



Rowland Institute of Autism
www.rowlandinstitute.org

Why Autistic Children Need Routine

Autistic children are capable of only two states of mind: either contentment or mental incapacity. The inner world in which they live is either safe, or it is unsafe. This is a black-and-white issue. There are no shades of grey.

Routine establishes order in their lives by giving them a safe and secure environment. Routine lets them know what to expect and when to expect it.

Autistic children insist on sameness and inflexible adherence to routine. Even the slightest deviation from the specifics of established routine creates enormous anxiety. Adherence to routine becomes obsessively important, and any sort of change is a major cause for alarm.

Autism fixates attention on whatever the child is doing in any given moment and makes him/her oblivious to everything else. Whenever you interrupt routine, you obliterate everything that was in the child's awareness and replace it with extreme anxiety.