

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DIFFERENT DIAGNOSES

A Practical Guide for Teacher Aides

A diagnosis gives clues, but connection creates change.

Every child is unique.
Every behaviour tells a story.
Every child deserves to feel understood.

AUTISM

You might notice:
- Difficulty with changes
- Need for extra processing time
- Social challenges
- Strong interests
- Sensory overload

What helps:
- Clear, concrete instructions
- Visual supports
- Warn before changes
- Movement or sensory breaks
- Remember: behaviour is communication.



ADHD

You might notice:
- Difficulty starting work
- Forgetting instructions
- Constant movement
- Talking impulsively
- Emotional ups and downs
- Losing equipment

What helps:
- One instruction at a time
- Visual reminders
- Break work into chunks
- Movement opportunities
- Praise effort, not just completion



AuDHD

You might notice:
- Craves routine but gets bored
- Wants friends but struggles socially
- Needs quiet yet seeks movement
- Big feelings

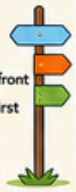
What helps:
- Consistency
- Flexibility
- Curiosity
- Co-regulation
- Understanding



PDA
(Pathological Demand Avoidance)

You might notice:
- Avoiding simple requests
- Negotiating everything
- Different ability day to day
- Using humour or distraction to avoid tasks

What helps:
- Reduce pressure
- Offer choices
- Work alongside
- Collaborate, don't confront
- Relationship comes first



OCD

You might notice:
- Excessive checking
- Reassurance seeking
- Erasing or redoing work
- Washing hands often
- Repeating actions

What helps:
- Don't provide endless reassurance
- Follow agreed strategies
- Work with parents and support team



ODD
(Oppositional Defiant Disorder)

You might notice:
- Arguing
- Defiance
- Easily annoyed
- Blaming others
- Refusing to follow rules

What helps:
- Build relationships
- Offer choices
- Stay calm
- Pick your battles
- Catch them being successful



DYSLEXIA

You might notice:
- Difficulty with reading
- Slow reading
- Spelling challenges
- Avoiding reading/writing tasks

What helps:
- Read instructions aloud
- Extra time
- Use audiobooks
- Focus on strengths
- Never assume intelligence from reading ability



DYSGRAPHIA

You might notice:
- Poor handwriting
- Writing is slow or painful
- Difficulty organising ideas on paper
- Avoiding writing tasks

What helps:
- Offer typing
- Use speech-to-text
- Reduce copying
- Accept alternative ways to show learning



DYSPRAXIA / DCD
(Developmental Coordination Disorder)

You might notice:
- Clumsiness
- Difficulty with coordination
- Trouble with handwriting, cutting, tying shoes
- Disorganised

What helps:
- Extra time
- Organised workspace
- Step-by-step demos
- Encouragement



TOURETTE SYNDROME

You might notice:
- Tics (sounds or movements)
- Fluctuating tics
- Increased tics with stress

What helps:
- Ignore the tic when possible
- Focus on learning
- Educate classmates
- Reduce stress



ANXIETY



You might notice:
- Worrying
- Avoiding tasks or situations
- Physical complaints (e.g. stomach aches)
- Irritability or shutting down

What helps:
- Provide predictability
- Build trusted relationships
- Break tasks into small steps
- Offer reassurance (not over-reassurance)
- Create a safe space

THE COMMON THREAD

Strategies that help most children – across all diagnoses:

- Clear routines
- Visual supports
- Extra processing time
- Positive relationships
- Predictability & structure
- Movement breaks
- Choice
- Reduce sensory overload
- Be understood before being corrected

When we support neurodivergent students, we create classrooms that work better for **everyone.**

WHAT MATTERS MOST

- Observe before judging.
- Support before correcting.
- Connect before directing.

The greatest intervention you can provide is being the adult who helps a child feel safe, capable and understood.



TOP 10 THINGS EVERY TEACHER AIDE SHOULD REMEMBER

1. You don't need to know everything about a diagnosis.
2. Build relationships – it's your superpower.
3. Behaviour is communication.
4. Small changes can make a big difference.
5. Consistency and calm help children feel safe.
6. Focus on strengths, not just challenges.
7. Celebrate progress – any progress!
8. Work as a team with teachers, families and professionals.
9. Look after yourself – you can't pour from an empty cup.
10. You make a difference every single day.



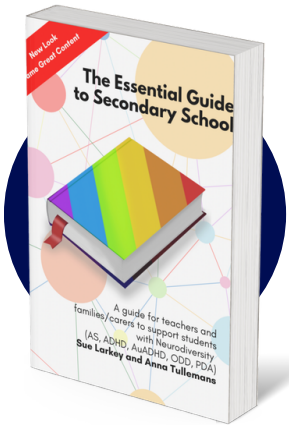
BE THE ADULT WHO BELIEVES IN THE CHILD.

You may never know the impact you have, but for the child you're supporting, it can change their world.

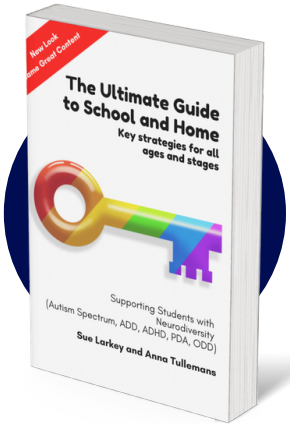
Every child. Every day.
You make the difference.

Sue's Top Pics for
TEACHER ASSISTANTS

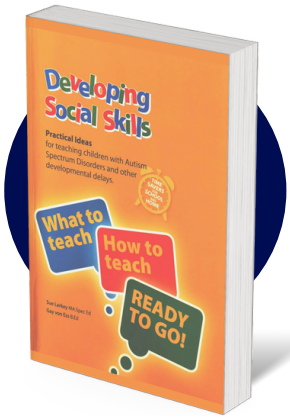
Sue Larkey Books



The Essential Guide to Secondary School



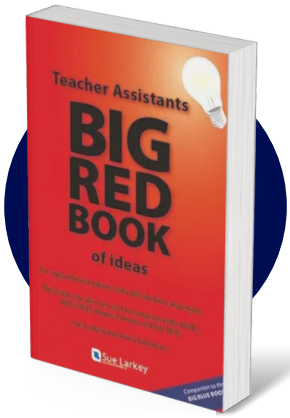
The Ultimate Guide to School and Home



Developing Social Skills



MEGA BOOK of Timesavers



Teacher Assistant's Big Red Book of Ideas



Teacher Assistant's Big Blue Book of Ideas

Sensory Tools



Porcupine Keyring



Liquid Timers



Portable Schedule Timer



Time Timer

SALE!

ONLY $49

UNTIL

8TH SEPTEMBER 2026

TEACHER ASSISTANTS' COURSES

Making a Difference to Neurodiverse Students (AS, ODD, PDA, ADHD etc)



Sue Larkey

Teaching & Support Strategies



Dean Beadle

Connection & Engagement



Anna Tullemans

Behaviour - Why & What to do

ON- DEMAND COURSES
Learn Anywhere, Any Time, Any Device

How to Teach & Support Neurodiverse Students

Sue Larkey (Teacher)

Teaching & Support Strategies - This course is designed for Teacher Assistants* to help support students with diverse needs to engage and learn. You can select topics of interest to you and your students. This method allows you to learn at your own pace. It also included great time savers e.g. templates ready to download and cheat sheets to use immediately. Sue Larkey in her first class had a child with Autism Spectrum who inspired her to specialise in Autism Spectrum. Sue formalized her speciality by completed a Masters in Education with a Major in Autism Spectrum.

elearning.suelarkey.com.au

Understanding & Meeting the Needs of Neurodiverse Students

Dean Beadle (Autistic Speaker & Leading UK Education Trainer) & Sue Larkey (Teacher)

Connection & Engagement - In this course Dean shares Myths and Misunderstandings about Autism, Executive Functioning and Link to Anxiety, Social Needs & Emotions, Transformative impact Teacher Assistants can Make, How to Disclose Diagnosis, Important of Autistic Joy & More. Dean Beadle uses his lived experience, as Autistic, and knowledge training 1000s of school staff to provide strategies and ideas to meet the needs and Neurodiverse of students.

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Behaviour Strategies for Teacher Assistants to Support Neurodiverse Students

Anna Tullemans (Teacher Assistant, Parent, Consultant) & Sue Larkey (Teacher)

Behaviour - Why & What to do - In this course Anna & Sue share tips and strategies to understand why you often get behaviour and what to do. This course will help you know what to do when you see a behaviour and why. Providing proven strategies and tips. Everything from: Why you see good and bad days in Neurodiverse Students, Understanding Anxiety, Why your current strategies might not be working as well as Common Questions on Behaviour and What to Do. Includes template to create a Behaviour Plan & Case Study. Anna Tullemans passion for Autism Spectrum stems from her personal experience when her now adult son was diagnosed at the age of six. Her work includes helping implement many practical strategies for students in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

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Who Should do the Courses:

*Teacher Assistants are called different names depending on where you are eg Teacher Aides, SSO, ESO, Teaching Assistants, Educational Assistants, Classroom Assistants, Instructional Aides, Paraprofessionals, Paraeducators

Register & More Information:

- elearning.suelarkey.com.au
- Email support@suelarkey.com.au
- Group Discounts Available email support@suelarkey.com.au

All Courses

- 2 Hours
- 6 weeks to complete
- Handout includes Additional Templates and Tips
- IT Support
- Certificate Issued on Completion of Course