



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
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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
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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)
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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
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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
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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
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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
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