

Autistically Thriving: Sensory Sense-Making Autistic Style

Helpful Hints

Help in Autistic Friendly Ways

Reduce conversation-usually people have an urge to talk more when helping. Autistic neurology benefits from less talking during times of sensory overload and in stressful situations.

Use visuals-frequently (Hint: Remember to preteach the meaning of visuals.)

Use statements vs. questions- for example:

QUESTION (no): "Which puzzle do you want to do next?"

STATEMENT (yes) "When you are finished with snack, you get to choose between the Star Wars Puzzle or the Harry Potter Puzzle.

Be predictable & provide prediction-always consider neurological surprise and how to reduce it

Use Proactive Feel-Good Activities

Embed frequent regulation breaks throughout daily schedule- try to be more proactive (promoting continued regulation) and less reactive (waiting to dysregulation)

Provide access to regulation strategies- 100% of the time. Include them in the daily routines (e.g., movement strategies during learning tasks, fidgets during meals, etc.)

Structure the breaks-use visual choice icons/visual schedule and practice feel-good activities to increase comfort and familiarity (practice a lot)

Offer & explore a variety of feel-good activities-help the autistic person find strategies that are regulating to their neurology (not to the helper's neurology)

Use break statements vs. questions to reduce conversational clutter- For example:

QUESTION (no): "Do you want to take a break?"

STATEMENT (yes) "When you are finished with the puzzle, you can choose 1: trampoline or bounce on ball."

Be Curious

Consider the autistic neurology at all times- how could the way that a person thinks and experiences the world contribute to what you observe?

Consider how you can change or adapt your own behavior to promote an autistic person's success (what can I do differently next time to be more supportive?)

Consider how you can adapt the environment and tasks- promote feelings of safety and regulation all of the time

Use a Regulation Approach (not a Compliance Approach)

REGULATION: Empower autistic people by helping them to discover their own unique sensory experiences & what they need to feel safe and regulated; focus is on honoring the autistic neurology

COMPLIANCE: Teaching an autistic person to follow demands and meet goals set by 'others'; focus is on 'fixing' the autistic neurology