

Tips for nail cutting

Before

- Choose the time wisely: Find a time where the person is relaxed, and you are too. Make sure you have enough time so that the task is not rushed, feeling under pressure by time constraints will add extra stress.
- Support the person to have as much control over the task as possible, can they choose the nail clippers, the hand cream etc.
- Support the person to feel calm before nail cutting: This may be achieved through proprioceptive input like rolling on a gym ball.
- Build nail cutting into weekly routines: If nail cutting becomes a part of the norm for the person and they know when to expect it they may become less anxious about it.
- Look at alternatives: There are alternatives out there such as electronic nail cutters or nail files which may work better for the person.
- Nail clippers can look scary, can you buy ones that look less threatening? There are clippers such as animal themed ones available to buy on the internet.
- Keep all the tools together in a bag or box: This will ensure you have everything you need and could act as a prompt for the person.

During

- Support the person to have as much control over the task as possible: Are they able to cut, trim or file their own nails?
- Use distractions: A distraction as simple as singing a song together, reading a book or watching TV may help.
- Create a song: Creating a song for nail cutting time may help the person cope better and can also provide predictability because the person is able to recognise which part of the process they are at and recognise when the end is coming.

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- Consider where and how the person is sitting: Would they prefer you to cuddle into them during this time, this will provide a chance for calming proprioceptive input.
 - Be aware of cutting the nail too short, it could be the fear of that sensation that is causing the problem with nail cutting.
 - Are there ways you can make this activity a positive sensory experience? Investing in their preferred hand cream or nail brush may help.
 - Could you cut the nails under water? Water makes our nails softer which may make it less painful for the person. Similarly, hand cream may have the same effect.
 - Use some specific sensory tools which may help the person feel calmer, things like squeezing a stress ball hugging a teddy bear or holding a vibrating toy may help.
 - Use a visual timetable to indicate the process of nail cutting.

After

- Be aware that after nail cutting the person may need time to decompress, be respectful of this.
- Learn from the experience, consider what worked well.

