

How to read the situation

Behaviour is a message about the nervous system. These four pages teach you to read it instead of guessing.

FREE · UNDERSTANDING

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This is yours. You do not need an account, an email address or money. Print only the pages you need, and pass it on if it helps someone.

Where is the nervous system right now?

Behaviour follows the nervous system, not the other way round. Check the state first, then choose what you do.

Who it is for: anyone supporting an autistic person, at home or at work.

Remember: yellow and blue carry the same load. A quiet person is not automatically a fine person.

Green: regulated and reachable

- ☐ Face and shoulders relaxed
- ☐ Responds to name or touch
- ☐ Engages with a familiar activity



What I do now: Connect, teach, practise. This is the window for anything new.

Yellow: load is building

- ☐ Movement gets faster or repetitive
- ☐ Sounds or stims increase
- ☐ Harder to shift attention



What I do now: Reduce demands, cut noise and light, offer a familiar anchor. Strategies still work here.

Blue: low arousal, still reachable

- ☐ Seeking pressure, movement or sensation
- ☐ Going quiet, slow or limp
- ☐ May look happy or dreamy



What I do now: Stay close, keep it calm, follow their lead. Blue can carry as much load as yellow.

Red: dysregulation, safety first

- ☐ Hitting, biting or hurting themselves
- ☐ Sealed off, no contact possible
- ☐ Fleeing or frozen in panic



What I do now: Safety only. No demands, no teaching, no questions. Fewer words, more space. Wait.

Want to go deeper? *The Sensory Binder* and our short online course show you how to read these states in everyday life.

Behaviour is Communication: Detective Card

Stop. Observe. Find the message. Don't react. Investigate.

Use this card when you encounter a challenging situation. Follow the steps in order.

1



WHAT DO I SEE?

Describe objectively

Don't say "aggressive". Describe: "hitting the table with an open palm".

2



WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE?

Antecedent events

5 min ago? Transition? New stimulus? Long wait? Last meal?

3



WHAT'S THE SENSORY ENVIRONMENT?

Check the surroundings

Noise? Lights? Smells? Crowd? Temperature? Hidden stimuli?

4



WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

What is the person trying to tell you

Seeking something? Wanting escape? In pain? Is the tolerance bucket full?

5



HOW IS MY ENERGY AFFECTING THIS?

Check yourself

Am I tense, rushed, frustrated? Am I using too many words?

6



WHAT DO I CHANGE?

Change the environment, not the person

Reduce stimuli? Offer food? Break? Headphones? Own space?

Remember: The goal is not to fix the person. It's to understand the message.

Non-speaking does not mean not communicating



A person who does not speak communicates all day long. The question is whether the adult is reading it.

Who it is for: anyone new to supporting a non-speaking autistic person.

1. Body

Tensing, arching, pulling away or leaning in. It may mean discomfort, pain, refusal or a clear yes.

2. Vocalising

Humming, squealing, repeated sounds. It may mean joy, rising load, self-regulation or a call for you.

3. Gaze

Looking at an object, a door, a person, or looking away. It may mean I want that, I want out, or I need a break.

4. Action

Fetching shoes, taking your hand, throwing an object. It may mean a direct request or an ended activity.

5. Refusal

Dropping to the floor, pushing away, turning the head. It may mean no, too much, too fast. Refusal is communication.

6. Withdrawal

Retreating to a corner, going quiet, going limp. Overload, exhaustion or pain. The easiest message to miss.

How you answer

Respond to the message, not the method: you are showing me you want to leave.

Say what you understood out loud, then act on it, so communicating proves worth the effort.

If the message repeats and you cannot read it, look for pain first.

Remember: every ignored message teaches the person that communicating does not work. Every answered one teaches the opposite.

The Emotion Binder and the Communication Passport help you turn these observations into a shared language.

10 Things to Remember

Ten principles that carry you through the hard moments of everyday life.

1

Behaviour is a message, not a problem. Find out the message.

2

The nervous system reacts automatically. Meltdown is not a choice.

3

Change the environment, not the person. Reduce the load.

4

Stop before you react. Breathe. Observe.

5

The tolerance bucket fills gradually. Act in yellow, in red it's too late.

6

Sudden behaviour change = check physical causes first.

7

A "good day" doesn't mean an easy day. Masking drains everything.

8

A calm adult Borrows Peace to the nervous system. Your energy is contagious.

9

The same sense can be hyper, hypo and they can shift quickly. Explore individually.

10

Goal: the person no longer needs behaviour to be heard.