



Daphne

Daphne is preparing for her First Communion. She is eager to join in all that it means, and to complete the tasks in order to participate in Communion.

Strengths:

- Dancing
- Dressing up, creating outfits, accessorizing
- Hula-hooping, jumping rope, bouncing balls and running
- Sharing hugs, foods, and anything else she has to give with those around her

Struggles:

- Reading is difficult
- Writing takes great effort and is frustrating
- Paying attention for more than a few moments
- Speaking words comes slowly



Levi

Levi lives in a group home near the parish. He wants to participate in and contribute to Mass.

Strengths:

- Laughter and infectious positivism, with a few pranks for his own amusement
- Patient with everyone, kind and gentle, a great listener whether he understands all that is said to him or not
- Enjoys counting, especially money, and keeping it organized
- Easy-going, even in new situations and with new people

Struggles:

- Speaking words
- Understanding concepts and multi-step or multi-faceted instructions or ideas
- Social boundaries are difficult to comprehend and perceive
- Transportation limitations



Angelo

Angelo is finding his place in the community, and desires to come to Mass, but finds it difficult.

Strengths:

- Technology, whether new or old, computer or small device, it all “makes sense” to him
- Strong memory
- Hard worker and thrives on routine

Struggles:

- Fear of transitions and unknowns
- Social skills are difficult, unnatural to him, he does not read body language or social cues well
- Staying calm is difficult in loud situations, especially when there is a lot of commotion



Julia

Julia comes to Mass, despite her current situation.

Strengths:

- Faithful friend and prayer warrior
- Highly intelligent
- Writes a blog with a strong following

Struggles:

- Sensations quickly overwhelm her: sounds, light, touch, smells can all cause her body to react intensely
- She cannot eat gluten, dairy, sugar or other foods that affect her health conditions
- Depression often affects her interactions with other people, particularly in large groups



Paul

Paul has been a part of the parish for years.

Strengths:

- Intellectual discussion and sharing of his deep understanding of the Catholic faith
- Singing in the choir
- Prolific reader

Struggles:

- Hearing is getting increasingly more difficult
- Vision is waning, and he sees best only what is directly in front of him
- Physical mobility is slower, more laborious and requires more assistance

Describe:

Strengths:

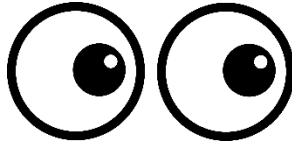
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Struggles:

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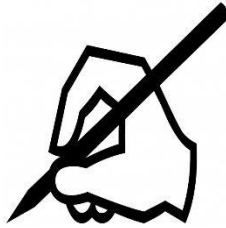
Support Tools

for Vision & Reading



- Black on white print can be difficult for struggling readers. Changing the color of the background can make it more readable. Yellow on blue is the best contrast. Highlighting text, printing on colored paper or using something like [EZ-C readers](#), can make it easier to see.
- Text-to-speech apps and devices (such as [Google](#), or Apple's [Text to Speech! App](#)) allow people to hear rather than read.
- The Bible App ([You Version](#)) gives access to a variety of ways to engage with Scripture.
- Pairing words with pictures or icons, such as in the Order of Worship supplies two ways to understand the meaning of the text.
- Keeping the number of words and images on a page or presentation slide to a manageable number (see [this article](#) for details) allows for greater readability.
- Presenting visual information in multiple ways, and in advance, on multiple formats (such as available in print as well as on a device so it can be resized, having Large Print versions, having it projected on a screen as well as available in-hand, placing it at eye-level for specific individuals, etc.) allows greater access to the information.
- Having visual information available in Braille, or available ahead of time so that individuals can print on their own Braille printer is helpful for those who read braille.

Support Tools for Writing



- Consider stocking some equipment, especially in rooms for children and youth. Materials to consider: a variety of pencil grips to try (some bigger, some squishier, some heavier or lighter), triangle pencils, different sized crayons and markers, etc. ([Therapy Shoppe](#) is a great resource)
- Allow for writing at different angles (using clip-boards, vertical surfaces such as a white board, or [a slant-board](#) or large binder)
- Allow writing to be done digitally (typed) using a speech-to-text app or device.
- Connect someone struggling with writing to a buddy or “secretary” to do the writing portion (but be sure that BOTH participants names are on the page!).
- Ask “what is the purpose of the writing?” and whether other options for relaying the information may be effective: speaking, recording, acting it out, etc.

Support Tools

for Verbal Communication



- When meeting a person with limited verbal communication, ask: How does s/he communicate?
- Include the individual in making decisions: Be sure to learn how someone wishes to communicate and is most comfortable before implementing something in an attempt to communicate with that person.
- In worship, consider alternate ways to bring praise to God, such as praise streamers, or [colored flags](#) or banners.
- Pictures/picture-based communication (including using a second copy of a picture-book, to cut up and make interactive)
- For communication in social gatherings, learning environments and worship, try using pictures and [alternate communication devices](#), or signing, using the sign language of your community.

Support Tools for Attention



- Consider stocking some equipment. Fidgets may “occupy the body to free the mind”, such as fidget pencils and other hand tools, wiggle cushions, etc.
- Consider offering breaks, to allow for a short time away from focusing.
- Provide movement options within a structured setting. Mass offers many options for movement. Make sure your children’s setting does as well, building in motions to songs, signs with words, times to change position in a service, a job to do, etc.
- Boundaries can help some individuals focus more on what is most important. Using a [time-timer](#) or a schedule, or adding structure to the seat, the room (adding more tables or shelves, e.g.), or the page (with highlighters or [highlighter tape](#), or making lines thicker with a permanent marker, e.g.) may help.
- Provide multi-sensory options, engaging multiple senses as often as possible (visuals with writing, movement with words, etc.) Jesus modeled this at the Last Supper!
- Educate the leaders. Learning about ADHD, the biological cause, medication issues, etc. can better equip them to include and support each individual.

Support Tools for Hearing



- Provide [a hearing-loop](#) and use microphones.
- Have a sign language interpreter for those who communicate solely through sign language.
- Consider using closed-captioning or having materials in print (such as songs, prayers, litanies, homilies, etc.) that would otherwise be only spoken.
- There are many factors in which hearing aids can help or hinder a person's participation, such as echoes, crowds, open air environments, etc. Communicate what options there are and be sensitive to these situations.
- Monitor the decibel levels ([see this article](#) for more information) to help stabilize auditory input.

Support Tools

For Mobility



- Make sure people have access to seats that are safe, of an appropriate size and have adequate support on all sides.
- Provide cut-out areas in pews for wheelchair and walkers to have a space within a variety of areas in the sanctuary.
- Install ramps for accessibility, to upper or lower levels, to podium and stage areas, etc.
- Think about the demands from leadership: Asking parishioners to sit, stand, kneel, come, etc. –use [language that welcomes, invites and includes](#), and offer to come to parishioners if that is the better option for some who may not be able to come (such as to receive Communion). Consider the phrase “please rise (or kneel, etc.) in body or in spirit”.

Support Tools for Social Interaction



- When in a social situation, keep in mind: “those who can flex, must” when it comes to expectations of social interaction.
- Sometimes people need social information to introduce them to environments, rituals and expectations. Provide social/informational stories, and [Video modeling](#).
- Provide previews of worship, education and social opportunities on the parish website in pictures or video. Try allowing individuals to visit the environment when empty before coming when it is full of people.
- Give training and information to leaders and the congregation about [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) and other social differences.

Support Tools

for Transitions



- Use a schedule, such as an order of worship, in words and pictures ([example from With Ministries](#)), or a picture-only schedule, whether that is on the wall, or in a folder for an individual.
- Post schedules ahead of time and keep activities the same when possible.
- Changes are hardest when they are new and/or unexpected. Talking about and practicing the transition before it has to happen can help!
- Try using timers, such as [Time Timer](#), or a [stop-light](#) timer.
- Realize that any change counts -a small change may impact a person to a great degree (from one person speaking to another person speaking, one verse to the next, e.g.).

Support Tools

for Understanding



- Use one big idea for the day/event/prayer/Mass, which is repeated in different ways.
- Provide multi-sensory access points: engage with materials through words, music, but also with touch, taste, smell, interaction, movement, etc., because if one way does not work for an individual, another way of taking in the information or interacting with it may work better.
- Offer repetition and routine.
- Use pictures/picture-based communication (including using a second copy of a picture-book, to cut it up and make it interactive).
- Remember, adults are NOT children, no matter how simplified the information needs to be (see WithMinistries.org/together for examples of adult Bible Study materials and methods for persons with varied levels of understanding).

Support Tools for Sensory Processing

Low Registration	Sensory Avoiding
Sensory Seeking	Sensory Sensitive

- A sound that is loud to you may not be loud to another person. A touch that is soft to you may be hard to another person. The brain interprets sensory information. Depending on the individual's needs, think about regulating and/or isolating certain sensations:
 - Sound -provide sound blockers or ear plugs and/or the option to leave when it is too loud.
 - Smells –provide a scent-free zone, where perfumes and possibly even scented laundry detergents are not used.
 - Lighting & Decorations -provide a space where lighting can be calm, low, regulated; also provide a space where decorations are not overwhelming, perhaps a small room or even a play-tent or a curtained-off area.
 - Touch -provide a [weighted lap-pad](#) or [weight-filled stuffed animal](#); provide ways for a person to avoid touch

from others by having a job or space to interact without touch.

- Space -provide seating options and areas in which the body is either enclosed (with arms on both sides, a chairback, and perhaps a table in front), or alternatively, much more open (a rug on the floor).
- Use break spaces –provide an “out” from the environment that is difficult to remain in. This could mean a hallway for walking, a quiet [room with calming elements](#), a rocking chair, a [therapy swing](#), or the place where a favorite activity is set up.
- Educate others about sensory differences:
 - “Adapting the Needs” video from With Ministries (withministries.org/adapting-the-sessions-to-the-needs-of-your-group/)
 - “One Body” video ([/withministries.org/worship-as-one/](https://withministries.org/worship-as-one/))

Support Tools

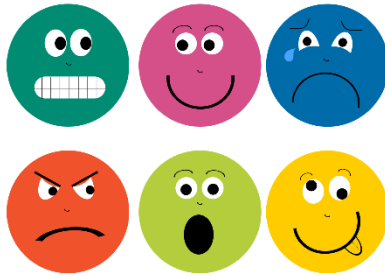
for Dietary differences



- Get information beforehand on what to avoid or use based on allergies, intolerances and health conditions
- Clearly mark with signs what is available, and what must not enter a certain area, such as with these symbols:
https://as2.ftcdn.net/jpg/00/88/19/93/500_F_88199381_rXe1UatlfuJq7TVQdBwPkj0fwba4M3j3.jpg
- Gluten free communion wafers are available at
<https://altarbreadsbspa.com/altarbreads/low-gluten-breads/>
with explanation on this blog post:
<https://glutenfreeworks.com/blog/2008/01/08/benedictine-uns-discover-way-to-produce-low-gluten-communion-hosts/>

Support Tools

for Emotional Regulation



- Watch your language. Using words like, “crazy”, “schizo” or “loony” is inappropriate and potentially very hurtful. Instead, use person-first language (such as identifying the woman experiencing depression, the man living with anxiety, etc.)- [cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/DisabilityPoster_Photos.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/DisabilityPoster_Photos.pdf).
- In planning prayers and homilies and songs, consider referencing the wide array of emotions present in that setting, mentioning depression and anxiety, for example, is one way to acknowledge those individuals experiencing these emotions.
- Balance praise with lament, knowing people will be able to relate to both concepts on any given day.
- Understand that those actively experiencing mental health concerns may have significant sensory processing differences. Allow for these differences.
- Provide training for leaders and members of the congregation. Consider reading “[Mental Health and the Church](#)” by Dr. Steve Grcevich for great insights and strategies.