

ENA'S NEURODIVERGENT ACADEMY

The Parent's Guide to Advocacy & Executive Functioning

Welcome! At Ena's Neurodivergent Academy, we believe in championing every child's unique learning potential. Navigating school systems and fostering emotional balance at home can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone. This guide provides essential strategies to help your neurodivergent child thrive in the classroom and beyond.

1. Navigating School Accommodations: IEP vs. 504

Understanding the difference between an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and a 504 Plan is the first step in effective advocacy.

- **The 504 Plan:** Provides *accommodations* (like extra time on tests or preferential seating) in a regular education environment to ensure a student with a disability has equal access to learning.
- **The IEP:** Provides *specialized instruction* and related services (like speech or occupational therapy). It requires that the disability adversely affects educational performance and outlines specific, measurable annual goals.

PRO TIP: THE ADVOCACY BINDER

Keep a dedicated 3-ring binder with all your child's evaluations, report cards, teacher communications, and current plans. Bring this to every school meeting. Being organized is your best advocacy tool!

2. Building Executive Functioning at Home

Executive function skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks. Here are ways to support them:

Visual Schedules

Routines provide safety and predictability. Use visual charts (with pictures for younger kids or checklists for older ones) for morning and bedtime routines to reduce anxiety and nag-free transitions.

Chunking Tasks

Instead of saying "Clean your room," break the task into manageable chunks: 1. Put clothes in the hamper, 2. Put books on the shelf, 3. Make the bed. This prevents task paralysis and builds confidence.

3. Fostering Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is a learned skill. Before a child can calm down, they need to feel safe, grounded, and understood.

- **Recognize the Triggers:** Is it sensory overload? A transition? Hunger? Fatigue? Identifying the "why" helps prevent future dysregulation.
- **Create a "Calm Corner":** Dedicate a safe, cozy space with sensory tools (weighted blankets, fidgets, noise-canceling headphones) where your child can go to decompress—not as a punishment, but as a tool.
- **Co-Regulation:** A dysregulated adult cannot regulate a dysregulated child. Take a deep breath yourself first. Your calm nervous system will help settle theirs.

EVERYDAY LEARNING MOMENT

Praise the *process*, not just the result. Instead of "You're so smart," try "I noticed how hard you worked on figuring out that puzzle, even when it got frustrating."

Common Accommodations Quick Reference

CHALLENGE AREA	POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS TO REQUEST
Focus & Attention	Frequent breaks, preferential seating, fidget tools, chunked assignments.
Sensory Overload	Noise-canceling headphones, quiet space access, permission to wear hats/sunglasses.
Executive Functioning	Extra time on tests, graphic organizers, visual schedules, understanding check-ins.

Ready to empower your child's educational journey?

This guide is a starting point. Book a personalized **Neurodivergent Coaching Consultation** with Ena's Neurodivergent Academy today, and let's build a customized strategy for your family's unique needs.

Empowering whole-family growth through education, advocacy, and creativity.