


**Empowering Neurodivergent Children**  
 by helping them understand their amazing brains!



Dr. Liz Angoff, LEP, ABSNP

1

**Talking to kids about testing results is tricky.**



© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

2

**Challenges to Effective Feedback with Children**

- Language
- Attention
- Overwhelm
- Time
- Parents

© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com


3

So why try?

© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

4

Kids know something is different...



I can't do it.

I guess I'm just lazy.

Everyone thinks I'm crazy.

I must be dumb.

...they just don't why.

© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

5

When we talk to kids about their differences early and often, we help them shift their self-narrative from

**"I'm broken"**

to

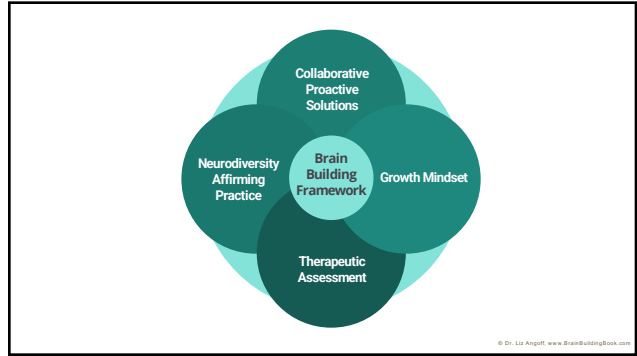
**"I'm built differently ...and that's pretty awesome!"**

© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

6

But how?

7



8

- ### The Brain Building Feedback Framework
1. Feedback starts before testing
  2. Build a shared language
  3. No surprises!
  4. You're not alone
  5. Continued conversation

9

- ### Brain Building Tools
- Preparing Kids for Testing (parent handout)
  - Brain Maps
  - Assessment Summary (parent/teacher handout)
  - Visual and Videos Spreadsheet
  - Child Friendly Diagnosis Reference Guide
  - The Brain Building Books
- All tools available at [www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts).

10

### Disclosures

I am the author and publisher of the **Brain Building Books**.

I receive proceeds from the sale of these books, which support the development of the resources and tools on [www.BrainBuildingBook.com](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com).

11

### 1. Feedback Starts Before Testing

- Set kids up to be collaborators
- Identify a problem the child wants to solve
- Be transparent about the process

[www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

12

## Example Language

- "I've noticed you're working really hard at \_\_\_\_ this year, but it still seems pretty tough and I'm **not sure why**. I've been thinking that if we knew more about how you learn best, **your teachers and I could do a better job** helping you."
- "Dr. Liz will do different activities with you to figure out how you learn best, where your strengths are, and why some things are hard right now. Your job is just to do your best, and if something is tricky, **let Dr. Liz know so you can work together to figure out why!**"

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

13

## Assessment is...

~~...an identification process.~~

...a collaborative discovery process.

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

14

## Helping Kids Ask Assessment Questions

15

## Helping Kids Ask Assessment Questions

- **Learning & the Brain Questions**

- Is there anything that you'd like to know about your brain or how you learn?

- **Compare/Contrast**

- You said that math is hard, but you love to bake. Baking is math! What's the difference? I wonder if we can figure out how to make math class feel more like cooking math?
- You said you love to read but hate to write. Maybe a good question is: Why do I love to read but hate to write?

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

16

## Helping Kids Ask Assessment Questions

- **What's Next? Questions**

- Last year your reading really took off. What do you want to work on this year?

- **Reframe "Boring" and "Bad At"**

- You said reading is really boring. I wonder if it would help to ask what could help it be not so boring?
- You said you're just bad at science. I wonder if it would help to ask what's making it so hard?

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

17

## Helping Kids Ask Assessment Questions

- **Children's Observations**

- You said math is a "fun challenge," but writing is a "frustrating challenge." I wonder if a good question is "Why does my brain like some challenges and not others?" Or "Why is writing frustrating?"

- **Wishes for Change**

- If you had a magic wand, what's one thing you would change about your life right now? I wonder if there's something we can do about that?

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

18

### Jo's Questions

- How do I choose an idea for writing?
- How do I get faster at writing?
- Should I try to like sports?
- How do I remember boring things?

(Page from *The Brain Building Book*)

19

### Alex's Questions

- Why do I move around when I'm idle? Why do I kick my feet?
- Why am I sometimes good-behaved and sometimes not?
- Why is my behavior very spontaneous?
- Why don't people always understand my jokes?

(Page from *Brain Building 101*)

20

## 2. Building a Shared Language

- Teach brain language to help them ask questions
- Introduce **highways** and **construction zones**
- Hear **how they describe** strengths and challenges
- Talk about what they've **already built**

[www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

21

# The Parts of the Brain

22

## The Parts of the Brain

- Your brain is made up of many different parts. Each has a different name and a different job.
- What are some things you like to do? How does your brain help you do those things?

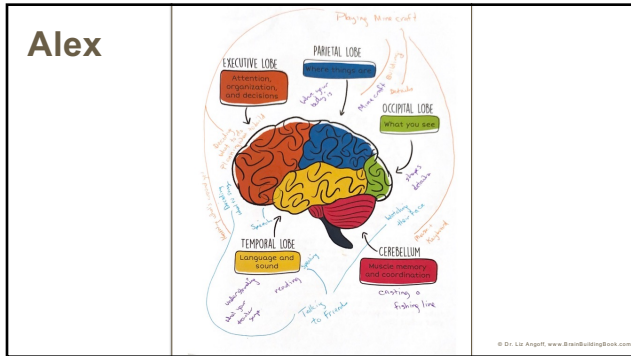
© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

23

## Jo

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

24



25



26

## Highways and Construction Zones

- Your brain works by sending messages from one part to another using special cells called **neurons**.
- Neurons connect to each other, making pathways in your brain like billions of tiny roads.

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

27

## Highways and Construction Zones

- Some things are easy for your brain - we can think of these as your **highways**.
- What are some things that come easily to your brain?

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

28

## Highways and Construction Zones

There are many things your brain makes easy for you to do. These are your brain's highways, where the messages travel at super fast speeds!

Your highways may be things that come easily to you, like...

- Remembering stories and experiences
- Creative ideas
- Making people laugh
- Jumping into new things
- Focusing on things you enjoy

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

29

## Highways and Construction Zones

- Some things are more challenging. We can think of these as **construction zones**, or skills that you are building.
- What are some things that used to be hard? What are you working on next?

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

30

## Highways and Construction Zones

When you try something new or difficult, it may take a little longer for the messages to get where they need to go. That's because the roads are still under construction.

For example, when you were little, you may remember that at first it was hard to...

*wait to share my ideas*

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.brainbuildingbook.com

31

## Highways and Construction Zones

Sometimes your brain doesn't make it easy for you to get from one place to another. When your brain is having a tough time, you may feel frustrated, embarrassed, or just plain tired!

For example, your brain may be working extra hard to...

*Write at the speed of my ideas*

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.brainbuildingbook.com

32

## Assessment Summary Sheet

- Write down highways and construction zones as you discover them
- Use the child's words
- Reference this sheet to explain testing results

[www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

Assessment Summary	
Highways	Construction Zones
Helpful Words	Tools and Construction Crew
Next Steps	

© Dr. Liz Angell

33

### 3. No Surprises!

- There is no "big reveal"
- Answer their questions
- Use the child's words
- Build a child-friendly diagnosis
- Make a plan together

© Dr. Liz Angell, www.brainbuildingbook.com

34

## Alex's Highways

- Puzzles and patterns
- Vocabulary
- Eager participant and learner
- Emerging self-awareness
- Desire to learn and improve!
- Remembers small chunks of information best

There are things that your brain finds easy to do. This means that your neurons have made well-defined pathways to help you get from one place to another. You can think of these as your brain's highways.

What are some things that come easily to you?

Puzzles + patterns  
Vocabulary  
Eager to learn!  
Self-aware  
Remembering small chunks of information.

(Page from *Brain Building 101*)

35

## Alex's Construction Zones

- "Spontaneous behavior"
- Sitting for a long time
- Joke timing
- Focusing on boring things

As you learn new things, your neurons are actively building new connections. You can think of these as construction projects.

When new construction goes smoothly, it feels great! Other times, new construction does not go smoothly. This may feel more like a roadblock, and you may not know how to get through it just yet. That may not feel so great - and is being challenging.

Spontaneous behavior  
Sitting for a long time

What are some things that might be challenging or difficult?

(Page from *Brain Building 101*)

36


## Building a Child-Friendly Diagnosis

In our work together, we learned that your brain is built in a way that makes (highways) come easily and (construction zones) much more difficult.

It turns out - you're not alone! This pattern happens a lot, and we call it **(ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia, etc.)**

Now that we know, our job is to maximize your amazing superpowers and find tools to build those trickier skills so that the hard part gets easier.

Let's make a plan!

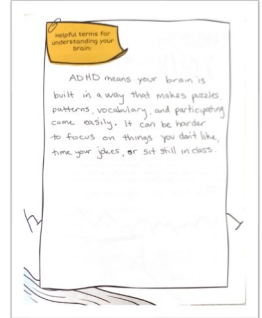


© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

37

## Child-Friendly Diagnosis for Alex

- ADHD:** Your brain is built in a way that makes puzzles and patterns, vocabulary, and participating come easily! It can also be hard to focus on things you don't like, time your jokes, or sit still in class.




(Page from [Brain Building 101](#))

38

## Child-Friendly Diagnosis for Alex

*"My jokes take off but don't always land."*

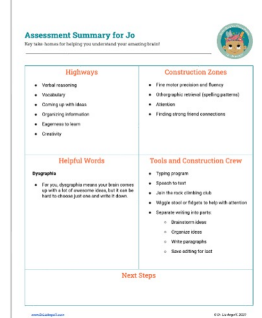


© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

39

## Jo's Highways

- Verbal reasoning
- Vocabulary
- Coming up with ideas
- Organizing information
- Eagerness to learn
- Creativity

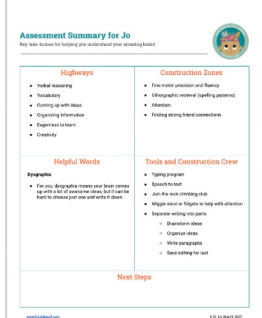


© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

40

## Jo's Construction Zones

- Fine motor skills
- Spelling patterns
- Attention
- Finding strong friend connections



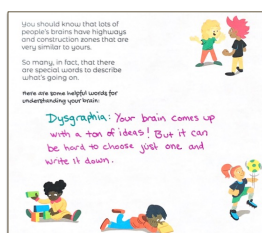
© Dr. Liz Angoff, www.BrainBuildingBook.com

41

## Child-Friendly Diagnosis for Jo

- Dysgraphia:** Your brain has a ton of awesome ideas, but it can be hard to choose just one and write it down.

*"Well, I really do like the ideas part of writing..."*

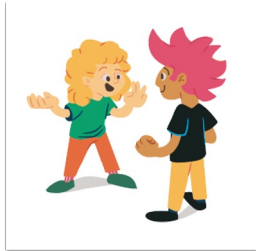


(Page from [The Brain Building Book](#))

42

### Other "Helpful Words"


- Organization
- Time management
- Motivation
- Big feelings
- Self-regulation
- Gear shifting
- Sensory processing
- Processing time
- **Neurodiversity**



43

43

### The Child Feedback Language Guide



Language for explaining diagnostic terms to children

A resource to help explain diagnoses or differences to children, using their own language.

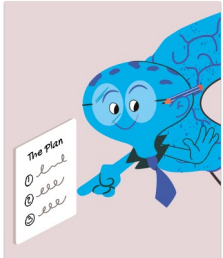
[www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

44

44

### 4. You're Not Alone!

- Normalize their differences
- Celebrate neurodiversity
- Help them develop a positive self-narrative
- Welcome them into an amazing community of importantly different thinkers!



45

45

### Videos and Visuals for Explaining

Tools for Explaining Testing Results and Learning Differences to Kids

Resource Name	Description	URL	Primary Audience	Additional Notes
My 10 Favorite Things About Having ADHD	10 strengths about ADHD	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raFC6dCV2G0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raFC6dCV2G0</a>	Child	Watch with the child and ask them what they connect with! May be best for kids with hyperactive-tyt. Parents or practitioners will want to preview videos to ensure they are relevant to younger children, and watch with them. For teens and young adults, they may enjoy exploring the channel on their own.
How to ADHD	A youtube channel with engaging, short videos about the many aspects of being an ADHDer, including social, academic, and emotional regulation challenges	<a href="https://howtoadhd.com/">https://howtoadhd.com/</a>	Child	Very clever and funny comics - great for elementary through adult
ADHD Comics	Colorful comics depicting the beauty and challenges of the ADHD mind	<a href="https://www.adhd.com/comics/">https://www.adhd.com/comics/</a>	Child	
ADHD Sucks, but Not Really	Saif Mahamane talks about his journey to understanding his ADHD superpowers	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f7CzqG2870">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f7CzqG2870</a>	Child	Recommended for older children
All Dogs Have ADHD	Uses images of dogs doing very cute things to help explain a variety of traits common to ADHD	<a href="http://www.bbc.com/1/health/all-dogs-have-adhd">http://www.bbc.com/1/health/all-dogs-have-adhd</a>	Child	Best for younger elementary
Normal Sucks	A memoir from a neurodivergent writer	<a href="https://www.smithsonianmag.com/normal-sucks/">https://www.smithsonianmag.com/normal-sucks/</a>	Family	Very funny and entertaining read for adults and teens
Ferrari Brain, Bicycle	Dr. Hallowell explains his approach to explaining ADHD	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j6n7d7d7d7">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j6n7d7d7d7</a>	Practitioner	Provides great language for explaining ADHD to school and professionals

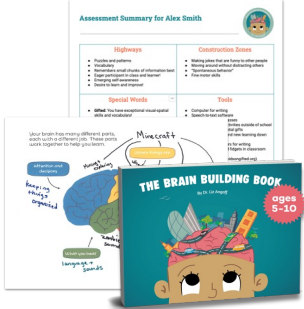
[www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

46

46

### 5. Continued Conversation

- Understanding is a journey, not an event
- Give everyone the same language
- Encourage self-advocacy
- You're not alone!

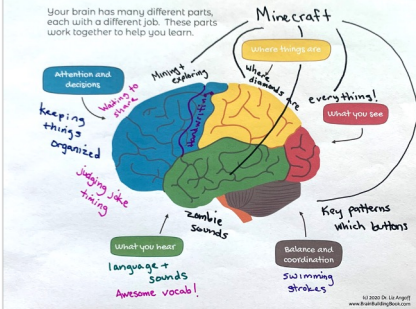


47

47

### Brain Maps

- Visual prompt
- Their words
- Strengths-based



48

48



**Assessment Summary for Alex Smith**

### Assessment Summary Sheet

<p><b>Highways</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puzzles and patterns</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> <li>• Repetitive oral chunks of information (e.g. "Spontaneous behavior")</li> <li>• Paper participation and teamwork</li> <li>• Learning self awareness</li> <li>• Desire to learn and improve</li> <li>• "Spontaneous behavior"</li> </ul>	<p><b>Construction Zones</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making jokes that are funny to other people</li> <li>• Making sound without disturbing others</li> <li>• "Spontaneous behavior"</li> <li>• Fine motor skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Helpful Words</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ASAP</b> Your brain is built in a way that gives you naturally great special opportunities and super cool abilities and it's not to show it to the world but to focus on things you don't like compare your thoughts, then strategies and get all set to do.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete for writing</li> <li>• Search for solutions</li> <li>• Improve and writing classes</li> <li>• Clubs, camps, and activities outside of school to build on social cognitive skills</li> <li>• Break assignments and new learning down into small steps</li> <li>• Use graphic organizers for writing</li> <li>• Always reading and writing in discussion</li> <li>• Extracurriculars</li> </ul>

49 All tools available at [www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

49

### 3 Box Worksheet\*

- For children with lower cognitive and language levels
- Closure and appreciation
- A script for self-advocacy

\*Care of Dr. Skye McLennan

50 [www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com/Handouts)

50

### The Brain Building Books

Customizable workbooks to help children understand their amazing brain!

Learn more at [www.BrainBuildingBook.com](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com)

51

### Tools to empower kids to be strong self-advocates

52

**Thank you for helping kids build their brains!**

Dr. Liz Angoff  
[Liz@DrLizAngoff.com](mailto:Liz@DrLizAngoff.com)  
 More feedback tools available at:  
[www.BrainBuildingBook.com](http://www.BrainBuildingBook.com)  
 Discount code: AET10

53