

The PIC (Person in Context) is the fourth tool in the Autism Level UP! Energy Regulation Suite. The PIC is all about being a detective and problem solving. This support is designed to help autistic individuals, their families and/or their educational teams identify risk and protective factors influencing the individuals' (My) Energy and the match/mismatch of that energy within the activities and environments that they are engaged (Energy Meter). To do this, individuals and their partners discuss and achieve consensus about the Person's Profile (PIC, Part 1)- How the person experiences different aspects of themselves regardless of context. Strengths and challenges are highlighted. Next, they reflect on the nature of a single Activity (PIC, Part 2), as well as the properties of the Environment (PIC, Part 3) where the activity is occurring using those same categories. Once Person, Activity, and Environment Profiles have been created, it's time to Put the PIC Together (PIC, Part 4).

Here's where the magic happens and patterns emerge in understanding regulation challenges and energy mismatches for the autistic individual in a comprehensive way. This visual display of the degree of "goodness" of fit in a wide variety of areas amongst the three profiles forms the basis for problem solving appropriate supports IN CONTEXT for an individual . Depending on the source of the energy mismatch, individuals and partners determine whether activity and environmental modifications are needed or if personal supports may be more effective in a given situation. The Regulator 2.0 can be referenced to select individual strategies previously identified as alerting or soothing with respect to energy levels. This support includes four worksheets that when used together create one powerful path for planning Energy support especially if parts 2 and 3 are generated for multiple activities and environments.

### **Autistic Perspective:**

Presume Competence...in Context! The PIC is invaluable in that it provides a respectful and realistic cognitive framework for how to think about supporting autistic people.

The determinants of an autistic person engaging, learning, participating, playing, contributing or collaborating are not how difficult, rebellious, non-compliant or unmotivated we are feeling at any given time. Rather, it is how predictable, appropriate, realistic, supportive, accommodating and trustworthy the combination of the environment, partners and activity are and how well regulated we are entering into this context. It is the goodness of fit between an autistic person (e.g., current developmental level, knowledge, skills, abilities and regulation), the activity at hand (e.g., social and cognitive demands), and the environment in which it is to occur (e.g., sensory and physical layout).

We do not need "functioning" labels for human beings. We need to understand our own risk and protective factors; and we need partners, peers, family, coworkers and society to honor these factors and recognize that our competence, performance, functioning, etc., are all influenced by this complex interaction of individual, activity-related and environmental factors. Functioning is a two-way street, and too often the responsibility and the burden of "functioning" falls solely on the autistic person with far too little consideration of the "functioning" of the activity or environment (both of which have likely been designed by and for neurotypical people).

I think this support, in particular, can really help illuminate some of the simple and most effective changes that can be made to facilitate autistics' engagement and participation. It should assist neurotypical people in shifting their thinking to be able to provide real assistance and to build trust. In very simple terms, The PIC asks you to consider the following:

**If I could do it yesterday, or 1,000 times before, but I cannot do it today, ask:**

- What challenges are present in the environment now that were not before?
- What supports are missing that are usually in place?
- How can this activity and environment be modified or replaced in order to increase the likelihood of engagement?

**Before you ask or say things like:**

- I know you understand; I know you can do this...Why are you being difficult?
- You're trying to get out of doing this.
- You're not allowed to [insert stim, use regulatory tool] until you can complete this task.