



SUPERCALM
Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

NEURO AFFIRMING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

SUPPORTING REGULATION & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



CREATING A PATHWAY TO BUILD REGULATION
SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE
NEURODIVERGENT LEARNERS CAN THRIVE

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Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

Introduction

We've created a practical guide to support schools implementing a regulation-first approach across classrooms, support plans and behaviour recording.



This resource translates research into everyday school practice helping staff move from reacting to behaviour to understanding what students need to access learning.

The guide supports whole-school consistency in:

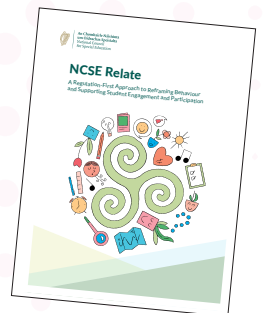
- Incident recording
- IEP language
- Behaviour support planning
- Staff communication
- Inclusive practice

Why this matters:

Because when a student is overwhelmed...they're not choosing behaviour — they're experiencing a stress response.

Evidence-informed and aligned with:

- NCSE regulation-first and relationship-based guidance
- Collaborative & Proactive Solutions — Ross Greene
- Neurodevelopmental & stress response research — Bruce Perry
- Polyvagal Theory — Stephen Porges
- Self-Determination Theory — Deci & Ryan
- Occupational Therapy sensory regulation approaches — A. Jean Ayres
- Universal Design for Learning



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LANGUAGE PILLARS



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Neuroaffirming Language Guide

A neuro-affirming approach embraces diverse communication styles, welcoming people to connect authentically in ways that are true to who they are whether through words, gestures, electronic devices, stimming or silence.

It is about creating a community where everyone feels safe, valued, respected & included.

NEURODIVERGENCE

"Autism is a Neurodivergence; an Autistic person is Neurodivergent." Neurodivergence describes the existence or mind-body experience being Neurodivergent. It is a broad term and encompasses the state of being of anyone who's neurocognitive function differs from societal standards of neurotypical.

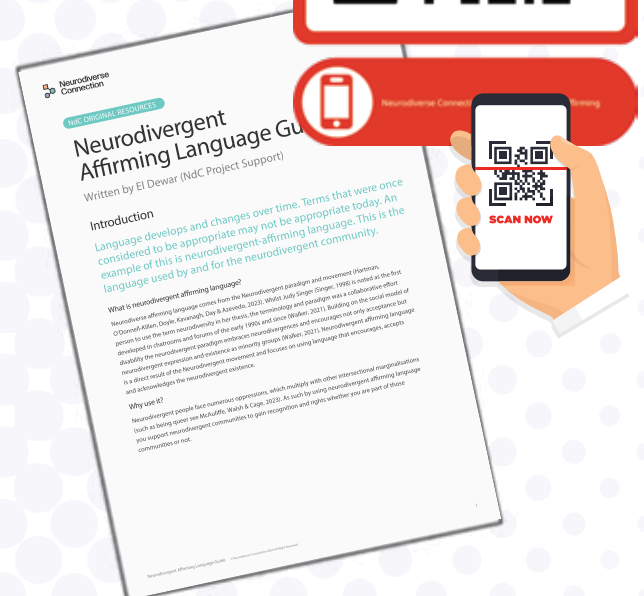
NEURODIVERGENT

"I have ADHD, I am neurodivergent." Is a person who diverges from the neurotype that benefits from and works with the way the society they live in operates. A person with multiple different neurocognitive neurodivergences can be called multiply neurodivergent.

NEUROTYPICAL

"Within this study there were multiple neurotypes." A neurotype refers to type of neurocognitive make up of a person. Neurotypical and Neurodivergent are neurotypes.

Ref: Neurodivergent Affirming Language Guide, Scan QR code above to read article in full.



Neuro-affirming language emphasizes respect, acceptance, and positive representation of neurodivergent individuals. Here are some examples:

IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE:

Many neurodivergent individuals prefer identity-first language, which puts their neurodivergence at the forefront of their identity. For example:

"Autistic person" instead of "person with autism"

"ADHD person" instead of "person with ADHD"

RATHER THAN
'PEOPLE
WITH AUTISM'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

AUTISTIC
PERSON

RATHER THAN
'PEOPLE
WITH ADHD'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

ADHD
PERSON

AVOIDING NEGATIVE TERMINOLOGY:

Language develops and changes over time, terms that were once considered to be appropriate may not be appropriate today.

language used by and for the neurodivergent community refrains from using language that implies a deficit or a problem

For example: Use "neurodivergent" instead of "disordered"

RATHER THAN
'DISORDER'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

NEURODIVERGENT

RATHER THAN
'DIFFERENTLY
ABLED'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

DISABILITY

RATHER THAN
'HIGH OR LOW
FUNCTIONING'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

VARIABLE
SUPPORT NEEDS:
VARY ACROSS
ENVIRONMENTS
& OVER TIME.

SUPPORT NEEDS ARE CONTEXTUAL
THEY ARE NOT FIXED TRAITS

FOCUS ON POSITIVE TERMINOLOGY:

Neuro-affirming language focuses on positive descriptors to emphasize strengths and positive traits.

For example: "Detail-oriented" instead of "obsessive"

RATHER THAN
'ARGUMENTATIVE'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**ANALYTICAL
THINKER
QUESTIONS
LOGIC**

RATHER THAN
'RIGID'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**VALUES
CONSISTENCY &
STRUCTURE**

RATHER THAN
'INFLEXIBLE'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**VALUES
PREDICTABILITY
& CONSISTENCY**

EMPOWERING LANGUAGE:

Use language that empowers and validates the experiences of neurodivergent individuals - No tragedy language. For example:

"Autistic advocate" instead of "autism sufferer"

"ADHD person" instead of "struggling with ADHD"

Neutral and Objective Descriptions: Describe behaviors and characteristics neutrally without judgment. For example:

"Stims by hand-flapping" instead of "exhibits abnormal repetitive behavior"

"Communicates non-verbally using AAC/ or using gestures / typing / device" instead of "non-verbal" as it can erase competence and implies inability rather than communication difference.

RATHER THAN
**'REPETITIVE
BEHAVIOUR'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**STIMS BY
FLAPPING
HANDS**

RATHER THAN
'NON-VERBAL'

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**COMMUNICATES
NON-VERBALLY**

RATHER THAN
**'CANNOT
SPEAK'**

PLEASE CHOOSE...

**COMMUNICATES
USING (METHOD)**

AVOID

Language that implies a neurotypical standard as the benchmark

The issue with statements that imply a neurotypical standard — often called **norm-referenced phrasing** — is not that they describe behaviour. It's that they quietly define one way of being as **"correct"** and position other ways as **deficits**.

"Responds appropriately"
"As expected"
"Age-appropriate behaviour"
"Normal social interaction"

"Failed to comply with instructions"
"Demonstrates typical behavior"
"On par with peers"

When we measure a child against a neurotypical benchmark neurodivergent communication, processing, and regulation differences are frames as **deficit**. This can unintentionally **pathologise natural neurological variation**. Norm-referenced language subtly implies there is a:

right way to respond

typical way to process

correct emotional expression

For example:

"Does not respond appropriately to instructions"

implies wrong doing.

vs

"Responds differently when overwhelmed."

acknowledges context

AVOID

Comparison to an the "average" child

Frame difference as impairment

Focus on behaviour outcome rather than nervous system state

Centre adult expectation over child experience

WHY

We focus on nervous system state over behaviour outcome

It Can Undermine Autonomy

Statements like:

"Behaved as expected"

"Demonstrated good social skills"

Can prioritise **conformity over safety and authenticity.**

Neuro-affirming practice prioritises:

- Regulation First
- Sense of Safety
- Self-advocacy
- Autonomy

Shifting the Lens, instead of asking:
"Is this behaviour appropriate?"

We ask:

"What is this behaviour communicating?"

"What support would increase regulation?"

"What conditions help this child access?"

Negatively Influences & Create Stigma

The language used in reports shapes:

How teachers perceive the child

How support is designed

How peers view them

How the child sees themselves

When language implies

"not meeting the norm," expectations can lower and stigma can grow.

IEP / Assessment Report

- Defiant
- Aggressive
- Non-compliant
- Disrespectful
- Rigid
- Oppositional
- Oppositional

- Regulation
- Strength
- Understanding
- Collaboration
- Safety
- Individual strengths

Psychologist's Report

- Deficits in Social Reciprocity
- Impairment in Emotional Regulation
- Poor Adaptive Functioning
- Below Expected Level
- Limited Frustration Tolerance
- Rigid and Inflexible Thinking
- Attention-Seeking Behavior

WHY

We focus on nervous system state over behaviour outcome

Impact Inclusion Progress

Norm-referenced and deficit-based language can unintentionally influence how additional support settings, including special classes, are perceived. When **reports focus heavily on behavioural concerns without contextualising regulation and nervous system responses**, it can heighten anxiety for staff and decision-makers. This may contribute to hesitancy in developing /extending inclusive provision in their school.



Impact Support Staff Decision Making

Deficit-focused language can unintentionally amplify fear around behavioural needs, educators & support staff themselves can operate in a state of stress, where fight-or-flight responses reduce their capacity to respond with empathy and can prioritise **conformity over safety and authenticity**.

Language that centers understanding, regulation, collaboration and support helps create conditions where both students and staff feel safe, confident, and equipped to engage constructively.

Shifting to regulation-informed language supports calmer systems, safer classrooms, and more confident inclusive practice.



ADOPTING NEURO-AFFIRMING LANGUAGE SIGNALS A PARADIGM SHIFT IN EDUCATION



PETROL - OUTDATED



EV - FUTURE FOCUSED

Using neuro-affirming language represents a paradigm shift in how we understand and support neurodivergent students.”

For too long, deficit-based and fear-driven language in professional reports has unintentionally reinforced stigma around students with additional needs. The words used in assessments, incident reports, and IEPs shape how a child is understood — by staff, peers, families, and most importantly by the child themselves.

The shift from deficit-based language to strengths-based understanding is not about ignoring challenges; it is about recognising that regulation, safety, and autonomy underpin learning. When language moves from managing behavior to understanding regulation, we move from control to inclusion. Documentation that reflects this affirms identity rather than diminishing it. Every child deserves to see themselves described with dignity, possibility, and belonging, and **every IEP should empower** neurodivergent students to recognise their strengths, feel safe in their differences, and experience school as a place where they truly belong.

Moving from deficit-based, behaviour-management language to regulation-informed, strengths-based language is a fundamental shift in how we understand neurodivergence

It represents a move from Compliance → Collaboration, Control → Co-regulation, Managing → Understanding.





SENSORY WELLBEING

Some Examples of a Regulated Nervous System in Action....



Engaged and Attentive -

Is present and able to engage in learning when feeling safe, supported, and regulated.



Following Routines -

Moves between activities when given predictability and preparation.

Body Movements -

Shows body movements that reflect comfort and regulation.

Cognitive Regulation

Behavioural Regulation

Self-Soothing

Uses strategies (breathing, movement, sensory tools) to support regulation when needed.

Emotional Responses -

Expresses feelings in ways that reflect their internal state.

Calm and Content -

Appears relaxed when their nervous system feels safe.

Focused and Attentive -

when feeling safe and regulated

Problem-Solving -

Attempts to work through challenges when feeling supported

Processing Information -

Understands and responds using communication styles that is authentic to their communication profile.



Social Regulation

Emotional Regulation

Interacting Socially -

responding to others in ways that reflects their communication style when feeling safe.

Flexible Thinking -

Navigates changes with support and predictability.

Expresses Needs Clearly -

Uses words, gestures, or communication tools that feel accessible



BLAME



UNDERSTANDING

**NEURO-
AFFIRMING
LENS**



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FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

"HE'S BEING DEFIANT"



**"HE'S FEELING
OVERWHELMED &
PROTECTING HIMSELF"**

**"THEY WONT
EVEN TRY"**



**"MAY NOT HAVE THE
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION
SKILLS TO
PERFORM THE TASK"**



**"SHE JUST
WANTS CONTROL"**



**"SHE NEEDS A SENSE OF
SAFETY AND AUTONOMY"**

**"THE ATTENTION
SEEKING BEHAVIOR
IS DISRUPTIVE"**



**"HE IS LOOKING FOR
EITHER CONNECTION,
REASSURANCE
OR SAFETY"**

**"SHE IS BEING
DIFFICULT"**



**"SHE IS STRUGGLING
IN THE ENVIRONMENT
RIGHT NOW"**

UNDERSTANDING

**"THEY STRUGGLE
TO FOCUS"**



**"ATTENTION SHIFTS
WHEN STRESSED, MAY
NEED REGULATION
BEFORE LEARNING"**

**"THERE MUST BE
CONSEQUENCES"**



**"THERE MUST BE
UNDERSTANDING
FOLLOWED BY
PROBLEM SOLVING"**



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FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

**"BECAME AGGRESSIVE
TOWARDS STAFF."**



**"HE'S FEELING
OVERWHELMED &
PROTECTING
HIMSELF"**

OR

**"ENTERED A FIGHT
RESPONSE DURING
A MOMENT OF
HEIGHTENED STRESS"
(A STRESS RESPONSE,
NOT A CHOICE)"**



**HE LOST CONTROL
& HIT ANOTHER
STUDENT"**



**"SHE EXPERIENCED
SIGNIFICANT
DISTRESS &
ENTERED A FIGHT
RESPONSE,
AND REACTED
PHYSICALLY"**

**"SHE'S TRYING
TO MANIPULATE
THE SITUATION"**



**"SHE'S
COMMUNICATING
DISTRESS IN THE
ONLY WAY SHE CAN
RIGHT NOW"**

UNDERSTANDING

**"SHE WAS RUDE
USING
INAPPROPRIATE
LANGUAGE"**



**FEELINGS OF
HEIGHTENED STRESS
WAS EXPRESSED
THROUGH REACTIVE
LANGUAGE TOWARDS
THE TEACHER"**

**"SHE OVER
REACTS"**



**"SHE HAS A LOWER
STRESS THRESHOLD
AT THIS MOMENT"**



**"THEY'RE REFUSING
TO COOPERATE
ON PURPOSE"**



**"THE DEMAND FEELS
TOO BIG FOR THEIR
NERVOUS SYSTEM
RIGHT NOW."**



FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS



IN A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT, FEELING SAFE MEANS THE STUDENT'S NERVOUS SYSTEM IS CALM ENOUGH TO THINK, PROCESS LANGUAGE, & ACCESS NECESSARY SKILLS.



WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE FOR EDUCATORS & SNAS

A STUDENT FEELS SAFE WHEN THEIR BRAIN BELIEVES:

- ➡ I UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING
- ➡ I KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED
- ➡ I CAN COPE WITH THIS DEMAND
- ➡ I HAVE A WAY TO COMMUNICATE OR GET HELP
- ➡ I AM NOT ABOUT TO BE SHAMED, RUSHED, OR OVERWHELMED

WHEN THOSE CONDITIONS ARE PRESENT, THE THINKING PART OF THE BRAIN STAYS AVAILABLE FOR LEARNING.

**A REGULATED BRAIN CAN LEARN.
A STRESSED BRAIN CAN ONLY SURVIVE.**

WHY THIS MATTERS IN SCHOOL

IF WE INTERPRET STRESS RESPONSES AS BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS:

- ➡ WE INCREASE DEMANDS
- ➡ THE BRAIN FEELS LESS SAFE
- ➡ LEARNING DECREASES

WHAT UNSAFE FEELS LIKE TO THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

WHEN A DEMAND EXCEEDS CAPACITY, THE BRAIN SHIFTS TO SURVIVAL MODE. AT THIS POINT THE STUDENT IS NOT CHOOSING BEHAVIOUR – THEY ARE PROTECTING THEMSELVES.

THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| ➡ REFUSAL | ➡ SILENCE |
| ➡ AVOIDANCE | ➡ AGGRESSION |
| ➡ SHUTDOWN | ➡ SILLINESS |
| ➡ RUNNING AWAY | ➡ "NOT LISTENING" |
| ➡ ARGUING | ➡ SELF HARM |

**THESE ARE STRESS RESPONSES.
NOT DELIBERATE BEHAVIOUR DECISIONS.**

THE KEY RELATIONSHIP



**SAFETY ALLOWS REGULATION.
REGULATION ALLOWS LEARNING.**

Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

KEY PRINCIPLE:

WHEN THE BRAIN DETECTS THREAT, SURVIVAL SYSTEMS OVERRIDE THINKING SYSTEMS.

IN SIMPLE TERMS:

THE STUDENT MAY HAVE THE SKILL BUT TEMPORARILY CANNOT ACCESS IT.

SUPPORTING SAFETY & REGULATION IN SCHOOL USING THE 3-STEP DESCRIPTION RULE IN PRACTICE

INSTEAD OF DESCRIBING THE CHILD, DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

THE CONTEXT - IDENTIFY STRESSORS IN THE SITUATION THAT RESULTED IN THE BEHAVIOUR HAPPENING, NOT THE BEHAVIOUR ITSELF.

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE - MEANS WHETHER THE STUDENT'S BRAIN WAS READY FOR LEARNING OR IN SURVIVAL MODE. – COULD THEY THINK/ACCESS SKILLS

THE SUPPORT NEEDED - SUPPORT NEEDED MEANS WHAT THE ADULT OR ENVIRONMENT HAD TO CHANGE SO THE STUDENT COULD COPE.

Example 1 – Refusal to Work

Old style report wording

"Jack was non-compliant and refused to complete his writing task."

USING THE NEURO AFFIRMING 3-STEP DESCRIPTION

1) CONTEXT:

During independent writing after a noisy transition from yard time.

2) NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE:

Appeared overwhelmed and unable to process verbal instructions.

3) SUPPORT NEEDED:

Reduced language, a short regulation break, and help starting the first sentence.

FINAL INCIDENT REPORT CONCLUSION:

After yard time, Jack appeared overwhelmed and unable to process the writing demand. With reduced language and support to start the task, he was able to engage.

REGULATION FIRST

3-STEP DESCRIPTION RULE IN PRACTICE

CONTEXT

NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE

SUPPORT NEEDED



BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT ASKS:
"HOW DO I STOP THIS?"



REGULATION SUPPORT ASKS:
"WHAT DOES THE STUDENT NEED TO REGAIN ACCESS TO THEIR SKILLS?"



Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS



**"SUPPORT NEEDED.
WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE ?"**

**SUPPORTS ARE SPECIFIC HELP, ADJUSTMENTS,
OR CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR THE STUDENT TO
REGAIN REGULATION & ACCESS LEARNING OR
COMMUNICATION.**



**SUPPORT NEEDED MEANS WHAT THE ADULT OR ENVIRONMENT
HAD TO CHANGE SO THE STUDENT COULD COPE.**

**EXAMPLES****ENVIRONMENT ADJUSTMENTS**

SPEND TIME IN A QUIETER SPACE
REDUCE NOISE LEVEL
HEADPHONES/EAR DEFENDERS
ALTERNATIVE SEATING (STANDING, WOBBLE, FLOOR, CUSHION)
REMOVE AUDIENCE DURING DISTRESS

COMMUNICATION SUPPORTS

REDUCED LANGUAGE OR INSTRUCTIONS
OFFER EXTRA PROCESSING TIME
ENCOURAGE NON-VERBAL RESPONSE - (POINTING, TYPING, AAC)
UTILISE VISUAL SUPPORTS
AVOID OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS DURING DISTRESS

TASK & DEMAND ADJUSTMENTS

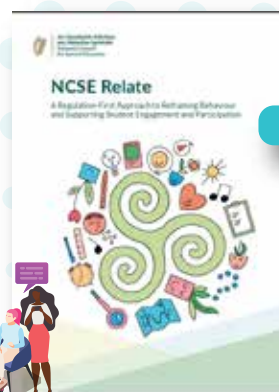
CHOICE OF HOW TO COMPLETE WORK
POSTPONE NON-ESSENTIAL DEMAND
REDUCE TASK LENGTH
REDUCED WRITING LOAD
BREAK WORK INTO STEPS

SENSORY STRATEGIES

TAILORED MOVEMENT OR SENSORY BREAK
ACCESS TO FIDGET OR SENSORY TOOL
CALM BREATHING SUPPORT
DEEP PRESSURE ACTIVITY (IF PREFERRED)
REGULATE BEFORE DISCUSSION

RELATIONSHIP & CO-REGULATION

CO-REGULATION WITH TRUSTED ADULT
CALM TONE AND SLOWER PACE
SIT BESIDE RATHER THAN STAND OVER
ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS WITHOUT JUDGEMENT
REASSURANCE OF SAFETY



NCSE RELATE FRAMEWORK



FROM BLAME TO UNDERSTANDING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

MAJOR SHIFT IN MODERN EDUCATION:

OLD MODEL CURRENT

BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS ATTITUDE
FIX THE CHILD
CONSEQUENCES TEACH SKILLS
INTENTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

EVIDENCE-BASED MODEL

BEHAVIOUR REFLECTS CAPACITY
ADJUST THE ENVIRONMENT
SUPPORT ENABLES SKILLS
STRESS RESPONSE BEHAVIOUR

5

STEPS TO SUPPORTING SAFETY & REGULATION IN SCHOOL

1

REDUCE DEMAND

WHY: THE BRAIN CANNOT PROCESS INSTRUCTIONS IN A STRESS RESPONSE.

ADULTS OPTIONS:

PAUSE INSTRUCTIONS
LOWER LANGUAGE LOAD
REMOVE AUDIENCE WHERE POSSIBLE
GIVE TIME WITHOUT PRESSURE
STOP REPEATING THE DEMAND

INSTEAD OF SAYING:

"COME ON, YOU KNOW THIS, JUST DO IT."

TRY:

"LET'S PAUSE. I'LL HELP YOU."

2

INCREASE PREDICTABILITY

WHY: STRESS DROPS WHEN THE BRAIN UNDERSTANDS WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT.

ADULTS OPTIONS:

STATE WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW
STATE WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT
KEEP VOICE NEUTRAL AND STEADY
AVOID SUDDEN CHANGES OR MULTIPLE INSTRUCTIONS

INSTEAD OF SAYING:

"COME ON, YOU KNOW THIS, JUST DO IT."

TRY:

"LET'S PAUSE. I'LL HELP YOU."

3

SUPPORT REGULATION BEFORE PROBLEM SOLVING

WHY: A DYSREGULATED STUDENT CANNOT REFLECT, APOLOGISE, OR LEARN FROM CONSEQUENCES YET.

ADULTS OPTIONS:

CALM TONE
SPACE OR PROXIMITY (BASED ON STUDENT PREFERENCE)
SENSORY OR MOVEMENT SUPPORT
CO-REGULATION (ADULT CALM HELPS STUDENT CALM)

ONLY AFTER REGULATION RETURNS:

DISCUSS THE INCIDENT
REPAIR
TEACH SKILLS

4

RETURN CONTROL SAFELY

WHY: AUTONOMY RESTORES SAFETY.

HOW: OFFER LIMITED CHOICES:

"HERE OR THE QUIET TABLE?"

"WRITE OR TYPE?"

5

TEACH LATER - NOT DURING DISTRESS

WHEN: AFTER REGULATION

HOW: ADULTS HELP THE STUDENT UNDERSTAND:

WHAT OVERWHELMED THEM

WHAT HELPED

WHAT TO TRY NEXT TIME

WHY: THIS BUILDS SKILLS INSTEAD OF FEAR.

WHAT NOT TO DO DURING DYSREGULATION - INCREASE THREAT RESPONSE AND DELAY RECOVER

AVOID: LECTURES, CONSEQUENCES FIRST, REASONING, REPEATED INSTRUCTIONS, RAISED VOICE, INSISTING ON EYE CONTACT, PUBLIC CORRECTION.

LANGUAGE GUIDE

STRENGTH BASED



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DEFICIT TO STRENGTH BASED RE FRAMING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

ATTENTION-SEEKING

➡ **SEEKING CONNECTION OR CO-REGULATION**

HYPERACTIVE

➡ **ENERGETIC & ENTHUSIASTIC**

EASILY DISTRACTED

➡ **HIGHLY AWARE OF ENVIRONMENT**

DOESN'T APPLY THEMSELVES

➡ **MOTIVATED BY MEANING & CONNECTION**

OVERREACTED**EXPERIENCED A HIGH STRESS RESPONSE**

➡ **EXPERIENCES STRESS INTENSELY & GENUINELY**

TOO SENSITIVE

➡ **DEEPLY PERCEPTIVE AND EMOTIONALLY AWARE**

MANIPULATIVE

➡ **USING AVAILABLE STRATEGIES TO GET NEEDS MET**

DRAMATIC

➡ **EXPRESSIVE AND EMOTIONALLY HONEST**

OBSESSIVE

➡ **DEEPLY FOCUSED. PASSIONATE ABOUT INTERESTS**

AUTONOMY
MEANS HAVING THE
FREEDOM AND SUPPORT
TO MAKE YOUR OWN
CHOICES ABOUT WHAT
YOU DO & HOW
YOU DO IT.

AUTONOMY is the experience of acting with a sense of volition and psychological freedom, where a person feels their behaviour is self-endorsed and chosen rather than controlled.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being.

DEFICIT TO STRENGTH BASED RE FRAMING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

ARGUMENTATIVE

➡ **ANALYTICAL THINKER. QUESTIONS LOGIC**

OPPOSITIONAL

➡ **PROTECTING NERVOUS SYSTEM FROM OVERWHELM**

DEFIANT

➡ **STRONG SENSE OF AUTONOMY**

AVOIDANT

➡ **SEEKING PREDICTABILITY, PRIORITISING SAFETY OR NAVIGATING COMPETING DEMANDS**

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

➡ **COMMUNICATING STRESS THROUGH BEHAVIOR**

DISRUPTIVE IN CLASS

➡ **EXPRESSING AN UNMET NEED OR OVERWHELM**

NOT FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

➡ **NEEDS CLARITY, PROCESSING TIME, OR**

CONTROLLING

➡ **NEEDS PREDICTABILITY AND AGENCY**

RIGID ABOUT ROUTINES

➡ **FEELS SAFEST WITH PREDICTABILITY**

INFLEXIBLE

➡ **VALUES CONSISTENCY AND STRUCTURE**

Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

DEFICIT TO STRENGTH BASED RE FRAMING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

A HELPFUL RULE OF THUMB

IF A WORD: 1) ASSIGNS BLAME 2) COMPARES TO "NORMAL"
3) DESCRIBES CHARACTER INSTEAD OF CONTEXT
4) IMPLIES CHOICE DURING DYSREGULATION...IT'S PROBABLY DEFICIT-BASED.

BEHAVIOUR INCIDENT

➡ MOMENT OF DYSREGULATION

NON-COMPLIANT

➡ NOT ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE DEMAND
RIGHT NOW

ESCALATED QUICKLY

➡ NERVOUS SYSTEM MOVED RAPIDLY INTO A
STRESS RESPONSE

TANTRUM

➡ DISTRESS RESPONSE

AGGRESSIVE

➡ ENTERED A FIGHT RESPONSE

MELTDOWN

➡ LOSS OF REGULATION DUE TO OVERWHELM

ACTING OUT

➡ EXPRESSING DISTRESS THROUGH BEHAVIOUR

TESTING BOUNDARIES

➡ EXPLORING SAFETY AND PREDICTABILITY

Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

DEFICIT TO STRENGTH BASED RE FRAMING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

Pathology / Medicalised Identity Labels

These come from diagnostic/medical classification systems & often imply a person is incorrect rather than different.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| ➔ DISORDER | ➔ SUFFERS FROM |
| ➔ IMPAIRMENT | ➔ AFFLICTED WITH |
| ➔ DEFICIT | ➔ VICTIM OF |
| ➔ DYSFUNCTION | ➔ ABNORMAL |
| ➔ PATHOLOGICAL | ➔ MALADAPTIVE |
| ➔ SYMPTOMS | ➔ CONDITION |
| ➔ SEVERITY LEVEL - MILD / MODERATE / SEVERE
(WHEN DESCRIBING THE PERSON RATHER THAN SUPPORT NEEDS) | |
| ➔ COMORBIDITY
(CAN FEEL DEHUMANISING OUTSIDE CLINICAL CONTEXTS) | |
| ➔ ATYPICAL
(CAN BE NEUTRAL CLINICALLY BUT DEFICIT-FRAMED IN EDUCATION REPORTS) | |

WHY

The wording in an IEP influences how a student is viewed and supported. Pathology-based terms deficit, impairment, disorder, or severity, can unintentionally position the child as the difficulty. Deficit-focused wording often lowers expectations, increases anxiety around behaviour, and leads to support based on control rather than understanding. Neutral, descriptive language keeps the focus on access to learning — what helps, what overwhelms, and what support works — which leads to more accurate planning and better outcomes for the student.

Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

DEFICIT TO STRENGTH BASED RE FRAMING - SIMPLY SHIFT THE LENS

ENGAGEMENT & LEARNING**OFF TASK**

➡ **ATTENTION SHIFTED AWAY FROM THE TASK**

EASILY DISTRACTED

➡ **HIGHLY AWARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

POOR ATTENTION

➡ **ATTENTION VARIES DEPENDING ON REGULATION & INTEREST**

DOESN'T APPLY THEMSELVES

➡ **ENGAGEMENT INCREASES WITH MEANING/CONNECTION**

UNMOTIVATED

➡ **MOTIVATION IS CONTEXT-DEPENDENT**

WON'T TRY TASK

➡ **FEEL UNSAFE, UNCLEAR, OR OVERWHELMING**

GIVES UP QUICKLY

➡ **REQUIRES SUPPORT TO PERSIST WHEN CHALLENGED**

NEEDS CONSTANT PROMPTING

➡ **BENEFITS FROM SCAFFOLDING AND REMINDERS**

NOT INDEPENDENT

➡ **INDEPENDENCE INCREASES WITH STRUCTURE/SUPPORT**

FAILS TO COMPLETE WORK

➡ **WORK COMPLETION AFFECTED BY REGULATION LOAD**

AVOIDS WORK

➡ **PROTECTING FROM COGNITIVE OVERLOAD**

SLOW TO START

➡ **NEEDS PROCESSING TIME**

POOR PARTICIPATION

➡ **PARTICIPATES WHEN FEELING SAFE AND SUPPORTED**

Ref: Greene, R. W. (2008). The Explosive Child. \ Delahooke, M. (2019). Beyond Behaviour \ National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

A NEURO-AFFIRMING APPROACH: SECTION 4

PUBLICATIONS



PODCAST



TRAINING



**RECOMMENDED
RESOURCES**

**NEURO- AFFIRMING
BEST PRACTICES**



REGULATION TOOLS

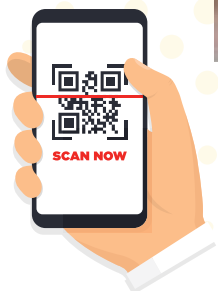


SUPERCALM
Sensory Wellbeing Solutions

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO- AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES



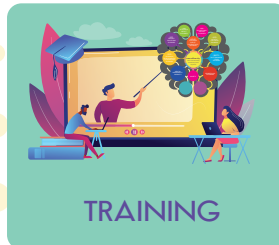
The Middletown Centre for Autism website is available resource for schools committed to inclusive practice. With free podcasts, training opportunities, & evidence informed guidance tailored to educators, it provides practical support that can enhance understanding, strengthen relationships, and improve outcomes for autistic and neurodivergent students.



RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

**IRELAND'S AUTISM CHARITY**

ASIAM is Ireland's national autism charity, working to create a society in which autistic people are accepted, understood, and supported to thrive. Their core goal is to promote inclusion, equality, and access to opportunities across education, employment, and community life. AsIAM provides a wide range of trusted resources, including published research, policy guidance, training programs for schools and organisations, and practical supports such as visual resources and toolkits. Their work is grounded in autistic voice and evidence-based practice, making them a reliable and valuable source of information for educators and families alike.



TRAINING



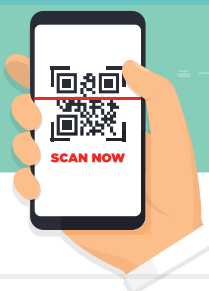
PODCAST



PUBLICATION



ASIAM RESOURCE LIBRARY



- ➔ **Research & Policy**
Published research reports on autism in Ireland
- ➔ **Training & Professional Learning**
Autism awareness training for schools
Whole-school inclusion programs
Webinars and online learning modules
CPD opportunities for educators
- ➔ **Education Supports**
Guidance for inclusive classrooms
Practical strategies for supporting autistic students
- ➔ **Practical Tools & Visual Supports**
Visual schedules and communication supports

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

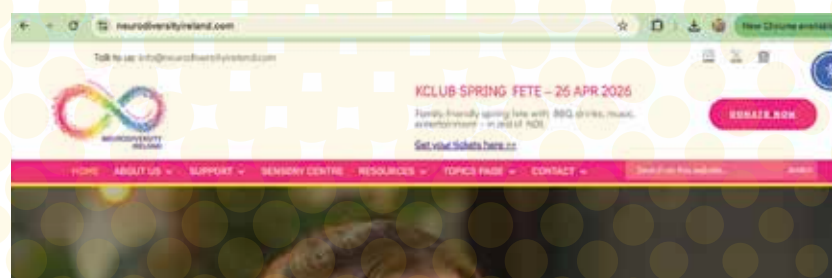
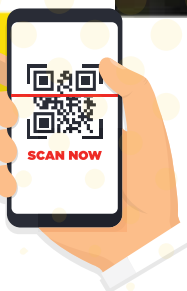


Neurodiversity Ireland is an organisation focused on promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of neurodivergent people across Irish society. Grounded in the neurodiversity paradigm, it recognises neurological differences such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia as natural variations of human development rather than deficits to be fixed. Neurodiversity Ireland provides advocacy, awareness initiatives, educational resources, and community engagement aimed at supporting schools, workplaces, and public services to adopt inclusive, strengths-based approaches. Their work centers lived experience and promotes environments where neurodivergent individuals can thrive.

<https://neurodiversityireland.com/>



Nessa Hill - Neurodiversity

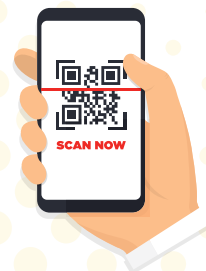
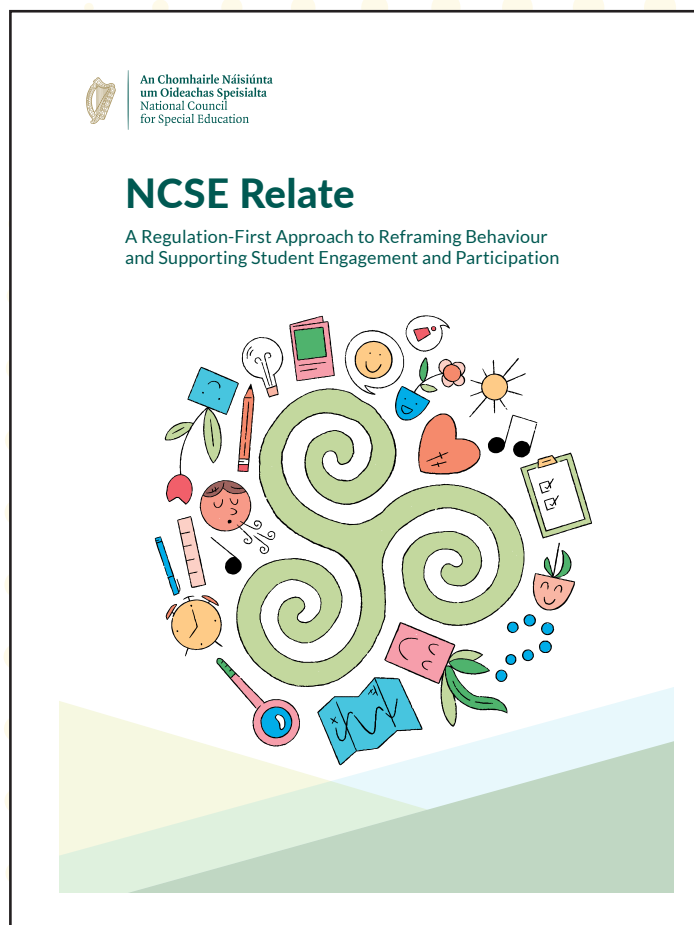


NEUROAFFIRMATIVE VALUES & INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS
JOAN McDONALD

This webinar features Joan McDonald (Neurodiversity Ireland) a science teacher and a neurodivergent individual who shared valuable experience based on her own lived experience.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES

A Regulation-First Approach to Reframing Behavior and Supporting Student Engagement and Participation



Supporting regulation & relationships in the classroom is central to inclusive education. The NCSE RELATE guidance offers practical, evidence informed strategies to help staff understand behavior through a regulation & relationship lens rather than a compliance lens. It provides clear, accessible tools that can strengthen connection, reduce escalation, & support positive outcomes for all students — particularly

those who experience stress responses in learning environments. Taking time to engage with this resource can enhance consistency across the school and support a calmer, more responsive classroom culture.

RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR NEURO-AFFIRMING BEST PRACTICES



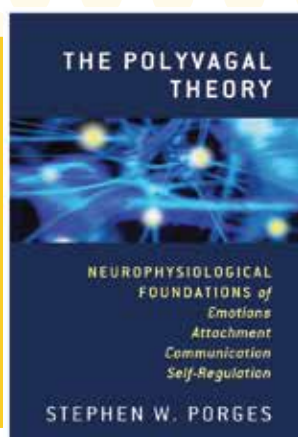
Dr. Ross Greene is a clinical psychologist & the originator of the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach. His work re frames challenging behaviour as a signal of stress and unmet needs rather than willful defiance, emphasizing that “kids do well if they can.” Through his writing and the organisation Lives in the Balance, he supports schools and families to build collaborative, regulation-focused, and relationship centered environments.



DR ROSS GREENE



RECOMMENDED

THE POLYVAGAL THEORY
BY STEPHEN W. PORGES

SENSORY REGULATION PLANNING





SUPERCALM TOP 5 REGULATION STATIONS

Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

SUPERCLIMBER - Transverse, Horizontal Walk Wall. Highly Regulating Proprioceptive Input Movement Station

1



An effective whole-body regulation tool for schools. By engaging both upper and lower body coordination, it supports brain connectivity, strengthens cognitive and motor development, and encourages rich sensory exploration.

2

SUPER STAR GYM - Punch Pad & Resistance Band Combination Wall



Deep Pressure Proprioceptive Regulation Station.
Strengthens Coordination, Balance, Motor Skills
Muscular System.

3

SUPERPATHWAY - Universal Sensory Floor Pathway with Wall Stations: Alerting, Organising, Calming Movement Pathway



Monkey Movement Wall Ladder.
Ideal for Calming Deep Pressure

Spinning Wheel Range: Animal Walks,
Core Building or Yoga Movements

4



5



Regulation Tools
that support access
to learning -
Offering choice
& Autonomy.





SUPERCALM

Sensory Wellbeing Solutions for Children

OUR MISSION

To design and deliver innovative sensory regulation tools & practical know how that empowers educators to create accessible, safe inclusive learning environments.

By combining evidence based practice with practical design
SUPERCALM aims to support schools in building the tools, skills, awareness & confidence needed to nurture every child's' potential and promote genuine
Neuro-affirming environments where neurodivergent learners can thrive.

OUR MOVEMENT
BREAKS WORK
WONDERS
for everybody



supercalmsensoryproducts.com

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Supercalm@gmail.com