



Brain First Parenting

Hosted by Dravet Syndrome Foundation

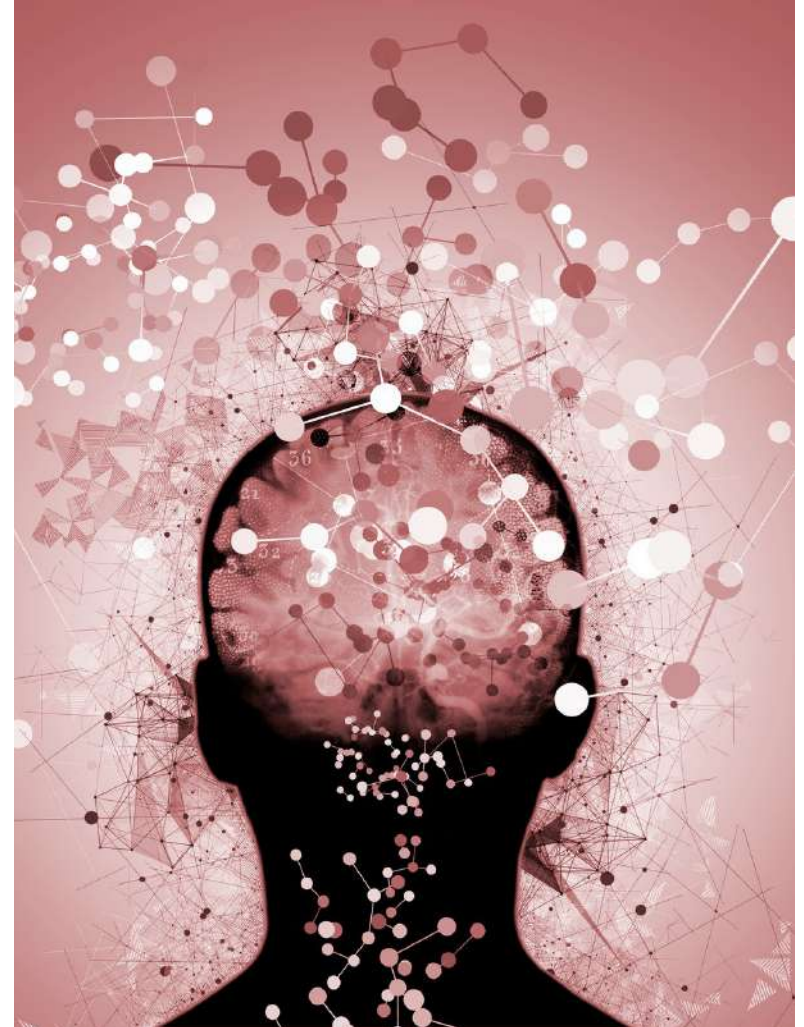
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Welcome!

It's a Brain Thing.

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What if...?

What if the brain is the source of all behaviors?

**What does this mean for our kids who struggle behaviorally?
What does it mean for the way we parent and teach them?**

What about all the different diagnosis our kids have received?

Why do "very good" parenting techniques fail miserably with my child?

If things like consequences don't work, what DOES work?

What if we always started from the standpoint that our kids would be doing well if they could? How would this change our approach and support of them?

What if I didn't focus on changing the behavior but instead focused on my child's unique brain function? What would change?

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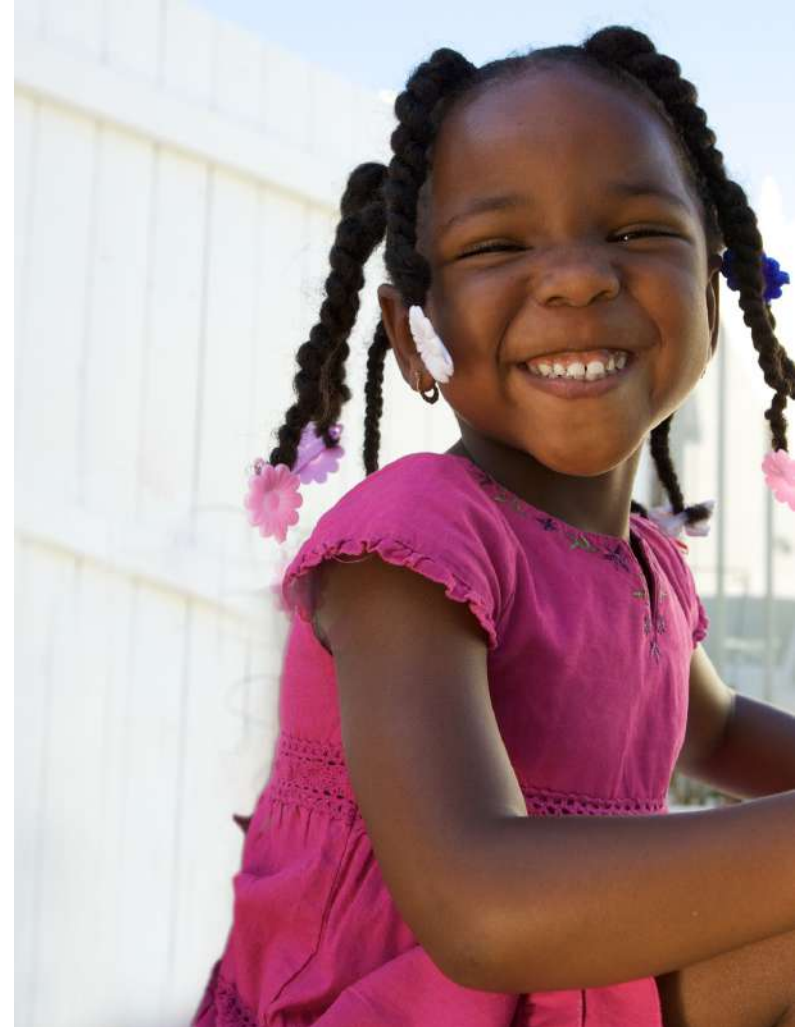


The Neurobehavioral Model

Seeing Our Unique Child Through a Brain-Based Lens

The neurobehavioral model is an individualized approach based on your child's unique brain function.

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**What does the
brain have to do
with my child's
challenging
behaviors,
anyway?**

Everything.

Provides understanding and clarity

Reduces frustration and improves outcomes

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The Brain is the Brain is the Brain

Different source, similar symptoms

Illness, trauma (experienced pre- and post-birth), pre-natal substance exposure, medical events at the time of birth, neuroimmune conditions, conditions caused by gene mutations and a traumatic brain injury all result in difficulty with seemingly easy cognitive tasks.

Behaviors are usually the only symptom of this brain-based difference.

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The Logic Behind the Neurobehavioral Parenting Model

Is a brain-based disability a physical condition and if so, what does this mean for the way we parent our child?



If So, Then What?

**Providing accommodations for our child
with brain-based differences is as
appropriate and effective as providing
accommodations to other children with
physical disabilities.**

Pre-natal toxic stress
Alcohol
Other substances
Trauma
TBI
Genetics
Illness
Loss of oxygen



**Changes in the
Brain with
Similar
Challenging
Behavioral
Symptoms**

The Neurobehavioral Model Components

The Path to Transformation

The Parent Experience

Building Resiliency

Accommodations & Building Skills

Parenting Our Child Differently

Secondary Characteristics

Seeing Our Child's Challenging Behaviors as Symptoms of Their Disabilities

Primary Characteristics

Insight into Our Child's Unique Brain Function and Lagging Cognitive Skills



BRAIN FIRST PARENTING

Primary Characteristics

The Brain-Behavior Connection



Primary Characteristics

Behaviors that help us gain insight into the way in which a brain works (or works differently). It includes things such as processing pace, executive functioning, language and communication and so much more.

Assumption based on "Neurotypical"

Think fast, listen fast

Predict & plan ahead

Multi-task & prioritize

Learn remember, apply info

Inhibits impulses

Ignore or manages sensory input

Identifies & solves problems

Neurodiverse Characteristics

Processes slowly

Difficult predicting outcomes

One thing at a time

Memory difficulties

Impulsive

Easily overstimulated

Difficulty problem solving

Primary Characteristics

Dysmaturity

Sensory Processing and Integration

Nutrition

Language and Communication

Processing Pace

Learning and Memory

Abstract Thinking

Executive Functioning

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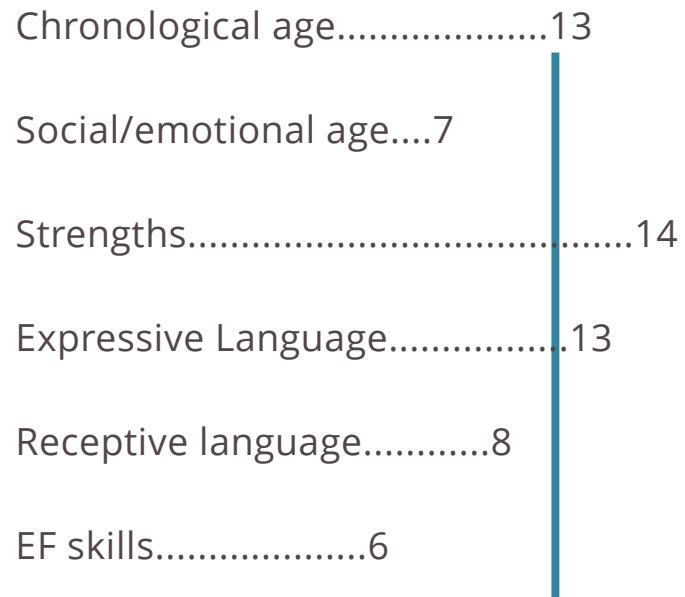


Dysmaturity

The gap between our child's chronological and developmental age.

They are not "acting" like a baby, they are a younger age socially, emotionally, and in relation to other cognitive skills.

Seeing Our Child's Uneven Development Through Their Behaviors





Sensory Systems

What happens when our child experiences everything?

Caused by structural and functional changes in the brain.

Child appears "disorganized".

Child's behavior is an attempt to normalize their nervous system.

Children can be over-sensitive or under-sensitive to touch (or both).

Their system can be over-responsive, under-responsive, sensory seeking or all three.

Nutrition & Hunger

Cravings for sweets and fats beyond what "typical" child experience

May not experience hunger pangs, becoming "hangry".

May not experience sensation of fullness.

May need to eat frequently due to cognitive fatigue.





Language & Communication

Talks better than understands (can "talk the talk" but can't "walk the walk")

Confabulates - tells truthful lies

Doesn't seem to understand, just doesn't "get it"

Chatty, may talk a lot (excessively at times), but can't participate in the back and forth/answer questions

Processing Pace

10-second child in one-second world

Frustrated if interrupted

Listens slowly, often asks, "What?" or says, "I don't know."

Slow, halting speech

If interrupted, has to start from beginning of story





Learning & Memory

Poor short-term memory, especially auditory

Has difficulty remembering and learning from past experiences

Can do 1 step, but not follow 2-4 step directions

Can recite the rule, but then can not follow it

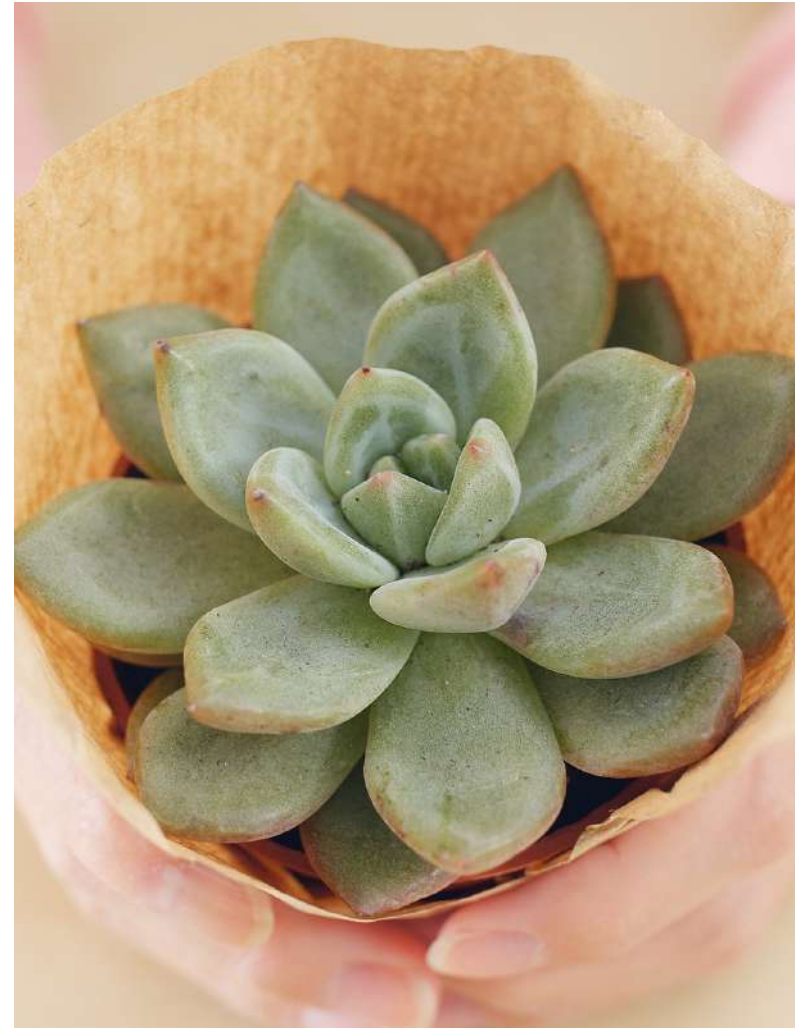
Inconsistent performance (on/off days)

Needs to be retaught the same thing many times

Cannot take what learned from one setting and apply it to another

Abstract Thinking

The ability to think about concepts that are real, like freedom and vulnerability, but are not tied to the senses or concrete objects. It also includes our ability to absorb information from our senses and make connections to the wider world.



Abstract

- Ability to learn the meaning behind things to explain the why and the how
- Ability to understand metaphors, humor or sarcasm
- Ability to interpret, and discuss ideas that have no concrete nature
- Ability to break knowledge down into separate parts and show the relationship through comparison, experimenting, and categorizing
- Ability to “get the gist” of a given situation or request
- Ability to understand what is implied, but not explicitly stated
- Ability to understand the big picture in a situation (independently gather context)

Concrete

- Inability to “brainstorm”
- Need for tangible information to make comparisons and categorize
- Taking things literally, as stated
- Not being able to take a learned skill or rule and apply it to different settings
- Important and relevant information may be ignored because it can not be seen
- Not being able to think beyond what is right in front of them (and experienced by the senses)
- Only able to be in the “here and now”
- Taking information as it is said (very literally) and not questioning it



Executive Functioning

The Brain's Air Traffic Control Center



Executive Functioning Difficulties Looks Like:

Difficulty transitioning, shifting gears

Upset by unexpected changes in tasks, schedule, or routine

Impulsive behaviors

Difficulty getting started or engaged in a task (especially non-preferred activities)

Difficulty staying engaged or finishing a task

Unable to link past experiences to current situation

Executive Functioning Difficulties Look Like:

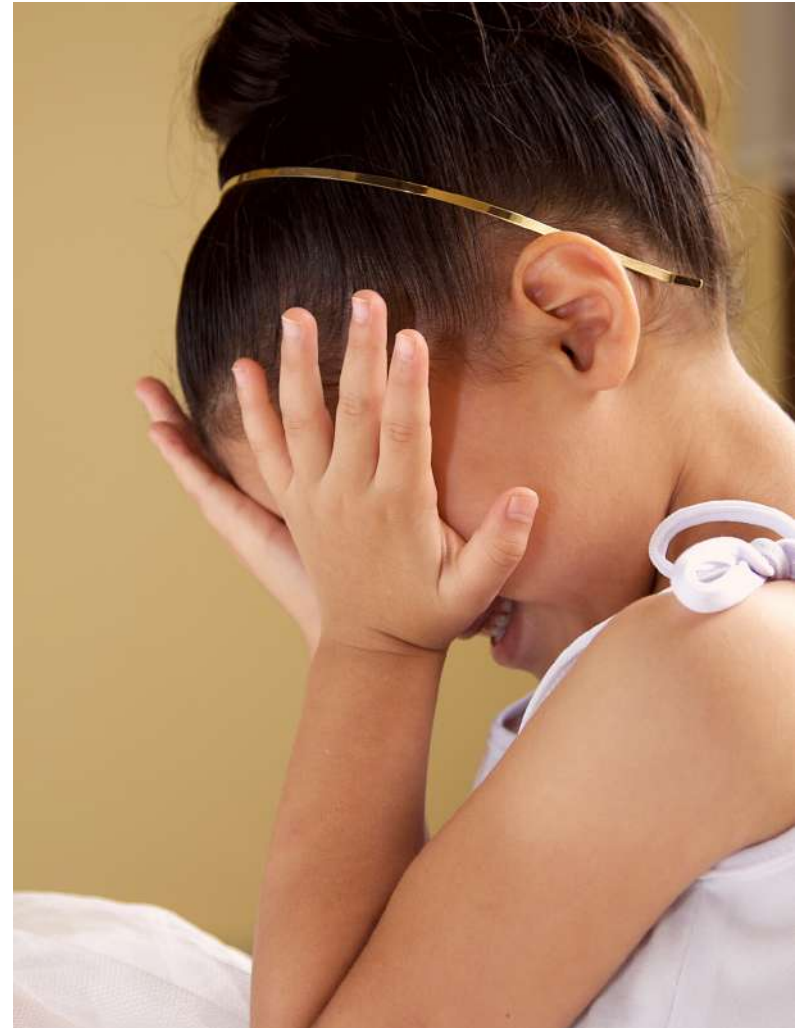
Difficulty identifying goals and planning steps to reach them

Getting stuck in behavioral or verbal loops, perseveration

Cognitively rigid, can't "let go" in an argument, difficulty seeing others' points of view

Can't see what's coming next

Difficulty tolerating frustration or staying emotionally regulated



Emotional Regulation & Our Child's Fragile Nervous System

Narrow window of tolerance

"Flip their lid" more easily than neurotypical children

Out of "thinking brain" when this happens

Regulated --> Relating ---> To Reason

