

Making the most of NDIS funded supports

The NDIS is not able to fund every support request that is made, and often you may feel that you don't have enough support available, but here are some tips that can help you make the most of the funded supports.

1. **Compare costs of different providers and negotiate your best deal.** Most providers charge the maximum amount under the NDIS Pricing Index, but sometimes you can negotiate the rate a little, or find organisations that charge a bit less.

It's also helpful to discuss short term session cancellation policies up front. Majority of providers will still charge you if you give less than 24 hours notice of the cancellation, which is unavoidable when a child is sick. Yet they give you less than 24 hours notice when they are sick. So consider negotiating that if the provider cancels with under 24 hours notice, you would like to have your next cancellation fee waived. Or if your child is sick and you need to cancel and you know you are going to be charged, get the provider to do some non face to face work – such as researching programs or activities for your child, or developing some new visuals or compiling some new game resources for you.

2. **Think about whether your child would learn best from a therapist, or from you as the parent.** If they are more likely to respond to you, get the therapist to set you up with a home therapy program that involves fun games and activities that is teaching the child skills while allowing them to have a fun time with you. Because the last thing you need is extra work to do with them that will make them unhappy and difficult! Sometimes therapists are willing to meet monthly or quarterly and provide you with resources, games and therapy activities that you can use with your child to help develop their skills.

If your child would learn best from a therapist, ask if the therapy organisation offers small group sessions or therapy assistants to run programs, as this can be a helpful way to get around double the amount of therapy for the same cost. Or consider training up grandparents or support workers to implement therapy programs developed and overseen by the therapists.

Also, consider having therapy in multiple locations. Visits at the school can help in some areas, and visits at the home in other ways, but consider a therapy visit at the local park – where they might be able to support your child to do different activities on play equipment that will build their fine or gross motor skills. Or invite your therapist to join you and your child for an appointment that you know your child finds challenging, so they can come up with different ways to support the child to manage future appointments.

3. **Does your child benefit from visual routines?** Rather than the therapist make them, why don't you do them, and consider involving your child too. There are some great free visual timetables available online:

- A day in our Shoes website has a list of 20 free printable visual schedules/routines <https://adayinourshoes.com/free-printable-visual-schedules-for-home-and-daily-routines>
- Boardmaker is a software program with thousands of visuals that you can use to develop a multitude of different style timetables, routines, choice boards and more. You can access a free 30-day trial of Boardmaker by visiting: www.goboardmaker.com/pages/software-trials

4. **Use Kites toybox toy library service** – the largest collection of adapted therapy resources and toys in the Southern Hemisphere with items available for hire with instructions for therapeutic use. This is a really great resource to hire a variety of different games, activities and equipment to work on different developmental areas, and your therapist can help select which would be best for you! It saves a lot of un-necessary purchases where you discover your child didn't like it or respond to it as expected.
5. **Upskill yourself** – connect with other special needs families online and find out what courses and parent training you might be able to access to help gain new skills and knowledge that you can use with your child for years to come. Some parent training can be funded by NDIS but there are some free online courses and training you can do too:
 - Carers WA e-learning - 9 short, online courses on topics to do with NDIS and disability issues
 - Carer Gateway Skills Courses - 6 short online modules about stress, self-care & communication
 - DDWA – Developmental Disability WA offers resources to build advocacy skills
 - Positive Partnerships offer workshops, webinars & an online learning hub
 - Raising Children Network offers online educational videos on a number of disability topics
 - Early Days 0-6yo Autism training
6. **Teach important life-skills in creative and fun ways at home.** Some facebook support groups and pinterest have great ideas that don't cost anything. For example:
 - For older children – let them be in charge of the grocery shop for a week – they have to plan the meals for 5 nights and go shopping with you to buy everything that's needed, all within a specific budget – be sure to take a calculator with you! That way they are learning money management and budgeting, meal planning and real life skills.
 - Get your child to write your grocery list for a week with the reward that they can add any item of their choosing (under a certain amount) to the list for you to buy.
 - Develop a 'roll for your reward' list – 6 rewards (each corresponding to a different dice number) that your child would like for completing all therapy tasks, homework and/or chores every afternoon without arguments. Then let them roll the dice on Saturday morning and enjoy their reward. You may need to set limits on the rewards and provide guidance – some ideas might be: an extra 2 hours of tech time on the weekend; or dessert for dinner; inviting a friend for a sleepover; cooking marshmallows on a fire...
 - For older children, consider listening to some Rslash AITA posts – Am I the Butthole is a collection of reddit posts where people share conflict situations they find themselves in where they aren't sure if they are being the butthole in the situation or not. Most of the bad language has been filtered out by the reader and it can be a great way to discuss different moral and ethical dilemmas that can be real life situations and a good way to make long car trips far more interesting!
7. **Make the most of support workers.** Encourage support workers join some therapy sessions so they learn games and activities to encourage therapy development according to your child's Plan goals; get them to "do with" your child instead of "doing for" them.