

Notice Capacity Before Responding

Match your next move to what the moment allows.

The same behavior can happen when someone is ready to collaborate, overloaded, or focused on protection. Observing capacity can help an adult decide whether to teach now, simplify the demand, or secure safety first.

FOUR MOVES TO TRY

01 Observe capacity

Can the person listen, speak, and consider a next step?

02 Support the moment

Use connection, fewer words, or a pause when overwhelmed.

03 Act for safety

When risk is present, prioritize protection and reduce demands.

04 Teach later

Return to the expectation, skill, and repair when participation is possible.

TWO WAYS TO APPLY IT

YOUNGER CHILD

A child who can talk calmly may help plan a transition; a child overwhelmed by it may need one step first.

TEENAGER

A teen who is highly activated may need a defined pause before discussing a broken agreement.

COACH THE CAREGIVER

Ask the caregiver what signs tell them the young person can participate in problem-solving.

TRY IT THIS WEEK

In one difficult interaction, observe capacity before choosing how many words or demands to use.

REFLECTION

Does my response fit what this person can manage right now?

SAFETY AND PRACTICE

These are observations, not diagnoses. Keep clear limits and use established safety procedures when risk rises.

AUTHORSHIP AND CONTEXT

Dr. Charles Pemberton, Ed.D., developed the original Clinical Perspectives materials for the FITT team while serving as Clinical Program Director at Omni Family of Services. This website adaptation is for general education; it does not state current Omni or FITT policy. Publication rights review is pending.