

Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices

Autism and Neurodiversity | March 2024

Neurodiversity-Affirming Narratives

- describe exact behaviors.
- consider word choice such as “preference for” instead of “restricted interests”.
- highlight successes.

Examples:

- Mona shows how she is feeling using her body and facial expressions. This includes spinning, putting her head back and shaking it, squinting, putting hands up to press her eyes, downward dog position, and in high-chair she straightens her legs. She often does these movements when she is happy or excited.
- Austin prefers to initiate physical touch and proximity himself when interacting with his family.
- Josie shows affection for her family members by coming closer to them, such as initiating sitting next to Mom while watching TV.
- Jose is very observant and notices small details in his surroundings. Parents shared that he will indicate to them when an item has been moved or changed. When Jose plays with ball before naptime, he will look for the specific balls in the same places (under the rug, behind the TV stand, etc..) when he wakes up.
- At mealtimes, Amari indicates that there is a change in the typical texture of a preferred food by removing it from his plate. Recently, he identified that the corner of a chicken strip was burnt and placed it in Mom’s hand after removing it from the plate. Dad identified that Amari feels safest when the food texture is consistent.

Neurodiversity-Affirming Goals

- expand on areas of strength.
- include and accept multiple forms of communication.
- Support family/community participation with accommodations and sensory supports.

Examples:

- When playing outside, Jai will engage in an activity of interest (ball, collecting sticks, jumping, etc.) alongside his brother each day for 2 weeks.
- When on Facetime with Grandparents, Michaela will show her interest by saying their names, labeling items, or bringing items near the phone 4x a week for 2 weeks.
- Nevaeh will request (words, gestures, or pictures) a specific support (hug, bouncy ball, blanket swing, etc..) when she needs it during the evening routine at each opportunity for 2 weeks.

