



## BRAIN FIRST PARENTING

# STARTER STRATEGIES & ACCOMMODATIONS

for supporting individuals with neurobehavioral differences

The purpose of this handout is to provide examples of simple accommodations based on how someone's brain works differently and to show how strategies are based on understanding symptoms differently.

With that being said, the problem with this can be, as with all prescriptive "strategies" is that they inhibit people from thinking for themselves, and for being able to develop *person-specific* accommodations based on understanding the whole person -- in context, and in all different settings.

One-liner recommendations fail to recognize the whole person in their environment, and clearly fail to build on individual strengths and interests, which is why the use of this material is so cautionary. **For this reason, these are simply examples to be used for the purpose of illustrating "trying differently" accommodations.**

brain first  
P A R E N T I N G

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### 1) Social skills and adaptive behavior

#### **If:**

Social behaviors like a person half their age  
Prefers younger friends  
May be seen as “irresponsible” for their chronological age  
Interests and play more like a younger person

#### **Then:**

Think younger, reframe accordingly  
Provide appropriate social opportunities  
Adjust expectations to fit a younger person  
Accept and support at developmental age

### 2) Sensory systems, sensory-motor integration

#### **If:**

Easily overstimulated and slow to settle  
Oversensitive to touch, textures, tags, etc.  
Undersensitive to touch, doesn't seem to feel pain  
Highly sensitive to lights, sounds or smells  
Doesn't seem to understand boundaries  
Has trouble falling asleep, staying asleep

#### **Then:**

Identify what is overstimulating: remove  
Evaluate and eliminate problems  
Observe; prevent problems  
Analyze settings for sensory input  
Provide visuals, consider social age  
Reduce stimuli, eliminate pre-bed TV

### 3) Nutrition

#### **If:**

Can't eat some foods –strong reactions to tastes  
Craves sugars, fats  
Needs to eat often  
Doesn't seem to know when hungry  
Doesn't seem to know when full, when to stop eating

#### **Then:**

Stop fighting. Ask: sensory issues? Teeth  
Recognize fatigue, provide healthy snacks  
Provide protein, complex carbs, no sugars, dyes  
Use routine, recognize emotional cues of hunger  
Monitor, hydrate, provide healthy foods, safety  
(May be related to early deprivation)

### 4) Language and communication

#### **If:**

Talks better than understands; may be “off topic”  
Confabulates—“Fills in the blanks”  
Has trouble finding words for feelings  
Doesn't seem to understand, “Just doesn't get it”  
Difficulty reading or responding to body language  
Chatty, may talk but have difficulty conversing

#### **Then:**

Use fewer words, check for understanding  
Breathe. Check by saying, “Show me”  
Try art, music, acting out  
Slow down, use concrete language  
Be specific, not indirect  
Recognize need to belong, accept, support

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### 5) Processing pace

#### If:

Listens slowly; often asks "What?"  
Thinks slowly; may take minutes to answer questions  
Slow halting speech

#### Then:

Slow down  
Give time  
Be patient, listen, avoid rushing, creating anxiety

### 6) Learning and Memory

#### If:

Poor short term auditory memory  
Says one thing, does another  
Inconsistent performance: "On" and "off" days  
Needs to be retaught the same thing many times  
Learns a rule in one setting, may not apply it elsewhere  
Has trouble remembering and learning from experience

#### Then:

Give one direction at a time, regardless of age  
Check for comprehension: "Show me"  
Accept variability; this is like Alzheimer's  
Reteach in different settings, show instead of tell  
Reframe: Inability, not intentional  
Recognize; prevent problems

### 7) Abstract thinking

#### If:

Learning math is hard  
Making change or managing money is difficult  
Often late, has difficulty planning time  
Difficulty predicting outcomes  
Making decisions is hard

#### Then:

Match task to ability, prevent failure  
Who can help?  
Use external supports, variety of assistive technologies  
Remember this and assure safety  
Recognize, validate, simplify

### 8) Executive functioning

#### If:

Difficulty organizing and planning a day  
Difficulty with multi-step tasks, setting and achieving goals  
Gets "stuck," has difficulty stopping  
Has trouble transitioning; shifting gears  
Upset by unexpected change in schedule  
Upset by changes in environments  
Impulsive, difficulty inhibiting responses  
Difficulty making links

#### Then:

Build on strengths, provide assistive technology  
Keep it simple, reduce complexity  
Ask what would help, give time for responses  
One thing at a time, one step at a time  
Avoid power struggles; anticipate, prevent  
Provide transition time & closure  
Forewarn, talk through next steps  
Accept; reduce anxiety to reduce impulsivity;  
provide safety; prevent problems  
Accommodate; fit task with ability