



Strategies & Accommodations Tool

for People with Brain Injury & Cognitive Changes

Person Served: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Use the Brainstorming Solutions Tool (BST) first, to help you figure out the person's strengths and weaknesses. Then use this tool (SAT) to **check off the strategies that might be helpful** for each area you identify on the BST. When possible, complete this form with the person served and discuss the strategies with them. Ask the person if there are other strategies or ways of communicating with them that might be helpful.

For each area:

- Consider whether there is any assistive technology (AT) that might help (see AT section at end).
- The initials after each type of strategy (ex: **Attention**^{SLP OT NP}) indicate someone who may be able to help develop additional strategies (see the initial key below).
- This is not a complete list of strategies, but can be used to help you think of other ideas.
- **Be patient and respectful.**

Attention^{SLP OT NP}

- Visual reminders to focus, like a sticky note
- Positive reinforcement for staying focused
- Change task more frequently
- Reminders to check work

Memory^{SLP OT NP}

- Use a planner (check-off system)
- Written & verbal directions for task
- Post directions or pictures
- Frequent review of information
- Reminders for completing a task

Processing Speed^{SLP NP}

- Slow down when talking, wait for responses
- Give one step at a time
- Be direct and clear

Initiation^{SLP NP}

- Remind the person that it is time to begin
- Break down task into steps, help with first task and decrease assistance with each step
- Use a calendar or planner to show when things are to be started
- Use encouragement to keep going once started
- Use a timer or alarm on watch or other device the person prefers

Awareness^{SLP NP}

- (Gently) help person to see where they are having difficulties & what they could do about it
- Give reminders to use strategies when they are not aware of a potential problem
- Ask them if they know where they are having an issue before you try to help them

Impulse Control^{SLP NP CBS}

- Teach the person to stop and think before acting

INITIAL KEY

The initials next to the areas indicate people who may be able to help develop other strategies for that area. The person served may be working with these professionals, or you may have them on your team. You can also ask your supervisor. Always seek help if needed.

- SLP:** Speech Language Pathologist
- OT:** Occupational Therapist
- PT:** Physical Therapist
- NP:** Neuropsychologist
- C:** Counselor
- BS:** Behavior Specialist
- AUD:** Audiologist

- Help the person to prepare for challenging situations – visualize possible outcomes from their actions or even lack of action
- Practice/role play the situation with the person – let them tell you what worked and did not
- Help the person to think back on a situation and figure out what they can do differently next time

Flexibility ^{SLP NP}

- Prepare the person ahead of time if you know what causes their inflexibility and what they can do instead
- Use an “if-then” statement let the person know that if they do the thing they do not want to do, then they will get to do something they want next. “If you get your laundry done, then you can work on the computer.”
- (Gently) help the person to shift in the moment
- Acknowledge and encourage small steps
- Prepare the person for upcoming change
- Offer two choices of what to do next

Difficulty Understanding Language or Slower Thinking ^{SLP}

- Face the person when talking
- Use direct, clear language
- Use simple words
- Pause frequently
- Break complex directions into steps
- Show the steps first
- Give one direction at a time
- Repeat key information
- Ask person to repeat info back to check for understanding
- Use visual cues like pictures or objects along with words
- Give your full attention to communicating with the person

Verbal Expression (Speaking) ^{SLP}

- Allow extra time to form thoughts
- Encourage them to write, draw pictures or point
- Don’t interrupt, show patience, model patience with your own actions
- Have a picture book of common topics
- Remind the person to slow down (if they are hard to understand) and clarify what you heard
- Remind the person that their words are important to you and you will “get it” even if it takes time
- Don’t finish their thoughts or speak for them unless the person has agreed you can. For example, some people who use finger spelling or have a hard time speaking are fine with people guessing what they are communicating. Some are not. Always ask.

Organization ^{SLP NP OT}

- Timeline to complete tasks
- Daily calendar for tasks (digital or paper)
- Instructions in using a planner or app
- Highlight important information
- Organization on a large scale can be overwhelming, but a little each day can build structure and create peace and accomplishment
- Have a place for everything
- Take time to organize; use labels if helpful
- Provide color-coded materials

Planning ^{SLP NP OT}

- Plan the hour, the task, the day, the week
- Make sure that they are part of the planning
- If they sustain a new injury, like a concussion, don’t assume that they can handle the same schedule, activities, or environment as they did before the injury.

Problem Solving ^{SLP NP OT}

- Ask the person what the problem is (Make sure you both agree on what it is)
- Break the problem and solution into parts

- Write out the steps, use pictures
- Give choices of what the person can try next
- Ask questions to help them figure out next step

Judgement ^{SLP NP C OT}

- Help the person with upcoming decisions
- Help to see consequences (outcomes) of each action
- Help to see how others might feel about a choice
- Help to focus on a longer term outcome (Ex: if I spend now, I won't have money for _____)
- Ask the person what they think will be the outcome

Vision/Visual-Spatial ^{OT}

- Encourage the person to wear glasses (if needed)
- Keep work area distraction free
- Modify materials (Exs: limit amount of material presented, get rid of extra picture)
- Put things within sight
- Use large print

Hearing ^{AUD SLP}

- Get hearing properly aided
- Speak up, speak clearly and slowly
- Speaker stands on the side of better hearing
- Face the person when speaking to allow lip reading to support understanding
- Foster participation in social activities
- Use captioning when possible

Motor/Movement – Gross Motor ^{PT OT}

- Priority in movement (getting to go first or last)
- Adapt physical activities (simplify, change)
- Simple maps & cues for finding way around
- Make a backup plan for new environments, allow extra time and consider a walk through in advance if possible
- Special transportation
- Fall Prevention:
 - Use ramps or elevators
 - Restroom adaptations
 - Escort between activity areas
 - Widen paths, walkways
 - Remove trip hazards
 - Use adaptive equipment like cane and walker

Motor/Movement - Fine Motor ^{OT}

- Adaptive equipment for writing: wide-ruled paper, thick grip or weighted pen
- For meals: thick grip or weighted fork, knife, spoon
- For meal prep: adaptive can opener, cutting board, rocker knife, etc.
- Grips on door knobs

Social ^{SLP NP C BS}

- Help understand facial expressions & body language in others
- Help understand what they are communicating with their face and body
- Teach & practice (role play) appropriate behaviors
- Prepare the person for frustration & how to react

Emotional State ^{C NP}

- Help the person identify how they are feeling
- Use a faces scale (sad, okay, happy)
- Take a time-out
- Get some physical activity
- Stop and think before acting when emotional
- Help the person understand how their emotion will impact their behavior, the task, other people
- Take deep breaths when stressed or upset (some smart watches offer this, apps on phones, computers)
- Express what they are upset about

Fatigue (Tiredness) ^{SLP PT OT NP}

- Reduce schedule
- Plan rest breaks
- Have a specific area for rest
- Keep a good sleep schedule
- Some medicines can make you tired. Always take as prescribed, but ask the doctor if a change in medication or schedule (time when it is taken) would help.
- Practice good sleep hygiene (exs: no electronics 30 min before bedtime, no caffeine late in day or at all for some, cool and dark room, calming sounds or scents, bedtime routine)

Environment ^{OT SLP NP}

- Does this environment work for the person? ex: privacy, loud noises, personal space
- Reduce distractions
- Post house rules/Discuss rules
- Post daily schedule

Behavioral Strategies ^{BS SLP NP}

- Try to identify (with the person if possible) what the behavior is trying to communicate, find a different way to communicate that
- Act early in a situation that may escalate
- Practice expected behavior (Role play)
- Help them to be successful with a task, or even part of a task at first
- Learn to recognize the person's early signs of stress and frustration
- Help the person to recognize their own signs and feelings of stress and frustration
- Prepare the person for what is coming up and expected behavior
- Reinforce positive behavior
- Give agreed upon non-verbal cues to discontinue a behavior
- Set goals with the person
- Keep approaches consistent with all support personnel (no "weak links")
- Teach all staff techniques to remain calm when working with a person during a behavior issue
- Have a place where the person can calm down
- Place additional structure in the daily routine
- Give frequent, specific feedback about behavior
- Make sure they know the consequences for behavior issues
- Talk to them like an adult
- Keep the person and others safe during an outburst
- If the behavior escalates too far, it might be best to let the person calm down before intervening
- Ask the person ahead of time how you should communicate with them during a behavior issue
- Develop a safe word with that person and staff so that if needed they have a way to let you know when they are overwhelmed or when staff can see it coming w/o having to explain the situation

Assistive Technology SLP OT

- Assistive Technology Evaluation (or updated if needed)
- Picture and symbol supported software
- Talking spell checker and dictionary
- Voice recognition software
- Communication devices
- Word predicting programs
- iPad, tablet or smart phone
- Apps for memory, organization, relaxation, etc.
- Accessible document formats

- Multimedia software
- Electronic organizers
- Shortcuts on computers
- Accessibility options on computer
- Proofreading programs
- Alternative keyboards
- Enlarged text or magnifiers
- Recorded books
- Special calculators

Other

- Staff should be consistent with strategies used
- Maintain a consistent schedule
- Train all staff in appropriate strategies
- Try not to view challenges as “good” or “bad”
- Only use previous behaviors for teaching. Never use it for punishment or to embarrass the person.**
- Teach peers how to be helpful to each other

NOTES (include dates used)

STRATEGIES THAT WORK _____

STRATEGIES THAT **DO NOT** WORK: _____

