



STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH IN FAMILY SUPPORT WITH YOUNG NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE



As a parent, you want your kid to feel supported, confident, and ready to take on the world. When raising a neurodivergent child, it's key to focus on what makes them unique and build on their strengths. Instead of just looking at challenges, the strengths-based approach helps highlight what your child is good at, boosting their confidence and helping them thrive.

WHAT IS THE STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH?

Rather than focusing only on struggles, this approach is all about:

- Noticing your child's talents, skills, interests, and personality strengths.
- Finding support within your family, school, and community.
- Empowering your child and family to take an active role in their success.
- Creating opportunities that play to their strengths so they can grow and thrive.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR NEURODIVERGENT KIDS?

Kids with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other neurological differences often deal with negative stereotypes that can affect how they see themselves. A strengths-based approach can change that by:

- Boosting Self-Esteem – When kids see what they're good at, they feel more confident in themselves (Gillies et al., 2021).
- Increasing Motivation – Success fuels motivation. When kids get recognized for their strengths, they're more willing to try new things (Niemiec, 2023).
- Building Coping Skills – Knowing their strengths can help kids develop ways to handle stress and challenges (PAMF, 2023).
- Developing Resilience – Focusing on strengths makes kids more adaptable and able to overcome obstacles (Wright & Lopez, 2022).
- Improving Family Relationships – A strengths-focused mindset creates a more positive, supportive family dynamic (Duncombe et al., 2023).



HOW TO USE A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH AT HOME

1. Spot Their Strengths

- Pay attention to what your child enjoys and what they naturally do well.
- Ask them what they think they're good at.
- Get insights from teachers, therapists, or others who know your child well.



2. Build on Their Strengths

- Incorporate their strengths into daily life. If they love storytelling, use that skill to help them with writing or social interactions.
- Encourage activities that align with their talents—like coding for a pattern-loving kid or music for someone with strong auditory skills.



3. Reinforce the Positives

- Be specific with praise: Instead of just saying, “Good job,” try “I love how creatively you solved that problem!”
- Celebrate all wins—big and small.



4. Shift the Mindset to Growth

- Help them set goals that build on their strengths.
- Frame challenges as opportunities to learn and improve.



5. Advocate for Their Strengths

- Make sure teachers and other professionals know what your child does well.
- Work together to create a supportive environment that values neurodiversity.



6. Be Patient and Flexible

- Every child is different—what works for one might not work for another.
- Stay open to trying different strategies to see what helps your child thrive.



7. Lead by Example

- Show how you use your own strengths in everyday life.
- Make it a family activity to discover and celebrate each other's strengths.



EXAMPLE IN ACTION

Let's say your child has ADHD and struggles with organization but is amazing at creative problem-solving. Instead of only focusing on organization issues, you could:

- Acknowledge their creativity: "I love how you come up with unique solutions to problems!"
- Use their creativity to make organization fun: "Let's think of a cool way to organize your schoolwork together."
- Provide tools that work with their strengths, like color-coded planners or visual checklists.



By shifting the focus from challenges to strengths, you're not just helping your child succeed—you're helping them see their own potential. Every child has something incredible to offer.

When you lean into their strengths, you set them up for a lifetime of confidence and success.