FRAGILE WORLD ON THE SPECTRUM

MY WORLD IS “CONFUSING” AND “OVERWHELMING”!!

OVERWHELMING ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS

- Too much, too fast!
- Too loud, too bright!
- I don’t understand!
- What do they mean?
- I don’t know how to act!
- What is expected?
- How should I respond?

WEAK & FRAGILE NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Sensory defensive; over-reacting to stimulation.
- Poor registration of information.
- Problems integrating senses.
- Becomes overloaded easily.
- Poor digestive and weaken immune systems
- Areas of brain do not work well together to give meaning to event.

STRESS OVERLOAD!

- Build up of stress chemicals.
- Feeling confused, overwhelmed.
- Feeling frustrated, anxious and scared.
- Break down of thought processes and ability to regulate emotions.

FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE!

- Shut-downs: Withdraw; unresponsive; nervous system shuts down in order to rebound.
- Meltdowns: Tantrums, aggression, property disruption, self-abuse, all in attempt to release stress chemicals and to escape/avoid stressors.

PLEASE HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND AND FEEL SAFE, ACCEPTED, AND COMPETENT!!

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I Don’t Understand!
Cognitive Deficits
- Delayed informational processing.
- Difficulty processing multiple information.
- Focus on detail, often missing the big picture.
- Rigid, inflexible thinking.
- Problems processing rapid change, shifting gears.
- Difficulty planning, organizing and following a plan of action.
- Trouble understanding what is required.
- Must process too much, too fast!
- Need simple, concrete, visual instructions.

Sensory Overload!
- Too bright, too loud, too strong, too much!
- Difficulty integrating sensory input.
- Over or under aroused.
- Sensory overload!
- Physical demands too difficult.

Social Performance Expectations!
- Strong social anxiety
- Difficulty reading and interpreting social cues.
- Impaired ability to understand intent and perspective of others
- Hard to coordinate and repair interaction.
- What is expected?
- What is he saying?
- What does he mean?
- How should I act?
- Interaction moving too fast!
- I DON’T WANT TO STAND OUT!
- Often unaware of how behavior is seen by others.

Structured Routine
- Demands of routine, too much, too fast.
- Transitions/change is hard.
- Difficulty understanding rules, roles & expectations.
- Need rigid schedule that is familiar and predictable.
- Avoids novelty and change.
- Difficulty with mediating time and schedule.
- Unexpected shifting gears.
- Unstructured time causes stress.

Poor Emotional Control
- Poor frustration tolerance.
- Poor self control.
- Often anxious, easily upset, disorganized.
- Unpredictable emotional outbursts.
- Difficulty identifying, interpreting & regulating emotions.

Communication
- Difficulty processing what others are saying.
- Problems reading non-verbal communication.
- Very literal; cannot read between the lines.
- Trouble formulating a verbal response.
- Problem communicating feelings, needs and wants.
- Verbal skills deteriorate when upset.

CONFUSED!
OVERWHELMED!
FRUSTRATED!
SCARED!
ANXIOUS!
STRESS REACTION

HELP!!!!
CONFUSED! OVERWHELMED!
(INSECURE! UNSAFE!)

INCREASED STRESS CHEMICALS
(ANXIETY)

FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE
(SHUT DOWN OR MELT DOWN)

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STRESS REDUCTION

Reduce Confusion
- Reduce demands
- Slow down, one step at a time.
- Keep directions simple, concrete, with visual cues.
- Don’t assume child understands; provide added support.
- Preview and review often.
- Ensure concrete beginning and end to tasks.

Calm and Organize Nervous System
- Reduce stimulation
- Provide calming input
- Deep pressure to calm
- Proprioception to organize
- Slow vestibular as tolerated.
- Physical activity to release stress chemicals
- Sensory diet to calm and organize nervous system

Reduce Social Demands
- Encourage and support, but do not pressure.
- Help interpret intent and expectations of others.
- Assume social anxiety.
- Role play and/or guide through interaction
- Use social stories
- Awareness training for peers.

Support When Agitated
- Intervene/support at first signs of agitation.
- Remove demands, slow down, stay calm.
- Be supportive not punitive
- Help child calm and feel safe.
- Coach alternative responses.
- Provide “safe area” to escape to when anxious
- Help problem solve if calm enough.

Structured Routine
- Consistent, predictable routine.
- Visual schedule
- Slow down, space out activity.
- Tailor demands/expectations to maximize success.
- Minimize fatigue, sensory overload
- Support for transitions
- Preparation for novelty/change
- Patterned routine and demands to individual needs

PLEASE HELP ME....
FEEL SAFE & ACCEPTED!!
FEEL COMPETENT!!

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