Bridging Gaps in Complex Assessments for Neurodivergent NDIS Participants

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The "Gap"

- Testing ≠ understanding

- Diagnosis ≠ supports

- Reports ≠ outcomes

Today's Structure

- A multimodal framework that works

- Strength + culture + context integration

- Translating findings → supports

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Why NDIS Assessments Are Different

Functional impact is the evidence

neurodevelopmental profile → functional impact → support needs → outcomes if supported.

What Makes Assessments "Complex"?

Complexity = the norm

- overlap

- masking

- environment

- risk

- system stress

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The Assessment Trap

Scores without function = confusion

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Standardised Testing is a Performance

Testing day is not real life

- rapport

- novelty

- structure

- masking

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Environment Shapes Functioning

- demands

- supports

- predictability

- sensory load

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The Mismatch Across Settings

Home ≠ School ≠ Clinic

Mismatch is data

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Behaviour is Communication

- escape

- access

- sensory

- safety

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Complexity Often Includes Risk

- aggression

- absconding

- self-injury

- restrictive practices

Key Message 1

Complex assessment = integration, not accumulation

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The Multimodal Assessment Framework

- Referral question → Function

- Multi-source data

- Formulation

- Practical outputs

Step 1: Strong referral questions

Start with the right questions

- diagnosis?

- functioning?

- school planning?

- NDIS funding?

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Step 2: Data sources that matter

- Standardised

- Behavioural observation

- Informants

- Records / context

Cognitive testing: interpret for access

Cognitive = access profile

- strengths

- bottlenecks

- learning conditions

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Executive function is the Invisible Barrier

Executive load

- initiation

- shifting

- inhibition

- planning

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Adaptive = daily support needs

- self-care

- independence

- safety

- supervision

ASD Assessment = Support Profile

- Sensory

- Social Stress

- Masking

- Rigidity

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ASD + ADHD Overlap

Attention ≠ motivation

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Sensory Processing + Regulation

Sensory drives behaviour

- overload

- avoidance

- seeking

- recovery needs

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Trauma-Informed Lens

- Safety

- Predictability

- Choice

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Cultural Responsiveness

- Culture changes meaning

- Interpretation must be contextual

Step 3: Formulation

- why now?

- what's driving it?

- what maintains it?

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Translate for NDIS

Evidence → impact → need → outcome → risk

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Example Translation: Working Memory

Cognitive load → overwhelm → behaviour

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Example Translation: Processing Speed

Time + pressure = shutdown

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Actionable School Supports

- Predictable

- Scaffolded

- Regulated

Actionable NDIS Supports

- Measurable

- Justified

- Functional

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Key Message 2

Your report is a support blueprint.

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Takeaway

Integrate → Translate → Implement

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