

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS CHEAT SHEET

School Life & Extracurriculars

Situation	Your Options	Suggested Script
You overhear other parents discussing your child's behavior	Ignore it or see this as an opportunity for compassionate education	"I heard you mentioning ____. I'm not sure if you know, but one of the things my child is working on right now is ____ because ____ situations can be really challenging for him/her. Let me know if you have any questions—I'm happy to share more."
Your child does something hurtful to another child	Call the other child's parent or ask the school to help facilitate a conversation	"I'm so sorry ___ happened today. Because of the way my child is wired, ___ can be especially tricky. Please know that we're working hard on helping him/her better handle these situations. I'm happy to talk about it at any time."
Your child is "disinvited" to participate in a camp or after-school program	Let it go or ask for a meeting to explore where things went wrong and how it could be handled differently the next time / with another child	"I'd like to talk with you about what happened so I can have a better understanding of how I could have better prepared you and my child, as well as give you feedback on how you might support children like my child in the future. Would you be willing to have that conversation with me?"
You notice another child is shaming or "disciplining" your child	Let the teacher know and ask him/her to remind the students that their job isn't to manage other kids in the class	"I noticed another child was correcting my son/daughter today. Being 'disciplined' by another child not only hurts their peer relationships, but it's not appropriate. Would you remind your students that everyone is working on different things and it's not their job to correct other students? Thank you—I appreciate your help with this situation."

In Public

Situation	Your Options	Suggested Script
Your child has a meltdown or does something "inappropriate" in a public place	Prioritize your child's needs in that moment, and only address strangers if it feels necessary in that moment	"This is an especially challenging situation for my child because of the way he/she is wired. (Optional: He has a diagnosis of ___ which means that ___.) Sorry for the inconvenience (and/or) thanks for your understanding."
A stranger tries to discipline your child	Remove your child from the situation immediately and/or compassionately educate the stranger	"Please don't address my child in that way. He/she is differently wired and this is a challenging situation for him/her. We've got it covered. Thanks so much."
You're stuck on public transport (e.g. airplane) and your child is having a rough time	If appropriate, enlist the support of an attendant and/or check in with people around you so they have context	To attendant: "My child's having a hard time because ____. Would it be possible to (ask for what you need in this moment)." To a stranger: "My child's having a hard time because ____. We're working on getting calm, but it may take a few minutes. Thank you for your understanding."
A stranger says something insensitive and harmful about / to your child	Ignore the stranger and focus on your child or compassionately educate the stranger	"Please don't address my child / talk about my child in that way. We're working through some things related to my child's neurodifferences, and comments like that only create more difficulties for families like mine. Thanks for understanding."

Family Life

Situation	Your Options	Suggested Script
A family member offers you parenting / discipline advice	Ignore it and move along or compassionately educate family member	"That may work with your child, but ___ needs a different approach because of the way he/she is wired. We've got it covered. Thanks though!"
A family member suggests your child isn't atypical but needs boundaries	Ignore the comment or compassionately educate the family member	"Those kinds of comments are hurtful to me and my family. My child is doing the best she can but because of her neurological wiring, she is moving through the world differently. We accept who she is and hope you will, too."
You're expected to attend a family event you know will disregulate your child	Opt to skip the event even though it's expected or explain your situation and needs to the host ahead of time	"We are planning to attend, but because of my child's wiring, ___ is going to present challenges for him and us. I have some ideas about how to make things go more smoothly. Can we talk them through?"
Your parent tells you they won't babysit your child because he or she is too difficult	Don't ask them again or explain why you'd like their support and provide them with tools to help them understand and support your child	"I know watching my child can be tricky because of ___, but I could really use your support right now. I've learned some strategies that can make things go more smoothly. Would you be willing to try them out? I think you'll find they'll help you enjoy your grandchild in a whole new way."

Friends & Acquaintances

Situation	Your Options	Suggested Script
Your child isn't invited to a birthday party his or her friends are going to	Let it go and do something special with your child instead or talk to the host about it	"I noticed that ___ wasn't invited to your child's party. He/she is feeling sad about it and I was wondering if the omission was a mistake? If not, can we find solution so my child can attend?"
A regularly occurring play date at your home isn't (ever) reciprocated	Stop inviting the other child over for play dates or discuss the situation with the other parent	"My child loves hanging out with your child, <i>and</i> I noticed that all of their play dates take place at my house. I'd love for there to be more back and forth with location...are you up for that? I'm happy to give you some strategies for situations that might come up in case you're feeling unsure about anything."
You notice your family is being left out of community / group activities you used to be a part of	Accept that communities are fluid and look for another group more in alignment or address the situation with your friends head on	"I've noticed that lately our family hasn't been included in group activities and I was wondering what was up? This community is an important part of our family's life—if there's a reason why we're not being included, I'd love to know what it is so we can try to figure something out."
Someone posts an insensitive and misguided post / article / meme on social media	Keep scrolling or unfollow the person or embrace this as an opportunity for compassionate education	"As the parent of a differently wired child, I find posts like this especially harmful/hurtful/stigmatizing because ___. While I don't believe you posted this with the intention of hurting anyone, I thought it was important to share what's true for our family and many others like me. Thanks so much for your understanding."