

Simple Practical Ways to Reduce Stress & Provide Accommodations



Purpose

This quick guide gives 4-H volunteers and staff **simple, practical ways to reduce stress and provide accommodations** so youth of all abilities can participate fully and confidently in club meetings and activities.

Planning with an Inclusive Mindset

- Assume **every youth can participate meaningfully** with the right supports
- Focus on **strengths first**, then adapt around challenges
- Remember: many accommodations benefit **all youth**, not just those with disabilities

Predictable & Clear Meetings

- Share agendas and reminders ahead of time
- Use a **consistent meeting structure** (welcome, activity, project, reflection, wrap-up)
- Preview transitions and changes before they happen
- Use plain, concrete language

Easy, Low Stress Accommodations

Environment & Sensory

- Provide a **quiet or calm space** for regrouping
- Offer flexible seating and movement options
- Adjust lighting or noise when possible
- Allow sensory tools (fidgets, headphones) as needed

Communication & Instruction

- Give directions **verbally and visually**
- Break tasks into **small, manageable steps**
- Provide examples or models of finished work
- Allow extra processing time

Materials & Tasks

- Offer adapted tools (large scissors, grips, pre-cut materials)
- Allow alternative ways to complete or show work
- Use peer buddies or mentors when helpful



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Supporting Behavior & Regulation

- State expectations clearly and positively
- Use visual cues, timers, and transition warnings
- Offer breaks **before frustration builds**
- Recognize that behavior is communication
- Use **specific, strengths-based praise**

Choice, Voice & Belonging

- Offer choices in roles, materials, and participation
- Encourage teamwork and peer support
- Model inclusive language and behavior
- Publicly recognize kindness, effort, and inclusion

Partnering with Families & Volunteers

- Ask families what works well at home or school

- Communicate early about supports and preferences
- Share accommodation plans with volunteers as appropriate
- Hold brief check-ins and adjust as needed

Volunteer Quick Tips

When in doubt:

Predictable + Visual + Flexible + Supportive = Inclusive 4-H

DO:

- Keep routines consistent
- Offer choices and flexibility
- Modify tools and environment, not expectations
- Celebrate growth and effort

AVOID:

- Assuming one strategy works for all youth
- Surprising youth with sudden changes
- Using punitive responses for sensory-driven behaviors

