

# 15 NEURODIVERSITY-INCLUSIVE SEL STRATEGIES

Neurodivergent minds tend to think, learn, and process information differently than neurotypical ones. Teaching neurodiversity-inclusive SEL means using strategies and practices that both address common challenges posed by neurodiversity and build on opportunities and strengths.



<b>SECURE &amp; CALM</b>  <b>SELF-MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>SOUND OFF</b> Give children age-appropriate tools to create their own quiet, such as foam earplugs or noise cancelling headphones.	<b>TAKE TIME</b> Give children ample time to complete tasks, especially complex ones. Use a timer to help them manage their time.	<b>PRAISE WISELY</b> Praise positive behaviors often and specifically, ideally within 5 seconds of observing them, to reinforce them.
<b>COMPASSIONATE &amp; KIND</b>  <b>SOCIAL AWARENESS</b>	<b>EYE SPY</b> In groups or pairs, assign a "looker" to pick an item to gaze at. Others follow their gaze and try to guess what the item is.	<b>BE A MIRROR</b> In pairs, invite a leader to make facial expressions and a follower to imitate them. Then switch.	<b>DEFINE KIND</b> Link empathy to specific behaviors, such as not smiling when someone is hurt and verbal statements like "how can I help?".
<b>GETS ALONG WITH OTHERS</b>  <b>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS</b>	<b>READ SOCIALLY</b> Read books or watch shows about friends together and discuss why the characters act the way they do. Compare to real life.	<b>MAKE A PLAY DATE</b> Engage in non-competitive, child-directed play without distractions regularly. Comment on what you notice and feel.	<b>USE 'I' MESSAGES</b> Practice using "I" messages to express feelings and desires in social situations, such as "I feel sad when you say I can't play."
<b>SOLVES PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY</b>  <b>RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING</b>	<b>COMIC RELIEF</b> Turn a problem into a comic strip and invite children to draw out possible solutions. Invite children to share if comfortable.	<b>USE DISTRACTION</b> Identify triggers in advance. Act early to support an upset child before they escalate. Distraction can help shift intense feelings.	<b>WORK TOGETHER</b> Define the problem, make a pros and cons list, and brainstorm solutions together. Make a specific plan and evaluate progress.
<b>ALERT &amp; ENGAGED</b>  <b>SELF-AWARENESS</b>	<b>BREAK IT DOWN</b> Break down behaviors into manageable steps. Chart progress together. Reward completion with small, frequent incentives.	<b>AIM FOR 4:1</b> Try to make 4 positive comments for every 1 negative one. Use consequences sparingly, and follow through right away.	<b>DIRECT MINDFULLY</b> Give directions that are clear, specific, and essential. Use statements, not questions. Try to cut directions by 50%!