 **Nail Cutting Advice - Tips for the Sensitive Child**

Children / young people with sensory processing differences may react negatively to personal hygiene and grooming routines because they become overwhelmed by certain types of touch/tactile input. The following activity ideas / suggestions may help keep the child’s nervous system in a calm state during nail cutting:

* Try and ensure your child is receiving sensory input, which is calming and organising, at regular points throughout their day. Calming and organising sensations include deep pressure tactile / proprioceptive inputs.
* Give deep pressure input to the child’s forearms, hands, fingers or feet e.g.
* Playing pushing and pulling games
* Pushing / clapping hands together
* Massaging the hand, fingers or feet
* Massaging each fingertip / toe firmly
* Complete nail care activities after a bath or shower, or after soaking the hands / feet in warm water, so that the nails are much softer.
* Use baby clippers or scissors, if possible, rather than standard (adult) ones.
* Apply deep pressure input to the tip of the fingers or toes / nail beds before and after each nail is cut. Cut only 1 or 2 nails per day – this way, nail cutting can be a short experience at first and then becomes an everyday activity.
* For finger nail cutting have the child hold a vibrating toy in their hand(s) prior to or during nail clipping. The vibration helps “desensitize” the area prior to nail clipping.
* Use a distraction technique during nail cutting e.g. holding a preferred toy / fidget or have them watch a favourite show on the TV or tablet.
* Let the child listen to their favourite music or use headphones during nail cutting.
* Using visual supports for nail cutting can help i.e. ‘Now & Next’. Use a nail cutting picture and 2 activity choice pictures. Explain to the child that first their nails will be cut and then they can have their choice e.g. snack or tablet etc.
* Use a social story to help the child become familiar with what will occur during a nail cut.
* Use ‘chewlery’ or a preferred crunchy snack during nail cutting, to help them keep calm.
* If the child is a very sound sleeper, you can try cutting nails at night while they are sleeping (please be aware this may increase issues if they wake during the process or notice their nails have been cut in the morning!).
* Use a heavy blanket or lap pad over their legs during nail cutting to help keep them calm.
* Have a preferred activity ready to use with the child immediately after nail cutting.
* Ensure that all carers involved with personal care activities follow exactly the same routine / process as consistency and predictability can help to decrease stress / anxiety.

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