



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Recreation, Leisure, and Play Activities

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. "Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism" is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children's Specialized Hospital.

Everybody benefits from recreation and leisure in their own way. Unfortunately children with autism spectrum disorders tend to have many restrictions or challenges when they try to engage in leisure activities. It's important for professionals or parents to help a child successfully engage and find an activity that their child can be successful in.

Children with autism spectrum disorder tend to have fewer recreation and leisure interests than typically developing children, so in order to help them find their preferred play activity you really should help them explore a variety of activities. Helping them be successful in a variety of activities so they can really find what they're good at and what they like to do and offering choices so not forcing a child to engage in an activity that you think they'll be successful in but in an activity that they'll truly love and truly enjoy participating in.

So certain things they can do is basically breaking down an activity. So let's say that the child does want to engage and participate in soccer, then breaking down and looking at the sport of soccer and the activity of soccer and what skills are necessary to be successful in soccer. If you are helping a child develop different skills when it comes to recreation, such as soccer, then once that they feel more confident in their ability to participate in soccer, they'll be more likely to engage with their peers in that activity. So not being successful and not being good at a sport really prevents any child from participating. They get anxious and they don't want to participate.

Music is also a great way or any art activity is a great way for children with autism spectrum disorders to communicate and express themselves. So painting, drawing, playing an instrument and just listening to music in general is a great way. It's a great activity for them. It's something that they can do on their own. It's something they can do with their peers, something they can do with anyone any time.

The park is a great place for families to go recreate together to enjoy the nature and the outdoors together. So it's something that a family can do together. Go out and visit a local nature center or even go on a local nature walk. You can have a scavenger hunt out in the woods or at the park and look for different things, maybe something that feels different. So touch different leaves and different flower petals and touch those and appreciate the sense of touch and listen for different nature sounds, so being able to point out different things that you don't see indoors and you might not see at your house outside or something and doing those things as a family and then the child can also take those things home and go out in their own backyard and do those things on their own or with their friends and have something that they can appreciate.

I think a lot of families tend to be hesitant and nervous to communicate with recreation staff members because they want their child to participate and they don't want somebody to turn them away from engaging in an activity. So the best way to help your child participate in an activity, in a group activity, would be to communicate before the activity occurs so maybe before the program is going to start, maybe at the time of registration, communicate any kind of need your child has and communicate these things with staff so they can adequately prepare to support your child and help them be successful.

There are specialized recreation programs just like we have here at Children's Specialized Hospital. We specialize adaptive aquatics and a martial arts program and families get very comfortable and very satisfied with their child's participation in our programs but what we always want to encourage to families is broaden their horizons and help your child engage in all sorts of activities. A specialized program is there so that your child and you can be comfortable and happy with whatever program they're participating in but don't limit yourself to that activity and know that your child has the right and the ability to participate in any recreation experience specialized or mainstream program.

Recreation is just an amazing outlet for individuals of all abilities and working in the field of recreation therapy I've seen people do outstanding, moving things and I just want to pass along to other families that if you are struggling for your child to engage in an activity, don't give up. Keep looking and keep helping your child be successful in different activities until they find what they love and what they enjoy doing.

What it means to be successful in a recreation activity is not winning the game or hitting the homerun or having the best piece of artwork. It's really about enjoying the activity and having fun and recognizing those little successes that we all see as a huge success for the child. It's all about fun.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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