



# PRESUMING COMPETENCE

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## **TIPS FOR PRESUMING COMPETENCE**

1. If possible, let person explain for him/herself and do not speak for them.
2. Support communication: may include use of dry erase boards, gestures, typing, picture symbols, letter boards, etc.
3. Speak directly to the person with the disability, not their care taker
4. Talk to someone in an age appropriate voice and topic.
5. Focus on what the person can do.
6. Include the person in IEPs and goal planning.
7. Let a person make their own decision, allow time.
8. Find a way to include him/her in the conversation.
9. Teach peers and others how to interpret potentially confusing behavior.
10. Ask permission to share information about them.
11. Do not speak in front of someone as if they were not there or cannot understand.

Presuming Competence means operating from the wholehearted belief that every individual has ability to think, learn and understand, even if they may not be demonstrating this is the case. It is important for parents, teachers, therapists and everyone in a child's life to understand this concept. If we did not presume competence, we would be severely limiting this individual's opportunities, relationships, and experiences. This can lead to emotional and behavioral concerns.

### **EXAMINE MOTOR DIFFERENCES:**

We are so reliant upon our motor system for the expression of what we know, whether this is using the muscles of the face and neck to speak words or our eyes and fingers to write, type or point. Many individuals have challenges within the motor system, including those with autism, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, dyspraxia, and more. It is very important that we presume the competence of these individuals, rather than narrow our expectations and beliefs because they cannot easily show us what they know. So often "showing" requires the use of the motor system.

### **EXPERIENCE THIS:**

Without using speech or accurately moving your body, answer the following question: What is your favorite color? Recognize significant difference between what can understand and what you are able to demonstrate.

### **INTELLIGENCE TESTING:**

It is often some sort of standardized testing that dictates someone's educational opportunities, as well as overall experiences presented to them. The vast majority of standardized testing, especially intelligence testing requires some sort of motor based response. These requirements may be in the form of fine motor, visual-motor, or the oral motor needs to produce speech. Unfortunately, they oftentimes identify what individuals cannot do rather than what they might do if they had good instruction and proper support. Therapists at Family Tree Therapies would love to help provide this support!



Family Tree Therapies is a multi-disciplinary therapy clinic specializing in occupational and speech & language therapy. We help families **IDENTIFY** the underlying factors contributing to the concerns at hand, **UNDERSTAND** how these factors impact language, development, learning, play and friendships, and **EMPOWER** your family with tools and strategies for overcoming such factors.