

## **Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS) Educational Series**



### **Understanding and Supporting A Person's Cognitive Abilities**

Educational Sessions 1-5

## **UNDERSTANDING THE BRAIN, COGNITIVE ABILITIES, ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATION, TASK AND DAILY ROUTINES**

**Educator Scripts and Accompanying Materials**

by  
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This entire curriculum and accompanying materials are available on the Michigan Improving MI Practices (IMP) website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

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We welcome feedback.

Please comment on the [improvingmipractices.org](https://www.improvingmipractices.org) website where indicated.

**Disclaimer:**

This CAIS Educational Series is not sufficient for the understanding, assessment, or intervention regarding any individual person or situation. In each individual case, a health professional must be consulted. This educational series simply presents ideas from which to draw and apply as appropriate. The suggestions here will not be appropriate for every person in every situation.

## THE CAIS EDUCATIONAL SERIES: INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the CAIS Educational Series: Understanding and Supporting A Person's Cognitive Abilities.

The goal of this educational series is to help participants of these sessions develop an interest in asking themselves "Why?" as they interact with a person. Participants are provided a series of questions to help ask and answer that question. By asking why a person is having difficulty communicating or performing a task or is in distress, participants will be able to discern much more quickly and effectively how to help, that is, to generate intervention or support strategies that will more likely work.

By using this curriculum for the CAIS Educational Series, you will be helping participants explore this process of asking themselves "Why?". You might use this curriculum informally during conversations with participants (ranging from casual snatches of conversations to more intense problem-solving sessions) or more formally as a presentation to a group or audience of participants. Regardless of how you use it, the content of the curriculum can be helpful to you as you try to understand and help a person in a way that addresses the brain and resulting cognitive abilities.

The educational series sessions help the participant examine, in an informal way, four factors: a particular person's cognitive abilities, their environment, communication with this person, and this person's tasks and daily routines. The whole person, including their emotional, physical, medical, and spiritual aspects are very important as well. This educational series focuses particularly on a person's cognitive abilities. The objective is to help the participant understand the role each of these factors plays in making it easier for this person to communicate, perform a task or to feel comfortable and competent. By examining each of the four factors, the participant can discover how to modify the environment, their interactions with this person, and the structure and timing of the task to make them more supportive of this person, by accommodating more effectively this person's cognitive strengths and needs.

The "**Introduction to Volume III: Teaching Why with the CAIS Educational Series**" also introduces this CAIS Educational Series. It gives a broader and more in-depth overview of the series as well as more particulars that will be helpful as you prepare to use this curriculum of five sessions. It also lists **background resources** that are available.

This entire **CAIS Educational Series** (including this introduction and all five sessions) with the **introduction** to Volume III, all of Volume III, and many **background resources** are available on the following website: The Michigan Improving MI Practices (IMP) **website** at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

The CAIS Educational Series curriculum consists of five one-hour sessions. Their titles are:

1. Understanding The Brain and Cognition
2. Understanding Cognitive Abilities
3. Understanding the Environment
4. Understanding Communication
5. Understanding the Task and Daily Routines

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Each session consists of the following:

1. A cover sheet
2. A script for a presentation or as content for a conversation
3. Slides to show or to copy as handouts
4. Handouts to distribute
5. Evaluation materials including a pre-and post session form to be completed by the participant and an Educator's Evaluation form of the educational session to be completed by you as the educator (that is, presenter) after the session is over. The latter is to help you record the circumstances of the session and your impressions as the educator.

Also included in each session are: objectives, additional content to include if there is time, and opportunities for guided discussion and direct application of the concepts covered.

You as the educator or adviser are encouraged to identify before the session begins a challenging situation the participants at the session might be encountering. The curriculum focuses on showering or bathing to illustrate the principles, since that could be seen as the most difficult task a person may have to do. If the participants can make a difficult bathing experience feel positive then they will more likely be able to do the same for most other tasks with a person. You may want to talk with participants ahead of time or even watch a participant or care partner (caregiver) with a person during a task, such as a shower or another task the participants identify as challenging. Then you can use that experience during the educational sessions to illustrate points you are trying to make.

Try to make good use of the discussion section of each session. During discussions you may be able to get a feel for the participants' particular concerns, their experience and skill level, and their awareness of the concepts conveyed in the session. The discussions also give the participants a chance to explore and apply the concepts outlined in the curriculum. They might even do some significant problem solving regarding the situation discussed.

It is usually helpful to establish a calm relaxed emotional tone when presenting the curriculum, so participants feel free and safe to share and think creatively. If projecting the slides makes the session feel too impersonal or formal, and you think a more informal discussion would be helpful, then simply talk about the content and use the handouts rather than the slides as reference points.

We hope you find this curriculum and the educational series useful and that you feel free to modify it to make it fit your own preferences and situation.

Just as we encourage participants to observe a person closely so they can recognize evidence of distress or to gauge the best time to give suggestions and requests (that is when this person is most receptive and focused enough to understand and respond), so we encourage you as the educator to watch your participants closely and to adapt the curriculum and your sharing of the content to fit their needs and desires. Timing and recognition of receptivity is crucial to effective teaching or sharing of information and skills. Try to sit in the participants' skin or to walk in their shoes so you can see from their perspective, just as we encourage the participants who are care partners (or caregivers) to do that with the persons they relate to.

Most of all, enjoy and convey your enthusiasm about exploring cognitive abilities and relating to people with various cognitive strengths and needs, as well as about your time with all the participants.