

THE EXCEPTIONAL EXPRESS

Spring 2025 Newsletter



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SUCCESS SUPPORT

- Building a Support System:

Strategies for Building a Support System to Meet Your Child's Educational Needs. Content provided by the FDLRS "S.O.S (Systems of Support)" Parent Training.

- The Power of Positive Reinforcement

Featuring an article published by SAGE Publications in the "journal Beyond Behavior."

Awareness Article: Guiding Your Child Into Adulthood

- Debunking Myths and Highlighting Truths of Adulthood with Disabilities
- Suggestions for Supporting Your Aging Child



Florida Diagnostic & Learning
— RESOURCES SYSTEM —

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This issue:

Using Assistive
Technology to Promote
Your Child's Learning
and Household
Engagement

Exceptional
Encouragement

Resource Highlight

AT-HOME TIPS:

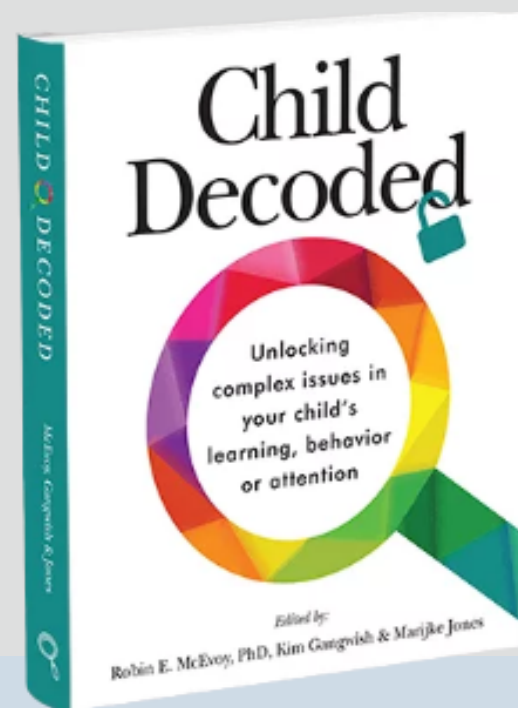
Lifelong Learning-
Teaching Life Skills
at Any Age

Using Assistive Technology to Promote Your Child's Learning and Household Engagement

Resource Highlight

Child Decoded: Unlocking Complex Issues in Your Child's Learning, Behavior or Attention

This book serves as a comprehensive guide aimed at helping parents and caregivers understand and address complex challenges in their child's learning, behavior, or attention. The book provides practical insights into identifying underlying issues, such as ADHD, learning disabilities, and other developmental concerns, and offers actionable strategies for supporting a child's growth and development. This is a valuable resource for navigating the often-confusing landscape of childhood development by empowering parents with knowledge and tools to advocate for and support their children.



Sometimes, “assistive technology” prompts the thought of electronic devices, but another great example of assistive technology is the use of visual recipes. The website Accessible Chef (<https://accessiblechef.com>) provides a collection of free visual recipes and other resources to help teach cooking skills to individuals with disabilities. Here is a great example of what a visual recipe looks like for “Banana Bread in Mug” from the Accessible Chef website:



Exceptional Encouragement

- Progress Over Perfection:

Shift the focus from outcomes to effort. Emphasize the importance of effort and persistence! Speed and proficiency will look different for every child. Praise the effort rather than the result. For example, ‘I can see how hard you worked on this today,’ rather than, ‘You did it perfectly.’

- Seek Professional Guidance:

You do not have to have all the answers! Don’t hesitate to reach out to professionals when you need help. Whether it's for guidance on therapy, education plans, or managing behaviors, expert advice can make a big difference in your child's progress.

- Stay Consistent:

Consistency provides stability. Stability creates security. Try to establish routines for daily tasks, and use strategies that work for your child, even if it takes time to find what suits them best.

Research shows that by focusing on reinforcement techniques that are tailored to the child's individual needs, caregivers can help promote lasting positive behaviors.

Positive reinforcement involves encouraging desired behaviors by rewarding them with something pleasant or reinforcing.

It is a core technique in behavior management and can be used effectively to teach new skills or reduce unwanted behaviors in young children.

Hardy, J. K., & McLeod, R. H. (2020). Using Positive Reinforcement With Young Children. *Beyond Behavior*, 29(2), 95-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1074295620915724>

Success Support

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A SUPPORT SYSTEM TO MEET YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION NEEDS

What is a Support System?

A support system is a group of people or resources that help an individual handle challenges, achieve goals, provides encouragement and accountability, and assists during challenging times. A support system can be made up of informal and formal supports.

Consistency in Support:

Maintaining consistency in a support system as a parent is about clear communication, shared responsibilities, regular engagement, and mutual respect. This creates a well-rounded, supportive environment for the child's growth and success.

Open Minds and Communication:

- **Be Honest About Needs:**
Don't be afraid to ask for help. Being open and honest with your network is essential.
- **Stay Connected:**
Regularly check in with your support network. Keeping in touch ensures that you maintain those connections.
- **Practice Transparency:**
Be transparent with your child's teacher/childcare provider if there's ever changes occurring that may impact their behavior.

| INFORMAL SUPPORTS | FORMAL SUPPORTS |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and Peers • Extended Family (Grandparents, Aunts/ Uncles, Godparents, etc.) • Nannies/ Babysitters • Religious/Spiritual Affiliations • Parenting Groups • Online Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and Educators • School Administration and Counselors • Healthcare Professionals (Doctors, Therapists) • Social Workers • Childcare Services • Government Programs and Laws |



THE POWER OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- **Use Immediate Reinforcement:**
Children, especially those with disabilities, benefit from immediate feedback. As soon as they demonstrate the desired behavior, offer praise or a tangible reward. Immediate reinforcement helps them connect the positive behavior with the reward right away.
- **Be Specific:**
Instead of just saying "Good job," be specific about what you're praising. For example, "Great job putting your toys away!" or "I'm really proud of you for sharing your snack with your sister." This helps your child understand exactly what they did well and encourages them to repeat that behavior.
- **Use Social Reinforcers**
Social reinforcers can be just as effective as tangible rewards. Praise, hugs, high-fives, or simply a smile and eye contact can go a long way. For children who may respond more to emotional connection, these social reinforcers can be especially meaningful and help build the parent-child bond.



AT-HOME TIPS:

Lifelong Learning- Teaching Life Skills for Any Age

Incorporate Real-Life Experiences:

Teach life skills through real-world activities in natural settings.

- Grocery shopping: Teach how to make a shopping list, compare prices, and pay for items.
- Cooking: Teach simple recipes, cleaning up after meals, or measuring ingredients.
- Household chores: Start with basic tasks like folding laundry, making the bed, or washing dishes.
- Public transportation: Practice how to read schedules, ask for directions, or pay fares.

Start early with teaching practical life skills that will be essential in adulthood. Alter these skills to fit your child's abilities as you help foster independence and confidence:

Provide Clear, Simple Instructions:

Use clear, simple language when explaining tasks.

Children with disabilities often benefit from instructions that are easy to understand.

For example, instead of saying, "Clean up the kitchen," break it down into clear steps: "Pick up the dishes. Put them in the sink. Wash the dishes. Dry them."

Promote Social Skills and Communication

Life skills aren't just about physical tasks; they also include social interactions.

- Conversational skills: Teach how to start, maintain, and end a conversation.
- Turn-taking and sharing: Play games that require turn-taking or sharing to build these skills.
- Understanding emotions: Use tools like emotion cards to help children identify and understand feelings in themselves and others.
- Role-playing scenarios like ordering food at a restaurant or asking for help at a store can help children practice social interactions in a safe environment.

Awareness Article: Guiding Your Child Into Adulthood

MYTH: People with disabilities cannot make decisions about their own lives.

REALITY: Many individuals with disabilities are capable of making their own decisions and advocating for themselves. Teaching self-advocacy and decision-making skills from an early age can empower individuals with disabilities to take charge of their lives. Supported decision-making models can also assist those who need help making complex decisions without stripping away their autonomy.

The transition to adulthood can be a long and challenging road, but with your support, love, and advocacy, your child can thrive in their own way. Keep your focus on their strengths and abilities, celebrate their achievements, and most importantly, never lose sight of the bright future they have ahead of them. Even in the face of uncertainty, your unwavering belief in your child will help guide them through each stage of life.

MYTH: Children with disabilities can't live independently as adults.

REALITY: Many individuals with disabilities can live independently or semi-independently with the right support. This may include using assistive technologies, living in supported housing, or receiving help from personal aides. The level of independence varies depending on the individual's abilities, but with proper training, resources, and encouragement, many people with disabilities achieve significant independence.

MYTH: People with disabilities are destined to always rely on others for care.

REALITY: While some individuals with disabilities may need lifelong support, many can become active contributors to their communities and families. With the right support systems in place, individuals with disabilities can have fulfilling personal relationships, participate in their communities, and lead fulfilling lives.