



AT-HOME TIPS:

Create a “Yes Plate”

A “Yes Plate” includes 2–3 foods your child reliably eats and feels safe with. Optional- add 1 “learning food” (a new or less preferred item), placed nearby but not required to be eaten.

Example: For a child who loves crackers and strawberries, you might also place a tiny portion of mashed sweet potato in a separate section or small dish nearby.

This keeps the plate predictable and safe, while slowly introducing variety.

Use Choice

- Give your child a say in what and how they eat. This builds autonomy and reduces anxiety.
- Offer two food options: “Would you like apple slices or banana wheels?”
- Involve them in preparation: washing veggies, setting the table, or choosing a plate.
- Avoid asking “Do you want broccoli?”—which invites a no. Instead, give two options with the same goal.

Use Control

- Use Routine, Not Rigid Rules
- Serve meals at roughly the same time each day so hunger cues align.
- Let kids know what to expect (e.g., “We’re having chicken and rice tonight. I’ll also have carrots in case you’d like some.”)
- Create visual menus or meal schedules if predictability helps.

Awareness Article: Sensory-Friendly Fun: Events & Activity Ideas

Museums Featuring “Sensory Hours”:

Children’s museums, science centers, and aquariums often host low-sensory hours with fewer visitors, dimmed lights, and quiet zones. Check local listings or call ahead to ask.

Staycations with a Twist:

Transform your home into a sensory haven for a weekend! Create a pillow fort, set up a mini sensory bin station, or turn the bathroom into a “spa room” with bubble lights and lavender-scented water play.

Utilize Your Local Library:

Many local libraries embrace sensory-friendly story times with smaller groups, movement breaks, and sensory-friendly materials like felt boards or fidget toys.

Success Support

Invisible disabilities are medical or neurological conditions that aren't immediately noticeable to others but can significantly affect a person's ability to function day-to-day. These conditions may involve chronic pain, fatigue, cognitive challenges, mental health disorders, or sensory issues such as impaired hearing or vision. Despite being unseen, they can greatly influence a person's quality of life and ability to engage in everyday activities.

Here are a few tips for advocating for your child's invisible disability:

Birwatkar, P. (n.d.). Silent struggles: Invisible disabilities in educational spaces. Teacher Plus.
<https://teacherplus.org/2024/2024/august-2024/silent-struggles-invisible-disabilities-in-educational-spaces/>

UNSEEN, NOT UNHEARD: ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD'S INVISIBLE DISABILITIES



Find Your Support Network:

You're not alone. Connect with other parents, support groups, or advocacy organizations in your area. They can offer encouragement, share experiences, and help you navigate complex systems.

Understand the Diagnosis:

The first step is being informed. Learn as much as you can about your child's condition, how it affects their daily life, and what strategies or accommodations can help. This knowledge helps you speak confidently and clearly when working with schools, doctors, or support teams.

Communicate Proactively:

Build a strong relationship with your child's teachers, counselors, and specialists. Share insights about what helps your child succeed and keep an open line of communication. Don't wait for problems to escalate—early collaboration often leads to better outcomes.

Request an Evaluation

If your child is struggling in school due to their condition, they may qualify for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan. These legal documents ensure your child receives accommodations such as extra time on tests, sensory breaks, or modified assignments.

DISABILITY & IDENTITY: HELPING CHILDREN BUILD SELF-ESTEEM AND PRIDE

Use Positive Language

- Why it matters: The words we use shape how children see themselves. Using identity-affirming or person-first language (based on what the child prefers) helps build pride and confidence.
- Example: Instead of saying "suffers from autism," say "is autistic" or "has autism," depending on the child's and community's preferences. Model respect by celebrating differences, not minimizing them.

Help Children Own Their Story

- Why it matters: Children benefit from knowing the truth about their diagnosis in a developmentally appropriate way. It helps them self-advocate and feel in control.
- Example: For a child with ADHD, a parent might say: "Your brain loves to explore lots of things at once. That's part of having ADHD. It's why you're super creative, and why we use tools like timers to help with focus."

Celebrate Strengths Alongside Challenges

- Why it matters: Focusing only on what's "hard" can leave kids feeling defeated. Balancing honesty about challenges with recognition of strengths builds resilience.
- Example: If a child struggles with reading but excels at building with Legos, affirm both: "Reading takes work, and we're proud of how you're sticking with it. Your engineering mind is incredible!"