

Sensory-Friendly Home Guide

**Practical, Low-Cost Ways to Make Daily
Routines Calmer at Home**

Kiron Autism Mission |
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Why Sensory-Friendly Spaces Matter

Many autistic children experience the world more intensely – sounds louder, lights brighter, textures more noticeable. A sensory-friendly home doesn't require expensive renovations. Small, thoughtful changes to light, sound, touch, and routine can meaningfully reduce daily overwhelm.

Lighting: Softening Visual Input

- **Swap harsh overhead lighting for warm, dim lamps** where possible – warm-toned bulbs (soft white/yellow) are gentler than cool white or fluorescent light.

- **Use curtains or blinds** to control natural light — even inexpensive fabric or a bedsheet pinned up can soften a too-bright room.
 - **Reduce flickering sources** — old tube lights or faulty bulbs can cause subtle flicker that's distressing even if not consciously noticed.
 - **Create one "dim corner"** in a common room with just a small lamp, for moments your child needs lower visual stimulation.
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Sound: Creating Auditory Calm

- **Identify and reduce background noise** — TVs, fans, or appliances running unnecessarily can add up. Turn off what isn't in use.
- **Use soft furnishings to absorb sound** — rugs, curtains, cushions, and even stacked books on shelves reduce echo in hard-floored rooms, at minimal cost.
- **Consider inexpensive foam ear plugs or DIY ear defenders** for overwhelming moments (guests, festivals, traffic).
- **Establish "quiet hours"** at predictable times of day, especially around transitions like waking up or bedtime.
- **Give a warning before loud sounds** — blenders, vacuum cleaners, doorbells — so they're

anticipated rather than sudden.

Touch & Texture: Comfort Without Cost

- **Let clothing tags and seams be optional** — cutting out scratchy tags or turning socks inside-out costs nothing and can prevent daily discomfort.
 - **Offer a variety of textures at home** — a soft blanket, a nubby cushion, a smooth stone — so your child can self-select what feels calming.
 - **Repurpose household items as sensory tools** — dried beans or rice in a sealed bottle, a stress ball made from a balloon and flour, or a textured fabric scrap bag.
 - **Weighted comfort on a budget** — a heavier blanket (even a folded quilt) can offer calming deep-pressure input during rest time.
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Smell: Reducing Overwhelming Scents

- **Minimize strong-scented cleaning products, air fresheners, or candles** — unscented or naturally mild alternatives are often gentler.

- **Ventilate cooking areas well** — strong food smells can be more intense for sensory-sensitive noses; opening a window during cooking helps.
 - **Ask before wearing strong perfume or cologne at home**, especially around transition times like meals or bedtime.
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Creating a Calm-Down Space

You don't need a dedicated room — a corner, a tent made from a bedsheet over a table, or even a labeled "calm basket" can work.

- [] A soft mat, cushion, or beanbag (even a folded blanket works)
 - [] One or two comfort items (soft toy, textured fabric, favorite small object)
 - [] A visual timer or sand timer, so the space feels predictable, not indefinite
 - [] Noise-reducing options (ear plugs, soft music, or silence)
 - [] Consistent location, so your child learns where to go when overwhelmed
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Daily Routine: Predictability as a Sensory Tool

Uncertainty itself can be a sensory and emotional stressor. Predictable routines reduce this load.

- **Use a simple visual schedule** — hand-drawn pictures or printed icons on cardboard work as well as store-bought charts.
 - **Keep transition times consistent** — same wake-up, meal, and bedtime routines reduce anticipatory anxiety.
 - **Give countdown warnings before transitions** — "5 more minutes, then bath time" helps the brain prepare for change.
 - **Use consistent, simple language for routines** — the same phrases each time (e.g., "shoes on, bag on, we go") build predictability.
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Mealtimes: Gentle Sensory Considerations

- **Offer familiar textures alongside new foods**, rather than replacing them entirely — this reduces pressure around eating.
- **Keep mealtime background noise low** — turn off the TV or loud music during meals if it's

distracting or overwhelming.

- **Use the same plate, cup, or seat** if this brings comfort — consistency itself can be calming.
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Bedtime: Winding Down Without Cost

- **Dim lights an hour before bed** to naturally cue the body toward rest.
 - **Reduce screen time before bed** — bright, fast-moving screens can be especially overstimulating close to sleep.
 - **Use a consistent "wind-down" sequence** — same three or four steps each night (e.g., bath, story, dim light, same phrase goodnight).
 - **Weighted or heavier blankets**, if tolerated, can support calmer sleep for some children.
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A Few General Principles

- **Observe before adjusting** — notice what specifically overwhelms or calms your child before making changes; sensory needs are individual.
- **Small changes add up** — you don't need to transform the whole home at once; start with one room or one routine.

- **Offer choices where possible** – even small choices ("soft light or lamp off?") give your child a sense of control over their sensory environment.
 - **What works may change over time** – revisit and adjust as your child grows and their sensory profile evolves.
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The Kiron Autism Mission is here to support families in creating calmer, more understanding home environments. Reach out anytime at kironautismmission.org.