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Improving organisational skills

Points to note

- The child with autism may have deficits in his executive functioning skills. This means he has difficulty with organisation, task sequencing, planning and getting started.
- The child might become easily overloaded and confused by having to cope with the social demands of school life, this in turn will affect his personal organisation.
- The child may be unable to see the point of being well organised if he has little motivation to please others or master new skills.
- The child may have particular difficulty remembering items he should bring from home, what he needs to take home each day, the materials required for certain classes, knowing where to put his answers on a work sheet and finding his way around the school.

What you can do

- A child with autism should not be punished for deficits in his executive functioning skills, ie. being disorganised, forgetting class materials, difficulty getting started on a task.
- The child may benefit from having a map of the school. You could use different colored highlighters to mark play areas, home room, canteen, etc.
- Use a homework assignment book or sheet. This should clearly state what is expected as well as listing the books and resources needed to fulfill the requirements.
- Talk to the child's parents about providing a suitable place at home for the child to complete his homework. It is essential for a child with autism to have a space that is free from distractions.
- It is very important that a child with autism has time to 'unwind' at the end of the day so you may need to lower your expectations regarding the amount of homework he is required to do. You could even set aside some class time for the child to complete a homework assignment.
- Use a visual or written timetable that shows the items that are required for each lesson.
- Enlarge worksheets onto A3 size paper and using a highlighter, mark the spaces for each answer.
- The child may need some help getting started with an activity. A physical prompt may be necessary. Try providing a list sequencing the tasks to reach the goal of the activity.