COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

QUICK GUIDE FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

DESTINATION *Illumination*

Neurodevelopmental differences can affect communication, sensory processing, attention, learning, and emotional regulation. Behaviors that may seem uncooperative or unusual are often related to disability—not intentional refusal.

CORE PRINCIPLES

SLOW DOWN
Allow extra processing time.

SAY LESS
Use short, clear sentences. One instruction at a time.

REDUCE
Limit sensory input when possible.

ONE VOICE
Avoid multiple people giving instructions.

EXPLAIN BEFORE YOU ACT
Tell them what will happen next.

DURING ESCALATION: THINK

REGULATE BEFORE YOU INVESTIGATE

REDUCE
- Noise
- Lights
- People
- Demands
- Physical proximity

REASSURE
"You are safe."

"I will explain what happens next."

REGULATE
- Give space
- Allow movement
- Use comfort items
- Respect self-regulatory behaviors

COMMUNICATE
One short instruction or question at a time.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"Do you understand what I'm telling you?"	"Tell me what I am asking you to do."
"Calm down!"	"You are safe. I'll give you space. I'll tell you what happens next."
"Look at me and stop doing that."	"You don't have to look at me. Please listen to my voice."

DO THIS

- Speak directly to the person.
- Use plain language (no jargon).
- Be calm, respectful and patient.
- Allow extra time to respond.
- Offer choices when possible.
- Ask: "How can I help you communicate?"



Understanding leads to connection.

Connection leads to safety. Safety leads to healing.