

Neurodiversity and Behaviour

How to accompany students in a classroom setting

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Presentation overview

- What is neurodiversity?
- Neurodiversity and anxiety
- What are neurodiversity affirming practices?
- Neurodivergent differences
- What doesn't work, and why
- CEBM pyramid of interventions

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What is neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity (a term coined by Judy Singer in the 1990s and short for 'neurological diversity') simply means that there is a range, or diversity, of ways in which human brains function, a range of ways in which we think, learn and relate to others.

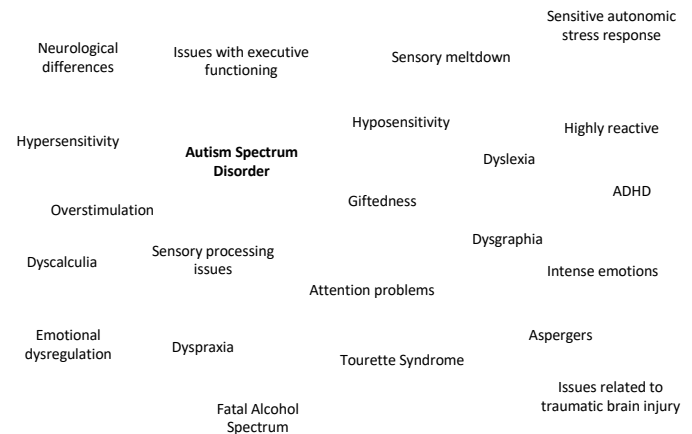
The dictionary defines neurodiversity as:

- individual differences in brain functioning regarded as normal variations within the human population
- the concept that differences in brain functioning within the human population are normal and that brain functioning that is not neurotypical should not be stigmatized"
- the inclusion in a group, organization, etc. of people with different types of brain functioning

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neurodiversity>

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A Continuum of neurodivergence and sensitivity



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Some sources on neurodiversity

Megan Mott	Judy Singer	Devon Price
Alfie Kohn	Amy Laurent & Jacquelyn Fede	Mona Delahooke
Kaelynn Partlow	Kelly Maher	Barry Prizant

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Research on sensitivity

Sensitivity research stretches back 100 years;

Research has led to the discovery that sensitivity should be considered along a continuum (everyone is sensitive to an extent). However, **hypersensitivity occurs in 15 to 20 % of the population**

Carl Jung (1921), argued that some people are born being more sensitive than others, and that this innate trait shapes and interacts with their experiences and their perception of the world.

- He observed that when sensitive individuals are given the same degree of stress in childhood as non-sensitive individuals, they are more likely to develop depression, or anxiety later in life.
- However, if sensitive individuals experience lower levels of stress or experience a nurturing upbringing that provides a good match to their innate trait, they show no more of these difficulties than the non-sensitive individuals.

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Research on sensitivity

Thomas Boyce, M.D. and his colleagues have generated over 200 scientific publications

They have found a subset of children - "orchid children"

- who demonstrate exceptional biological sensitivity to their social environments
- who show higher cortisol levels for "normal" stressors
 - bear higher risks of illness and developmental disorders in settings of adversity and stress
 - ON THE OTHER HAND, these same characteristics make them responsive to positive influences and sensitive to social and emotional cues – when raised in supportive environments

"They can really blossom into extraordinary people."

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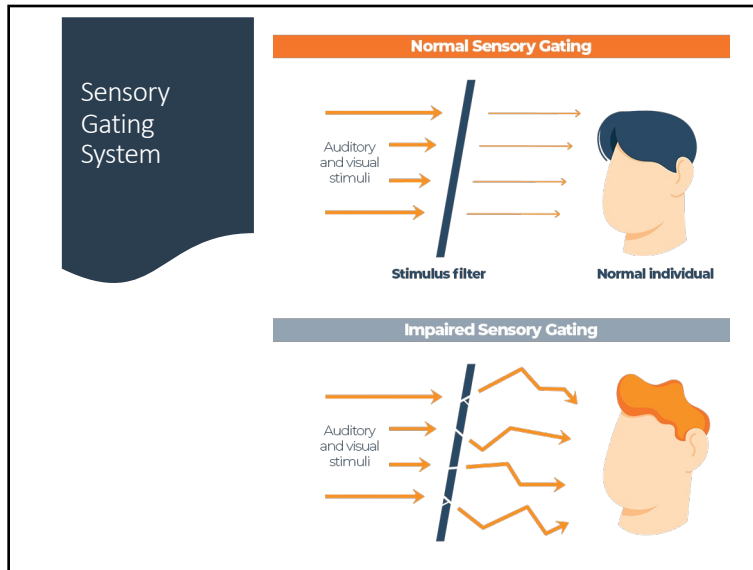
Research on sensitivity

Elaine Aron – describes these children as

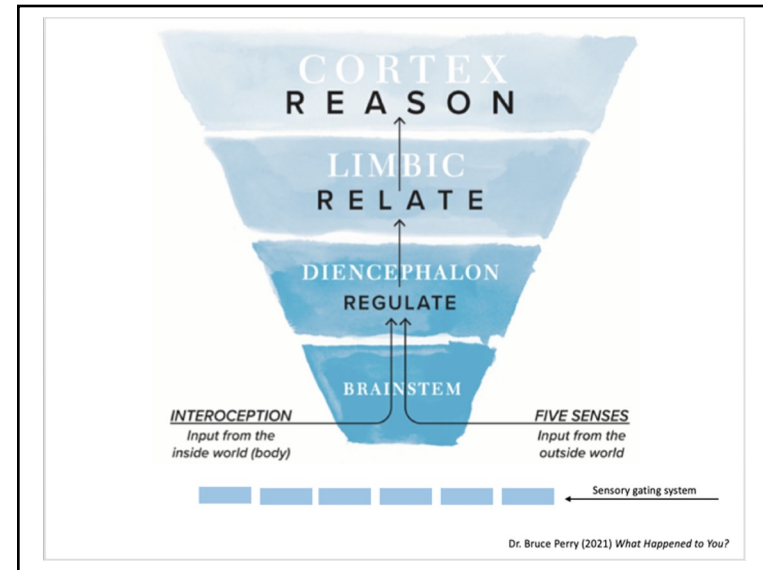
- being shy and fussy
- having sensory-processing sensitivity
- being startled easily, are sensitive to pain, bright lights, strong smells and coarse fabrics, and they are also deeply moved by art.
- tending to notice more about the people around them and their physical environment, but they are also easily overwhelmed.

Jelena Obradovic: "These are the kids that if you approach them too quickly, or make too loud a noise in their face, get fussy and irritated."

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Emotional sensitivity and emotion regulation challenges

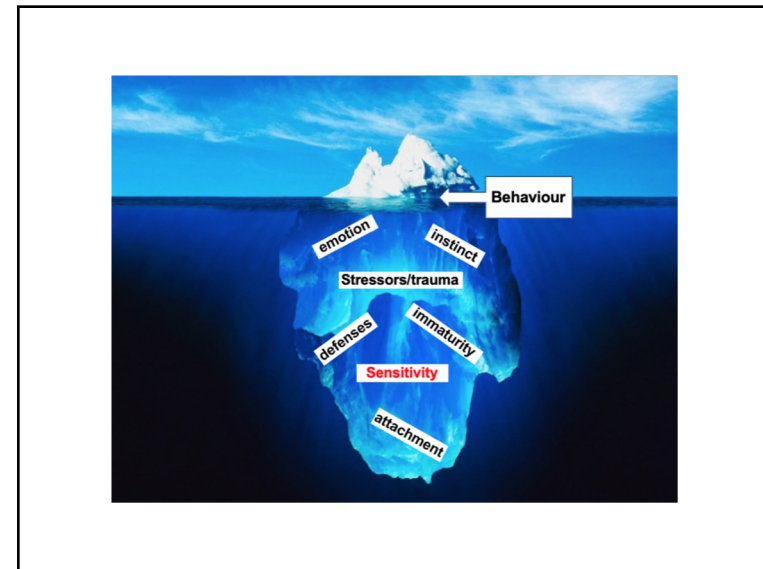
Neurodivergent individuals are:

- More easily affected and moved by their emotions
- More easily overwhelmed by their emotional experience
- More likely to be "stuck" emotionally:
 - Emotional intensity evokes more defenses
 - Intellectualization of experiences (escape of emotions)
 - Loss of tears necessary for adaptation

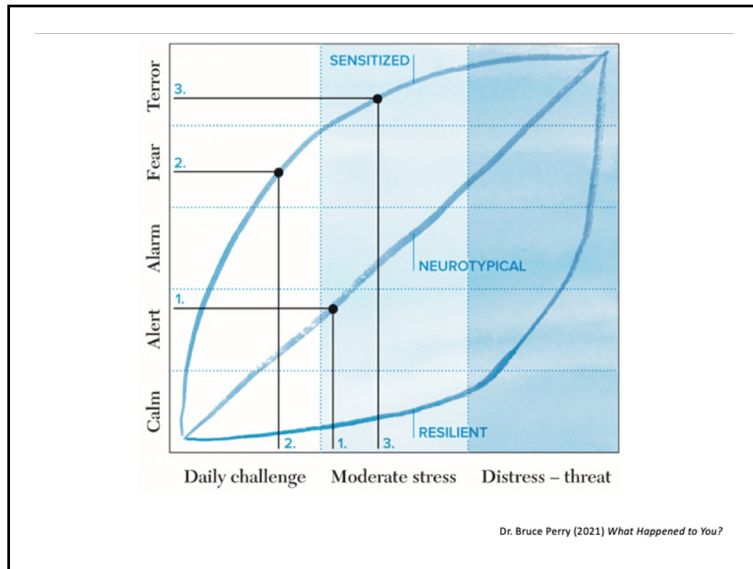
Adults typically attempt to calm the child in order to avoid emotional eruptions, which doesn't help the situation.

The block contains two photographs: one of a young girl with her hands on her face, looking distressed, and another of a young man with his hand on his forehead, looking downcast.

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Neuroception

describes the neurobiological mechanisms involved in perceptions of safety, danger or life threat from

Hidden Treasure with Tracey Farrell

Adapted from the work of Stephen Porges & David Ogden

Definition: the brain's and body's (through the neural circuits) ongoing subconscious surveillance of safety and threat in the environment (*Dr. Stephen Porges, 2004*).

Faulty neuroception: when a person's body and brain detect threat when the person is actually safe, or alternatively, detect safety when actually at risk.

A child with a vulnerable nervous system or a trauma history can mistakenly detect a threat in the environment even when they are safe, triggering defensive reactions, hence faulty neuroception.

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THE HIGH RATES OF ANXIETY IN AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS, WITH UP TO 84% EXPERIENCING IMPAIRING ANXIETY, EMPHASISE THE CRITICAL NEED FOR AUTISM UNDERSTANDING, INCREASED SUPPORT AND TAILORED ANXIETY INTERVENTIONS WITHIN THE AUTISM COMMUNITY.

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HOW AUTISM AND ANXIETY CONNECT

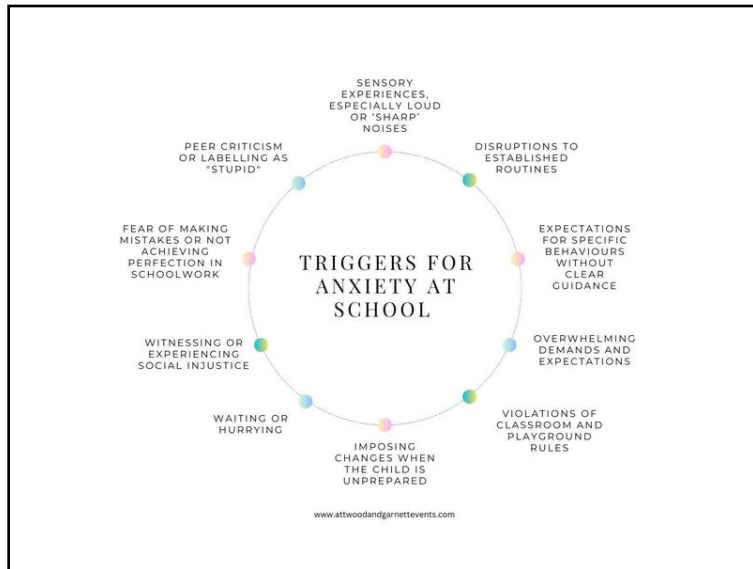
Psychological and Environmental Factors

- Social Communication Differences
- Camouflaging
- Intolerance of Uncertainty
- Negative Experiences

Neurobiological Factors

- Amygdala Differences
- Amygdala Subnuclei Volumes
- Hormonal Factors
- Sensory Hyperreactivity

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Common ways that Neurodivergent People experience Ableism from others...

- Having sensory processing differences dismissed
- Being expected to tolerate uncomfortable + distressing situations
- Having accommodations denied or removed because they are deemed unnecessary
- Having personal experiences invalidated and diminished
- Being expected to demonstrate neurotypical skills + traits
- Being trained to have the 'right' behaviour, while having needs ignored
- Lack of empathy, Curiosity and open-mindedness when it comes to neurodivergency

NeuroWild

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Neurodiversity affirming language and practices

Instead of “*low/high functioning*”, try **describing** the student and their **support needs**.

Functionality labels limit the perception of the student in question and distort the reality of the individual being described

It is much more accurate, ethical, and useful to describe strengths and challenges, as well as the level of support

Level 1
requiring some support

Level 2
requiring further support

Level 3
requiring intensive support

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Neurodiversity affirming language and practices

The language and practices we choose have an impact on how people view and treat neurological differences.

Instead of “*red flags and deficits*”, try **traits** or **individual differences**. Neurodivergence is not a problem to be solved, but a different way of being, which needs to be honoured. Language matters; using the terms red flags and deficits invoke fear, negativity and unacceptance, whereas traits and individual differences tend to neutrally describe.
 e.g. “*Sarah is non-speaking and she uses a device to communicate*” or “*Johnny expresses joy by hand-flapping*”

Instead of “*obsession*”, try **special interest** or **deep interest**. The term obsession carries a negative connotation and it insinuates that the interests of that particular individual are problematic. In reality, deep interests can be a beautiful strength, as well as being extremely meaningful and rewarding.
 e.g. “*Jordan has strong visual special skills*” or “*Katie tells great stories about her favorite character*”

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Neurodiversity affirming language and practices

Instead of	Try
impulsive	instinctive, spontaneous
attention seeking	seeks social connection
rigid	benefits from predictability and routine
picky, fussy	demonstrates strong preferences
defiant	determined, has strong beliefs
tattles	has a strong sense of justice
distractible	curious, notices environment
hyperactive	energetic
stubborn	persistent
emotional, moody	sensitive
intrusive	eager, passionate

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10 TRAITS COMMON TO SENSITIVITY

The following traits can derive from high sensitivity but none of them are exclusive to kids with high sensitivity.

Dr. Deborah MacNamee
@deborahmacnamee

UNUSUAL ALERTNESS Even as infants they may seem keenly alert to their environment, taking in information, and absorbed by their surroundings.	EXCEPTIONAL MEMORY They can exhibit an exceptional memory for details and events, relating stories that contain information others may have missed.
ENHANCED SENSORIUM They may have an enhanced sensorium such as heightened tactile, auditory, visual, touch, taste, and kinesthetic proprioceptor signals.	SENSORY INTEGRATION Due to intense signals, some kids may need more time and support to integrate sensory information, with play being one of the most natural places for this to occur.
INTENSE FEELINGS They may display intense feelings and emotional reactions to things that frustrate, upset, excite them, or that they are attached to.	EXCEPTIONAL BRIGHTNESS They can put ideas and concepts together in ways that are not typical, and may learn quickly when not emotionally distressed.
PREOCCUPATION WITH THOUGHTS They can become intensely preoccupied with their thoughts, play, or any activity they engage in as they absorb sensory information.	LOW TOLERANCE FOR DISTRESS They may be less able to function in distressing environments and can display spontaneous attempts to pattern and reduce sensory stimulation.
ASKS PROBING QUESTIONS As they engage in play or learn different subjects they may explore it thoroughly and ask questions that seem novel and unique.	FOCUS IN OR OUT They may have a narrow focus when it comes to their interests but display a depth of knowledge in them, or they can have a wide range of interests that they are passionate about.

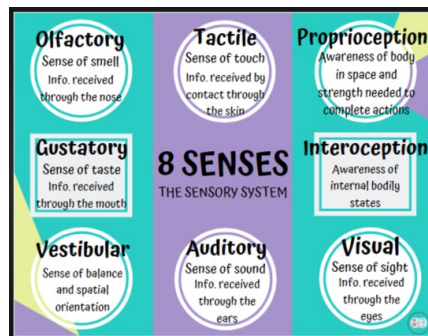
Copyright Dr. Deborah MacNamee

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Sensory processing differences

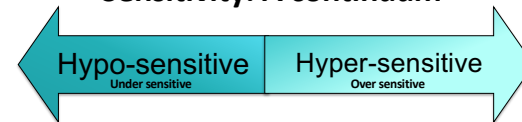
Many neurodivergent individuals experience differences in how they perceive and process sensory information. A person may have sensory preferences in each of these 8 domains.

A person may also have sensory dislikes or aversions in any of these. It is common for ND people to have differences in eye-contact (may look away, use peripheral vision, or have a hard time processing information when making eye contact).



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Sensitivity: A continuum

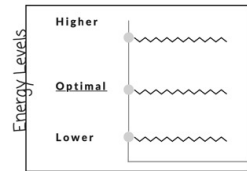


- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs MORE input to sense what the typical individual feels May get hurt and not realize it May appear clumsy or disorganized – low body awareness Under-reactive to sounds Under-reactive to touch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extreme sensitivity to touch, taste, hearing and smell Overly sensitive to being touched May be choosy about fabrics, textures and foods Startles easily Reacts with a stress response to normally tolerated events |
|---|---|

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Sensory and learning

STUDENTS WHO ARE AT AN OPTIMAL ENERGY LEVEL ARE READY TO LEARN.



However, some students may have an energy baseline that is higher or lower than what is optimal for learning.

We can use **sensory tools and strategies** to help them get to an optimal zone for learning. Certain tools can help raise the energy level, while others help to lower it.

It may be beneficial to connect with your school Occupational Therapist to see what they might suggest, which is adapted to the student's individual needs and challenges.

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What is stimming?

“Stimming” is a term for self-stimulatory behaviour – a repetitive action or movement of the body, including making noises. It is common adaptive behaviour amongst neurodivergent individuals, and it serves an important purpose.

Here are some examples of stimming:

- Twirling hair
- Biting nails
- Rocking back and forth
- Flapping hands
- Flicking fingers, or repetitive motions with the fingers
- Arching or tensing parts of the body
- Visual stimming, such as watching something intensely or on repeat, looking at something with peripheral vision
- Chewing or mouthing items
- Spinning or twirling
- Repeating behaviours, like opening and closing a container
- Etc.

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Stimming serves a purpose

SELF-REGULATION. Stimming can:

- distract from or dampen sensory input from outside sources
- enhance or provide additional sensory input
- help manage emotions and/or sensations
- help bring to a state of calm
- help to handle stress or overwhelming paces/events

EXPRESSION. Stimming can:

- be a form of expression to release strong feelings or reactions
- communicate frustration, fear, overwhelm, etc.
- also communicate joy, excitement, happiness, etc.

ENJOYMENT. Stimming can:

- just be done because it feels enjoyable, and that's okay.

** Stimming should be honoured and left to complete its purpose, unless it is harming to the individual or to others.*

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The deal with empathy

MYTH:

Autistic people don't feel empathy for others

Truth:

Many ND people process and regulate emotions differently¹. It is actually common for autistic people to have heightened empathy².

Many neurodivergent individuals experience **Alexithymia**, an emotional processing difference where there are challenges in identifying and describing your own emotions.

There are different types of empathy. Emotional empathy can be described as feeling/experiencing another person's emotions. Cognitive empathy can be described as identifying and understanding how another person is thinking in relation to that feeling.

Studies have shown that ND individuals may have a surplus of emotional empathy (even empathic "hyperarousal"). They feel what another person feels, possibly strongly. What they may have less of is cognitive empathy, or identifying/understanding what the emotion is and why it's occurring.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF03395663>

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Communication differences

Some neurodivergent individuals may:

- be non-speaking
- need a speech augmentative device (voice amplifier) or a speech alternative device (speech generating device) to communicate
- have a multimodal way of communicating (with a combination of words, gestures and icons)
- use echolalia (repeating language that was heard previously).

ND people may also have a language processing differences, including literal interpretation of language.

As educators and allies, we can support neurodivergent communication by:

- Promoting multimodal communication
- Recognizing and modeling that all type of communication is important, and accepting whichever way your student chooses to communicate
- Providing access to the use of icons, symbols, AAC devices, etc.
- Responding to all communication attempts, including echolalia
- Understanding that the ability to communicate may not be fluid for an ND individual (more effective/available at some times than others)
- Helping with literal interpretation of language, by explaining to and supporting ND students with figurative language, sarcasm, and body language

Need for openness and accommodation around Communication

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Motor differences

Many neurodivergent individuals experience differences in how their bodies move, or their level of control over their body movements.

GROSS MOTOR DIFFERENCES: some students may be ambulatory or use a wheelchair, may need supportive equipment for movement, may have a difference in their gate or walk, a difference in their muscle tone, a difference in their balance or a difference in their coordination.

FINE MOTOR DIFFERENCES: some students may experience challenges grasping or manipulating objects, such as small objects that require a pincer grasp, scissors, buttons, zippers, keyboard, and/or writing utensils. They may have some difficulty isolating movement of a certain body part, such as a single finger.

APRAXIA: some students may have a neurological difference in that they are not able to voluntarily control their precise body movements, despite being physically able to complete the movement and/or willing to complete the movement. For example, apraxia of sound is when we mean to say one sound, but another one comes out.

There are a number of adapted tools and strategies (e.g. pencil grips, adapted keyboard, adapted scissors, etc.) that provide accommodations to help students with motor differences. It may be beneficial to connect with your school Occupational Therapist to see what they might suggest, which is adapted to the student's individual needs and challenges.

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Neurodivergent play

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children, play is serious learning." – Fred Rogers

There are many misconceptions about play in neurodivergent children, including that they play the "wrong" way.

If we force our ideas of play onto students, then are they really even 'playing' anymore?

When it's play time...

- Consider if the activity is actually play or work. Is the student enjoying the play? Are they free to play as they see fit?
- Let students choose what to play with. It might be the fringe of the rug or the lid of a container. That's okay.
- Allow play to be repetitive. We sometimes have the urge to push children to play different games. Remember that true play is engaging, free and expressive. It should be about choosing what pleases the adults or the peers.

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What is executive functioning?

The set of cognitive processes that allows us to do things like plan, prepare, problem-solve, judge time, focus attention, self-regulate, and remember steps to a plan. Neurodivergent students commonly demonstrate differences in executive functioning.

They may have challenges with everyday tasks that are easy to take for granted, such as keeping an organized desk, turning in finished work, or not shouting out answers in class. These challenges are not present because a student "just needs to try harder" or because they are "lazy" or "doing it on purpose".

Provide supports:

- Visual cues
- Visual organizers
- Timers
- Note-taking support
- Etc.

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Prefrontal cortex and executive functioning

Judgment last to develop

The area of the brain that controls "executive functions" — including weighing long-term consequences and controlling impulses — is among the last to fully mature. Brain development from childhood to adulthood:

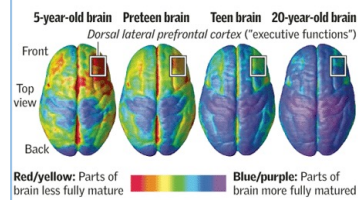


Image from the National Institute of Mental Health; Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of Neuro Imaging

Executive functioning requires the activation of, and access to, the prefrontal cortex part of the brain. However, the development of the prefrontal cortex relies on the individual being in a state of rest and safety.

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WHAT DOESN'T WORK

To EXPECT neurodivergent students to:

- give you eye-contact at all times when you are talking to them
- function well in a neurotypical environment without any ND accommodations
- follow daily routine without too much struggle
- stay seated in class during desk work
- be able to remain focused on a given task
- tune in to instructions automatically without needing too many cues/prompts
- manage transitions (hallway, schoolyard, cafeteria) with ease

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WHAT DOESN'T WORK

REASONING, TALKING especially about CONSEQUENCES

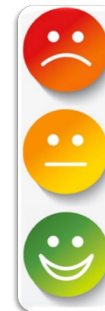
- Talking keeps them in high arousal – flight or fight mode
- When the child is in "survival" mode they cannot hear our words, just our tone.
- They can't process language (the words we are using) just keep hearing the TONE
- They can't remember the future (what will happen if they don't stop) – **only feel the intensity of the present moment.**

Waiting to hear: "And I've had it with you."

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WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Conventional Classroom Management and Problem Behaviour Centered Intervention



- Rewards/Consequences
- Behaviour management tracking systems
- Being sent to the Principal's office
- Detention/Reflection Room
- Student behaviour contract
- Zero tolerance discipline measures
- Suspensions

It doesn't help change or improve student behaviour and it exacerbates the problem with neurodivergent students

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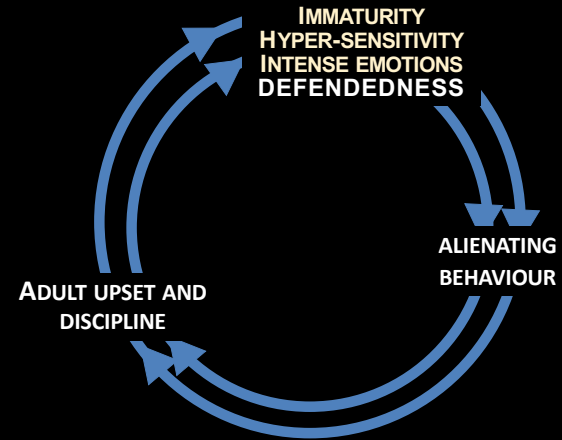
WHAT DOESN' T WORK

When the natural influence is lacking

- We expect students to listen to any adult based on their role
- We tend to assume the problem is lack of knowledge and seek know-how
- Some give up on their nurturer responsibilities (become more reactive)
- We tend to seek for some leverage or resort to forcefulness

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WHAT DOESN' T WORK



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WHAT DOESN' T WORK

Compliance-based strategies

ABA type of approach

- Compliance-based strategies teach a dangerous precedent to an already vulnerable community: "I have to do what you say, regardless of how I feel about it". It puts ND individuals in a position of being at risk for future abusive situations.
- Compliance-based strategies often ask a student to mask, or to adhere to neurotypical norms. Masking can be detrimental to the mental and physical health of ND students.
- Compliance-based strategies do not validate the internal feelings and/or needs of ND individuals. It also overlooks critical development areas, such as self-awareness and self-advocacy.

Include video interview on an Autistic discussing ABA

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WHAT DOESN' T WORK

Using the student's joys and interests as a reward

- In the educational setting, it is common to see students' favorite items and activities kept away from them in order to use them as reinforcers for work. ("First work, then dinosaurs")
- While this has been done with 'the best intentions' (to motivate students to complete tasks), the reality is that these joys, interests and comforts were withheld from students.
- This has an effect on motivation, feelings of safety and comfort, and teaches neurodivergent children compliance for the sake of compliance. In other words, "You tell me what to do and I have to do it, or I don't get something I need or love.
- Studies have shown that using rewards to motivate students (like prizes and tokens) actually decreases the response rates by weakening intrinsic motivation. This means that rewards aren't long-term successful motivators.
- The same studies have also found that genuine encouragement, in the context of a strong and supportive relationship (not gratuitous praise), improved response rates by increasing intrinsic motivation. Connection is more motivating than tangible rewards!

[Carton JS. The differential effects of tangible rewards and praise on intrinsic motivation: A comparison of cognitive evaluation theory and operant theory. Behav Anal. 1996 Fall;19\(2\):237-55.](#)

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What is masking?

When a neurodivergent person works to compensate, suppress or hide their natural qualities or differences, this is called "masking". It can occur in a variety of settings and for many different reasons, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Reasons for masking may include:

- Fitting in or trying to uphold social norms in order to feel a sense of belonging
- Keep oneself safe from bullying, judgment, or stigma
- Performing at school or in activities
- Trying to make friends
- Not meaning to mask, but doing so out of a learned need or habit

Here are some examples of masking:

- Trying to withstand sensory discomfort when in front of others
- Minimizing or hiding stimming in front of others
- Mirroring or mimicking the facial expressions or gestures of others
- Forcing oneself to give eye contact
- Downplaying or avoiding personal interests
- Etc.

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Masking and mental health

The neurodivergent population reports masking can be extremely stressful, exhausting, and creates dysregulation and burnout.

Studies* have shown that masking can lead to some extremely negative outcomes, including higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation.

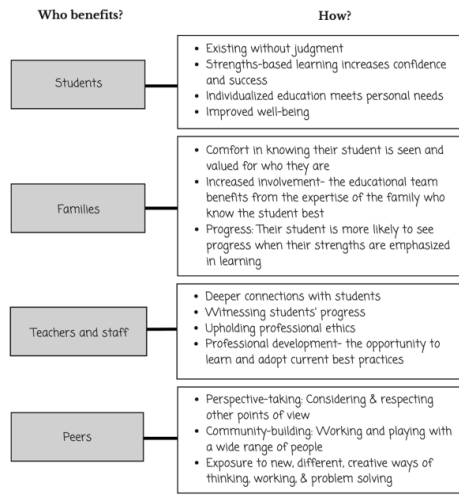
As educators and allies, we can support their mental health by:

- Not teaching "social skills" that promote masking (e.g. enforcing eye contact)
- Embracing and supporting individual students' interests
- Openly talking to students about neurodiversity and promoting an environment of acceptance
- Encouraging self-advocacy by helping students recognize their individual needs

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29071566/>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2156869318804297>

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Benefits of a ND affirming education



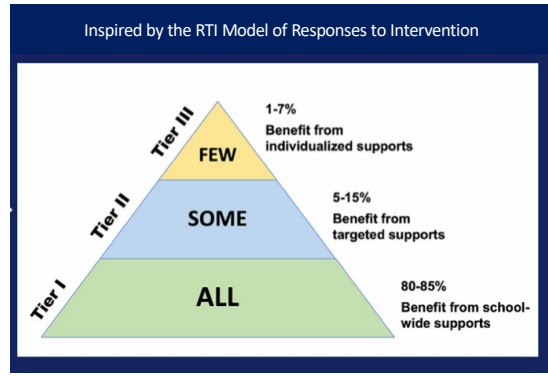
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PREVENTION and INTERVENTION

Key factors in supporting challenging students

CEBM Pyramid of Interventions

Inspired by the RTI Model of Responses to Intervention



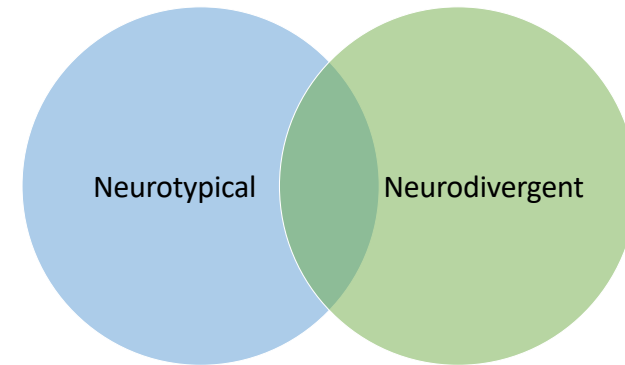
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TIER 1 – UNIVERSAL Practices in the Classroom

- At Tier 1, the classroom supports benefit the group as a whole.
- These are daily practices lead by the Homeroom Teacher and the Specialists.
- The focus is on PREVENTION:
 - ✓ Setting up the physical and social environment of the classroom with an ND individual in mind
 - ✓ Using **inclusive practices** that move away from neurotypical norms and that don't push ND students to mask
 - ✓ Offering an array of tools and resources to answer to a range of **needs, differences, and interest**

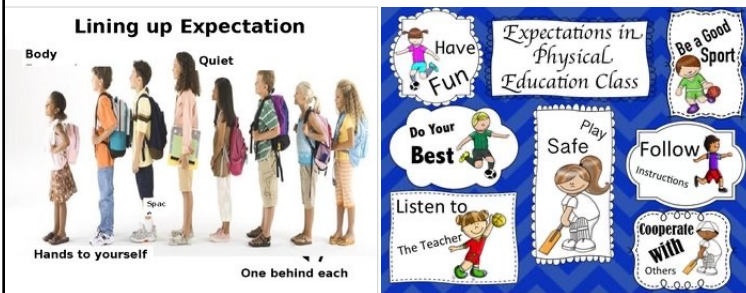
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Using inclusive practices



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Adjusting expectations and considering individual differences



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MINIMIZING SENSORY INPUT

Be aware that your classroom decor may be overstimulating to a neurodivergent student. While the decor may appear fun to you, lots of bright colors with no place for the eyes to rest could be hard on the sensory system of ND students in the classroom.

Consider toning down the decor to include:

- fewer decorations
- less intense colors
- a place (perhaps towards the front of the classroom) where a child can rest his or her eyes



You'll likely find a less stimulating classroom to be beneficial for neurotypical children as well as for ND students.

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Transition Practices & Setting up your classroom

Before the Beginning of the School Year

1. Make contact with your new group of students:
 - a. Telephone or video call with each student, postcard, email
 - b. Use "Welcome letter" sent to each parent's email address.
2. Invite challenging or highly anxious students to come and visit you at school, during a PEd Day. These 1-2 visits help you to get to know each other, reduce anxiety and for the student to know where their classroom will be. This gives a long way to using into the new school year!

Preparing the Classroom

1. Have a "Welcome" sign on your classroom door with each child's name on it. We recommend having your picture, in the middle, as a great way to welcome them into this new year with you!
2. Determine the physical layout of the class and desk/public configuration
 - a. Create a desk/public configuration that will based on your students' needs, as much as you know of them for now
 - b. Determine the different areas in your classroom: make it visual for students to know where things are. Keep it simple, less is more!
 - c. Ensure that students have a space to keep their personal belongings (ex. school bag, lunch box, etc.)
3. Colour code and/or label materials that can be accessed by students (think Executive Functioning). Keep things clear, simple and organized. Categorize learning material / socio-emotional material, classroom setting, transition tools (booklets) by subjects.
 - a. A group community basket is suggested even though students are expected to have their own materials.
 - b. Fidget items, sound reducing headphones and disco-cut cushions (for those who need them, but accessible to all)
 - c. Alternate work station options – clipboard, standing station options, lapdesk, "lifter" table, etc.
 - d. Alternate seating options – stools (Ergogears, Hinkis), sit & surf, foam tiles, bean bags, biding rock, cushions.
 - e. A variety of alternative, quiet time activities
 - f. Building & Creating community activities
4. Cover up any area that will not be accessible to students. We recommend using light, solid colours (solid blackboards or white) as these will provide less visual stimulation than bright colours and busy patterns.
5. Measure at least either the perimeter – think of it as measuring the volume of your room from the inside. Everyone will benefit from more floor and air space!

Classroom Layout Helps Prime Student Attention

How a classroom is physically set up can make a big difference to how easily a student's attention can be primed.

Questions to consider for teachers:

- From the position where you teach can you easily see all your students at once?
- Do you have a gathering point to ensure that you can see all your students when the lesson transitions?
- Do you have a table where you can teach and group? Are you positioned in the middle here, near where you work with a class?

Questions to consider for students:

- When a student is sitting at their desk, can they hear the teacher clearly in their own seat?
- Does the student need to turn their head at an angle to hear their teacher clearly?
- Are there obstacles in front that make it difficult for students to see their teacher?
- Are students placed in lessons that most each of them find challenging? (e.g. with extra needs, low ability, etc.)
- Is the background mostly busy or unstimulating?

Does each student have an individual workspace that meets their needs?

If a student requires an alternate workstation to do their work independently, by their choice, can they have their own workstation? (e.g. a table with a laptop, a desk with a laptop, a table with a laptop, a desk with a laptop, etc.)

Strategies: using benefits

1. You can use all of your students and they can all see YOU!
2. It's easy to measure around – measure physical proximity and get them for their attention.
3. Check regularly the area of the room as a whole. (DINE, look the image for teaching great WORK STATIONS)

Help: These images show there are open spaces in which you can work through.

Classroom with alternate seating/alternate workstation access options:


1. A grouping area to bring the students close together when teaching to bring your attention to them on their work.
2. It's easy to measure around – measure physical proximity and get them for their attention.
3. Check regularly the area of the room as a whole. (DINE, look the image for teaching great WORK STATIONS)


<https://www.cebmmember.ca/intervention-planning-and-mapping>

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MINIMIZING SENSORY INPUT

PRIVACY CARREL





MODIFYING NEON LIGHTS



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Flexible Classroom

Offer alternate seating options and alternate workstations to help students with attention and manage their bodies

Flexible seating options



Alternate workstation options



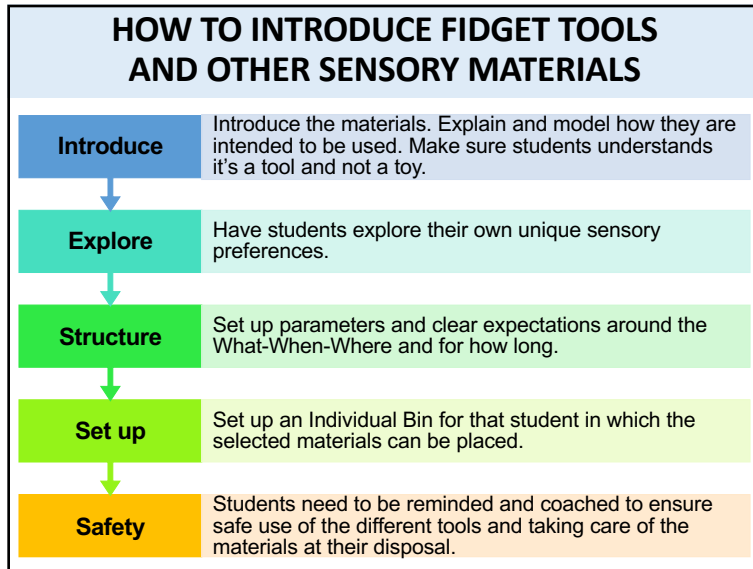
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/individual-work-stations>

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PROVIDING TOOLS

- Figure out which sensory tools works best for the student
- Create a sensory retreat for the student
- Include sensory breaks as part of the school day
- Provide choices for sensory input opportunities
- Make sensory activities fun and engaging
- Help the student to recognize their internal cues and when they need a break

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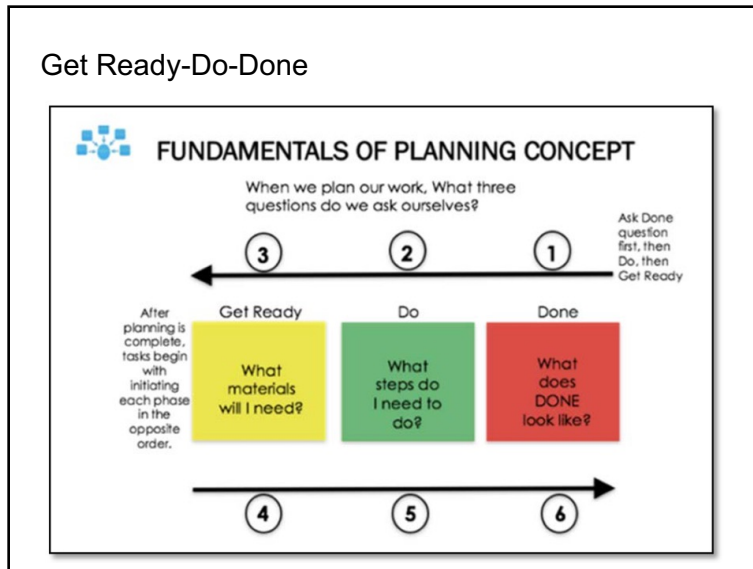


53

Supporting executive functioning

- **ADAPT THE ENVIRONMENT.** Modify the classroom by adding physical barriers, reduce distractions, use homework bins, seat child to promote attention.
- **ESTABLISH ROUTINES AND SCHEDULES.** Providing structure and predictability goes a long way (e.g. routine chart, visual calendar, etc.)
- **HELP WITH ORGANIZATION AND TIME MANAGEMENT.** Providing tools and strategies (e.g. bins/labels, visual reminders, checklists, time-timer, wonder clock, etc.)
- **OUTLINE STEPS.** Use checklists that outline steps and procedures (e.g. Ready-Do-Done model).

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Get Ready-Do-Done - Elementary

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Get Ready-Do-Done - Secondary

Get Ready

- Computer
- Library books
- Uncle Tom
- Printer/paper
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Trifold board

Do

1. Gather materials
2. Research using three sites, two books, one person
3. Find 10 facts
4. Find effect on econ
5. Type info
6. Mat neatly/be creative
7. Print 5 photos
8. Practice and present

Done

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Embracing ND interests

SHARE ENJOYMENT: join in the with the items and activities that your student truly enjoys.

TALK ABOUT IT: let your student talk about or share their interest regularly.

INCORPORATE THE INTERESTS: try include your student's interest into the learning by:

- offering themed activities
- picking a book with a character or a topic of interest
- providing manipulatives or sensory tools of the interest
- having the student write about their interest
- using clips/songs of the interest in learning

HONOUR THE VALUE: recognize that interests may be deeply comforting and meaningful to the student.


EDUCATE PEERS: talk to students about neurodiversity and special interests. Like the fact that some people can love their interest so much that they can learn basically everything there is to know about it! That's impressive!

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CLASSROOM BRAIN BREAKS

As movement is incorporated into the daily classroom routine

- the brain is able to function at higher levels,
- stress and anxiety are reduced



Improves **STAYING ON TASK**

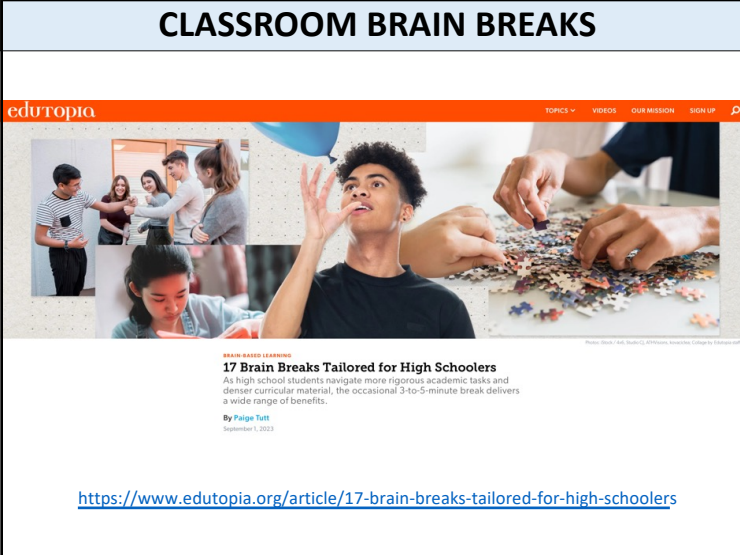
Increases **ATTENTIVENESS**

Restores **ENERGY AND MOTIVATION**

Be mindful of overly stimulating activities – provide options

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CLASSROOM BRAIN BREAKS



17 Brain Breaks Tailored for High Schoolers
As high school students navigate more rigorous academic tasks and denser curricular material, the occasional 3-to-5-minute break delivers a wide range of benefits.

By Paige Tutt
September 1, 2023

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/17-brain-breaks-tailored-for-high-schoolers>

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**Individual "Quiet Time" activity
In the Classroom**

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/fine-motor-quiet-activity-area>

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QUIET CORNER IN THE CLASSROOM

- A resource available for all students in the group
- Benefits for:
 - the student
 - the group
 - the teacher
- Adapted to the age group/grade level



<https://www.cebmmember.ca/cocoon-area>

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TIER 2 – TARGETED Practices in the Classroom and School

- At Tier 2, the student requires a more targeted support.
- These supports measures and accommodations are meant to be assigned to or scheduled for the ND student.
- Practices lead by the Homeroom Teacher and the Specialists with the help of Support Staff and Resource Teacher.
- The student continues to benefit from Tier 1 supports in addition to supplemental Tier 2 measures.

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Flexible Seating and Work Station ASSIGNED to the student

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Scheduled time in the "Quiet Corner"

Materials inside the Designated Area can include an array of the following...

Visuals	Hands on	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathing techniques Exercise/yoga pictures (how to) Emotions/feelings Search and find bottle Search and find books Nature scenes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calming basket (range of fidget tools) Books (picture books, mazes, emotions, etc.) Tactile bins (rice bin, lentil bin) with small items to find Different writing utensils (white board and dry-erase markers, paper on a clipboard etc.) Felt marble maze Never ending drawing pad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calm lighting (flashlight, lava lamp, etc.) Timers (sand timer, time timer) Earbuds and music

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INDIVIDUAL BIN

Contains

- activities to engage the student if they need a moment of respite
- less demanding educational work
- can be easily transported to another location or another room

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Scheduled Movement Station

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/physical-outlet-movement-station>

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**MOBILE
QUIET
CORNER**



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Kinesthetic Pathway / Movement Stations



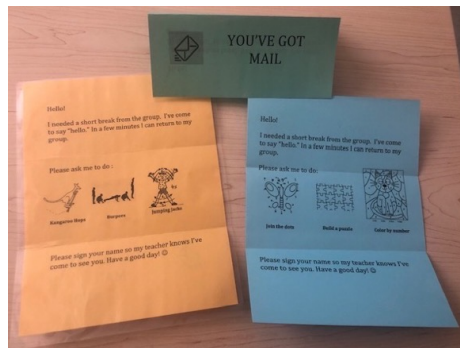
70

***“You’ve Got Mail”
Transition with a Destination***

“You’ve Got Mail” letters provide something tangible for a student to hold as they head to a pre-determined destination for a short period of time.

Two types of letters are available:

- Active movement
- Quiet activity



<https://www.cebmmember.ca/practices-outside-the-classroom>

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**TIER 3 – INDIVIDUALIZED Practices
with the help of Support Staff and/or Professionals**

- At Tier 3, the student requires a more intensive and individualized measures. One-to-one support is needed.
- These accommodations and adaptations are tailored to the student’s individual needs and interests. The student may require an adapted schedule as well.
- A collaboration is needed between the school team, the board consultants/professionals, the parents, as well as outside partners (if present).
- The student continues to benefit from T1 and T2 supports in addition to supplemental T3 measures.

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**Daily student “Check-Ins”
with a significant adult**



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USE TIME AWAY INSTEAD OF TIME OUT

KNOW YOUR LIMITS AND WORK WITHIN THEM

If you are starting to “reach your limit” with a student:

1. Send the student to another place
 - The “Quiet Area” in the classroom
2. Send the student **TO SOMEONE** with a “task”
 - a book or an envelope
 - ✓ Another adult – technician, school secretary
 - ✓ Nurturing Support Centre
3. Always go to the student and let them know that the **relationship is still intact** and that you will take care of them the next day.

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Nurturing Support Centre (NSC)

- Provide student with passes to visit the NSC, to work, to talk, to have supervised ‘alone time’
- Participation in ‘interest clubs’ with adult supervision during recess and lunchtime
- Sheltered recess and/or sheltered lunch in a predetermined location (small group) – orchestrate the schedule to ‘divide & conquer’ clusters of students who struggle together



<https://www.cebm.ca/nurturing-support-centre>

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NSC Emotions Area

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/emotions-intervention-area>

Having an
area
dedicated to
*Emotions
Intervention*



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Supporting feelings and emotions

Co-regulate with them. Given that many ND students experience intense and overwhelming emotions, they do not always have a way to communicate or to regulate them effectively. They need us to model and support them in co-regulating their emotions.

Validate their emotions. ND students are sometimes taught to let others describe their emotional experience “No Johnny, this is a SMALL problem; you don’t need to be upset”. Instead, let your student know their emotions are valid. Try “I understand that this is important to you and that it’s upsetting”. Talk about the situation and help draft some possible next steps, if needed and if the student is receptive.

Provide supports. Sometimes we over-emphasize the importance of using words to describe our emotions. If this approach is difficult for your student, try another method (e.g. visual support).

Make it part of everyday life. Don’t wait until the student is experiencing strong emotions to practice using the tools and strategies. Practice these regularly to normalize using them and during times when the student is regulated so they are in a better place to be trying and adjusting them.

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EMOTIONS ROOM

A PLACE TO LET IT OUT

‘calming down’ will come naturally once the emotion has been released



POOL NOODLES



BUBBLE WRAP



FOR THROWING



FOR KICKING



FOR RIPPING



FOR HITTING



<https://www.cebm.ca/emotions-room>

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RATIONAL DETACHMENT

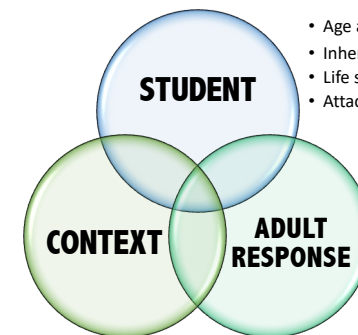
Having Lenses and Mirrors



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RATIONAL DETACHMENT

Considering all the elements involved



- Age and developmental maturity
- Inherent sensitivity
- Life stressors/trauma
- Attachment depth

- Environmental stressors
- Child emotional state/intensity
- Instinct driven to defend and protect
- Engagement/receptivity to the adult

- Adult stress level
- Insight on the student and the context
- Reflective vs. Reactive
- Type of verbal and non-verbal responses

80

Action Plan with adult-centered goals

PLANNING WITH THE EXPLOSIVE AND CHALLENGING STUDENT IN MIND			
Name of student: _____			
Age: _____	Grade: _____	Teacher: _____	Date: _____
ANALYSIS			
WHEN			
WHERE			
WITH WHOM			
PRECURSORS • what happened just before?			
WARNING SIGNS			
TRIGGERS • what set the student off			
SOURCES OF FRUSTRATION • what is not working today • what doesn't work every day • in home environment • Frustration – at school or at home			
POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FRUSTRATION • Schedule shift • Major changes in schedule			
OTHER FACTORS Sensory issues and sensitivities Trauma – difficult home situation			
INTERVENTION			
SAFE ATTACHMENT - PERSONS FOR INTERVENTION			
PLAN "B" FOR A DIFFICULT TIME (What will be done differently to prevent an eruption?)			

Student: _____ Date: _____ page 2

PLAN "B" FOR A DIFFICULT TIME OF ACTIVITY

- Alternate location
- Alternate activity

ALLOWING FOR EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

- **FRUSTRATION**
Alternate, less violent expression
Flailing and attack
- **TEARS**

OTHER INTERVENTIONS

NOTES

TO AVOID:

- IMPOSING STIFFER CONSEQUENCES (EXCEPT FOR "SOCIAL JUSTICE")
- USING ISOLATION AND IGNORING
- USING REINFORCEMENT SYSTEMS
- USING AGENDA TO REPORT ON THE STUDENT'S DAY

TO DO

DURING AN ERUPTION:

- Clear the area
- Move the student – safe place
- Have one person "be Balm" for the student

AFTER AN ERUPTION:

- Go to a quiet place
- Reflect frustration and/or anger
- Help to find sadness & learn
- Provide reassurance

MODIFY PLAN "B" FOR FUTURE INTERVENTIONS -> PLAN "C"

1. IDENTIFY CHANGES REQUIRED (WHAT DID NOT WORK)
2. DECIDE ON CHANGES TO BE IMPLEMENTED
3. ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF WORKING WITH THIS STUDENT ARE AWARE OF "PLAN C"

CEBM page on Frustration <https://www.cebmmember.ca/frustration-and-aggression/> (Password CEBMmembers)

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/intervention-planning-and-mapping>

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Support Interventions during **RECESS and LUNCH**

RECESS Intervention Models

- **Supported Recess:** meet a designated adult in a predetermined location at the onset or a few minutes prior to the beginning of recess. An area of the playground is reserved for this purpose.
- **Extended Recess:** meet the technician 10-15 minutes prior to recess. They are given additional recess time as it is deemed that the physical output is needed for them to be able to manage themselves well later into the day.
- **Sheltered Recess:** come to the NSC during recess because they are unable to cope within the larger group on a behavioral and emotional level.

LUNCH Intervention Models

- **Supported Lunch – Eating time:** meet a designated adult in a predetermined location at the onset or a few minutes prior to the beginning of lunch.
- **Supported Lunch – Outdoor play time:** meet a designated adult in a predetermined location at the onset or a few minutes prior to the beginning of lunch outdoor play time. An area of the playground is reserved for this purpose.
- **Sheltered Lunch:** Identified students come to the NSC during lunch because they are unable to cope within the larger group on a behavioral and emotional level.

<https://www.cebmmember.ca/intervention-planning-and-mapping>

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Neurodiversity affirming IEP goals

The purpose of an IEP is to provide special-needs students with an education “designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.” Therefore, for ND individuals, we must move away from neurotypical norms that asks the student to mask their neurodivergent traits.

To do this, we need to collaborate with the student and their family. Take the time to ask what goal areas are important to them. What are the student’s long-term goals?

What makes a goal neurodiversity affirming is that it:

- views the student as a whole, complete person
- is based on a lens of differences, not deficits
- considers an individual’s joys, interests, preferences
- considers an individual’s strengths and builds from them
- considers the person’s well-being and personal needs/viewpoint
- embraces the student to thrive using accommodations and supports
- factors in executive functioning scaffolds/supports
- considers and supports sensory and emotional needs
- embraces ND communication styles
- fosters positive self-identity, self-awareness and self-advocacy

* Consult attached document for concrete ideas

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SUPPORT AND COMPENSATE

ANTICIPATE

WHEN SENSITIVITY CAN BE OVERWHELMED

Provide **ADVANCE NOTIFICATION** of:

- Changes in schedule or routine
- Special events
- New adults e.g. substitute teacher

This allows the student to get “used to” the change and will likely prevent an over-reaction.

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SUPPORT AND COMPENSATE

**When?
Where?
With whom?**

Work with your school team to change the circumstances rather than just trying to control or change the student.

Prevent problematic situations

- **Recess / Breaks**
 - ✓ With extra supervision
 - ✓ Organized activity
- **Hallways**
 - ✓ Away from other students
- **Bathrooms**
 - ✓ Under supervision
- **Lunch time**
 - ✓ In a quieter space
- **Substitute teacher**
 - ✓ Make introductions or
 - ✓ Have an alternate "person" the student can be with

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SUPPORTING THE STUDENT'S GROWTH

Find a balance between "Pushing" and "Protecting"

- Recognize when the child has reached a "limit" of being stirred up and needs pressure to be removed
- Encourage the child to try challenging activities but in small steps.

Remember that these children experience higher cortisol levels for "normal" stressors than other children. We need to help them to tolerate some level of "stress" but not too much.

86

BRIDGE THE FALLOUT OF THE SENSITIVITY REACTION

- **Bridge** any separation from one time of connection to the next – these students struggle to hold on to adults. Adults need to go the extra mile to hold on to them and keep the student in connection with them. **"Looking forward to..."**
- Reassure the student that you will continue to help and support them despite their "difficulties". **"We'll try again tomorrow."**

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SCHOOL TEAM

Use your existing a school team to

- Plan regular meetings to discuss students with challenging behaviours, and how best to help support them so they can handle being in school
- Put together a team of adults to share the responsibility of caring for these students
- Use adult resources in the school creatively
 - Identify one "key" adult to connect with the student – to try for a regular check-in or recap at the end of the day by means of another activity e.g. breakfast programme, recycling, exercise "group".

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Centre of Excellence for Behaviour Management
www.cebm.ca



Also visit the CEBM Resource Center
<https://www.cebmmember.ca/>

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Guiding questions

- Do school teams get to collaborate?
- How often do school teams meet to debrief following a difficult situation?
- Would I have intervened in the same way had it been a neurotypical student?
- How often do I use neurodiversity affirming language?
- What tangible strategies work for me?
- Am I willing to try something today that I worry about the outcome?
- How often have I physically contained a student?
- Tell me about a time you've had fun (experience enjoyment) with your students?
- Not talking about the kid in front of them

90