



Smarter Supports: AI and Neuroscience Tools for Today's ABA Practitioners

AI Tools – The D.A.N.C.E. Framework

Why AI Needs a Framework

AI can save you time, spark ideas, and lighten your workload. But without structure, the results can feel vague or unusable. That's why we use the **D.A.N.C.E. framework**, a simple step-by-step process to guide your prompts and get high-quality, neurodiversity-affirming output.

The D.A.N.C.E. Steps

■ D – Define Your Goal

Be clear on what you want. A well-defined goal makes it easier for AI to deliver something useful.

Example: "I want a bedtime routine that supports co-regulation and smoother transitions to sleep."

■ A – Add Relevant Context

Give the background that matters. Include details about the learner, setting, or barriers to success.

Example: "The child is 6 years old, autistic, enjoys deep pressure input, and is sensitive to sudden light changes."

■ N – Name the Audience and Tone

Tell AI who the response is for and how it should sound.

Example: "Audience: behavior analyst. Tone: affirming, practical, sensory-aware, neurodiversity-affirming."

■ C – Construct the Prompt

Put it all together into a clear, direct request.

Example: "You are a behavior analyst supporting a 6-year-old autistic child. Create a neurodiversity-affirming bedtime routine that includes sensory regulation, gradual light changes, and opportunities for connection."

■ E – Expand or Refine Iteratively

Don't stop at the first draft. Ask AI to adjust or expand until it fits.

Example refinements:

→ "Add co-regulation strategies with caregivers."

→ "Include fading supports over time."

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Sample Prompts You Can Try

Here are three prompts you can copy and paste to see D.A.N.C.E. in action:

1 Social Story Prompt

"Write a neurodiversity-affirming social story for a middle school student who feels anxious about speaking during group work. Make it supportive, encouraging, and use age-appropriate language."

2 Classroom Strategy Prompt

"Suggest three co-regulation strategies that a teacher can use in a preschool classroom when transitions cause distress. Write them in simple, parent-friendly language."

3 Email Draft Prompt

"Draft a short, professional, and affirming email to a parent explaining how incorporating movement breaks during homework can support focus and regulation."

With **D.A.N.C.E.**, AI stops being a guesswork tool and becomes a structured support system for your work.

Using AI Ethically in Practice

AI can be an incredible support tool, but it should **never replace your professional knowledge, judgment, or training.**

Here are a few quick ethics reminders to keep in mind every time you use AI:

■ Use AI to enhance, not substitute.

If you don't fully understand a concept, seek out training, supervision, or trusted articles first. Then use AI to help brainstorm, reframe, or organize what you already know.

■ Critically evaluate all output.

AI responses may sound confident but can still be inaccurate, biased, or completely fabricated (a problem known as "hallucination"). Always review with a critical eye before applying it in practice.

■ Prioritize client safety and dignity.

Only use AI in ways that align with professional ethics, protect confidentiality, and uphold neurodiversity-affirming values.

■ Adapt for context.

No AI-generated suggestion will ever be one-size-fits-all. Apply your professional expertise to tailor ideas to each client's needs and environment.

■ Stay current.

AI tools evolve rapidly. Continue to expand your knowledge base and revisit your ethical decision-making framework regularly.

Want a deeper dive into AI ethics and practical safeguards?

Explore our full AI webinar, where we unpack risks, case examples, and strategies for safe and affirming use of AI in practice.

Neuroscience Tools – Why Safety and Co-Regulation Come First

Modern neuroscience shows us something behavior analysts have always known: **learning only happens when the brain and body feel safe (e.g. Hayes, 2004)**. Before we can teach new skills, we need to help clients regulate and connect.

Core Concepts to Know

■ Neuroception

Dr. Stephen Porges describes neuroception as the nervous system's way of automatically scanning for safety or danger without conscious thought. When a client senses danger, whether real or perceived, their stress responses activate. Fight, flight, freeze, and fawn take over, and learning pauses.

■ Co-Regulation

Co-regulation means lending your calm. It is the process of using your presence, voice, facial expressions, and body language to help a child or client downshift from stress into safety. Over time, co-regulation builds the foundation for self-regulation.

■ Creating Environments of Safety

Physical and social environments send signals to the nervous system about whether it is safe to engage. Predictable routines, sensory supports, and affirming communication all encourage safety and keep the brain open to learning.

Practical Applications for Practitioners

■ Start with Connection.

Begin with connection by building routines that focus on back-and-forth interactions instead of skill demands.

■ Pay attention to state shifts.

Notice cues of dysregulation such as changes in movement, tone, or withdrawal. Pause teaching and offer co-regulation before continuing.

■ Plan for prevention

by designing environments that reduce stressors like loud noises and unpredictability. Increase cues of safety wherever possible.

■ Reframe how you measure success.

Progress includes engagement, connection, and regulation in addition to skill acquisition.

Neuroscience Tools – Why Safety and Co-Regulation Come First

Why This Matters for Effective Teaching

When behavior analytic practices align with neuroscience, practitioners move from compliance-driven approaches toward relationship-centered learning. Honoring neuroception and co-regulation makes it possible for clients to access their fullest potential. Progress begins with safety, not with pressure to perform.

Quick-Check Guide: Supporting Regulation Through Neuroscience

When a child is struggling, it helps to pause and scan across a few key domains before moving into intervention. Here are a few starting points from our **Behavior Support Checklist: A Neurobiological and Contextual Guide for Behavior Analysts** (DeLeon Miller, 2025).

■ Sleep & Energy

- Is the child getting enough rest?
- Are there signs of fatigue that may be impacting behavior?

■ Nutrition & Sensory Needs

- Has the child eaten recently, and is nutrition stable?
- What sensory inputs (noise, textures, movement) might be overwhelming or calming?

■ Neuroception (Safety Scanning)

- Does the environment feel safe (familiar people, calming voice, predictable setting)?
- Are there cues of threat (loud sounds, harsh tone, sudden changes)?

■ Emotional & Co-Regulation

- Who does the child trust for support in moments of stress?
- Is there an opportunity for co-regulation before asking for independent self-regulation?

■ Environment & Demands

- Are tasks matched to the child's developmental level?
- Could routines or expectations be simplified to reduce stress?

Want the full checklist with deeper guiding questions and intervention ideas?

You'll get it in our Neuroscience Meets ABA Workshop, along with practical tools for case application.

Ready to Go Deeper?

This quick guide is just the start. If you found these tools helpful, you'll love the full **Prompting with ABA** and **Neuroscience Meets ABA** workshops. Each one dives into the strategies and frameworks you've seen here and gives you step-by-step ways to apply them in your daily practice.

Special Offer:

Grab both courses together in our **AI + Neuroscience Bundle** and save **\$25**. These are two of our most **state-of-the-art, practitioner-focused trainings**, designed to expand your toolkit and strengthen your confidence.

Check out the bundle [here](#) and join other practitioners who are learning to combine science, ethics, and innovation to do better in their work.