

WHAT IS NONSPEAKING?

Nonspeaking refers to individuals who do not have speech as a reliable or consistently reliable means to communicate their true thoughts.

NONSPEAKING: IT IS NOT TRUE THAT NONSPEAKING MEANS NONTHINKING. NOT HAVING SPEECH IS NOT THE SAME AS NOT HAVING ANYTHING TO SAY. MOTOR IS SEPARATE FROM COGNITIVE AND WHILE A PERSON MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO TALK, THERE ARE OTHER WAYS A PERSON CAN COMMUNICATE.

MINIMALLY SPEAKING: I CAN COMMUNICATE SOME BASICS BUT I CAN'T INITIATE SAYING MY LONGER AND DEEPER THOUGHTS WITH MY SPEECH. I COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY BY POINTING TO SPELL.

UNRELIABLY SPEAKING: MY SPEECH DOES NOT ALLOW ME TO SAY EVERYTHING I WANT TO SAY BUT I CONNECT WITH OTHERS THROUGH IT. THIS IS MY STRUGGLE. I APPRECIATE WHEN OTHERS MAKE THE EFFORT BUT THEY CAN'T ALWAYS KNOW THAT I HAVE MORE TO ADD OR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TO SAY.

LANGUAGE AND LABELS

"VIOLENT"

The Outdated Perspective

Autistic individuals are a danger to themselves and others because of unpredictable outbursts.

The New Perspective

In highly emotional situations, the response to extra stimuli can be misinterpreted as violence. It is an overflow of emotion and stimulation that leads to loss of body control. That's it.

"BEHAVIOR"

The Outdated Perspective

Behaviors are only bad when it has to do with autistics.

The New Perspective

Rather than behavior, keep in mind the brain-body disconnect. Disobedient bodies are not the same as disobedient minds.

"INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED"

The Outdated Perspective

That there is a lack of intelligence in autistics.

The New Perspective

Intelligence cannot be judged based on tests that require a motor response nor on outward appearance. Intelligence is not only reserved for the speaking. Every person has a right to learn. Autistics are competent and able to learn but they are unable to demonstrate their abilities in traditional ways due to what is called apraxia, so they must sometimes use unorthodox ways to prove intelligence.

"AGGRESSIVE"

The Outdated Perspective

Dysregulation is intentional and controllable. There is aggression because autistics are averse to anything new.

The New Perspective

The label "aggressive" paints an intention that does not always exist. The label inaccurately depicts autistics as always having control when in reality, dysregulation is being out of control of one's motor and emotions.

THE HUMAN'S GUIDE TO SUPPORTING AUTISTICS

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APRAXIA

APRAXIA: Apraxia is the inability to initiate, stop or slow down a sequence of movements on demand. It affects the motor planning process it takes to execute movement.

What can apraxia look like?

- RUNNING OUT OF A ROOM WHEN I AM EAGER TO STAY
- BOLTING OUT WHEN I KNOW I SHOULD STAY
- GETTING STUCK IN A DANCE WHEN I NEED TO PICK UP MY FEET AND WALK
- HARD NOT TO SPEAK IF I AM NERVOUS
- SILENCE

DYSREGULATION

DYSREGULATION: When an autistic is triggered by an external or internal stimulus that causes their baseline level of a regulated state to become no longer balanced.

What can dysregulation look like?

- BEING RUDE TO PEOPLE
- ANGER AND YELLING
- RUNNING OUT
- YELLING TOO LOUD
- BITING MY ARM
- DOING IMPULSIVE THINGS LIKE PULLING HAIR
- HAPPY LAUGHTER

What causes dysregulation?

- SOCIAL ANXIETY FOR ME CAN MANIFEST PHYSICALLY.
- THERE CAN BE EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS LIKE BAD MEMORIES OF SOMEONE. SEEING THAT PERSON AGAIN CAN CAUSE DYSREGULATION.
- I PERSONALLY DON'T LIKE BEING SCOLDED OR TOLD I'M WRONG.
- FEELING PRESSURE TO TALK
- IT CAN BE SOMETHING SMALL. LAST MINUTE CHANGES CAN MAKE ME FEEL FRUSTRATED. I LIKE FEELING PREPARED.
- BEING EXTREMELY EXHAUSTED AND WHEN I AM EMOTIONAL ABOUT FAMILY
- EXCITEMENT

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION

What advice can you give others?

- Avoid focusing on and asking about personal and emotional stuff all the time.
- If you notice someone fidgeting a lot or looking antsy that can be a sign of early dysregulation. Try pausing what you're doing to move around or go on a short walk.
- Try giving space and prompt purposeful, calming breathing. Engage the motor and speech as purposefully as possible to scramble the pathway.
- Make yourself a calmer presence.
- Keep me engaged. Boredom can be dysregulating.

What Not To Do

Do not startle the person. This will put them deeper into fight or flight.

Do not yell.

Keep hands off unless you need to protect yourself. Do not crowd the person.

Do not make the person feel worse by blaming or punishing him or her.

Do not grab someone by their wrist or arm while they are moving.

What To Do

Do announce what you are going to do.

Speak in soft tones.

Give the person space.

Give emotional support.

Try to get them seated by grabbing clothes rather than skin or limbs.

EMPATHY ST.

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