

RYAN W. ANGOUW

THE NEURODIVERSITY *Playbook*

Foreword by ^{leh}

Prof. Dr. dr. Hardiono D. Puspongoro, Sp.A(K), Subsp.Neuro(K)



Magna Minds

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The Neurodiversity Playbook

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FOREWORD

I welcome the publication of this book and commend Ryan W. Angouw for his concern and enthusiasm in seeking to understand the world of children with autism and other developmental disorders. At the age of 15, Ryan has demonstrated the courage to learn, listen to families' experiences, engage in social activities, and strive to make a tangible contribution to society. Amid the various activities typical of teenagers his age, his decision to study the needs of children with developmental disorders and to articulate his thoughts in a book is truly admirable.

This book highlights the concept of neurodiversity and the importance of creating a more inclusive environment for children with diverse developmental needs. The message—valuing every individual, reducing stigma, and providing equal opportunities for every child, is vital. A good society is one that embraces differences while providing the necessary support for every child to thrive and reach their full potential.

However, it is important to understand that the terms "neurodiversity" and "neurodivergent" are not diagnostic terms in the medical field. In clinical practice, we use diagnoses that have clear definitions and scientific bases, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Specific Learning Disorder (SLD), Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), Tourette Syndrome, and various other neurodevelopment disorders.

The concept of neurodiversity helps us understand that human beings vary in how they think, learn, and interact. However, it is also important to remember that some children with these conditions face real challenges regarding communication, social interaction, learning, emotional regulation, and independence. Therefore, while social acceptance is crucial, it alone is not always enough; many children require support, appropriate education, appropriate interventions, and long-term guidance to thrive.

In over forty years of working with children with developmental disorders, I have learned that there is no single approach that suits every child. Even two children with the same diagnosis often exhibit vastly different abilities, needs, challenges, and responses to intervention. What works for one child does not necessarily work for another. Therefore, various general principles and practical guidelines should be understood as a starting point for understanding the child, rather than as a formula that can be applied uniformly to all children.

In today's information age, a wide range of knowledge regarding child development is readily available. I encourage readers to remain open-minded yet critical when examining this information. Not all information is backed by the same level of robust scientific evidence. A sound understanding requires the ability to integrate personal experience, solid scientific research, and objective professional judgment.

I hope this book helps improve public understanding of children with special developmental needs and fosters an environment that is more inclusive, more understanding of their needs, and better equipped to provide appropriate support.

Congratulations to Ryan on his initiative and sense of care. I hope this book marks the beginning of a long journey of continuous learning and contribution to the children of Indonesia and their families. Observing the curiosity, social concern, and courage he has demonstrated, I see great potential in Ryan. I hope that in the future, he will grow into an outstanding professional, whether as a doctor, educator, researcher, or leader in his chosen field.

Indonesia needs more young people who are not only intelligent but also possess empathy and a willingness to dedicate their knowledge to serving others.

Jakarta, May 30, 2026

Prof. Dr. Hardiono D. Pusponegoro, Sp.A(K), Subsp.Neuro(K)
Professor of Pediatrics
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PREFACE

As someone struggling through adolescence, I've always been described as sensitive. During the first week of kindergarten, I was always the last to stop crying when my mum had to leave me alone with my teachers and classmates. At the movie theatres, I cried at every single sad scene they threw at me. At school, a game of tag that I lost would be enough to work me up to the point of tears.

Some might find that laughable, especially since I come from a position of privilege. And for a long time, I was really insecure about my emotional sensitivity. I internalised a lot of feelings of self-hatred, just wishing that I could be nonchalant and stoic-like. In reality, I was just making it worse.

As I reflect on that time of my life, I realise that my shame stemmed from a deep misunderstanding: emotion was weakness. After all, it is embarrassing to weep in front of your crush in the third grade, or shake from pure fear right before a performance in front of an entire crowd. It sucked!

What I realise now, however, is that emotion is a constant, no matter who you are. And most importantly, emotion is what allows us to connect with people. Think of every single time you've felt bad for a sad friend, helped them out, and became better friends with them as a result. The only reason you strengthened that relationship is that you've been through it before, you know how much it sucks, and you feel an obligation to make sure someone going through it is reminded they're not alone.

If you abandon emotion altogether, you can't make that reminder. I see it as a disservice to the circle closest to you, and if you're privileged enough to help people beyond that circle, it's a disservice to them, too. To be emotional is to be compassionate, and to be compassionate is to be human.

So, you might be thinking: “Ryan, how does this relate to child psychology or any of the techniques you wrote in this book?” Well, even though I love psychology and behaviour science, this preface isn’t really a scientific guideline, it’s a recommendation. When you want to help your child, student, friend, or whoever it might be, try to connect with them emotionally. Recognise their experience as an individual, whether they’re neurologically different or not, and consider everything they’re going through. I guarantee you that if you attempt this, not only will that person learn faster, adapt to their environment more effectively, and form a deeper connection with you, but you’ll gain something, too: the irreplaceable, beautiful feeling of compassion.

At the end of the day, that’s why I’m so motivated by service, no matter if it’s environmental or humanitarian. I feel like we all need to transform people’s perception of emotion from a weakness into a weapon, which I’m sure will make the world a better place.

So, as you read through this book, I request that you keep a few things in mind:

- Remember that these strategies serve as templates/starting points that you can adapt to your needs. They are not the end-all, be-all.
- Remember to keep compassion at the heart of your work.
- Remember that not all great minds think alike.

Thank you so much for taking the time to check out this book. I sincerely hope it helps you as much as it helped me!



Ryan W. Angouw

Founder, MagnaMinds

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**** must be read by parents and educators**

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***** must be read by parents and educators***



UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

1.1. WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity is not actually a medical term; it's a social concept. Neurodiversity is the idea that differences in how people's brains work are not deficits or problems; they're differences that occur naturally in an individual's birth or development.

What does Neurodivergent mean?

A person whose brain works differently from what is considered 'typical' is neurodivergent. This includes people with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and more (Cleveland Clinic). A neurodivergent person experiences the world differently from a neurotypical person.

Disability or not?

Many people label neurodivergent individuals with titles like “differently abled” or “special.” While these titles aren’t necessarily false, they risk undermining the challenges neurodivergent people face. It is important to acknowledge that these conditions ARE disabilities that, in most cases, significantly negatively impact people’s lives (Nadolny). However, it is also important to know that having a disability is okay, and people should never be persecuted for being disabled.



1.2. COMMON TYPES

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Includes a very wide range/spectrum of developmental differences affecting social interaction, communication, and behaviour.
- Often characterised by social rigidity and repetitive behaviour repetition
- Often associated with unique strengths in pattern recognition, focus, and creative problem-solving.
- ASD is unique because its commonalities are less specific than those of other types of neurodiversity. Two people with the same diagnosis may behave very differently.
- People with ASD may be neurologically comorbid, which means they possess multiple neurological conditions simultaneously (e.g. ASD and ADHD at the same time) (The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia).



The 3 Levels of Autism



Level 1

Requiring support

- Trouble understanding and following social rules
- Rigid or inflexible behavior
- Some stress during transitions
- May benefit from therapy or life skills coaching



Level 2

Requiring substantial support

- Atypical social behavior, like walking away mid-conversation
- High interest in specific topics
- Noticeable distress when faced with change
- May need school accommodations like reading help or social skills support



Level 3

Requiring very substantial support

- Severe communication deficits, such as being nonspeaking
- Repetitive behaviors like rocking or spinning
- Extreme distress when asked to switch tasks
- May need one-on-one time with an education assistant and may use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools, like picture symbols



Profound Autism

- Profound autism is a type of ASD that is found in 1 of every 4 diagnoses.
- An officially autism diagnosed person has profound autism if they exhibit these behaviours by age 8:
 - An IQ under 50 (difficulty in performing and learning simpler tasks).
 - Communication difficulties (Nonverbal or limited vocabulary).
 - In need of 24/7 supervision for the rest of their life.



Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- Involves differences in attention, impulse control, and energy regulation.
- People with ADHD may have challenges with maintaining focus or may have trouble deciding where to direct their focus.
- Many people with ADHD are highly energetic, spontaneous, and innovative thinkers (Nall).

Dyslexia

- A learning difference that primarily affects reading, spelling, and language processing.
- Often linked with strong visual thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Neff).



Dyscalculia

- Involves difficulties with numbers, math concepts, and spatial reasoning.
- Individuals may have strong abilities in non-mathematical areas such as storytelling or art (Hollings-Tenant).

Dysgraphia

- A learning difference that affects handwriting, spelling, and organising written expression.
- People with dysgraphia may be strong verbal communicators or creative thinkers (Exceptional Individuals).



Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder, DCD)

- Affects motor skills (possible struggles in cutting, running, jumping, etc.)
- People with dyspraxia may excel in creative or strategic thinking despite motor challenges (Stone).



Tourette's Syndrome

- A neurological condition characterised by involuntary tics (sudden movement) or sounds.
- Tics are caused by disruptions in the nervous system, preventing the brain from suppressing unwanted actions.
- Tourette's has a very well-documented connection with anxiety, as tics are amplified by emotional stress. People, especially children, with Tourette's are more likely to show symptoms of anxiety (Kumar et al.).
- Often accompanied by creativity, humour, and resilience (Simpson).



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.1. WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Inclusive Education is an educational system in which individuals with diverse physical, mental, social, and academic capabilities learn together, with appropriate support from supervisors for those who need it.

Why is inclusive education important?

In inclusive education systems, neurotypical students develop lifelong values such as compassion and empathy while also acquiring useful skills, including effective communication and collaboration, as they interact with and learn from diverse perspectives.

For neurodivergent students, inclusive education helps them hone their abilities to adapt and remain comfortable in otherwise challenging situations, thereby improving their social skills and emotional intelligence (Garey). Furthermore, common stigmas against neurodiversity are reduced through increased interaction among students. With appropriate support, inclusive education can help improve the academic progress of these students.

Overall, inclusive education helps prepare all students for real-world situations in which respectful, collaborative interaction is necessary between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals, and, under the right circumstances, it can set everyone in the classroom up for success (Brady).

Is inclusive education right for everyone?

Yes and no. 100% inclusive education may not always be the right option, depending on students' familiarity with it. Without the right preparation, neurodivergent students may feel isolated, and neurotypical students may feel uncomfortable.



Inclusive education should be something that educators and parents work towards with their students. Therefore, integration of inclusive education is necessary to introduce neurodivergent students to their neurotypical classmates, and vice versa (Nurhayati). Methods to do so will be discussed in depth in this toolkit.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION VS SPECIAL EDUCATION

Although both methods are beneficial for neurodivergent learning, there is a significant difference between them. Special education is a system that uses a different curriculum for neurodivergent students, tailored to their specific needs, to accelerate their learning (Singha).

At MagnaMinds, we believe that special education is essential, but that it should be (though not 100% of the time) an important but temporary stepping stone in a neurodivergent child's learning.





2.2. PARENTS' ROLE

As a parent, you will likely have to be your child's primary therapist, guide, and advocate. In every situation, you should advocate for your child's needs. This means communicating to teachers, friends, and family members that your child might need more help and accommodations. It also means to learn more about your child, such as how they communicate, behave, and react. However, there is a difference between protecting your child and sheltering them. Your goal should always be to make progress with your child's ability to eventually become independent, although that progress happens at different speeds.

To determine the improvement speed you should aim for, parents must learn to adjust their expectations according to the child's needs. For example, if their child is diagnosed with profound autism, they likely have to be supervised into adulthood or the rest of their lives. If a child is considered high-performing and is skilled at many things, they have a higher chance of becoming independent and self-sustaining in the future.

2.3. TEACHER'S ROLE

A teacher's approach, although serving different purposes, should be quite similar to a parent's approach. They should, like a parent, try to understand students and their needs.

However, teachers need to make the important distinction between what they are allowed to discuss and work on and what should be left to parents. Setting boundaries with parents early on is really useful as a teacher. Teachers can be a friendly guide who helps the child find their own steps in the direction they feel is right, rather than imposing a set direction they force the child to follow.

THE LAYERS OF INCLUSION





HOW WILL MAGNAMINDS HELP?

3.1. OUR VISION

We aim to contribute to a world with high-quality, inclusive education, where both neurotypical and neurodiverse students can learn and socialise safely and happily in the same institutions. A society where neurodiversity is seen as a difference, not a weakness, with a higher willingness to support and accept neurodiverse people with unique skillsets for employment, higher education, and other opportunities where neurodivergent individuals can find and pursue their life goals.

OUR MISSION

- Magnaminds aims to address infrastructural education issues in local communities by providing alternative, integrative, and inclusive education for neurodivergent youth with limited resources and educational opportunities.
- We aim to break and reinvent common negative stigmas through advocacy efforts, including social media and community outreach events.

- Lastly, we aim to facilitate collaboration with local NGOs, governments, and professionals through regional symposia to develop and implement new, useful, and innovative solutions to address these issues.

3.2. OUR PILLARS OF SUPPORT

- **Creating comfortable, inclusive classrooms and learning environments**

A safe living and learning environment is the number one thing that calms us down as humans, and that feeling is amplified in neurodivergent individuals. How are people expected to learn and concentrate in places where they don't feel comfortable? Incorporating calming spaces and sensory-friendly decor (pastel colours) are seemingly small, but essential steps in establishing an optimal and safe environment.

- **Tailoring to the needs of students**

Each child is different and has different needs. Necessary accommodations, such as AAC devices for students with limited communication skills, can be an effective way to help students feel heard and included, and to provide them with what they need to communicate their wants, questions, and needs.

- **Early Intervention and Therapy**

Early screening for neurodiversity is encouraged! The earlier something is known, the better. Earlier intervention and appropriate therapy can significantly improve an individual's learning speed and future capabilities.

- **Fostering collaboration and interaction across neurotypes**

Interaction between neurodivergent and neurotypical students is the most effective way to integrate students into real-world situations and achieve a truly inclusive environment. Normalising interaction is a must, but it must be supervised for the safety of the students involved.



- **Parent/Educator Resilience and Support**

In any circumstance, being the parent or educator of any number of children is mentally and physically draining. In a situation where children are truly reliant on their supervisors and need 24/7 support, their support system disappears when their parents/educators burn out. **Supporting the people who help your children is equally important to the children's success as supporting the children themselves.**

3.3. OUR ROLE WITH PARENTS AND EDUCATORS



PARENTS

We have a unique role in ensuring your children's success. MagnaMinds is not a centre where your children can come for analysis by a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst for special intervention. That is definitely the best option, but frankly, that isn't possible for everyone.

Although it is effective and amazing, it is a necessity to recognise that the vast majority of people cannot choose this option. So, our goal is to bring the centre to your home.

MagnaMinds' aim for parents is to transform them into their children's primary therapist.



This toolkit's goal is to empower you with practical, accessible, low-cost, but effective tools to support you and your children. These tools come in a wide range, from adjusting your environment to meet the children's needs to equipping your children with the tools they need to communicate.

Through the inclusive education principles outlined in Chapter 1 and Magnaminds' Pillars of Support outlined in this chapter, we aim to support and educate you so that you can help your children develop the physical and mental skills to support themselves as much as possible.



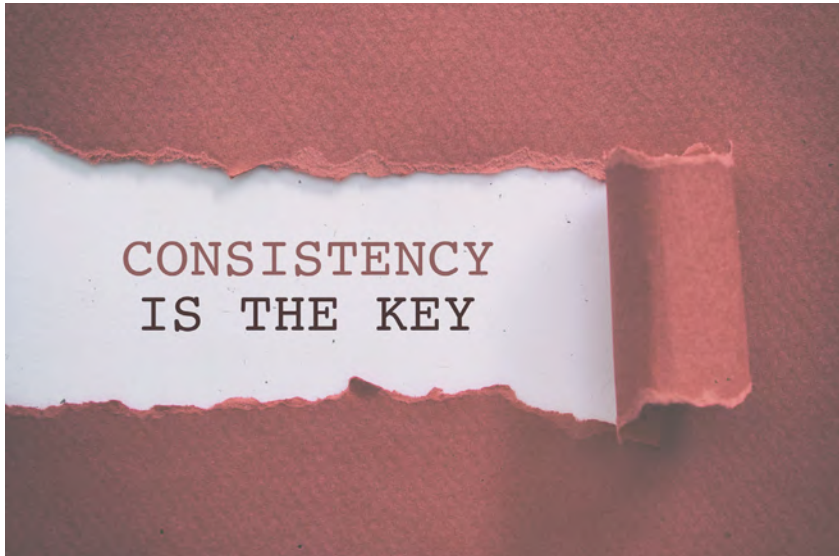
As mentioned before, the priority is NOT K-12 education. We don't want to help you “fix” your children; we want to help you become their lifelong companions (not caregivers), so that your family has a healthy, sustainable wellbeing.

EDUCATORS

We understand that you face unique challenges in Jakarta. There's limited education, a lack of specialised resources, irregular class sizes, and less advanced educational infrastructure. So, our goal is to fill in those gaps as much as possible. We aim to provide you with the training you need to support your students best. This toolkit will cover the materials you need to become a behaviour analyst and therapist for your students.

As with parents, our goal is to guide you by providing low-cost, effective solutions that suit your school's or organisation's capabilities. There are so many adjustments you can make that don't break the bank to help aid your students that, while small, will add up in combination with many other adjustments.





Throughout this toolkit, we will provide inspiration and guidance on designing your students' learning environment, supervising your students, and selecting the type of curriculum you can teach, among other topics. Overall, the information in this toolkit can be a valuable asset if implemented and used correctly.



FOR EDUCATORS

4.1. 1 CREATING NEUROFRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

THE PROBLEM

As the teacher of neurodivergent children, you've probably heard of the term "sensory" before. Perhaps your student is facing sensory problems. Regardless, it is essential to adapt the environment in which every child stays so that they have a comfortable learning experience and a setting suitable for them.

A person facing sensory issues simply means that their brain struggles to process information that enters through the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing).

It's not just sensory problems; neurodivergent individuals can come off as difficult to understand at first, and they may react to situations aggressively, angrily, and unpredictably. Implementing measures such as calming corners, spaces, or rooms can significantly help children calm down, making the environment more welcoming and better suited to their needs.

HOW DO I IMPLEMENT THIS?

When it comes to the unique sensitivities of neurodivergent individuals, those affected fall under two categories.

Hypersensitivity - Highly sensitive to sight, sounds, touch, smells, and tastes

- These people tend to be more shy and reserved, as they try to escape sensation

Hyposensitivity - Less sensitive than usual to sight, sounds, touch, smells, or tastes

- These people tend to be more energetic and “wild”, as they are sensation-seeking

It happens because these individuals’ brain regions involved in sensory input are developed differently, leading to differences in sensitivity.



Although hyposensitivity and hypersensitivity are the two main categories, some students may be hypersensitive in one sense and hyposensitive in the other. However, a single student can experience both simultaneously, exhibiting hypersensitivity in one or more specific senses and hyposensitivity in one or more other senses. This might mean they prefer vibrant colours in their activities due to visual hyposensitivity, but they may also prefer or require earmuffs because of auditory hypersensitivity.



Yes, it's very complicated, but these are factors to consider when renovating or redesigning classrooms (National Autistic Society).

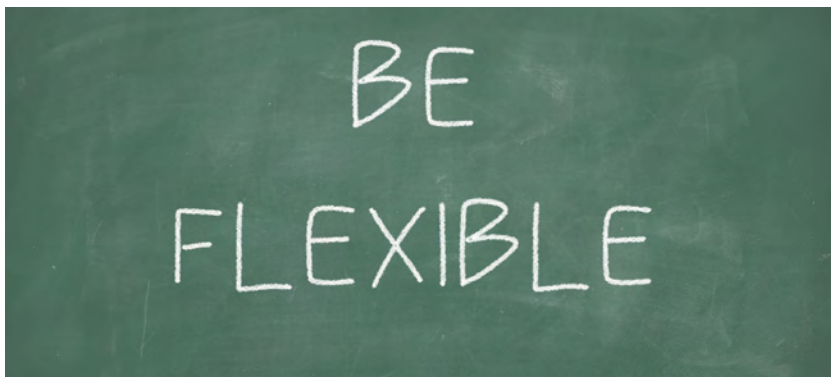
HERE ARE SOME STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE YOUR INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

- **Flexible Classrooms**

Due to the diversity of your students' requirements, it is worth considering keeping your classroom empty before students arrive at school and using a different classroom design, layout, and decor for each class.

To improve convenience and efficiency, using lightweight, easily movable equipment is a practical way to prep your classrooms for each student's benefit.

Remember to research your students' needs before designing your learning space. Inclusive education often employs a case-by-case approach, so maintaining flexibility is crucial.



- **Environmental Modification**

Now for the good stuff. There's a variety of minor adjustments you can make. **Visually**, using natural light, dimmer LEDs, and softer lighting can be a great help in reducing distraction and discomfort in the classroom. When it comes to colour tones, there is no universal preference; however, softer, more muted tones are generally preferred for individuals with hypersensitivity. Sticking to pastel colours is a good go-to.

Audibly, providing technology such as noise-cancelling headphones is not the most accessible option. A good alternative is earplugs, which significantly reduce the decibel level. For individuals using earplugs, providing different educational media, such as visual or physical representations, can be a viable option for teaching the class content. Furthermore, using sound-absorbing materials such as carpet or foam can help reduce echoes and loud noise (Pioneer Group).



Tactilely, students may feel uncomfortable with hard, stiff chairs; therefore, providing flexible seating options, such as seat covers or pillows on top of seats, may be preferred by some students. The carpet and foam used to address auditory issues can also be beneficial for students with tactile sensitivity, as these materials are typically softer and more comforting (Rodriguez).

These (audio, tactile, visual) are the three primary senses that you can really make a difference with. By improving the living and learning environment of your students, you automatically eliminate a series of issues and insecurities experienced by millions of neurodivergent children worldwide. School is a child's second home, so it is necessary to make these adjustments to further support and improve their learning.





YOUR GUIDE TO CALMING SPACES

Calming spaces are beneficial for both non-sensitive and sensitive individuals. For people who struggle with sensitivity, it serves as a “haven” for them, with all of their concerns completely gone. It gives them a chance to unwind when they feel overwhelmed and offers a nice break from the stress and emotions they’ve accumulated throughout their day. For non-sensitive or neurotypical students, although they may not be overwhelmed by sensory input, it can still serve the latter purpose (Sen).

However, your calming space shouldn’t be a “timeout space”; it should be a refuge space. If you just leave the child in the calming space when they show challenging behaviour, it conditions their brain to see the calming space as their “punishment” space, causing more stress. This space should be something your students actively want to go to, and they should never feel isolated, neglected, or guilty for being in the calming space.

SO, HOW TO DESIGN ONE?

Follow the strategies outlined earlier in this chapter! Use a corner or a quiet spot in a room and add comfortable, sensory-friendly seating and decorations.

Use dim, calming lighting and provide mindful activities that divert people's attention from what is stressing them most, such as colouring or fidgeting toys. Aromatherapy, such as candles or diffusers, can also enhance the calming atmosphere. It may be helpful to include posters with calming breathing exercises or meditation mantras to help the student calm down and take their mind off the situation (Ratner). Remember, while you are helping and interacting with the child directly, keeping calm is essential. Use a lower pitch, a slower tempo, and don't use too many words or movements.

7 ideas for a sensory calm space for kids



Soft rug



Cushions



Beanbag



Basket of sensory objects



Noise-cancelling headphones



Gentle projector lamp



Calming books

www.theyarethefuture.co.uk



4.2. DESIGNING INCLUSIVE CURRICULA

MINDSET AND REFLECT!

Starting this is arguably the most difficult part of the job. What do I teach so that all children, neurotypical or neurodivergent, can learn together at the same pace and with the same level of mastery, concentration, and results? Well, the truth is that it doesn't exist. Even in classes with exclusively neurotypical students, there isn't a single class or course in the world, whether it's at Harvard, an SLB, or a public school, that leaves each student with the same level of knowledge and confidence.

When you design or teach your curriculum, and if what you see seems hopeless, remember that it's pointless if you only want perfection, because you'll feel too overwhelmed even to start. And starting is the most powerful thing you can do.

First, the number one thing you should do is reflect. Reflect on the old curriculum. What elements of it work in an inclusive setting, and what parts of it don't? What parts of it can be adjusted to work?

Then, reflect on how you teach. What do I add to further include a certain group of people? What do you remove that excludes a certain group of people? Always remember that inclusivity is not about a diverse group of people fitting into a strict system, but rather about a system transforming itself to accommodate as many people as possible (Jagoo).



“

Inclusive education is key in building inclusive communities, when children with and without disabilities learn together it promotes an inclusive society. It is about our future living in the community and having jobs like everyone else.

”

Jenipher Akinyi, KAIH

www.unesco.org/gemreport

PRINCIPLES OF CREATING CURRICULUM

- **Understand Your Students**

Create a learning profile for each student: their strengths, weaknesses, sensory requirements, behaviours, and personality through surveys. This way, you know what adjustments you can make to the current curriculum to accommodate neurodivergent students and students who have struggled in the past (Monarch Education).

- **Methodology!**

This seems like a fancy, scary word, but it really isn't. In this context, methodology means making the most of what you have and reducing the reliance on specialised (and usually expensive) equipment, to flexible methods that work for your situation.

For example, in communication/language courses, non-verbal students should not waste time acquiring AAC devices that are often expensive and inaccessible; instead, they should communicate using AAC materials that can be downloaded from the internet for free and created at home. These small switches, not only in students' daily lives but also in what is taught in classes, can make a difference in these children's experiences, even if they're not 100% perfect (Alnahdi).

- **Incorporate Life Skills**

This point is less about inclusivity but about the effectiveness of the curriculum in general. As I've said before, a formal education curriculum may not necessarily be the best option for everyone, including both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals.

However, you can still incorporate some elements from a formal education curriculum into your curriculum that will actually be usable in the children's future. For example, in mathematics, relate problems to what children experience in their daily lives, such as weighing produce and calculating transactions at their family businesses (Grateful Care ABA).



- **Assessment**

Lastly, the very important element of assessment. Assessment should be more flexible, rather than relying solely on final exams for every student. For students capable of taking tests and exams, accommodations should be provided, such as extra time and larger text. However, students with special needs who can't take regular standardised assessments should have their "grade" calculated differently (Gross).

- **Scale**

The scale should not be traditional numeric or letter grades. Seeing an “F” or a zero on your paper feels like a permanent mark of failure. Instead, using “milestones” as grades can support and motivate future growth while also rewarding academic success. For example, grades could be represented as follows: M (meeting expectations), E (exemplary work), D (developing skills), and NM (not meeting expectations).

- **Assessment Type**

For many students with special needs who still learn academic concepts, a traditional test may be a test of executive function, such as sitting still and/or staying silent, rather than fully assessing the extent of their academic knowledge. As a result, another assessment method should be used to demonstrate a student’s learning, ideally throughout the school year, in a flexible manner. A great example of this is assigning students to model academic concepts using physical objects, which demonstrate true understanding while eliminating the need for functional environments (Parker).



- **Grade Weighing**

As mentioned before, students who are not able to undergo regular standardised testing need different systems of grade calculation that factor in their development of executive function (e.g., being able to sit still, ask to go to the bathroom, and respect simple boundaries). An example is a 60/40 split, with 40% of their grade determined by their academic development (ideally incorporating life skills as mentioned above), and 60% determined by improvement in executive function and daily tasks. This improvement grade should be determined by the teacher, taking into account the student's past speed and motivation to learn.

4.3. SAMPLE CURRICULUM

To provide an inclusive reference class that applies these strategies that you can learn from, here is a sample curriculum and syllabus of a theoretical History class that you could implement in your schooling situation. I will provide the course theme, unit overviews and breakdowns, the logistical situation, and the assessment method.



COURSE OVERVIEW

(I use Jakarta as an example. Feel free to adapt the curriculum to any other place or subject that you want to teach!)

COURSE TITLE: JAKARTA HISTORY



UNITS:

UNIT 1: THE EVOLUTION OF JAKARTA

- Summary: A broader look at Jakarta's History from part of the Sundanese Kingdom to the modern metropolis today.
- Life Skill Integration: Studying Maps and learning Jakarta's physical geography so students know how to navigate the city in the future (and how history influences it)

UNIT 2: THE HEROES

- Summary: Who our pahlawan (heroes) were and how they show themselves in modern life.
- Life Skill Integration: Recognising street names, assisting future navigation, and familiarising students with currency, assisting their financial responsibility.



UNIT 3: WORK LIFE

- Summary: A zoom-in on how people made a living over time, from trading spices to running food carts (kaki lima) and street stalls (warung).
- Life Skill Integration: Understanding the importance of their financial situation, calculating loss and profit, and starting to understand the management of money for their futures.



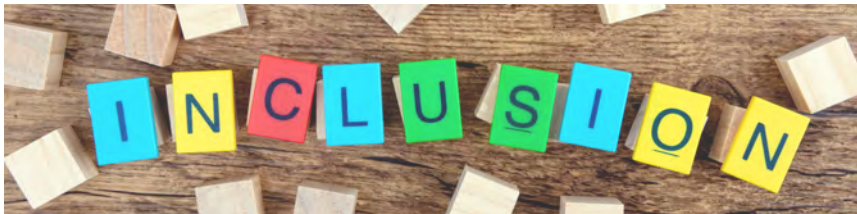
UNIT 4: THE WATER

- Summary: History of Jakarta's rivers and canals, from trading routes to colonial defence, points to the low-lying waterways that cause the regular floods in Jakarta.
- Life Skill Integration: Understanding why floods happen and knowing flood-safe areas in case of an emergency.



INCLUSIVE MEASURES

This unit syllabus doesn't account for environmental adaptations in the classroom to support neurodivergent students in learning most effectively. These changes are necessary and are expected to have been made to the greatest extent possible for your situation.



- **Understanding Your Students**

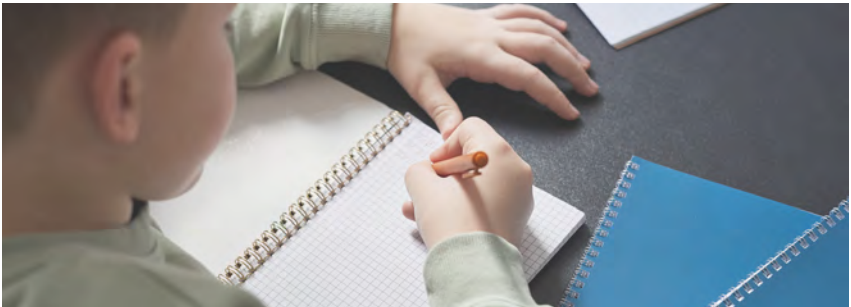
The course should begin with a brief survey to gauge the class's sensory needs and their understanding of Jakarta's history. Through this, the depth of the curriculum can be adjusted based on the mean understanding, and teachers know which students to look after who may need help learning the content.

- **Methodological Logistics**

Traditional field trips are valuable, but they're expensive. Students deserve to learn from environments outside of school, but it doesn't need to cost money. One way students can learn recent history from direct primary sources is by having them interview the elders around them, who have likely lived through important events and have many stories to tell, or by having them watch informational videos on the Internet while taking notes. Aiding non-verbal students can be done through physical AAC copies, which will be discussed in full detail in a later chapter.

- **Assessment & Grading**

Assessment and testing will differ from usual tests and exams, but they will have some things in common. For this specific course, there will be 4 “tests”, 1 for each unit, which are tasks that assess the student’s understanding of the unit. There will be 1 “exam” at the end of the course, which is a longer task that incorporates knowledge from all 4 units.



- **Unit 1 Test:** Using an empty map of Jakarta, the student outlines a route from their home to the national monument (Monas), marking 3 historical landmarks along the way.
- **Unit 2 Test:** Fill an empty wallet with paper bills, and task the students with writing a quick summary of the hero corresponding to each bill amount.
- **Unit 3 Test:** Separate students into equal groups based on their learning profiles and task them with working together as the managers of a warung. Provide a challenging situation (e.g. unsuccessful and unfruitful harvest) and grade their response (e.g. raise prices of products).



- **Unit 4 Test:** Separate students into groups and assign a waterway/river to each group that was studied in depth in class. Task them with creating a defence strategy (e.g., an emergency pack) and pinpointing a “safe zone” in the area.
- **Course Assessment:**

Assign students to create a “Jakarta Box” (a physical portfolio) with 4 items inside:

1. A map leading their house to an assigned historical landmark (graded on accuracy).
2. A “Rp 1,000,000” bill with information of a local hero in their community (graded on depth of information).
3. A notebook/ledger of products along with their prices, which are determined based on assigned market prices of ingredients (graded on accuracy).
4. An emergency checklist for a flood in their home (graded on specificity and accuracy).



FOR PARENTS

5.1. UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

To truly understand your child, it's important first to be aware of your current mindset and the mindset you should work towards. To be quite frank, many people in the world still view neurodiversity as a disease that can be cured. Yes, neurodiversity is a disability, but that is okay and should be accepted. And in almost all cases, it cannot be reversed.

Because of this common mindset, people act as disciplinarians to their child's behaviour, trying to "fix" their self-stimulatory behaviour (also known as stims) and ticks, when, in most cases (but not all), they truly can't help it. You need to change your mindset from a discipliner to a decipherer.

This is something that you must understand: your child's behaviour, no matter what, serves a purpose. If you try to "fix" their bad behaviour without ever targeting the root cause, you will end up suppressing your child's emotions, causing emotional damage that can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental problems in their future. If you target the root cause, they are much more likely to stop or minimise the bad behaviour healthily because their need is fulfilled. No matter how you look at it, it is worth giving it a shot.

So, how do you do that? (Please be aware that these strategies apply best for the most common and most important cases of stim triggers, not all)



Track the Patterns

When your child shows certain behaviours, take notes. Try to find similarities in the environment, their activity, and what's happening or has just happened around them. These can be things perceived as meaningless, such as the time of day, or glaringly obvious, such as a loud concert nearby (MindMate NHS UK).

Remember, there is a reason why the child is doing this behaviour! Tracking these environmental patterns shifts your thinking from just the meltdown or stim to the primary stressor that caused it. If you're able to find something in common with the irregular outbursts of behaviour from your child, you will be able to understand how to accommodate their needs in all other areas of your life.

Conduct a Sensory Audit

If behaviour is constant and/or challenging to track, it may be beneficial to conduct a sensory audit in your house and neighbourhood. Many factors can influence behaviour, but among the most common are temperature, humidity, tactile features, and noise, especially if all are high simultaneously (Sherrell).

As mentioned above, track these and create “sensory profiles”, which indicate the relative intensity of each factor throughout the day. Although you may not be able to change the entire environment for your child, you can still make small adjustments which will benefit them, as explored in the next subchapter (Health, Safety, and Environment).



Conduct a Communication Audit

If you are struggling to communicate with your child, there may be several reasons why. However, they often have a limited or inadequate vocabulary, which prevents them from expressing their emotions effectively in words. Another common case is that they require longer times to process what we are trying to say. In both cases, it's beneficial to conduct an audit that shows how your child communicates and how long it takes them to do so. That way, you will be able to start searching for the right alternative communication method for them if needed (which will be discussed in depth in a future chapter).



5.2. DAILY ROUTINES

You may be wondering, now that you have these findings of what triggers your child's behaviour, what do I actually do to accommodate their needs and minimise their negative outbursts? One great way to do that is to develop a healthy, punctual, and fun daily routine for them to follow.



Good days
start with
great
routines

In a high-pressure, highly sensory-stimulating environment, order and structure are needed to even out the chaos and provide the child with something to work towards and focus on at home. Daily routines help add structure, making the child's daily activities predictable, accommodating, and easier to follow.

(Please note that if the child is being forced to do anything, it is unhealthy and will cause more negative behaviour)

SO, HOW DO I CREATE ONE?

- **Incorporate Life Skills**

If you read chapter 3, you may have heard this one before!

This is less about accommodating the children's stimulant needs, but more about general parenting and preparation for the future. The routine must incorporate things that they will do for life, such as doing (or learning) regular, daily hygiene (showering, using the bathroom and wiping the seat, brushing teeth) as well as respecting others and their own boundaries (remembering to lock the door when using the bathroom or showering, showing that opening a door without knocking when someone else is using the room is something to avoid doing).



- **Sync To Your City**

Using the information from your sensory audit, sync your daily routine to the city's rhythm. If there's a time of day when the neighbourhood is loud, don't ask your child to do anything mentally taxing during that time. Save those activities for the minutes of quiet. If there's a time of day when it's hottest, try to do something that involves less movement in a shaded area, ideally wearing more breathable clothing. By syncing to the city, your accommodations are ensured to be long-term.

- **Add Recovery**

Using the patterns you tracked, if there is a time of day or event that causes the most sensory or mental load for your child, adding a 20-30 minute rest period is great for them to unwind and de-stress before jumping into another activity. Creating a makeshift calming space, as discussed in Chapter 3, would be great for this. This change helps your child stay mentally stable during a stressful period, helping them become more accustomed to and stronger in the face of discomfort.



- **Match Their Energy**

If there is a particular time that your child is energetic and jumpy, the activity they should do should be physically taxing and require energy. Wherever your child goes, the activity follows. It sounds so simple, but when put into practice, it effectively accommodates their needs.

- **Visual Maps**

For all children at very young ages, it's usually hard to perceive and track the flow of time. Using a map to symbolise that, such as a cardboard clock that displays their activities with symbols (Picture of a toilet for a bathroom break, picture of a crayon for colouring), can help them transition better and also prepare themselves mentally for the next activity if it's particularly taxing in any way (GentleCare Therapy).



THE CAVEAT

Many parents assume that, since the real world isn't accommodating, their parenting style shouldn't be either, because it doesn't allow the child to adapt and grow stronger in less-than-ideal circumstances. However, it doesn't quite work like that. The goal of an accommodating environment is not to shelter the child for life, but to provide a safe base for the child to recover (Gada). There is always room for improvement in the face of discomfort, but growth occurs during the recovery process.

Think of it like lifting weights. The muscle doesn't grow when you lift the weights, it gets bigger AFTER, when it is recovering from the load it received during the lift. The same principle applies here. There are many ways to introduce this discomfort into the daily routine, but it cannot be the entire routine.



- **Incorporating Surprises**

Change one small thing about the routine, such as what the child eats for breakfast, and label it a "surprise day." Take note of their reaction. If you do this repeatedly (once to twice a month), take note of any progression or change in their response.

- **Baby Steps**

If there is a place that your child avoids because of an environmental factor, such as its smell or noise, you can't avoid it forever. Start with just 5 minutes of visiting around the outskirts, and work your way up. Remember to take notes on their progress and only move on once they've shown signs of growth.

- **Coping Mechanisms**

If an outburst is likely to occur in a less-than-ideal environment, having a plan in place to help the child calm down BEFORE the outburst happens is beneficial. For example, doing breathing exercises can help the child calm down and zone them out of the potentially overwhelming environment.

5.3. SAMPLE ROUTINE

Here is a sample daily routine that applies all of the strategies discussed above, with visual models to show how it works. You can copy this or tweak it to fit your situation.

7 AM- Wake Up

7 AM is a good time, as the child will sleep through the early morning market rush. Please do not aggressively shake them or scream at them. Talk to them gently, but be firm and intentional. Lightly touch them and use music if required.

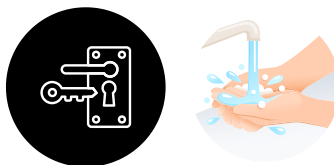
7.15 AM- Breakfast

Use something light, small, and nutritious that the child will not get bored with, since in some cases you'll have them eat the same breakfast every day— unless it's a surprise day.

7.30 AM- Bathroom Break

Use pictures in the bathroom to remind them to lock the door and wash their hands.

(You can find these pictures on Canva!)



7.40 AM- Colouring Book

Using a monochromatic colour scheme might be beneficial, but adjust according to the child's needs. This helps warm up the brain before a more difficult activity.

8 AM- Household Chores

Sweeping the floor gives the child visible progress to track as they do the chore. Hand-washing dishes allows more sensory exposure without being too overwhelming. Sorting and categorising groceries or books trains their pattern and colour recognition. All are good potential entry-level chores that will train their brains to adapt slowly while remaining comfortable for the child.

9 AM- Recovery (Peak of Rush Hour)

Allow the child to go to their calming space for as long as they need. This is a good recovery placement, as it allows the child to recover after a physically and mentally taxing activity and during an environmentally overwhelming circumstance that began when the child woke up.

9.30 AM - Bathroom Break

Same system as previously mentioned.

9.40 AM - Board Game (Snakes & Ladders)

Incorporating board games is great because it's a fun de-stressor for the child, and it also teaches them to respect others' turns while asserting their own when it's their turn. It also trains their sportsmanship and their ability to accept losses while respectfully celebrating victories.

10 AM- Light Studying

It doesn't have to be conventional problem-solving; it can be any form of mental stimulation that allows the child to interact with uncertainty and prompts them to solve it.

10.30 AM- Market Visit

Since the market rush is over and production is limited, this may be a good time to visit and help the child become more comfortable with the early-morning environment over time.

11 AM- Exercise Games (Wrap-up)!

The last activity of the day should be fun but physically taxing, as children need specific exercise, not just household chores, to be healthy and grow stronger. This also trains their mental fortitude and sportsmanship. Some fun games to play are red light, green light, hide-and-seek, and tag.





COMMUNICATION

Communication is defined as “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.” In daily life, the most common forms of communication are speaking and writing. However, not everyone can do either or both.

6.1. STRUGGLES WITH COMMUNICATION

Some people cannot communicate their thoughts in spoken words, mostly for two reasons: they are overstimulated and cannot focus, or the part of the brain responsible for speech is impaired, limiting their vocabulary to a few words or none (Inclusive ABA).

When someone cannot communicate through spoken language, they are considered non-verbal, which is common among people with autism, cerebral palsy, and/or CAS (childhood apraxia of speech). This doesn't mean they are totally mute, as most non-verbal people can still make noise, though it's not clear or intelligible.

On the other hand, someone with sensory problems can experience overstimulation in an environment that causes them stress, which can temporarily (or in extremely severe cases, permanently) impair their speech and cause a fully verbal individual to lose their ability to speak (Bhargava).





OTHER STRUGGLES

Aside from neurological factors, adolescents in general will struggle with:

- **Social Rules**

Fully verbal people can struggle to communicate because of unclear, exclusive unwritten rules. They may come across as offensive or disrespectful simply because they don't know when to start or stop talking, when to change the conversation topic, etc. (Brown).

- **Emotional Complexity**

Adolescents inherently make more impulsive, “heat of the moment” decisions compared to adults. As they go through puberty, their emotions are far more unstable, which can prompt them to say something that they logically wouldn't say. This can incite fear to talk, which discourages communication for some (Developing Minds Australia).

- **Generational Gap**

Due to the age gap between you and your child/student, you often communicate very differently, both when speaking, writing, or non-verbally communicating. This can lead to more common misunderstandings and impair effective and optimal communication (Chapman).

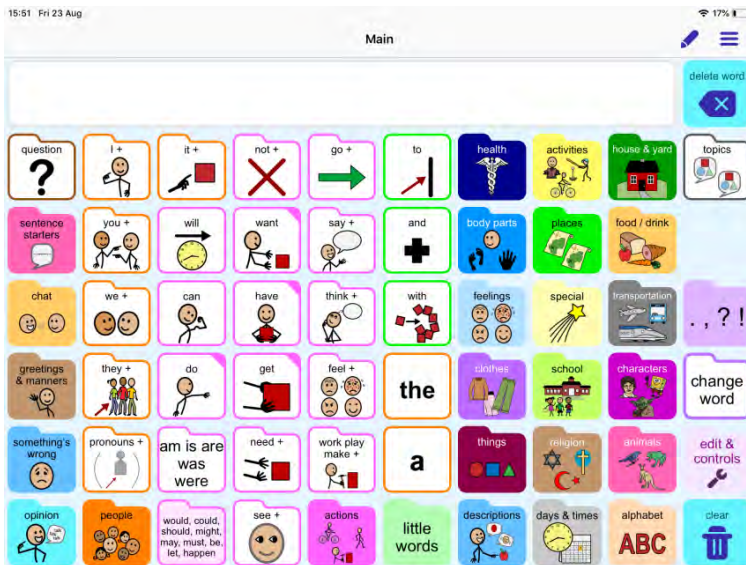
It's bad enough for the average teenager, but imagine someone who is nonverbal or partially verbal. They have to withstand all of these factors while struggling to talk. That's where AAC comes in.



6.2. UNDERSTANDING AAC

AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. By definition, it means any form of communication that is not speaking or writing falls under the category of AAC. This includes babbling, crying, meltdowns, gestures, body language, and even physical violence. Remember, all behaviour has a purpose. Your child acting violently is technically a way for them to communicate that they are angry (London Speech & Feeding).

Some forms of AAC are much more streamlined, peaceful, and coherent. Think of these as translation devices, which translate the information in the non-verbal person's brain into words that you can understand. Let's review some of those:



- **Sign Language**

Sign Language is a form of unaided AAC, as you only need your body and another's body to communicate, no extra devices. It's one of the most widely used and well-known forms of communication in the world, and it's extremely well-developed, with its most common type, American Sign Language (ASL), and many other common sign languages having their own alphabets and dictionaries. In Indonesia, where this book was written, for example, the used form of sign language is Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (BISINDO) and SIBI (Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia).

- **Electronic Communication**

Using standard social media messaging apps, people with impaired speech can communicate via text, and if they're word-blind, they can still communicate through symbols such as emojis.

- **AAC Devices**

The newest and one of the easiest forms of AAC to learn is communicating through AAC devices. This high-tech form utilises a phone or tablet to display a grid of options, allowing the person to form phrases or sentences. The grid displays an array of categories, each with symbols indicating specific words.

For example: Category- Decision, Word- Yes/No

The best thing about AAC devices is that you can personalise the options according to the person communicating and their most commonly used words. This removes the overwhelming feeling of having to choose from all the options and helps streamline the communication process.

6.3. IMPLEMENTING ACCESSIBLE AAC

To say it bluntly, AAC technology is not always accessible for everyone. So, methodology is key!

- **Unaided AAC**

This is the most economically accessible form of AAC, as it does not use any external technology to help people communicate effectively. The main drawback is that some forms are hard to interpret coherently, and others are hard to learn due to their complexity (body gestures and sign language, respectively).

Creating a course dedicated to it, labelled as a modern language course, would be highly helpful, as sign languages such as ASL have developed to a level of complexity comparable to that of spoken languages. If you are a parent, teaching your child the essentials (toilet, eat, yes, no) can be massively helpful in translating their thoughts to understandable information.

Some examples of unaided AAC are sign language, hand gestures, facial expressions, and body gestures.



- **Drawing Boards**

The only requirements for this method are preferably a small white/chalkboard and an erasable marker, or paper and pencil. It's a great way for creatively gifted children to express their emotions and communicate how they feel in the moment. It also doubles as a mindfulness activity that helps the child de-stress and navigate a stressful time (Li et al.).

To implement it, provide the small boards to all of the children, regularly check in with the class/home, and invite them to use it. I recommend teaching the group some simple drawings first, that are simpler and easier to draw, but get the basics down, as mentioned above (toilet, eat, yes, no).



- **Physical AAC Device**

This method is great because it offers most of the benefits of real AAC technology while remaining accessible and affordable. It's easy to learn, allows complexity in what the person can say, and it's a relatively simple process to make it. However, the drawback is that real AAC technology lets you delve deeper into the category tiles and be even more specific, whereas a physical copy cannot.

To implement it, you have two options. The first is that you can download an AAC grid online, print it, and laminate it to protect the paper. As a bonus, it would be beneficial to highlight the most common options for the child so they can spend less time finding the right one and communicate more efficiently. The second option is to draw the physical copy on paper, or, ideally, use a marker on cardboard so it lasts longer. Either way, they both serve the same purpose, and it depends on what you have at hand at the moment.





CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Remember when I said that behaviour is a response to emotion? Well, let's dive a little bit deeper into that.

If you feel frustrated or mad, what does your brain want you to do? Scream? Cry? Punch something with all your might?

While the last one is a little extreme, all of these are examples of how to express your intense emotions and “let your anger out”.

7.1. CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR 101

It is always useful to learn how to accept and express your emotions, as this practice allows you to process your thoughts, understand “why you feel this way,” and begin managing them. In many ways, behaviour helps us humans communicate. Our actions are often the most effective way to convey how we feel, such as helping people out, writing handwritten letters, or hugging someone.

For neurodivergent people, their brains may not always process emotions clearly. Their emotions may correspond to a certain reaction, but they react either completely differently or with a different expected intensity (Neurodivergence Wales). This can manifest in many ways, such as:

- Their reaction is extreme and disproportionate to the emotion and experience they received
- Their reaction is minimal and disproportionate to the emotion and experience they received
- Their reaction does not correspond to their emotions, either minimally or extremely

For example, a certain stimulus might make a neurotypical person cry or scream. Still, because neurodivergent brains may struggle to process emotion, a neurodivergent person might try to punch something instead. However, always keep in mind that every case is different, and it depends heavily on the subject's past tendencies and behaviour.





These reactions commonly result in challenging behaviour, which is defined as any behaviour that can cause physical or emotional harm to the actor or others. It doesn't need to directly harm someone to be classified as challenging behavior. If the possibility even exists, it counts.

Therefore, this chapter is a very sensitive but important subject and contains essential information for your safety and that of your students. Because of that, there are very specific things to do and avoid that can either massively help or harm your child or students' emotional journeys.

7.2. DOS AND DON'TS

DON'T:

Don't silence your students and forbid them from expressing intense behaviour, even if it's challenging. Don't get it mistaken: challenging behaviour is unacceptable and must be treated correctly. However, this doesn't mean you should tell your students to bottle up their emotions. Just like physics, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. If students experience these actions and are taught not to react, their reaction does not disappear into thin air. Instead, mental tension will grow and fester in the student's mind. Over time, the tension will build to a point where they break down in a reaction that encompasses all the built-up mental tension. In the worst possible cases, this can lead to the loss of the students' and others' lives.

Believe it or not, it has happened before!

As said earlier, behaviour is communication. Many neurodivergent people are either non-verbal or semi-verbal, so prohibiting communication can disrupt one of the only ways these students can show how they feel. Although in a school setting, not being able to communicate might seem like a minor problem, this can cause future problems with sexual and physical consent (because they cannot express what they are and aren't comfortable with), potentially leading to abuse, harassment, and/or assault, which has already happened for neurodivergent children and adults in millions of cases around the world. That's how serious this is.

DO:

Do assess and document what potentially “triggers” the child and identify any behavioural patterns over time, challenging or not. This, arguably the most important element of this journey, aligns with many of the topics discussed in this playbook. Keep a log sheet of each time you see student(s) show emotion, and take special note of repeated patterns, situations, and stimuli that ignite some sort of out-of-the-ordinary response from the student.



It may be necessary to do this individually for students who struggle with behavioural regulation, and with an assistant, such as your parenthood partner or another teacher, who can watch that student while you are teaching/supervising (if possible).

However, do not deliberately create or simulate stimuli to see if a reaction occurs. This just creates unnecessary mental/physical stress for your child or student and can lead to overstimulation and mental trauma. Allow circumstances to unfold naturally, and be patient as you track each child’s patterns.

With the data you collect, you can begin making changes to your learning environment to support your child better, while also learning about next steps to help your child acclimate to currently uncomfortable situations.

DON'T:

Don't punish self-regulation, even if it's strange, without being sure that it can potentially lead to harm. Even if it is challenging behaviour, punishing the child is definitely not the way to go. Self-regulation, commonly known as stimming or fidgeting, is a physical and behavioural response to emotion that helps people calm down mentally and distract themselves from what is stressing them. So now you may be wondering: if punishing the child doesn't work, what is the best way to address and correct challenging behaviour while minimising harm to the child who is showing it?

7.3. HOW TO TREAT CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR?

Punishment is an effective way to stop the child from resuming the behaviour they were showing. Although punishment may be effective to some degree with neurotypical children, it's best to avoid punishment with neurodivergent children, as their response to it is unpredictable and potentially damaging.

A better approach is to reward the child for demonstrating good, appropriate behaviour, creating a healthy environment in which they can learn what is acceptable and what isn't, and how to manage their own emotions (Soaring High ABA). This method is a form of consequence, more commonly known as **positive reinforcement**, which is a safer way to address challenging behaviour. This system is a long-term project that will require you to monitor your child's behaviour constantly.



SO, HOW CAN THIS BE PUT INTO PRACTICE?

- **Prepare the rewards in advance so the child understands their purpose.**

Positive reinforcement must be done without delay to be effective. If there is a delay, this may confuse the child, and they might not understand that their past behaviour allowed them to receive the reward. Preparing rewards and staying alert at all times will help avoid delays and ensure the message gets across.

- **Set up a clear, well-planned system that you communicate to your child.**

Don't give out rewards randomly. For positive reinforcement to work, desired behaviours and their corresponding rewards must be specific, once again, to avoid confusion. It's highly encouraged to write your system down to make sure that you remember it, and so you can show it to your child.



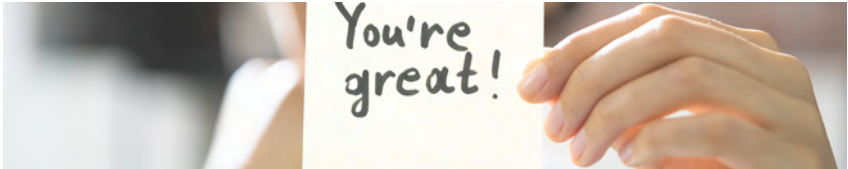
(E.g.)

Behaviour: Asking politely instead of throwing tantrums in the candy aisle at the grocery store

Reward: 1 bag of candy that we can buy and take home

- **Avoid Bribery**

Yes, at first glance, this system does look similar to bribery. However, there are a few key differences and major problems with bribery that you want to avoid. Bribery means that your child is the one in control, as you're willing to give up something to make them stop their negative behaviour. If you continue with bribery, your child learns that to get what they want, they simply need to engage in negative behaviour, so you can reward them to stop (Autism Learning Partners). Positive reinforcement, on the other hand, only rewards positive behaviour. Your child must work to get the rewards, and the rewards you give out are under your control. As long as you strictly follow the system you set up in advance, you can avoid bribery and ensure your positive reinforcement system works.



- **Fade The Rewards Over Time**

If you keep the same rewards indefinitely, rather than educating them on the importance of the behaviour, they will only do the behaviour because of the expected reward. This doesn't mean that you will eventually ignore their positive behaviour. You must still recognise and reward it, but you should shift your rewards from tangible objects (candy, toys, playtime) to natural praise (verbal praise/something physically comforting). Remember to fade these tangible rewards gradually and take things step by step over a long period.

7.4. PREVENTION

At some point in your life, you've probably heard the saying "prevention is better than a cure". This applies to challenging behaviour, too. To prevent something dangerous, such as meltdowns or extreme tantrums, you must first document and understand what triggers these responses in your child, as mentioned before. Some tendencies lead children to show challenging behaviour. The most common of which are:

- Sensory issues
- Uncomfortable situations, physically and/or emotionally
- Inability to communicate emotions and/or needs
- Lack of sleep
- Hunger

If you know that you are going into a situation where 1 of those (or anything else you documented) may occur, remember and be ready to put the 3 Rs (Regulate, Relate, Reason) into action (Perry).



- **Regulate**

Regulation, in a case as intense as this, is helping your child carefully manage his emotions and calm down. No matter the child's moral standing or whether their actions are right or wrong, your only goal in this stage is to lower the intensity of their emotions. Telling them of their actions can happen another time, when the child is ready to hear criticism and is not emotionally volatile.

- **Relate**

Always put yourself in their shoes. In any schooling situation, when you're dealing with something as difficult as misconduct, always seek to understand the actor of the behaviour. Make your efforts to do so clear as you discuss with them, so that the child understands that you are making an effort to understand them. They will appreciate it more than you think. This will help build an emotional connection, making it easier for the child to understand why they are wrong. Effective ways to do this include active listening, empathy, and validating their emotions.

- **Reason**

Discuss the incident with the child slowly and work out a solution together. This stage is a great way to introduce a positive reinforcement system that can help improve the child's behaviour in the long term.



RESOURCES

FREE AAC COMMUNICATION CARDS

To support effective communication while bridging gaps between students, here are some free communication cards that are available on **[Kenhub.com](https://kenhub.com)**. These cards are helpful communication tools for those who need extra help in expressing their needs, feelings, and thoughts.



Kenhub
Communication
Cards

	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
Date:			
Time:			
Staff:			
Date:			
Time:			
Staff:			
Date:			
Time:			
Staff:			
Date:			
Time:			
Staff:			

(Doing Autism Right)

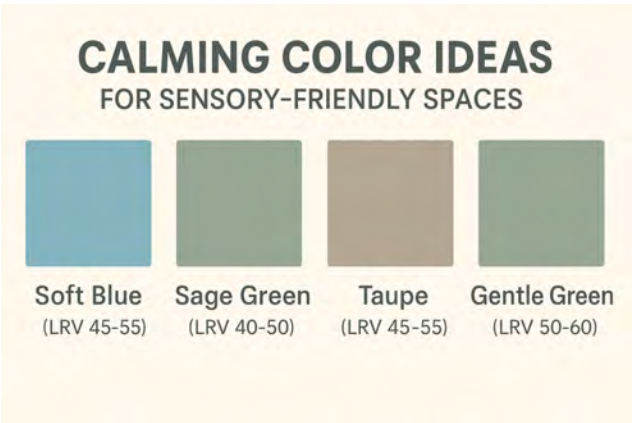
**ABC (ANTECEDENT - BEHAVIOUR - CONSEQUENCE)
DATA SHEET**

Used to document behaviour of any kind and understand what stimulated that behaviour, what emotions the actor experienced, and what happened as a result of the behaviour.

To utilise, fill the antecedent column with information about the surroundings, emotions, and events directly preceding the behaviour you are documenting. Fill the behaviour column with detailed information about what behaviour was shown, what emotion it could possibly correspond to, and exactly how it happened. Fill the consequence column with the immediate response from other people, the environment, or the actor themselves as a result of the behaviour.

Please keep in mind that this is a real data sheet commonly used by professional Behavioural Analysts, which may make it more suitable for experienced parents and teachers. Use at your own discretion if it works well for your situation.

CALMING COLORS REFERENCES



(Kaminsky Design and Remodeling)

ZONES OF REGULATION GUIDE

A poster that shows an environmental suggestion for more sensory-friendly spaces in your school or home.



(Girls Inc.)

A guide on how to approach students experiencing certain emotions when doing activities in your classroom or home. Treat each colour like road traffic lights, with green indicating that the student is open to being adventurous and participating in activities and red being the opposite, as they need regulation and calming.

DE-ESCALATION STRATEGIES FOR MELTDOWNS



(thinksensory)

A great poster to hang on your wall when a child is experiencing something intense and potentially challenging, such as tantrums or meltdowns. Be very careful and follow the instructions on the poster, which will definitely aid the first R (regulation) of returning the child’s emotional state back to normal.

LEARNING SUPPORT STRATEGY POSTER



(Sue Larkey)

Another great poster you can hang on your wall when doing activities and teaching to keep your class fun, inclusive, and engaging. Follows many strategies featured in this playbook, such as positive reinforcement and flexible learning plans.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



At the age of 14, Ryan W. Angouw founded MagnaMinds, and this book grew out of his journey to better understand neurodiversity and expand access to inclusive education. From an early age, Ryan developed a strong awareness of the experiences of neurodivergent family members and friends.

Ryan came to recognize that neurodivergent individuals, despite their abilities and potential, often face disadvantages due to social barriers and limited support systems. His interest in inclusion began during secondary school, when he became actively involved in school inclusion initiatives, and deepened further through an internship at a learning center for children with special needs.

Ryan is also the founder of EdukaSea, a youth platform to support the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and the Co-Founder of Reeformers, a marine conservation NGO he has been involved with since he was 11. Reeformers has been featured by National Geographic and invited to participate in international forums, including the United Nations World Oceans Day Conference in June 2023. He was also one of the youngest Youth Delegates at the 2025 UN Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, further strengthening his commitment to meaningful youth participation in global conversations.

Through MagnaMinds, Ryan continues to champion inclusion and help break down barriers, working toward a future where differences are understood, potential is recognized, and everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

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PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS

Understanding and Supporting Neurodivergent Children

“ At the age of 15, Ryan has shown remarkable courage to understand the needs of children with autism and other developmental differences. Through this book, he highlights the importance of neurodiversity and inclusion, valuing every individual, reducing stigma, and ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

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Child Psychologist & Applied Behavior Analysis Practitioner

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Clinical Psychologist, CBT Practitioner, Educational Consultant for Mental Health

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