

Meaning in the Minutes – Purposeful Engagement in Everyday Tasks

DR. MARTHA FARNSWORTH, OTD,
OTR/L, CPAM, CARSS



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Presentation Disclaimer

The information presented today is intended for educational and informational purposes only. It is designed to provide general information about supporting children with Down syndrome and is not intended to replace individualized evaluation, assessment, or treatment by a qualified healthcare, therapy, educational, or medical professional.

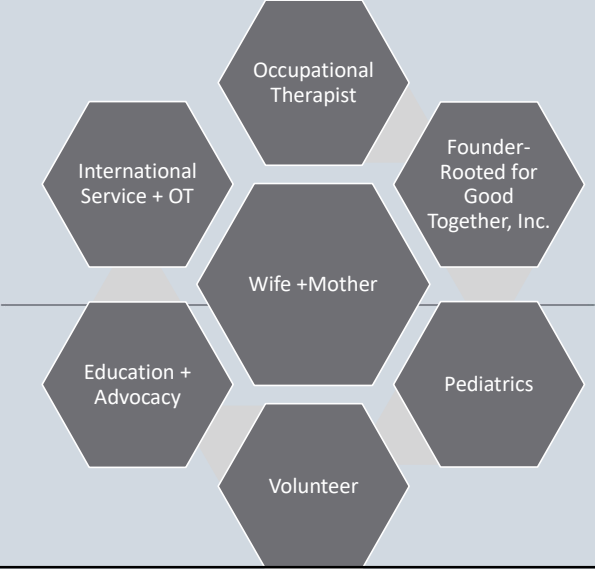
Every child has unique strengths, needs, medical considerations, and developmental goals. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to consult with their child's occupational therapist, physician, speech-language pathologist, physical therapist, educator, or other qualified professionals before implementing new strategies or making decisions regarding their child's care.

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Speaker Intro



- Occupational Therapist
- Founder-Rooted for Good Together, Inc.
- Pediatrics
- Volunteer
- Education + Advocacy
- International Service + OT
- Wife +Mother

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Full circle moment!

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Reminder



Children with Down syndrome are each unique and learn and grow at their own pace –
Focus on the developmental sequence



Your worth as a parent/caregiver/therapist is not defined by “success” or milestone mastery or level of independence.



The purpose of therapy and therapeutic activities is not to “catch up”, but to encourage development of skills and meaningful engagement in life!

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Why YOU are so important

- ☐ You know your child better than anyone – meaningful tasks
- ☐ No one is more invested in your child than you
- ☐ You are your child's biggest advocate
- ☐ Empowered & supported parents = healthy families
- ☐ Envisioning goals for your child and working towards them early and often

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Learning Objectives

The Brain + Learning

Routines

Practical & hands on learning opportunities

Technology & tools

Grading Tasks & Assistance

Sensory rich environments

Important of trial/error- allowing individuals to problem solve and show them you **know** they are CAPABLE, “hands in pockets”

Disclaimer -

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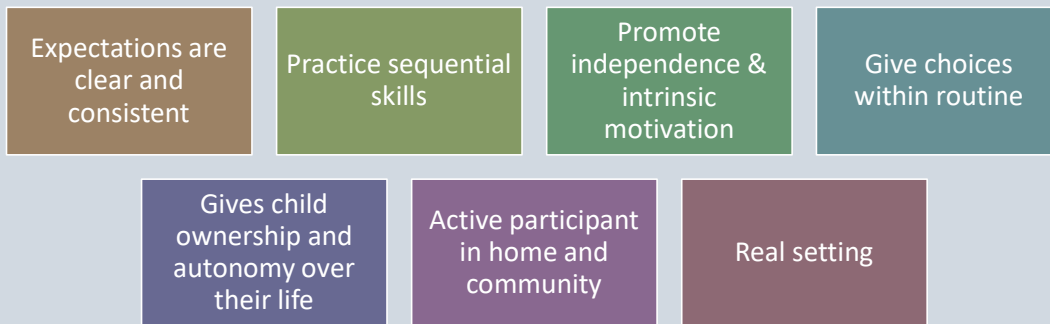
The Amazing Brain

- Individuals with DS are lifelong learners –capable!
- Early exposure and practice to functional activities and routines
- Individuals with Down syndrome may need twice as many repetitions of a new skill to master (or more!)
- Visual supports for learning and modeling
- Meet your loved one where they are- and keep those expectations *lovingly high*
- Multisensory approach – sensory rich environment
- *How does the brain of someone with DS learn differently?



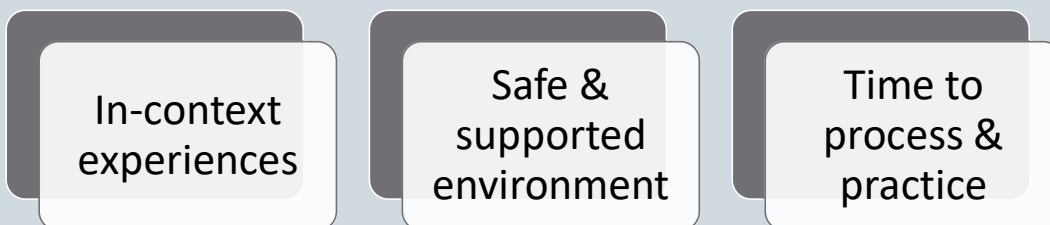
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Routines – why are they important?



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Practical & hands on learning opportunities within the home environment



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Building Routines



Start with something like a morning or bedtime routine



Break down into main tasks



Visual support



Give choices – brush teeth or brush hair first?



Practice + Practice + Practice



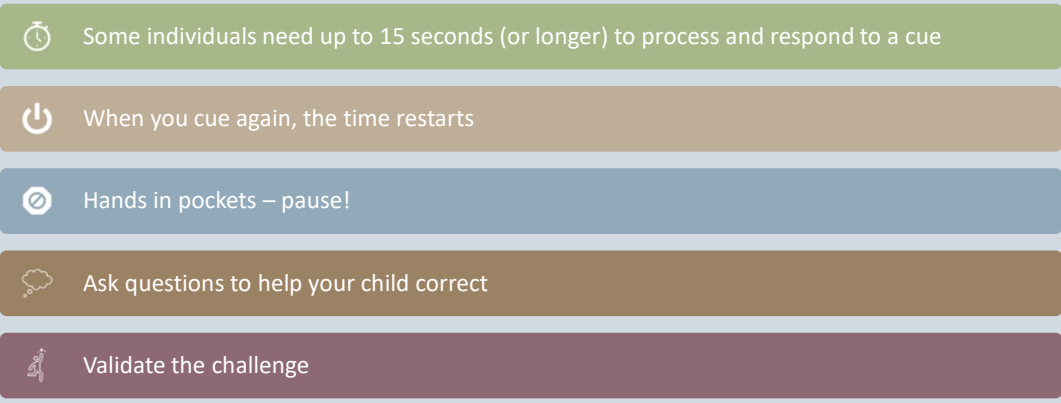
Grade your support – physical assist – verbal cueing – visual prompts

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Example of morning routine chart

ANNIE		
1		Go potty
2		Brush teeth
3		Brush hair
4		Make bed
5		Get dressed

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-  Some individuals need up to 15 seconds (or longer) to process and respond to a cue
-  When you cue again, the time restarts
-  Hands in pockets – pause!
-  Ask questions to help your child correct
-  Validate the challenge

Cueing

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How to Help – Promoting Skill Mastery

- Total assist-** You do the task to or with the child
- Forward chaining-** the child does the first step, and you complete the others
- Backward chaining-** you complete all steps except the last step
- Hand-over-hand assist-** using your hands or body you physically guide them through the task
- Stabilization-** you support the tool of the task or stabilize your child's body
- Modeling-** you do the task and then ask the child to do it
- Verbal cueing** – talking them through the steps in simple, direct cues
- Visual cueing-** using a visual diagram, model, or gestures

High-quality repetitions matter – practice correctly

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Motivators – building intrinsic motivation

- ☐ What is intrinsic motivation?
- ☐ Positive behavior reinforcement
- ☐ Just-right challenge
- ☐ First-Then with a preferred activity
- ☐ Giving choices – order of tasks
- ☐ Varying reinforcers, decreasing over time
- ☐ *Bribe versus Reinforcer – what is the difference?*

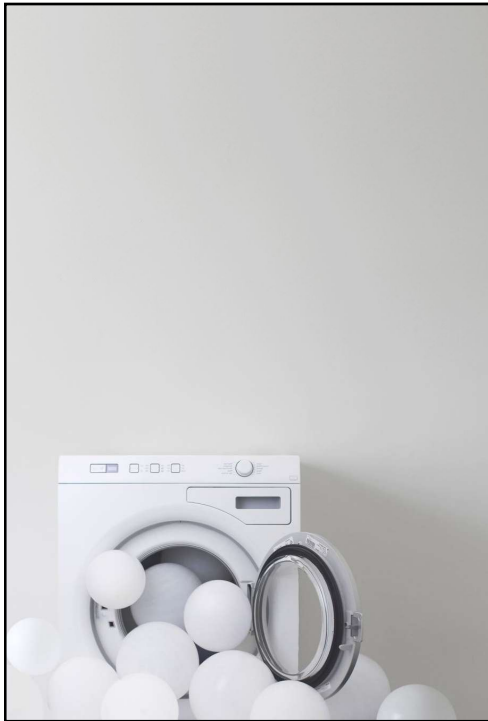
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Activity: Laundry

- Routine based
- Offers opportunity for multiple repetitions in a short time
- Promotes independence with a functional skill
- Incorporates motor skills + vestibular + sequencing + sorting

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Laundry – breaking it down

- Switching items one at a time from washer to dryer
- Carrying or transporting items to laundry area
- Pouring or measuring laundry detergent
- Sequencing steps
- Pushing laundry basket full of clothes
- Sorting laundry by family member, clothing item
- Matching socks
- Folding items - simple to more complex
- Practicing hanging up clothing
- Working on fasteners
- Make it fun!

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Folding Practice

*Build stamina
and endurance
over time for
functional tasks*

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Activity: Dressing



SELECTION OF APPROPRIATE
CLOTHES FOR THE DAY –
WEATHER, SITUATION



SEQUENCING – CORRECT
ORDER TO PUT ON CLOTHES



ORIENTING CLOTHES AND
ADJUSTING ON SELF



MOTOR PLANNING –
COGNITIVE SKILLS – VISUAL
SKILLS – PERSEVERANCE

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Dressing – Breaking it Down

Motivation – practice with costumes, dad's socks, sibling's clothes, play favorite music

Motor Skills – put scrunchies on ankles and hands, hats and necklaces on

Backward chaining- take off clothes first

Fine motor skills- zipper and button boards

Shoe tying – use a small rope and tie around legs

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Dressing practice



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Activity: Unloading the Dishwasher



HIGH LEVEL OF
REPETITIONS IN A
SHORT AMOUNT OF
TIME



DYNAMIC MOVEMENT,
MOTOR PLANNING, AND
VESTIBULAR INPUT



RECALL OF LOCATION
TO PUT ITEMS AWAY



SAFETY HANDLING
SHARP KNIVES OR
TOOLS – MANAGING
BREAKABLE ITEMS

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Unloading Dishwasher - Breaking Down Skills

*Sometimes we need to take a step back and work on a specific skill
in isolation outside of a routine or task.*

Example: Your child is struggling to sort silverware accurately.

Sorting Practice:

- Sort items by color (bold, simple)
- Sort items by size (big, small)
- Sort items by type (socks, underwear, shirts)

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Unloading Dishwasher - Breaking Down Skills

Example: Your child is having difficulty recalling where dishes and other items belong when the cupboard is shut.

Practice Ideas:

- Hide and seek – hide a favorite toy in a cupboard and cue the child with “the toy is hiding where the cups are”
- Add a simple visual icon to the outside of cupboards and drawers
- Open drawers and cupboards before unloading dishwasher and review with child (pre-teaching)
- Practice one type of item at a time then add an additional item once mastered with strong recall – silverware, bowls, plates, cooking utensils, etc.

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Dinner prep- cheese grater

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Kitchen Skills



Setting the table



Clearing the table after meal



Loading and unloading dishwasher



Handwashing dishes



Making snacks



Pouring a drink

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Kitchen Skills -
Practice

Pouring station

Scooping pom poms

Mud kitchen

Bathtub play

Visual snack prep

Obtaining and transporting items

Washing toys

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Community-Based Idea: Groceries

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Groceries

- Pictures of items to find in the store or writing a list
- Produce bags
- Transporting items and placing into cart
- Unloading cart
- Bagging groceries
- Counting money or using payment card
- Social interactions
- Phone number recall for rewards
- Parking lot safety
- Heavy work- pushing cart, carrying bags

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Sensory Rich Environments

- Many daily living tasks are “active” and incorporate many sensations compared to isolated skill practice
- Encourage your child to recognize and interact with their environment
- Exposure to language, music, rhymes within routines and activities
- Adds motivation and may aid in memory recall with specific sensory inputs

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Technology & Tools



Balance of “doing things by hand” and using available, practical tools



Using apps for navigating community



Using a digital calendar for tasks, chores, scheduling



Tip calculator



Technology as a motivator

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Wrapping it up

- Taking advantage of everyday activities can provide hundreds of opportunities for your child to practice skills every week without much prep or needing to buy “therapy” tools or toys
- Involving your child in meaningful family routines promotes skill development working towards independence and mastery
- Focus on small, developmental gains over time at your child’s unique pace
- Keep your expectations lovingly high while meeting your child where they are at in the moment

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Resources – Helpful Links

LessonPix

Teachers Pay Teachers

Pinterest – free resources

Microsoft Word or Google Docs + Clip Art
or pictures found online – create a visual

Canva – great templates to customize!

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Thank you!



Contact: Martha Farnsworth,
Occupational Therapist & Mom



Phone: (307) 203-6860



Email:
marthafarnsworthot@gmail.com

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