

Functional Developmental Levels	Ideas for Supporting These Functions
Regulation of one's physiology	Help the person to manage the internal hypervigilance which often accompanies stress, often by staying calm and empathizing
Interpersonal engagement	Affective connection, empathic approach
Basic back-and-forth interactions	Build on what the person is doing or thinking about
Flow of interactions in the service of problem solving	Patiently support a stream of reciprocal communication
Symbolic ability [this and subsequent levels are not always available to persons with developmental challenges]	Identify transitional objects, ideas, or activities that might help the person step back from moment to moment emotional distress, eg, "This is like the hurricanes you talk about—very scary but we can find shelter"
Logical use of symbolic ability	Try to help the person connect fragmented ideas to solve problems, eg, "You get mad when you are hungry—let's plan regular meal times"
Multicausal thinking	"Your friend is sad because the TV broke and because he is sick. Maybe we can help him feel a little better by..."
Appreciation of nuance in thinking	Clarify the difference between good things and better ones: "you got a burger but you wanted a soda with it too"
Reflective thinking	"Maybe we can sit and figure out what you want and then how to get some of it"

Source: TCPR, June 2013, Vol 11, Issue 6, Autism Spectrum Disorder