Can't vs. Won't

Least dangerous assumption: the learner *CAN'T* do something.
Very dangerous assumption: assume initially that a learner *WON'T* do something.
Safest assumption: each learner is doing the best s/he can at this moment.

Assumption of *WON'T* by parents/staff leads to punishment, resentment and power struggles. No one wins. Can have lasting negative effects on the learner's mental health.

Assumption of *CAN'T* leads to creative problem solving and analysis of the needs of the learner and the details of the environment. The learner is taught to view self objectively, ask for help and seek solutions.

Assumption of *CAN'T* leads to an effort to take the point of view of the learner and an attempt to see the world from the perspective of the learner.

CAN'T: Variability of performance is characteristic of people with autism spectrum disorders and other disabilities. Each learner needs to be able to identify own strengths and needs and how these change in different situations.

CAN'T: Gestalt processing: the learner absorbs the whole situation with all the details. Any change may lead to loss of skill. Causes the learner to look like s/he is not trying.

CAN'T: Problems in central coherence: the learner is unable to select and focus upon the most relevant information in the situation. Causes the learner to appear inattentive and unfocused.

We need to re-teach in new environments or when any element changes. Planned re-teaching in new environments provides needed support and promotes success.