



Parent Coaching: Supporting You and Your Child

Created by: Yesmin Sabbagh

Parent Coaching Booklet





Essential Therapies Centre

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At Essential Therapies Centre, we know parenting can be both rewarding and challenging. As both a professional and a parent of a child on the autism spectrum, I understand how overwhelming it can feel when your child has big emotions, meltdowns, or moments of not listening. This booklet offers practical tools, step-by-step strategies, and reassurance that you are not alone—together we can support your child’s growth, confidence, and wellbeing.

What Is Parent Coaching?

Parent coaching is a collaborative process that empowers you with strategies you can use in everyday routines. Rather than quick fixes, we focus on small, consistent steps that build lasting change. You are the expert on your child; our role is to equip and support you.

Our Philosophy

Our approach is compassionate, strengths-based, and culturally sensitive. We combine evidence-informed strategies with lived experience to meet your family where you are. We believe progress grows from connection: clear routines, calm role-modelling, and confident boundaries.

How Coaching Works

- Observation and feedback (at home, school, or clinic).
- Modelling strategies—your coach demonstrates what to do and says why.
- Guided practice and role-play with real scenarios from your week.
- Problem-solving obstacles together and adjusting the plan.
- Setting small achievable goals and celebrating wins.

When Your Child Is in Meltdown (In the Moment)

- Lower demands; safety first. Keep your voice soft and your sentences short.
- Reduce stimulation (lights, noise, people). Offer space or a safe corner.
- Validate feelings without arguing facts: “I see this is hard. I’m here.”
- Offer a regulating tool (deep pressure, breathing, squeazy toy, water).
- Wait for calm before teaching. Debrief later, not during the storm.



Avoid during meltdowns:

- Lengthy explanations or lectures during the meltdown.
- Rapid-fire questions (“Why are you...?”).
- Threats or power struggles that escalate emotions.
- Crowding your child if they need space.

Try saying:

“You’re safe. I’m with you. Let’s breathe together... In... out... We can talk when your body feels calm.”

When Your Child Isn’t Listening (Before It Escalates)

- Gain attention first: move close, say their name, pause; use gentle touch if appropriate.
- Give one simple instruction at a time. Use First-Then language: “First shoes on, then playground.”
- Offer limited choices to build control: “Blue cup or green cup?”
- Use visual supports (pictures, timers, checklists).
- Praise immediately when they follow through: “Thanks for listening right away!”
- Use calm, predictable consequences; follow through once, without repeating.

Try saying:

“First pack toys, then tablet. I’ll help with the first 3 blocks. Thank you for starting.”

Role Modelling: We Teach What We Show

- Name your own regulation: “I’m feeling frustrated. I’ll take a deep breath.”
- Keep tone steady; the adult nervous system sets the room’s temperature.
- Practice repair: if you slip and raise your voice, circle back—“I’m sorry I yelled. I’m practicing calm.”
- Use problem-solving out loud: notice, plan, act (“The line is long; let’s play the ‘I spy’ game while we wait.”).

Self-Care for Parents



Parenting a child with big emotions can be exhausting. Your own regulation is the foundation for your child’s calm—children borrow the adult nervous system around them. Looking after yourself is not selfish; it’s necessary.

Why Your Regulation Matters

- Calm is contagious: when you model steady breathing, slower speech, and a softer tone, your child’s body can mirror that calm.
- Dysregulation is also contagious: rushing, yelling, or showing high stress can unintentionally escalate your child’s emotions.

Simple Grounding & Breathing Strategies

- Box Breathing: Inhale for 4 counts, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4.
- 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding: Notice 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- Stretch & Release: Unclench hands, roll shoulders, shake tension out of your arms.

Joining Activities With Your Child

Sometimes the best way to regulate is *together*. If your child is struggling to calm down, invite them into a short, structured activity:

- Countdown Tidy-Up: “Let’s pick up toys together. We’ll count backwards from 10 really fast!” (turns regulation into movement + fun).
- Breathing Game: Blow bubbles together—watching the bubbles float can slow breathing naturally.
- Reset Movement: Jump, stomp, or shake arms with your child for 20 seconds, then pause and take a deep breath together.
- Body Scan Together: “Let’s both check if our shoulders are tight—shake, shake! Now let’s relax them.”



Boundaries Are Caring

Children feel safer when limits are clear and consistent—just like adults do. Boundaries teach self-control, respect, and resilience. Saying “no” kindly is part of loving guidance—never feel guilty for setting healthy limits.

- State the boundary and the why: “Toys stay on the floor so everyone is safe.”
- Offer what they *can* do: “You can throw the soft ball outside.”
- Use calm follow-through; avoid debates. Repeat the boundary, show the next step.
- Match consequences to behaviour and keep them short and teachable.
- Notice and praise boundary-respecting moments (“You stopped when I asked—great listening!”).

Boundary scripts:

- “I won’t let you hit. I will help you be safe. Hands are for high-fives.”
- “It’s okay to feel angry. It’s not okay to break things. We can stomp the mat instead.”

Helpful Tools & Routines

- Visual schedules and First-Then boards for transitions.
- Timers and countdowns to prepare for stopping/starting activities.
- Reinforcement menus (earn stars/points for effort and great choices).
- Calming kits: noise-reducing headphones, chewy/squeezy, fidgets, water bottle.
- Connection rituals: 5 minutes of child-led play daily builds cooperation.

Quick-Reference Cheat Sheet

- Connect before you correct.
- Say less; show more (visuals, gestures).
- First-Then; Choices; Praise.
- Calm voice, slow pace, soft face.
- Boundaries + empathy = safety.

My Calm Plan (Fill-In)

My child’s early signs of overwhelm: _____

Best places to calm down: _____

Tools that help (e.g., squeezes, water, headphones): _____



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Words I'll use to validate feelings: _____

Our plan for after the storm (repair/teach): _____

Closing

Parent coaching is not about perfection—it's about practice. Small, consistent steps create big changes. We are here to walk alongside you.



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