

TOOLKIT · VERSION 1

Parent Toolkit

Steady, evidence-informed support for raising neurodivergent kids.

How to use this toolkit

Skim once, then choose one practice to try this week. Toolkits are living documents — mark them up, share them with your team, and revisit as your needs evolve.

Overview

Parenting a neurodivergent child is not a project to manage — it's a relationship to tend. This toolkit pairs research-backed strategies with everyday language you can use today.

Why it matters

Children flourish when the adults around them are regulated, informed, and curious. The most protective factor across studies is a trusted adult who sees the child clearly and adapts the environment, not the child.

Research summary

Family-centered, strengths-based approaches predict better long-term outcomes than deficit-focused interventions (Dunst et al., 2007). Co-regulation precedes self-regulation throughout childhood and into adolescence (Murray et al., 2015).

Practical strategies

Co-regulation

- Lower your voice and slow your breath before you speak.
- Name what you see: "Your body looks tight. Big day."
- Offer presence first, solutions later (or not at all).

Predictability

- Visual schedules for mornings, evenings, transitions.
- Preview changes: "In ten minutes we'll ..."
- Same anchor meals or rituals through hard weeks.

Advocacy

- Document what works at home — share it with school.

- Ask for IEP/504 evaluations in writing.
- Bring a support person to high-stakes meetings.

Ready-to-use scripts & worksheets

After a hard moment

“That was hard. You’re not in trouble. We’ll figure out what your body needed and try again.”

Talking to teachers

“Here’s what helps her settle at home. Could we try one of these in the classroom and check back in two weeks?”

Recommended lessons & next steps

- Family Toolkit — /family
- Conditions Library — /conditions
- AI Companion (Family pathway) — /companion

Selected references & further reading

- Dunst CJ, Trivette CM, Hamby DW. *Meta-analysis of family-centered helping practices research. Ment Retard Dev Disabil Res Rev.* 2007.
- Murray DW, et al. *Self-regulation and toxic stress. OPRE Report.* 2015.
- Siegel DJ, Bryson TP. *The Whole-Brain Child.* Bantam, 2011.

Ask the AI Companion

Visit understandingneurodiversity.org/companion to ask follow-up questions about **Parent Toolkit**. The Companion will recommend lessons, conditions, and research tailored to your role.