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.
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
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