

Interactional Accommodations:

A Positive Approach to Supporting People on the Autism Spectrum

TRAINING SUMMARY:

Interactional accommodations are strategies or adaptations that are shared by people with sensorimotor differences and their partners to facilitate desirable interactions. They are part of an interlocking spectrum of supports that include environmental and self-regulatory accommodations. Accommodations are Positive Approaches because they ask us to work with, not on, the person who needs them, and to cultivate a respectful relationship. Rather than responding reactively and negatively to behavior that challenges us, designing successful accommodations requires us to be proactive and ask meaningful questions about a person's quality of life. Interactional accommodations help the communication partner(s) of a person with autism to recognize and adapt to the unique characteristics of that interaction, such as the use of rhythm, movement, touch and space by the person with autism; their use of different sensory channels; and ways in which they express and regulate emotions. When we observe and adjust to the interactional needs of a person with autism, communication becomes clearer, more sustainable, and more enjoyable. There is no limit to the types of interactional accommodations that can be created, and most are very easy to implement.

TRAINING GOAL:

Support staff, parents, teachers, and community members will explore the impact of the physical and social environment on a range of social, emotional, communicative, physiological, and self-regulatory issues that may challenge and disrupt the social interactions of people with autism. The process of supporting the person through the mutual design of appropriate interactional accommodations will be investigated, and examples shared.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

1. Understand the types of sensorimotor challenges frequently experienced by people on the autism spectrum, and how to identify them
2. Become aware of the range of neurologically-based nonvolitional (involuntary) behaviors and the role of accommodations in alleviating them
3. Consider the wide range of interactional accommodations, and the process of making collaborative, individualized choices
4. Investigate the importance of timing, movement, and rhythm in successful, sustainable interactions.
5. Understand the importance of relationships, typical experiences, and typical environments in designing successful accommodations
6. Investigate ways to support and enhance self-determination through interactional accommodations