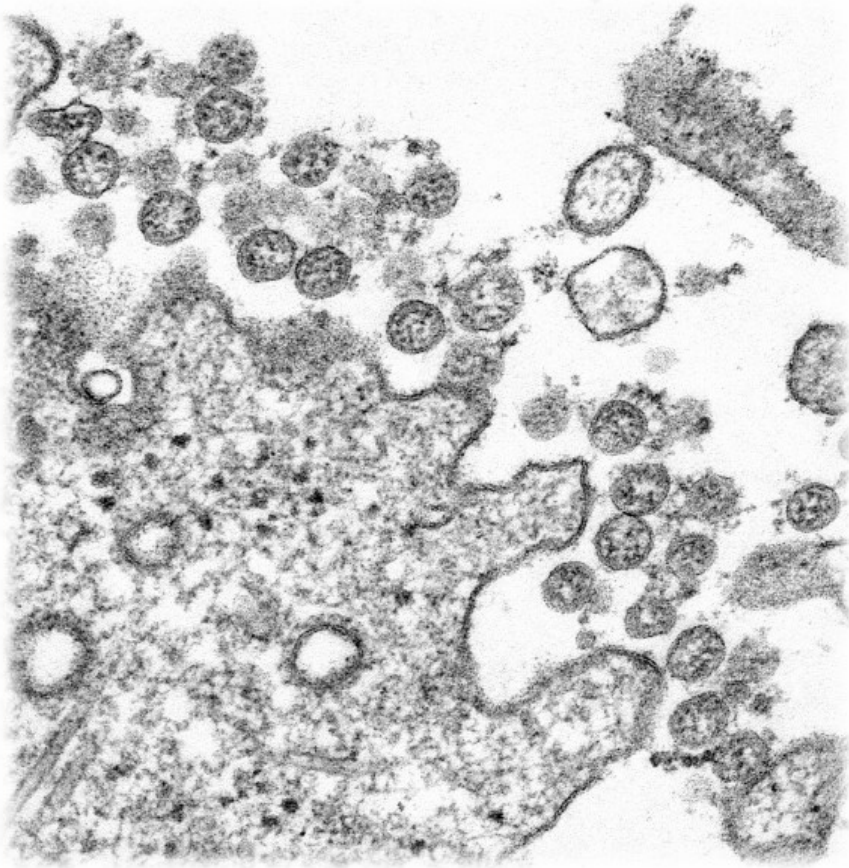


My Story About
Pandemics and the Coronavirus

- Carol Gray



This story is about pandemics and the Coronavirus. A pandemic is when many people in a large area become sick. A pandemic is usually caused by a new virus.



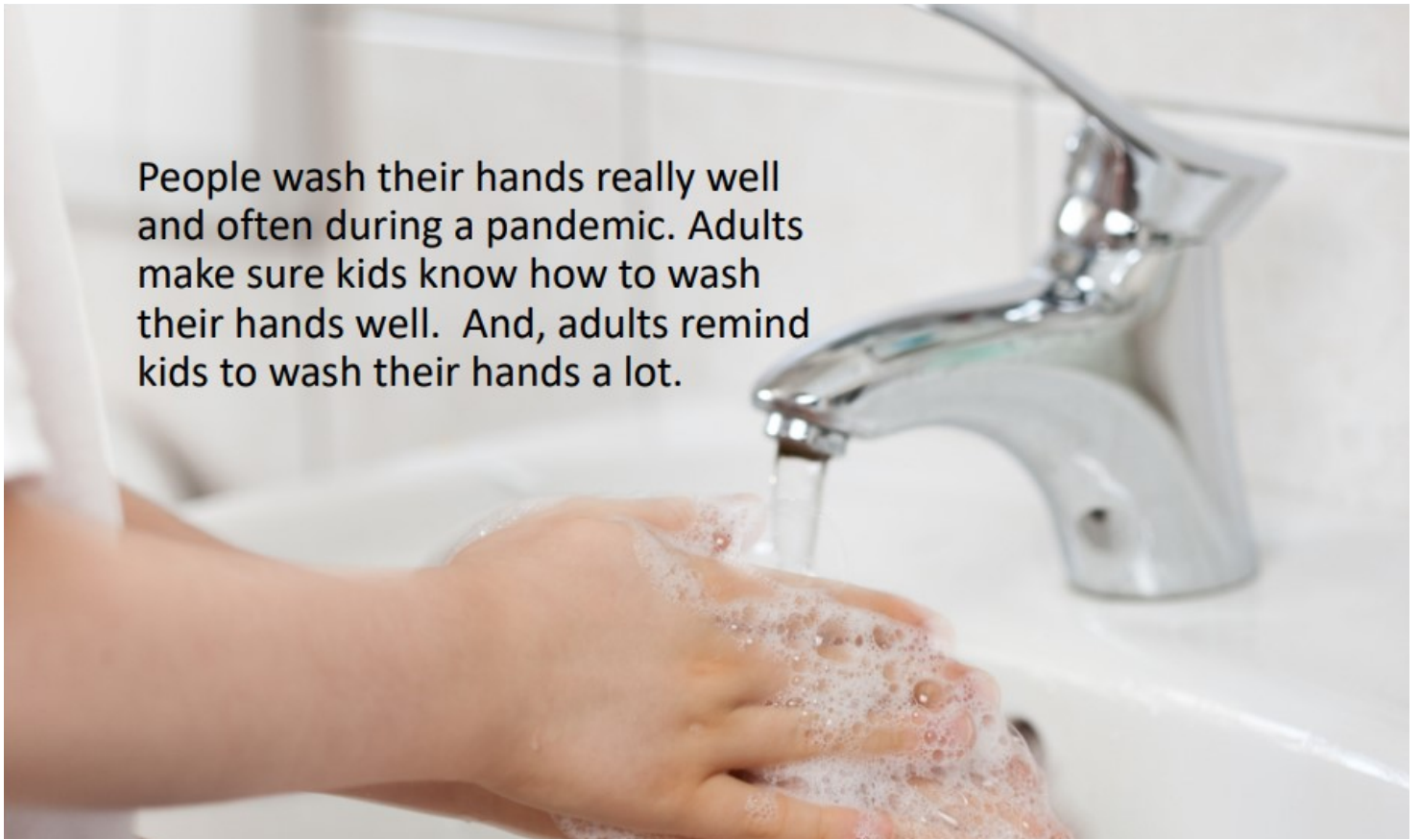
The Coronavirus is a virus that is spreading fast and causing a worldwide pandemic now.

Viruses are so small that it takes an electron microscope to see them. People can't see if a virus is near them.



People are smart. Even though they can't see the Coronavirus, they know what to do. They use healthy habits and work together to make it harder for the Coronavirus to spread. This helps to keep people healthy during the pandemic.

People wash their hands really well and often during a pandemic. Adults make sure kids know how to wash their hands well. And, adults remind kids to wash their hands a lot.



The Coronavirus has been traveling fast from one person to another. If many people are close together in the same place, that makes it easier for a virus to spread. More people become sick faster.



Sometimes schools close during a pandemic. That way, children are farther apart from one another and it's harder for a virus to spread.



A pandemic can cause people to reschedule their vacation plans. This is because vacations are often in fun and crowded places. People try to avoid crowds in a pandemic. They may re-schedule their trip.

It's good to know that pandemics don't happen very often. They occur about once every twenty-five or thirty years, or about three times every one hundred years. It's also helpful to remember that the Coronavirus pandemic will end; probably not by tomorrow morning, but it will end.

