

Mask Desensitisation

(younger child)

General Information

Using graded exposure for a new task offers the learner a chance to feel comfortable with and make sense of what is required, before having to do the task itself. Graded exposure/desensitisation may take minutes, days, or weeks, depending on the learner's apprehension in relation to the task. If you have sufficiently adapted your methods and the process remains difficult, it may be that the learner is not yet ready to achieve this goal.

Try to engage the learner in graded exposure tasks daily where possible. It is important to gauge the learner's interest and tolerance levels in the task and work in a supportive role with the child or young person to alleviate any anxieties. Please note you should only move onto the next stage as the learner is comfortable.

The following are suggestions for graded exposure to wearing masks:

Mask Desensitisation

- exploring masks with younger children -

STAGE 1

- Watch video clips that introduce and explain the concept of wearing masks (see prior Facebook post).
- Colour the pictures of characters wearing masks. Read the story. (<https://www.autismlittlelearners.com/2020/04/wearing-mask-coloring-book-for-children.html>)
- Draw or colour masks on preferred characters.
- Use playdough (or blu tac) to make masks for action figures, dolls or small plastic toys.
- Put a real mask on teddies, dolls and other toys.





STAGE 2

- Adults and siblings model wearing masks - as appropriate/ without causing distress.



- Engage in 'spot the mask' task when out driving in the car .

- Practice holding a mask in front of the face when in front of the mirror. Try to make it fun e.g. peek-a-boo/ funny faces.



STAGE 3



- Take with and without masks photos of individual members of the family or of the family group together.
- Share with and without mask photos with extended family and friends.
- Guess Who? Family photo game (e.g. it's Grandad wearing a mask).

STAGE 4



- Timed trials - try to wear a mask for 5 seconds up to 5 minutes (increasing intervals based on capacity).
- Practice wearing mask in public. Increase time spent wearing mask as capacity increases. You could use a visual timer and/or schedule to support time spent wearing the mask.