

Bathroom Checklist

This was put together by Sarah - a mum and member of our Neurodiversity Think Tank.

We have provided this checklist as a general guide to get you thinking about the bathroom environment.

Clear the room of unnecessary stuff

You may enjoy that exfoliating loofah in the shower but having it hanging above head height could make someone, especially a child, feel like an attack from a spider monkey is imminent.

Only have the necessary items ready

Preparing the room for the task ahead might seem like the obvious answer, but its purpose could have a more important role than you think. It can create predictability, consistency, safe and expected outcomes, and an order or routine. If we know what's going to happen and why, it can relieve stress and anxiety factors, it also stops the constant back and forth of getting items, prolonging the event, causing more pressure.

Identify the stress factors

Is it the lights? Are they too bright? Do they reflect off the bubbles? Is it the sounds? The smells?

Having the 'big light' on could overstimulate the senses. Try turning it off or having the landing light on instead; throw some glow sticks in the water for extra fun, and non-scented candles can create a spa-like environment, which could help relax the individual.

Is it the sounds? The water crashing into the tub? The overhead shower or tap at the sink dripping? The extractor fan whirling away, the echo bouncing off the tiled walls then the floor? TVs churning out heightened scenarios of a soap opera? Sensory overload!

Try filling the bath beforehand, turn off the TV, some people can take 'bath time' literally, so expect to get straight in the bath, but when they get there, they then have to... 'wait 'til the water's ready', 'get undressed', 'get in', 'move to this end' - this can seem like an endless chain of commands that can be too much to process. Keep it simple, visual prompts can help.



Check out the Smells

So, you've just got that gorgeous new bubble bath and can't wait to use it because Janice down the road tried it and 'it worked on her kid'? Smells are a massive trigger for some people, and what might be pure aroma heaven for you, might as well be battery acid for someone with sensory sensitivities.

Having products the bather likes, loves, or even picks themselves is a better way to eliminate any issues around scent and also, giving the sense of control is another step to happy bathing.

Check out what you can see

Lights reflecting off surfaces, objects, even bubbles can create overstimulation and anxiety. Simple things like closing the toilet seat, moving mirrors, bottles of Janice's bubble bath etc, can really help create a calm environment.

Check out what you can touch

Same as the loofa, sponges, soaps, gels and foams can send the individual into a tizzy if they don't like certain things on their skin. By establishing a solid list of preferred items and keeping them on hand and moving items that are not needed, out of sight, might help reduce emotions and stress triggers.

Consider the tub itself, do you have an anti-slip mat? These can help with sliding in the bath, but for other individuals, it can cause horrid chaffing of the rubber on their skin.

Does the bath have handles? Does that make them feel icky? Or would it help to pop a flannel or a pool noodle over it?

Simple checks can really help in making people feel at ease. By identifying triggers and removing them promptly, getting the individual to be involved can really help provide a sense of control. Seeing things from their perspective and validating their fears can work towards a better experience.

