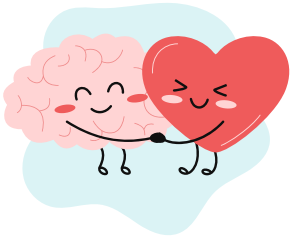
Your go-to provider for children and families

Inclusive Classrooms: Supporting Neurodivergent Learners

Building Better Brains is a multi-award-winning therapy practice based in Croydon.
Our **trauma-informed, neuroaffirming** and **child-centred** approaches support children and their caregivers to heal, grow and thrive.

Supporting Neurodivergent Students: Quick Guide for Educators & Teaching Assistants

Autism + ADHD, AUDHD and 2e



Brains Under Construction

All young brains are *"under construction"* until around age 30. The last areas to fully mature are responsible for emotional regulation, empathy, impulse control, cause-and-effect reasoning and complex problem-solving.

Neurodivergent brains often have denser neural connections across different brain regions, meaning they take in more sensory, emotional & social information all at once. Because of this, these brains can take 1–2 years longer to develop skills in social awareness, sensory regulation, emotional management and executive functioning.

They don't lack skills- they need time, guided practice and co-regulation to develop them.
Behaviour = communication. Let's stay **curious** - *what is happening for the child right now?*

Understanding Stress Responses

When overwhelmed, uncertain, or embarrassed, students may move into a **stress state** (fight, flight, freeze or fawn). Look for signs such as...

Withdrawal, avoidance, or going quiet =
Freeze response, hypoarousal, shutdown from stress overload

Fidgeting or restlessness =
Hyperarousal stress response, high cortisol and adrenaline

Heightened emotions, frustration, or shutdown
plus fight or freeze shutdown response

Attempts to leave the room or seek space to regulate =
Flight response, thinking brain shuts down, panic

Goal: Focus on **safety** and **regulation** first. Calm brains learn best.

Connect with us

58 Main Street, Croydon VIC
(03) 8719 1218
communications@buildingbetterbrains.com.au
www.buildingbetterbrains.com.au

Together, we can.

Your go-to provider for children and families

Inclusive Classrooms: Supporting Neurodivergent Learners

Core Support Strategies

Say what you see	*"You look unsure; would you like me to show you again?"* Builds safety and shows empathy.
Co-regulate	Stay calm, use gentle tone and body language. Their nervous system mirrors yours.
Offer clear structure	Visual steps, examples, and defined outcomes reduces uncertainty and anxiety for all students.
Give limited choices	*"Would you like to start with this or that?"* Builds agency and control. Asking questions rather than directives reduces escalation and flight/fight overwhelm.
Use curiosity, not correction	*"I wonder what part feels hardest?"* Reduces shame and supports reflection/ownership.
Reflective reframes	*"It looks like you want it to be just right, that shows how much you care."* Builds self-awareness and confidence.
Sensory adjustments	Quieter space, gloves, alternate textures. Reduces sensory stress and overwhelm and keeps engagement.

The A.C.T. Model of Support

A cknowledge what you notice → *"It seems like this feels tricky/frustrating right now..."*

C uriosity/Communicate Limit → Stay curious about what's going on. *"This is a task we all have to complete. I wonder what part is hardest right now?"*

T arget Alternatives → Think Together and guide calm problem-solving or coping choices. *"You can choose to try this or this - which do you choose?"*

Connect with us

58 Main Street, Croydon VIC
(03) 8719 1218
communications@buildingbetterbrains.com.au
www.buildingbetterbrains.com.au

Together, we can.