

Neurodiversity and Developmental Norms

Having a child with a neurodevelopmental disability can often lead to questions about whether one's child is “behind” other children when considering developmental milestones.

In reality, using milestones made for children without disabilities for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities can often lead to negative consequences:

- ❖ Inappropriate or unrealistic expectations
- ❖ Increased stress for the caregiver when developmental milestones are not met
- ❖ Increased stress for the child when they are expected to be similar to other children

It is often said that if you have seen one child with a disability, you have only seen one child with a disability. Every child is different and will reach milestones at their own pace. If developmental norms are created without considering children with disabilities, why are children with disabilities expected to abide by a set of guidelines that do not adequately represent them?

Limiting your focus on the importance of meeting developmental norms offers a number of benefits:

- ❖ Reduces stress on both the caregiver and the child
- ❖ Allows the caregiver and child to focus on goals and milestones that are meaningful to them
- ❖ Removes pressure from others to conform to standardized expectations
- ❖ Gives the caregiver and child greater autonomy and freedom in selecting goals that are relevant and important to them
- ❖ Purposefully sets a child up for expectations of success instead of just playing “catch up” for the rest of their life