

Asking Why

With the CAIS: A Guide to Supporting a Person and Their Cognitive Abilities

VOLUME III: Teaching Why with The CAIS Educational Series

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Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS)

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This entire three-volume manual is available on the Michigan Improving MI Practices (IMP) website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

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We welcome feedback.

Please comment on the *improvingmipractices.org* website where indicated.

Disclaimer:

This CAIS three-volume manual is not sufficient for the understanding, assessment, or intervention regarding any individual person or situation. In each individual case, a health professional must be consulted. This manual simply presents ideas from which to draw and apply as appropriate. The suggestions here will not be appropriate for every person in every situation.

**INTRODUCTION
TO
VOLUME III**

**Teaching Why
With the CAIS Educational Series**

This is Volume III of the **three-volume manual** “Asking Why with the CAIS: A Guide to Supporting a Person and Their Cognitive Abilities”. Volume I is “Understanding Why with Concepts, Tips, and CAIS Examples”. Volume II is “Addressing Why with the CAIS Questions to Ask and Intervention Strategies”.

On Website: All three volumes of the CAIS manual, as well as the online course “Beyond Behavior: The CAIS” (described at the end of this introduction) are on the Improving MI Practices website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

Volume III of this manual is comprised solely of the “Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS) Educational Series: Understanding and Supporting a Person’s Cognitive Abilities”.

Content in Volume III

- Introduction to Volume III that is an **in-depth overview** of the CAIS Educational Series
- **Brief introduction** to the CAIS Educational Series curriculum with more specific instructions
- Curriculum of **five one-hour sessions** to present with a script, handouts, slides, and evaluation forms for each session
- List of **additional resources**

This introduction to Volume III provides an overview of the CAIS Educational Series.

“**The CAIS Educational Series: Introduction**” introduces the CAIS Educational Series more briefly and with a different focus. It gives practical and orienting suggestions and a brief description of the series that will be helpful as you prepare to use this curriculum of five sessions. This briefer introduction is also included in this Volume III.

Volume III, the entire **CAIS Educational Series** (including all five sessions and the brief introduction), and the **background resources** listed at the end of this introduction to Volume III, are available on the following **website**: The Michigan Improving MI Practices (IMP) website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

The series is a curriculum of five one-hour sessions to be **presented** by an instructor, facilitator, or advisor. It is not designed to be an online course, but can be adapted as a virtual presentation. (This is NOT a script for the online course called "Beyond Behavior: The CAIS", though it does share some content and can be used to prepare for the online course. Viewing the online course can also help you prepare to present or use these curriculum sessions. The online course is described at the end of this introduction and is available on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>)

Please note, the word "**participant**" here refers to someone who is attending the presentation or is participating in an informal sharing of the content. "**Person**" here refers to a person the participant is assisting or relating to outside of these sessions.

Five Sessions

The CAIS Educational Series consists of **five sessions**:

1. The Brain and Cognition
2. Cognitive Abilities
3. The Environment
4. Communication
5. The Task

Sessions 2-5 include **informal questions** for a participant to learn to ask themselves regarding the session topic. This is to help the participant **understand why** a person they assist or relate to is having difficulty understanding, communicating, or performing a task, or is feeling distressed, or why there are distressing situations. This will then help the participant know better how to help this person and how to prevent or reduce distressing situations.

When given formally as a presentation, each session is **approximately one hour long**, depending on how much time is devoted to discussion or to various topics.

Use Formally or Informally

These sessions can be presented **formally** to a class or an audience, or shared **informally** with a group or one-on-one during a conversation, discussion, or problem-solving meeting.

You can use as much or as little of each session as you prefer, whether in a presentation or in informal sharing. You will likely not use all the script in every session. There are parts that are identified as content that you might want to include if you have time.

You might sometimes decide to avoid the parts of the session that involve group discussion about a person and a task. This is discussed in more detail below.

Once you have learned the script, you may decide to modify it to fit your style, the situation, and the needs or preferences of the participants you are presenting to or using it with.

Structure of each session

1. Title Page
2. Detailed **script** for a presentation or as content for a conversation. The script includes objectives, discussion questions, and content to present, among other suggestions.
3. **Slides** to show or to copy as handouts
4. **Handouts** to distribute to session participants
5. **Evaluation** forms:
 - a. Pre-session form to be completed by participants at the beginning of each session
 - b. Post-session form to be completed by participants at the end of each session
 - c. Educator's Evaluation form of the educational session to be completed by the educator after each session.

You do not need to have experience as an instructor to use a session as a presentation to a class or audience. The **detailed script** and **notations** within the script help to facilitate the presentation. There are also times for discussion that is part of the session structure.

The pre-session and post-session evaluation forms are for you to have feedback you can review about the session. The completed forms can alert you to how well participants learned the concepts in the session. The educator's evaluation form is for you to record your insights regarding the session so you can review them later when you are trying to improve your presentation. These three evaluation forms are optional.

The CAIS Questions and Interventions and the Educational Series Curriculum

The sessions include some questions, concepts, and content from the *Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS) Questions to Ask* and the *CAIS Intervention Strategies* that are presented in Volume II of this manual and are available on the IMP website

<https://www.improvingmipractices.org> But the sessions do NOT directly include the CAIS Questions and Interventions themselves. The CAIS Questions and Interventions are mentioned in the session handouts as a resource. They can be a resource for you as you prepare to present or use the content from the sessions, since the questions in these sessions are similar to those in the CAIS. The introduction to Volume II outlines the structure of the CAIS and Chapters 1-5 in Volume I include examples to illustrate the structure of the *CAIS Questions to Ask* and the *CAIS Intervention Strategies*.

Goal:

The overall goal of the Educational Series is to increase a participant's ability to **understand** and **help** a person they are assisting or relating to, and to understand and **adapt** the **conditions** around this person in order to make **communication** and **tasks easier** for this person. This will help this person and the participant to feel more **comfortable** and **competent** and to enjoy their time together. It will also help **reduce distress** and distressing situations.

The specific goals are to help a participant to:

1. **Ask why** a person is having difficulty communicating or performing a task, or is upset, and why distressing situations are occurring.
2. Use the concept of informally **asking themselves questions** similar to those in the *CAIS Questions to Ask* about a person's cognitive abilities, environment, communication, and their task and daily routines. (These sessions do not include the actual CAIS questions and intervention strategies.)
3. Feel confident about asking questions since those suggested are **simple** questions about **everyday situations**.
4. Recognize the value of asking these questions to better **understand why** a person is having difficulty communicating or performing a task, or is distressed.
5. Understand cognitive abilities in a natural, intuitive way, using five phases of cognitive processing.
6. Identify a few of the very many specific **cognitive abilities** a person has.
7. Ask themselves questions about this person's cognitive abilities to understand and identify this person's **cognitive strengths** and **needs**
8. Make communicating and performing tasks easier for this person by understanding and addressing the **reasons** they are difficult.
9. Prevent and reduce distressing situations that are frustrating, confusing, and difficult for both this person and the participant, by **addressing the causes** of the difficulty and distress.

Sometimes participants are too exhausted or too close to a situation to be able to keep an objective perspective and to analyze various factors within the situation. Sometimes participants are just not accustomed to analyzing a situation or a person's abilities, needs, and behavior. This curriculum gives them enough information to help them gain some perspective from the point of view of this person they are assisting.

It helps participants have more information when they leave a situation than they did when they entered it. So when a situation is frustrating, they have a way of immediately asking themselves why the situation is occurring and how to prevent and respond to the distress in the situation.

The curriculum encourages participants to search for solutions by examining and addressing the likely causes or triggers.

It also helps the participants see ways in which **they themselves unintentionally engage in behavior** that may be seen as difficult or distressing to a person they interact with.

Cognitive Abilities

Cognitive abilities are a person's ability to think, understand, respond, remember, and imagine among many other skills that help a person perform tasks and interact with other people and their surroundings. Cognitive abilities are closely tied to the brain. When the **brain changes**, specific cognitive abilities usually change.

For Whom

1. You as a **presenter** or someone who shares this content, can be anyone. You could be a family member, friend, or an educator, counselor, staff development or in-service staff member, consultant, supervisor, mental health professional, social worker, or health care professional.
2. A **participant** of the sessions can be anyone interested in improving a relationship with a person or improving a person's ability to communicate and perform tasks, and to feel comfortable.
3. A participant may be a family member, friend, or someone who interacts with the public in a store, bank, or restaurant or as a mail carrier or police officer. They could also be direct care staff, group home staff, home care staff, staff of assisted living, day program staff, supervisors, nurses, social workers, or other staff and professionals.
4. A participant with any level of skill, knowledge, or experience can benefit from participating.
5. For formally presenting and informally advising, participants should be participating at a time when they are not overwhelmed or emotionally or physically tired. It is helpful to time the presentation or sharing when a participant feels **ready** to hear and understand.
6. Participants who use the information and insights from the sessions for advising, writing care/intervention/treatment plans, family or staff problem solving, or addressing an immediate or on-going issue will benefit.
7. A participant may be someone who is assisting or relating to a **person** with only a few or with many cognitive challenges. This could range from a person learning a new skill or to a person who cannot easily understand, respond, speak, or move. This person may be living with a brain disorder such as attentional deficit disorder, autism, stroke, traumatic brain injury, Down syndrome, dementia (or major neurocognitive disorder), or a psychiatric illness.
8. The concepts and intervention or support strategies in this manual **apply to any person, in any setting, and to a person or participant involved with any interaction or task**, including a leisure activity, activity of daily living, decision-making, or an unusual situation.

Bathing or showering is used frequently to illustrate the concepts and strategies, since **bathing and showering involve** a variety of **challenges that can make any task difficult**. But a participant who does not assist with bathing or showering, can still benefit since the concepts and strategies do apply to other tasks and to interactions with a person.

Concepts and Messages

These sessions help a participant understand the role the brain and each of four factors (a person's cognitive abilities, their environment, communication, and their task and daily routines) play in making it easier for this person to communicate, perform a task, or to feel comfortable and competent. By examining each of the factors, the participant can discover how to modify the environment, their interactions with this person, and the structure and timing of the task to be

more supportive of this person. By doing so, the participant more effectively accommodates **this person's cognitive strengths and needs**. This reduces distress and distressing situations.

The emphasis is on **cognitive abilities and brain functioning** rather than simply behavior. It is usually the changing brain not manipulation, stubbornness, or willfulness, that underlies the challenges and behavior that is distressing. These sessions can help foster compassion, tolerance, empathy, and patience by increasing knowledge and understanding of the person they are relating to.

The questions are presented in an easy and informal way, with real, everyday tasks and recommendations.

These sessions show participants **what to observe** and **how to ask why** a person is distressed, having trouble performing a task, or is engaging in behavior that creates distress. They show how to search for solutions by examining and addressing the likely causes or triggers. The questions and information provided are directly accessible and can be **easily used** by participants. The interventions or support strategies that evolve from the questions are concrete and practical and can create positive situations and interactions.

Bathing and Showering as Task Illustrations

Bathing or showering is used more frequently than some examples to illustrate concepts in this Educational Series in a concrete way. This is usually because of all tasks, **bathing or showering** can be the most **difficult** for a person with many cognitive needs, due to the complex emotional, social, physical, and cognitive aspects of this task. Some of these aspects include abstract and concrete decision making, perception, body movement, and modesty issues. These involve cognitive abilities that may be difficult for this person and can make any task difficult as was noted earlier.

Quite often bathing, showering, or washing are tasks identified by participants as the most challenging and distressing of tasks to assist with or perform. For some persons anxiety and discomfort can be extreme. There are many reasons for this. Some of the reasons are explored in these sessions.

Tips and concepts that apply to bathing and showering generally **apply to most other tasks**. So even if a participant doesn't assist a person with washing, bathing, or showering, the concepts, techniques, questions, and interventions can be used with nearly any task, interaction, or situation the participant does encounter.

The assumption is if a participant can assist a person with understanding and compassion while this person is taking a bath or shower, the participant can most likely assist well with most other tasks.

Discussion of a Task for These Sessions

The script for the first session suggests the presenter **observe** and/or **discuss** with a person's care partners (or caregivers) **before the first session**, a bath, shower, or other **task**. This task then becomes a focus for discussion to **illustrate** the **concepts** presented **throughout the five sessions**. It can work especially well when the participants are familiar with this person or situation, though that might be unusual. The presenter would receive **updates** about this person and their experience of the task before each session to note any changes that have occurred since the previous session. The participants may have had a chance to use some of the concepts with this person between sessions. The script suggests the presenter get appropriate **permission** to observe, talk with care partners (or caregivers), and discuss this person or the situation during the sessions. This person will not need to attend any of the sessions. This process will need to be conducted with appropriate **respect** and **discretion**.

If you as the presenter choose to **avoid** using the parts of each session that discuss the participants' experience with a particular task, or you choose to keep the discussion **generic** and encourage participants to share some of their own experiences independent of your familiarity, then this observation and process described above will not be necessary.

What Makes the CAIS Educational Series Unique

- The curriculum can be adapted to the presenter and to the participants and setting.
- It can be applied to a person at any level of independence and dependence, including a person with many cognitive needs.
- The content is intuitive and easy to understand. It applies to everyday situations and uses informal everyday language. There is a minimum of technical language.
- The content can be presented or shared formally or informally.
- The focus is on cognition and understanding cognitive abilities, rather than simply behavior or emotional status.
- The curriculum addresses causes.
- The questions help a participant ask why this particular situation is occurring.
- It focuses on aspects of the environment, communication, and the task structure and timing, in addition to this person.

Additional Information and Help

Instructions: A **brief** introduction to the CAIS Educational series is in this Volume III. It gives **practical** and **orienting** suggestions. Its title is "**The CAIS Educational Series: Introduction**".

Five Chapters: The focus of each session is similar to the focus of each of the **Chapters 1-5** in the background resources in Volume I. The chapters are an elaboration of these sessions. The chapters can be a resource for you in preparation for presenting or using the sessions.

CAIS Handouts: There are a total of 43 CAIS Handouts in Volume I that **supplement the information** provided in the Educational Series curriculum. These handouts can be resources for you to read as you prepare to present or use information, and for you to distribute to participants, in addition to the handouts already a part of the curriculum.

These CAIS handouts:

- Provide **more detail and depth**.
- Address **additional topics** that are related but not included.
- Are useful as **background** material to review before presenting the curriculum content.
- Focus on **specific issues**, such as tips for sharing information, interventions for visuospatial abilities, and helping a person make decisions.
- Can be helpful for participants to **read outside** of sessions.

Two specific CAIS handouts, #39 about sharing information with others, and **#5 about how to recognize a person’s cognitive abilities** (that is, their cognitive strengths and needs) might be particularly helpful to you as the presenter or advisor. These are listed in the “Additional Resources” section below.

These and additional resources are listed below.

Additional Resources

For more information about the brain, cognitive abilities, the environment, communication, the task, and the CAIS, (as well as this CAIS Educational Series curriculum) that is easily accessible and easy to read see:

1. **“The CAIS Educational Series: Introduction”** in Volume III. It gives a brief overview of the series and **practical** and orienting suggestions. It is **more specific** than this general introduction to Volume III. It is on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
2. The Michigan **Improving MI Practices (IMP) website** at this link: <https://www.improvingmipractices.org> Many **resources** regarding the **brain, mental health, brain changes, and cognition** are on this IMP website. This IMP website also has this entire CAIS Educational Series curriculum, the entire three-volume manual with background resources, the 43 CAIS Handouts, the entire CAIS Questions and Intervention Strategies, and the CAIS online course described below. The **CAIS Questions** and **Intervention Strategies** are available in an **interactive format** and as pdf documents on this website as well.
3. **Chapters 1 through 5 in Volume I** that give background information related to the topics in this curriculum. They also give examples to illustrate how the *CAIS Questions to Ask and the CAIS Intervention Strategies* are structured for all four parts. The topics of the five chapters are: The Brain, Cognitive Abilities, The Environment, Communication, and The Task and Daily Routines, respectively. These are also posted on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
4. **CAIS Handouts of Information and Suggestions in Volume I**. These can be distributed as handouts. They are additional resources on a variety of topics with more in-depth information about the brain, cognitive abilities, and intervention and support strategies. They are at the end of Volume I and are on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org> There is a list of the handouts that are especially relevant to the brain, cognitive abilities, the environment, communication, and the task at the end of each chapter that addresses each topic respectively in Volume I.

5. CAIS Handout #39 “**Sharing Ideas with Others: Suggestions for Sharing Information, Support, and Intervention Ideas**” at the end of Volume I in the section called “**CAIS Handouts**” and on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
6. CAIS Handout #5 “**Recognizing Cognitive Abilities: Suggestions for Recognizing Evidence of a Person’s Cognitive Strengths and Needs**” at the end of Volume I in the section called “**CAIS Handouts**” and on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
7. **Volume II** with the entire *CAIS Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies* and **instructions** for all four parts: Cognitive Abilities, Environment, Communication, Task and Daily Routines. The *CAIS Questions to Ask* is a more formalized way of asking the questions presented in sessions 2-4 of this curriculum. The CAIS is described at the end of the handouts included in Sessions 2-4. The entire *CAIS Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies* with instructions and introductions and all of Volume II are posted on the IMP website at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
8. The **Online Course** of five one-hour modules called “Beyond Behavior: The Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS): Modules 1-5”. They address the brain, cognitive abilities, the environment, communication, and the task and daily routines, respectively. The modules explore **concepts** and give **examples** and **tips** from the *CAIS Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies*. The modules also show **how to use** each of the **four parts** of the CAIS Questions and Intervention Strategies. The **title** and **content** of each **module** in the online course **correspond** to the title and content of each **session** of the CAIS Educational Series curriculum in this Volume III. The content and context of the curriculum sessions and online course modules, while similar, **treat the topics differently**, because they each have a different focus and **purpose**. The online course can be viewed as preparation for presenting or using the five curriculum sessions. The curriculum sessions which encourage the participant to assess and ask “Why?” as a way to understand cognitive abilities and behavior, can also be reviewed as preparation for viewing the online course with its focus on a more formalized way of asking “Why?”. The entire online course including all five modules is available for you to view or take on the IMP **website** at <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>