

## RESPITE TIP



### MARCH BREAK SURVIVAL 101

While we all look forward to March Break, breaks from school days can be stressful for children with disabilities and their families. School is a routine event for children with disabilities and many look forward to riding the bus to school, spending time with friends, and the time they have with staff at school. They expect these things will happen in their day, and it may be confusing for them when the routine changes.

For parents the Break can be stressful too. The routine at home for taking care of the house is shifted by the need to care for children. Parents who work outside the home have less flexibility to shift their time and energy. There are additional demands if children are involved in March Break programs outside of the home. Driving back and forth, dealing with weather conditions, preparing lunches, and handling the new transitions can add stress for you and your child and juggling all of these demands may cause you to feel more tired and frustrated.

These ideas might help to balance the week:

- Ask members of your family to help out during the week. If others can help with household chores, it is easier to balance the needs of your children.
- Recruit an older child to be your "helper" and your child's playmate during the week. Give them a few play suggestions, some options for snacks, and yourself a few hours.
- Make the day at home predictable for you and your child. Try to list things you plan to do each day so you know in advance what to get ready for.
- Plan activities that are fun and relaxing. "Down time" activities like watching a favourite movie together or playing a board game might be fun. Have a "stay home, pajama morning" where the way you dress is a cue that the day ahead will be relaxed.
- Try and get out for a walk. Explore the last days of Winter together and look for signs of Spring.
- If you have respite workers – book some time so you get a well-deserved break too!

Consider recreation programs in your community. Contacting your local community centre might lead to programs that will be fun for your child. Local libraries, museums and art galleries, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Recreation Centres might have ideas that will work for your family. Check in with people involved with your child. They may be aware of recreation options that suit your child well.

Finally – plan a special time or treat for yourself for after March Break. You can expect an increase in demands for the week – but you will have great memories and maybe a little chocolate hidden at the back of the pantry shelf – just for you!

*This Respite Tip has been brought to you by the Nova Scotia Partnership on Respite, Family Health, and Well-Being. Information on the Respite Partnership and this and other Respite Tips can be found at: <http://disability.novascotia.ca/content/nova-scotia-respite-partnership>*

*Respite, WE deserve it!*



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