

- here's the meat and potatoes: When you're trying to change or encourage a particular behavior, "capability" is the first and most important place to start. Many people believe that if someone doesn't appear to be motivated, it's because they don't want it. People hardly ever look deeper to find that someone actually does want something, they just don't have the capacity and capability. As a coach, I see this every day when talking to parents. They tell me they've been trying for years to compel their kid to get a job, wake up on time, you name it. Then I talk to the kid directly, and they tell me
- that they love the idea of having a job or magically being able to wake up on time. They're just so deep in Defense Mode and so low on energy & emotional capacity that the idea sounds like wishful thinking.
For example, let's say that your child didn't do their homework. That might be 100% a motivation issue in the sense that they were out of Defense Mode, and they had all the time, knowledge, [Spoons](#) (emotional capacity), resources, etc. to do it and they just simply chose not to. However, the vast majority of the time I've found it's actually a capability issue, first and foremost. There was something going on under the surface, and they felt blocked in some way, either internally or
- externally.
As Carl Alasko, Ph.D said so succinctly, "Everyone is always doing as well as they can within their personal limitations, their personal history, what they know and don't know and what they're feeling in that moment. If they could make a healthier decision, they would. This includes you."

If you're ever unsure, give your child the benefit of the doubt. Assume that they really do (or at least could) want it, and it's just a capability issue. Even if it's a mix, and it's 90% "I didn't want to" and 10% "I felt blocked", then address the 10% first. You'll be trying to swim upstream until you do.

To overcome these sorts of "upstream situations," you need to understand and address all the different kinds of capability issues, which tend to fall into one of three categories.

Three Kinds of Capability Issues

1. Personal Capability

If I ask you to buy this shiny new product for \$40 and you only

have \$20 in your wallet, then it doesn't matter how good a salesman I am, I'm never going to make that sale. If your son doesn't understand how to do his math homework, then it's going to be very tricky to convince him to "just do it because it's important." Your daughter normally loves people, but today she is in Defense Mode and out of Spoons so going to that family party tonight is probably the last thing on her mind.

- That's what this category is all about.

Personal capability deals with things such as knowledge and skill, whether or not they're in Defense Mode, emotional capacity (Spoons), physical capability, time, access to resources such as money or tools... you get the idea. Before you can accomplish something, you need to be physically, emotionally, and mentally capable of doing it.

The majority of capability blocks tend to fall into this category.

2. Third-Person Capability

If someone else is involved or needed for a particular task, then your child's ability to accomplish that task will depend heavily on that person's availability and willingness to do their part. For example, if you need information from your boss to finish a project, but you can't contact of him or her, then you are blocked.

Another version of a Third-Person capability block would be someone else (intentionally or not) creating a situation in which it becomes more difficult to accomplish XYZ, such as having a friend that encourages your child to ignore their homework since they don't think it's important (peer pressure).

If the needed person is absent then you and your child will have to get creative and see if you can accomplish the task without the other person (or in spite of them). Alternatively, you can try to contact them to explain what you need and/or draw a boundary with them. It's not always a guarantee that you'll be able to reach them or that they will say "yes."

Third-Person capability is by far the most difficult to solve out of the three because it's the most difficult to influence directly.

3. Environmental Capability

Your environment can either work for you or against you. It's more difficult to stay strong on a diet if there's lots of unhealthy snacks throughout the house. You're a lot less likely to exercise if

your gym is twenty minutes out of your way. Likewise, if your child has sensory issues and can't stand the smell of your bathroom, then they will not want to go in there to do basic hygiene. Your child is a lot less likely to do their homework if they can't find a pencil. Alternatively, it might be difficult

- for them to study and focus on a messy kitchen table with the TV and 17 1/2 small children blaring in the background.

Examine your environment and see if there's anything you can change, add, or take away in order to make it easier to do XYZ. After all, swimming upstream is so tiring.

[Note: This was an excerpt from our book "7 Easy Ways To Motivate Someone With Asperger's". If you'd like to keep reading, you can purchase the book here.](#)

Talk soon,
Asperger Experts