

## **Asking Why**

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

# **VOLUME I: Understanding Why with Concepts, Tips, and CAIS Examples**

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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 I

### Understanding Why With Concepts, Tips, and CAIS Examples

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

**On Website:** All three volumes of the CAIS manual, the CAIS Questions and Interventions, and the online course called “Beyond Behavior: The CAIS” (described at the end of this introduction) are on the Improving MI Practices website at

<https://www.improvingmipractices.org>

#### **Background Information**

Volume I explores issues and gives in-depth background information helpful for **understanding** and **using**: the **CAIS Questions** and **Intervention Strategies** in **Volume II**; the curriculum sessions of the **CAIS Educational Series** in **Volume III**; and the **Online Course** called “**Beyond Behavior: The CAIS**” that shows the structure of the CAIS and how to use it.

#### **Content in Volume I**

- Introduction to the three-volume CAIS manual and a Table of Contents
- Introduction to Volume I
- **Five chapters** with tips, concepts, and examples that illustrate the structure of the CAIS. They discuss issues related to understanding a person and a situation to help generate support and intervention strategies.
- Introduction to the CAIS Handouts
- **List** of the 43 CAIS Handouts
- **CAIS Handouts** with information, tips, and suggestions on a variety of topics. These are 43 summary sheets to distribute. They provide information and suggestions with a more focused and in-depth look at some of the topics addressed in this manual and in the CAIS.
- **Lists of additional resources**

**Volume I** consists of **five chapters** that explore tips, concepts, and issues related to understanding a person and a situation. Examples to illustrate the structure of the CAIS are included. The chapters address the brain and cognition, cognitive abilities, the environment, communication, and the task and daily routines, respectively. Volume I also includes a total of

Introduction to Volume I: Understanding Why with Concepts, Tips, and CAIS Examples.

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43 **CAIS Handouts** that provide information, tips, and suggestions on a variety of topics. These handouts are summary sheets that can be reviewed and distributed for a more focused and in-depth look at some of the topics addressed in this manual, the CAIS, and the online course.

**Volume II** presents the *Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS) Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies* along with instructions. **Volume III** presents the **CAIS Educational Series** a five-session CAIS **curriculum** that can be presented **formally** in a class setting or **informally** in one-to-one conversations or in a group as part of problem solving or discussion. Volumes II and III are described in the introduction to the manual. The **online course** is described at the end of this introduction and at the end of the introduction to the manual.

### **The CAIS**

As noted above, volume I gives background information that can help you understand the CAIS and its approach in more depth.

The **CAIS** presented in **Volume II** is a guide to **simple, concrete, practical, everyday** ways to support a person and make this person's tasks and interactions with their environment and other people **easier**. They also can help prevent and reduce **distress** and **distressing situations**.

The CAIS consists of **four parts**:

1. Cognitive Abilities
2. The Environment
3. Communication
4. The Task and Daily Routines

Each part has a set of **questions** to identify a particular person's **cognitive abilities** and how well their environment, communication, and the task support these cognitive abilities. For each question there is a list of ideas of **intervention strategies** to adapt the environment, communication, and the task to increase support for the cognitive abilities as needed by this particular person.

### **Understanding Why: The Brain, Cognitive Abilities, and Adaptation**

The **goal** of **this volume I** and of this manual is to help you support a person's cognitive abilities so you and they can interact more easily and feel genuinely comfortable and content.

This volume (and manual) look **behind** a person's **behavior** and **emotions** to understand how their **brain** affects their **cognitive abilities**, which in turn affect their behavior and emotions. Cognitive abilities can help a person feel content and elated, or confused and distressed. Understanding these effects of a person's cognitive abilities can help us identify and use effective intervention and **support** strategies that are **individualized** to a particular person and a particular situation. These intervention strategies that support this person's cognitive abilities address the **causes** or **reasons** for distress and this person's emotions and behavior. They can

nurture this particular person's **quality of life**, **reduce frustration**, **stress**, and **distress** for them and for you, and help you and this person **enjoy** your time together.

The basic premise of the CAIS and this volume and manual is:

- **To understand why a person acts the way they do or what makes communication or a task easier or harder** for a person, it is important to identify and address this person's cognitive strengths and needs, that is, their ability to think and to understand and respond to you and their surroundings.
- Understanding and supporting a person's cognitive abilities (their cognitive strengths and needs) will in turn **reduce distress** and distressing situations **by reducing the causes of distress**.

The introduction to this manual says **cognitive abilities** are a person's ability to **think**, including their ability to **understand** what they see or hear, to **remember**, to **figure out** how to do things, **imagine**, and **respond**, among many other functions.

**Volume I** introduces concepts and issues regarding a person's **cognitive abilities** and the **brain**, and explores the changes in cognitive abilities that occur when the brain changes.

It also explores in detail and in a narrative style the role this person's **environment**, their **tasks and daily routines**, and your **communication** with them play in making it easier or harder for this person to use their cognitive abilities. This affects how easy it is for you to assist or relate to this person.

It elaborates on the context of issues and gives **tips** for how to **adapt** this person's environment, tasks, and your communication to help this person and you.

### **Four Factors**

The four parts of the **CAIS** reflect the **four factors** the **CAIS** assumes play a major role in a person's ability to interact with their surroundings, perform tasks, and to think. The four factors also play a major role in a person's behavior and emotions. If there are difficulties or problems, or if there is a change that is wanted or needed, examining and modifying one or more of these four factors will likely be helpful or even required. These four factors are:

1. The Person
2. Their Environment
3. Communication
4. The Task and Daily Routines

Because the **CAIS** focuses on a **person's cognitive abilities**, the **CAIS** addresses primarily the cognition of a person, even though other aspects of the person (for example, their emotional, physical, medical, and spiritual aspects) are important.

### **Chapters: Issues, Concepts, Tips, and CAIS Examples**

The five chapters address the four factors and the brain. The topic of each chapter is:

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

The chapters present **issues** to think about, and **concepts, tips, and examples** to illustrate the structure of the *CAIS Questions to Ask* and the *CAIS Intervention Strategies*. A brief **description** of the **CAIS** is at the end of each chapter with respect to the topic of that chapter.

**Chapter 1** focuses on the brain and how differences or changes in the brain might lead to a specific pattern of cognitive strengths and needs. The chapter notes how those cognitive abilities might be evident in emotions, behavior, needs, confusion, or frustration.

**Chapters 2 through 5** look at each of the **four factors** (the four parts of the CAIS): a person's cognitive abilities, their environment, communication, and the task, to see how each can be examined and adapted to help a person and you feel more relaxed, comfortable, and effective when communicating or performing a task.

### **CAIS Handouts: Information and Suggestions**

The CAIS Handouts give more in-depth information and intervention (support) suggestions on a variety of topics regarding the brain, cognitive abilities, the environment, communication, and the task and daily routines, in addition to brain disorders, specialized intervention strategies, and issues specific to cognitive intervention.

The CAIS Handouts:

- Provide more **detail** and **depth** on the topics addressed in this manual.
- Address **additional topics** (such as some specific brain disorders) that are related but not included elsewhere in this manual.
- Are useful as **background** and **in-depth** information to review when using the CAIS in Volume II, presenting the curriculum sessions in Volume III, and viewing the CAIS Beyond Behavior online course at the website <https://www.improvingmipractices.org>
- Address **specific issues**, such as how to recognize a person's cognitive strengths and needs, how to assist with making decisions, and how to touch a person who is hypersensitive to touch.
- Can be helpful to **distribute** to people you work with or relate to.

### **Volume I**

Volume I further explores:

- The relationship between the brain and its cognitive abilities.
- How to better understand individual cognitive abilities and the pattern of cognitive strengths and needs unique to a particular person.

- How cognitive abilities are nurtured or supported by three of the four factors in the CAIS:
  - the environment surrounding this person.
  - the communication this person has with other people.
  - the structure of tasks that they perform.
- Ways in which these same three factors can be adapted to accommodate this person's unique pattern of cognitive abilities, that is, how they can be modified to rely on and use this person's particular cognitive strengths and to support and compensate for this person's cognitive needs.
- How the *CAIS Questions to Ask* and the *CAIS Intervention Strategies* are structured to identify a particular person's cognitive abilities and then identify specific support or intervention strategies that are tailored to this person's cognitive strengths and needs.

### *CAIS Questions to Ask and CAIS Intervention Strategies*

The *CAIS Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies* are in each of the **four parts** of the **CAIS**: (Cognitive Abilities, the Environment, Communication, and the Task and Daily Routines).

The *CAIS Questions to Ask* and *CAIS Intervention Strategies* look at a person's specific cognitive abilities, as well as each of the three remaining factors (the environment, your communication with this person, and the structure of a task) to see how well they are supporting this person's cognitive abilities. By using the intervention strategies, you can increase support for this person's particular cognitive strengths and needs and in that way support this person's behavior, emotions, and their ability to perform a task.

The *CAIS Questions to Ask* presents a series of questions you ask yourself to better understand and identify:

- What makes a **task** easier or harder for a particular person.
- What makes understanding and responding to other people and their surroundings easier or harder for this person.
- What hinders or helps this person.
- What increases this person's feelings of **comfort** or **distress**.
- What causes this person to act in a way that is relaxing or distressing to themselves or others. What causes someone else's actions to be distressing to this person.
- This person's **unique** pattern of **specific cognitive abilities** (that is, their cognitive strengths and needs) (with the *CAIS Cognitive Abilities Questions to Ask*).
- How well the factors in the other three parts of the CAIS (environment, communication, task) support this person's cognitive abilities.

The *CAIS Intervention Strategies* presents a list of possible interventions for your response to each question in the *CAIS Questions to Ask*. These intervention or support strategies:

- Are accessible so that **anyone** can use them.
- Can be used with **any person** in **any setting**.

- Are **simple, practical, and concrete everyday** strategies.
- Can be **added** to support or intervention strategies you currently use and expand your pool of options.
- Can be **adapted** to the preferences and needs of you and the person you are relating to.
- **Address the causes** of distress, distressing situations, or this person’s reduced ability to communicate or perform a task, rather than primarily focusing on behavior or emotions.
- **Reduce trial and error** when trying or planning intervention strategies.
- Help a particular person communicate, perform a task more easily, and feel comfortable.
- **Support this person’s specific cognitive strengths and needs.**
- **Adapt** the three **factors** in the CAIS (environment, communication, task) to support this person’s cognitive strengths and needs.

### **Applies to Any Person, Any Setting, Any Situation**

This information will be useful to anyone who interacts with or assists another person regardless of this person’s **pattern** of cognitive abilities (that is, their cognitive strengths and needs). It will also be useful to anyone who interacts with a person who has **unusual** or **many cognitive needs and strengths**, whether or not there is a diagnosis of a cognitive disorder. The CAIS can be useful for a person with no cognitive disorder. No matter how you are related to a person or what type or level of assistance you offer them, this information can help you understand and relate to this person more easily and effectively.

All of the concepts and support strategies presented in the CAIS and in this volume apply to **any person, to any setting, in any situation.**

It doesn’t matter how old a person is, how healthy or unhealthy a person is, or how easy or difficult it is for them to use various cognitive abilities (they may be doing well in a highly demanding job or curled up in a bed unable to speak). The CAIS can be helpful to them.

The information can be useful in any setting, including a private home, residential setting, long-term care, hospital, office, a store, or gathering space.

The reason these concepts and support strategies are so widely applicable is because they are individualized to a particular person at a particular time and setting. This is discussed in more detail throughout this three-volume manual.

### **Online Course**

Volume I also gives in-depth background information regarding issues addressed in the CAIS **online course** of five one-hour modules called “Beyond Behavior: The Cognitive Abilities and Intervention Strategies (CAIS). This online course explores concepts and gives examples and tips from the CAIS. It also **shows how to use the CAIS.** The **title** and **content** of each **module** in the online course **correspond** to the title and content of each **chapter** in Volume I. The **chapters** and the **CAIS handouts** in Volume I provide the additional **in-depth background**



**information** and **tips** that can help you better **understand** and more easily **apply** the information in the modules of the online course.

This online course is for **anyone** who interacts with a person (particularly a person living with cognitive challenges or distressing behavior), assists with a task, or advises (or supervises) someone who does. You do not need specialized expertise or training to use the CAIS or take the online course. The course is available **for you** to view or take on the Michigan website Improving MI Practices at this link: [\*\*https://www.improvingmipractices.org\*\*](https://www.improvingmipractices.org)