



# OSSME NEWS

## Outreach Specialist Support Newsletter: Bumper Edition!

### In this issue:

- Live Parent/Carer training during COVID
- World Autism Day
- HMS Prince of Wales!
- Home school tips
- 5 point star advice for home schooling
- Stakeholder feedback
- ..And so much more!

## Brave New World!

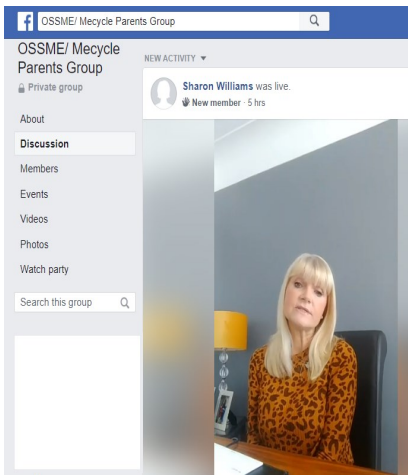
It is an understatement that life as we know it has currently had to change immeasurably. These are uncertain times and we at OSSME want you to know that despite this we are working very hard to support students and their families in more 'creative' ways than we may have needed to do previously.

OSSME have been operating in a variety of ways, including the use of password encrypted Zoom/Skype to support parents; Google Classroom lessons; 1:1s on the telephone with students and a 'virtual' parenting group (see below for details).

This bumper edition is packed full of news, but more importantly, we have added some printable visuals at the end of the newsletter regarding support for challenging behaviour. We hope this is useful for readers. Please pass on to anyone else you feel may benefit from this.

Should you feel you would like further support from OSSME or have any suggestions for us, please feel free to contact us via manager, Sharon Williams, at this email address: [Sharon.williams@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:Sharon.williams@autisminitiatives.org)

## Live training and support for parents & carers during lockdown

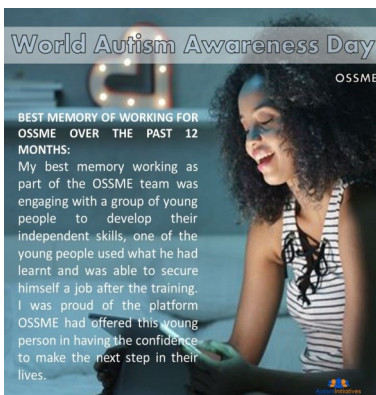
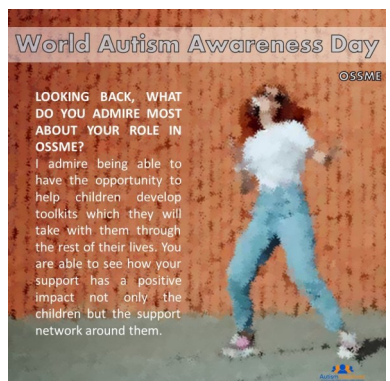


We are very aware of the disappointment of parents that due to Coronavirus we could not meet in person for training at Mecycle; therefore OSSME has created an online Facebook group in which manager, Sharon Williams, vlogs regularly and also broadcasts lots of online training sessions. These can be watched live or in your own time. Parents can direct message OSSME with ideas/requests for further sessions, or can comment directly on the videos. Please tell any other parents or carers they can join the group by first following OSSME Autism Initiatives page, then joining the group is easy: search FB for 'OSSME/ Mecycle Parents Group' and request to join. Please help us to spread the word!

## World Autism Day: Thursday 2nd April 2020

Autism friendly events & educational activities have been taking place all month, aiming to increase understanding & acceptance of people with autism, foster worldwide support and inspire a kinder, more inclusive world.

Why be just one day though? Join us for World Autism Awareness Month, Year, Lifetime... to help us spread kindness and autism awareness!



Some comments from AIPs about working in OSSME team

# OSSME NEWS

## Outreach Specialist Support Newsletter

### A great visit to see the HMS Prince of Wales in Liverpool



What an opportunity! Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales, the second of the Royal Navy's giant new vessels was in Liverpool during late February and early March, long before lockdown—so AIP Rocio Manzanera organised a fantastic trip for one of our students to help them to work towards their current Open Awards qualification. Our student commented they will never forget it, and even got some photographs to treasure, too.



### Home-schooling tips from OSSME

**Completing school work at home can raise significant difficulties and avoidant behaviours to some students with Autism. Some students compartmentalize activities at home and activities at school which can cause heightened anxiety if one encroaches on the other. Here are some tips that may help ease anxiety when asking students to complete schoolwork at home.**

**Environment:** Let the child choose the place to complete the work. (A quiet space free from distraction is best) however, if they choose to complete the work lying on the couch, let them. Having this small element of control during a time of uncertainty and confusion may help ease anxiety.

**Visual timetable:** Having a visual timetable allows for an element of predictability and routine. Including your child in making a routine for their day may help them to organise their thoughts in terms of what is expected of them and when.

**Timer:** Visual timers such as sand timers, stop watches and countdown apps on your phone can help students to visualise a clear start and end point to their task or activity. Negotiate the time span with the child. Short bursts of regular activity may be best to manage however, some students may prefer to get everything done in one go so they can have the rest of the day free of work. Again giving this choice and element of control may help ease anxiety.

**Provide a 'finished box':** It may be beneficial to have a box or tray with the word 'finished' or 'complete' on. This will give a sense of achievement to them after completing an activity, the physical action of placing it in the box/ tray can improve self-esteem and pride in their achievements. Also, having a start box with all work for that day might benefit some children in that it is giving them a clear expectation however, it may cause anxiety and 'shut down' for others who see it as overwhelming.

**Use their interests to motivate and reward:** Discuss with your child a reward that they can have after completing an activity, this could be based around their interest such as:

- Time on the PlayStation
- Cooking or baking
- Arts and Crafts
- Lego



Giving children an incentive to finish school activities will often motivate them to work, as it is giving them an end goal that will provide them with gratification and reward.



# OSSME NEWS

In a recent newsletter, we discussed how OSSME Autism Initiatives always approaches ASC from a strength model as opposed to merely focusing on the difficulties associated with the condition. With this in mind, the below aspects of the home school advice has been broken down into these 5 areas, which should guide you through understanding any barriers your child may face when learning at home.



## Motivation:

What motivates your child to work? It may be beneficial to adapt work given by school and personalise it to include their interests such as Lego, painting, food, TV programs. Students are more likely to engage in work and activities when it is based around their interests. For example, if a child is given an addition worksheet to complete, you could adapt it and instead of adding counters or numbers, you could use Lego or paint brushes. If your child has a barrier to writing in that causes them anxiety you can record your learning through photographs and share with their teacher on return to school.

## Understanding:

Does your child understand what they are being asked to do? It may be that if a child doesn't understand the work initially they may 'shut down' for fear of making a mistake, which is often something that can cause anxiety in students with Autism. Talking through the activity bit by bit and breaking it down may help some students process the information.

## Sensory:

Consider that environment you are asking your child to complete the work or activity in and relate that environment to their individual sensory profile. For example, if your child is hypersensitive to specific smells, it would provide distraction and discomfort to have the child sat in the kitchen completing the activity while you are cooking. If your child is hyposensitive and seeking vestibular input, it may be beneficial to complete activities while sitting on a yoga ball so they can self-regulate their movement. Providing the appropriate sensory environment can also aid focus and concentration.

## Expectation:

Does your child understand what is being expected of them? See what their expectation of work is from teachers in school and compare that with your expectations from home. Discussing expectations can help reduce anxiety and provide clarity in an uncertain situation for many students.

## Communication:

It is worth considering what the best way of communicating information regarding schoolwork is. It may be that broken down information repeated throughout the day may be more beneficial than sitting them down and explaining activities all at once. Repetition and reminding your child of when an activity will be starting may be received more favourably than saying 'right, it's time for homework,' for example, in 10 minutes we will complete an activity, in 5 minutes, in 2 minutes etc.; this can be reinforced with a visual timer to aid processing. It may also be beneficial to be aware of 'trigger' words that may be causing anxiety such as school, work, teacher, homework, maths etc. Learning what words are more likely to cause frustration and anxiety will help you communicate more effectively when it comes to school work and activities.



Remember to prioritise the mental health of you and your family during this testing time. It is worth remembering that the vast majority of parents are not trained teachers and even if they were, they would still find motivating their children at home alongside other commitments very challenging. There are some little reminders pic-



tured, however the most important thing to remember is that your child's mental health is always the priority over their grades. Schools will adapt to reteach and boost students' progress when they return. Don't beat yourself up if you can't get your child to do things they would normally do in school. You're doing your best—we are in this together! #wegotthis

# OSSME NEWS

**We are so happy we are helping families so much. Here is the feedback so far from parents and carers about our service and what they like about how we have adapted during lockdown. Thanks to all for giving your time to feed back to us.**

- Just knowing that we have someone to talk to is great.
- Louise has given support to myself and my son the last few weeks and also given us someone to talk to when he's finding things hard.
- I am happy at the fact that I know I have help at the end of a phone when my son is having a bad day or if he is just generally feeling low
- Conor has built up a good relationship with my son and has gained his trust. He engages well with Conor and enjoys his company, he really looks forward to going out each week.
- Email and phone contact with Sharon, Conor, Claire and Vicky.
- Sharon's live feeds on MeCycle parent group on Facebook have kept me sane!
- OSSME listening and offering their advice, but also knowing if I need them I can just call or email.
- Everything. Just everything.
- Fantastic support at this difficult time. Sharon manages my son's anxiety in a way no one else can. Her support is invaluable and very much appreciated.
- Michelle who normally supports my child (so brilliantly!) has been unwell and Claire has taken her place for a while. It was fab speaking to her and her understanding of my anxieties and helping me by talking me through what my child is going through. Claire also offered further support when needed closer to going back to school.
- My son has found the sessions really useful in school and although he struggles with telephone conversations I feel his continued contact with Vicky is extremely valuable to his mental health. Thank you for the continued support x
- Behaviour advice is amazing. Thankyou!
- Vicky trying to escalate support for our family has been a godsend.
- The Zoom & Google classroom. Her accessibility. Claire always goes the extra mile. (even the IT support!)
- Advice and someone to talk to for support is critical for me. Thank you all.
- Lovely, friendly and reassuring phone calls, great to know there is someone there with a listening ear and to turn to if needed. This, combined with lots of advice, resources to use with my daughter and a feeling of continued support. Great links via email, lots of updates and information. Greatly appreciated - Thank you so much Claire. OSSME, you do such a fabulous job!
- OSSME are the best thing that came into our lives, no one believed that my daughter had autism and I felt like I was talking to the wall; then I met Sharon Williams who absolutely blew me away, telling me what I had been telling the primary school for over a year and I just cried, because finally someone could see what I could see. Now my daughter is diagnosed. I love you OSSME!
- It feels like we have someone in our corner, supporting us at a difficult time. We had just the basic understanding of ASC but can feel our knowledge growing with the resources and conversations provided by Sharon and the team. We feel in a better frame of mind now we're starting to understand how our son's mind is working. We're in it for the long haul and completely trust Sharon & team to steer us in the right direction. I also appreciate how Sharon questions me on how much I've taken on board from our talks, to make sure I'm paying attention...:)

## How to Handle Negative Self Talk in Children And Young People



### Empathize

Acknowledge the hard time they're having.



### Correct them

Teach them to use positive thoughts.



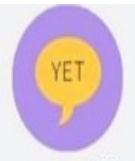
### Me too

Talk about similar situations you've gone through.



### Model Positivity

Show them what optimistic thinking looks like.



### The power of "yet"

Add "yet" to the end of their negative talks. "I can't do this." "...yet."



### Remind them

Redirect their focus to things they have already accomplished.



# OSSME NEWS

**...Here is the feedback so far from some of our schools about our service and how we have adapted during lockdown. Thanks to all for giving your time to feed back to us, we know how busy you all are!**

- Valuable, practical information and advice which we can send to families.
- I think more than anything its the support that you have been able to offer parents that has been the most valuable. Anxious, worried parents have been reassured by your messages and conversations. I imagine you have also been able to impart relevant advice, experience and tips for supporting and managing in the family home during these very uncertain, unstructured times. Claire as always is easy to communicate with and quick to respond.
- Sharon has been continuing to work with the pupils she has been supporting in school by supporting their families via telephone consultations. Sharon has been sending PowerPoints to give parents information and has been emailing families for whom English is an additional language. Sharon has kept me informed of what support she has offered by sending an email of the summary of the consultation which she has sent to the parent. Parents I have spoken to have been very grateful for the support and have valued the consultations with Sharon.
- Communication! Vicky is so good at keeping in contact with myself and parents. Her support has been invaluable during this difficult time. She supports me as SENCO and contacts me regularly. Vicky has produced a number of resources that I can share with our families: just great! Vicky also makes contact with individual families, offering much needed practical help and support. I couldn't ask for more, thank you!

## Feedback from some of our older students themselves :

### What do you feel is going well with your OSSME support?

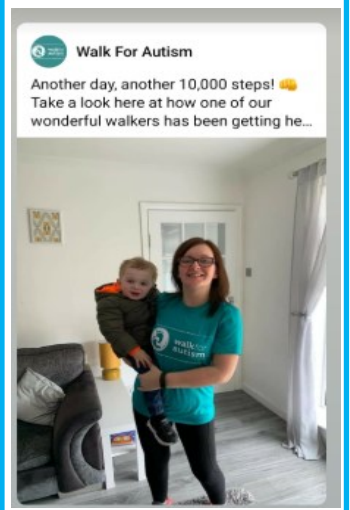
“You always make me feel so much more positive and help me think of activities”

“I like doing my weekly homework for OSSME. It helps me loads”

“I like talking to Rocio over the phone. She is really positive and that is so helpful.”

“OSSME helps me with routine, helping me find my 'normal', & support for going to uni”

Click below to see how our Walk for Autism is going!



For further information on OSSME services or training packages, please contact [Sharon.williams@autisminitiatives.org](mailto:Sharon.williams@autisminitiatives.org)

## Visuals for supporting children at home during the Coronavirus Pandemic

### BE PREPARED



Make sure plans are up to date and followed



Add a new routine with familiar and favourite activities



Use visual timetables to communicate the routine



Provide choice



Reduce demands your child finds difficult



Praise and reward positive behaviour



Involve your child in everyday activities



Remind your child of rules

### IF YOU SEE A CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR

#### CHECK:



Physical health



The environment



Triggers which you know affect your child

TRY TO WORK OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD IS "SAYING" THROUGH THEIR BEHAVIOUR. DO THEY...



Need positive attention?



Need something tangible?



To avoid or escape something?



Feel uncomfortable for sensory reasons?

# OSSME NEWS

## IF YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR BECOMES CHALLENGING

TRY THE FOLLOWING:



Stay as calm as possible, use low voice & relaxed body language



Divert or distract



Give your child what they are asking for if possible



Keep language simple



Give your child some space and time if it is safe to do so



Use body signs and gestures

## FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR:

REVIEW WHAT HAPPENED AND WHAT YOU COULD CHANGE TO AVOID IT AGAIN:



Try to keep a record of what happened before, during and after



Keep a record each time and you will build up a picture



Ask for help/advice from OSSME

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF:



Take some deep breaths



Can someone else step in?



Can you have time out?



Can you discuss?