

Start Here

Your roadmap to the whole system — what's inside, how the seven documents fit together, and exactly how to use them so this becomes 30 days you finish, not 30 days you meant to start.

Document 0 of 7

Read this one first — it only takes five minutes

You paid \$7. Here's why that should feel like a mistake on our part, not yours.

This system takes everything a parent typically pieces together from a dozen different accounts, forums and PDFs — food, communication, movement, sensory regulation, sleep, and routines — and organizes it into one connected month, with the evidence behind each piece named plainly as you go. Numbered markers like this^[4] point to sources in the full reference list at the end of this document — 19 sources, all 2020–2025, from CDC, NICE, NIH/NCCIH and peer-reviewed journals.



WHAT THIS SYSTEM IS

A practical, evidence-informed 30-day structure for feeding, communication, movement, sensory regulation, sleep and routines — built to be run by any parent, with no clinical background required.



WHAT THIS SYSTEM ISN'T

Medical advice, therapy, or a claim to treat, cure or reverse autism, ADHD or any related condition. It works alongside your child's pediatrician, SLP, OT and developmental team — not instead of them.

If you've bought things like this before...

...and they're sitting half-read somewhere, this page is for you.

You are probably not new to this. You have likely already downloaded a checklist, joined a Facebook group, bought an ebook, or saved forty Instagram posts about autism, ADHD, feeding, or sleep. Most of it meant well. Very little of it told you, in order, what to actually do on a Tuesday.

That's the specific gap this system is built to close — not by giving you more information, but by giving you a **sequence**. Here is what makes this different, plainly:



IT'S ONE CONNECTED SYSTEM, NOT SIX SEPARATE TOPICS

Everything in this bundle points back to Document 1's daily calendar. You never have to decide which of the seven documents to open — the calendar decides for you.



IT REMOVES THE DECISION, NOT JUST THE INFORMATION

Decision fatigue is real, especially by evening. This system's entire design goal is that you never stand in the kitchen wondering what today's "thing" should be.



IT SAYS WHAT IT CAN'T DO, TOO

A system that's honest about a realistic 30-day scope (see page 10) is one you can actually trust with the next 30 days — and the \$7, for that matter.

If none of your previous purchases stuck, that is probably not a reflection on you. Most of them were information without a sequence. This one leads with the sequence.

Seven documents, one system

Each document below does one job. You do not need to print or even open all seven today – Documents 1 and 7 are the ones you'll touch daily or weekly; the rest you'll reach for exactly when that week's focus comes up, and not a moment before.

0 Start Here (you are here)

The roadmap. Explains how the other six documents connect and how to run the month.

1 The 30-Day Calendar & Weekly Rhythm

Your daily spine – one focus per day across 4 weekly themes. Open this every morning.

2 Meal Rotation & Picky-Eating Playbook

10 days of breakfast/lunch/dinner (repeats across the month), plus the full food-chaining ladder for selective eaters.

3 The Communication Ladder

Four weekly speech/AAC-friendly goals that build on each other, with daily moments to practice them.

4 Sensory & Movement Bank

40 activities sorted by sensory-seeking, avoiding or mixed profiles, plus a calm-corner build guide.

5 The Sleep Rebuild Plan

A 4-week, not overnight, approach to the most common bedtime stall points.

6 Visual Routine Cards

Printable morning, after-school and bedtime schedule cards – cut, laminate, use.

7 Trackers & Appointment Prep Sheets

Weekly logs across all six areas, plus ready-made questions for your child's pediatrician, SLP, OT and dietitian.

Your daily 2-minute routine

If you remember nothing else from this document, remember this page.



EVERY MORNING, DO EXACTLY THIS

1. **Open Document 1** (The 30-Day Calendar). Nothing else, just this one.
2. **Find today's day number.** If you don't know, check yesterday's tracker in Document 7 — it's one more than that.
3. **Read the one-line "Focus" for today.** That is the only thing this system is asking of you today.
4. **Check the "Uses" column.** It names exactly one other document (2 through 7). Open only that one.
5. **Do the thing. Close the documents.** You do not need to read ahead, and you do not need to open any document Day 1's row doesn't mention.

That's the entire operating instructions for this system. Everything else in this Start Here document — the weekly themes, the expectations, the checklist — exists to give you context and confidence, not more to do.



WHAT IF I MISS A DAY, OR FALL BEHIND?

Open Document 1 and do *today's actual date's row*, not the row you skipped. A resumed rhythm beats a perfectly unbroken one that you eventually abandon out of guilt. This system is built to be picked back up, not completed perfectly.

The weekly rhythm

Four weeks, four themes — each one building on the last.

You now know what to do each day. This section explains *why* the days are ordered the way they are, so the month feels like a story with momentum, not a random list of 30 unrelated tasks. Consistent, structured routines are one of the more reliably supported strategies for children with attention and regulation difficulties^{[1][11]}, and that structure is exactly what turns six good ideas into one system that actually holds.

Turn the page for a real look at what each week is actually building toward — and what you can realistically expect to notice by the end of it.

● WEEK 1 OF 4

Foundations

"The week you stop guessing."

Week 1 deliberately asks very little of you. You'll pre-plan meals the night before using one simple formula (Document 2), add just *one* new communication moment to your day (Document 3), and start a bedtime sequence exactly where your bedtime already is (Document 5) — not where you think it "should" be.

Why start here, and not with the harder stuff? Because these three changes share one property: they cost almost no extra time, and they create the habit of "checking the calendar" that the rest of the month depends on. You are not trying to fix everything this week. You are building the muscle of showing up daily.

A TUESDAY IN WEEK 1

"I didn't do anything dramatic. I just already knew what was for breakfast before my child asked for the fourth time, and I held up two cups instead of guessing what she wanted. That was the whole day. It was still a good day."

By the end of Week 1, expect this: dinner planning takes less mental energy, you've noticed at least one new communication attempt you might have missed before, and the wind-down sequence is running — even if bedtime itself hasn't moved yet. That's genuinely on schedule.

Next week: we put that new daily rhythm to work on movement and sensory regulation — the part of the day that often feels hardest to control.

● WEEK 2 OF 4

Building Blocks

"The week your child's energy starts working for you instead of against you."

Week 2 adds movement and sensory tools (Document 4) on top of the rhythm you already built in Week 1. You'll introduce the 10-20-5 movement rhythm, build a calm corner, and start using it *before* a known hard moment instead of only after a meltdown has already started.

This is why Week 1 came first: none of this works if you're also trying to remember to plan dinner from scratch at the same time. With that already on autopilot, you have real attention left over for something that needs more of it — noticing your child's sensory signals and getting ahead of them.

A SATURDAY IN WEEK 2

"We were about to leave for a birthday party — usually our hardest kind of outing. This time we did five minutes on the trampoline first. I don't know if it was the trampoline or luck, but the car ride was the calmest one we've had in months."

By the end of Week 2, expect this: you'll have a go-to movement activity you reach for without thinking, a calm corner your child has actually used at least once by choice, and a slightly better read on which of the 40 activities in Document 4 your child gravitates toward.

Next week: with the day itself feeling steadier, we turn to the part almost every household in this program says is the hardest — sleep.

● WEEK 3 OF 4

Sleep & Consistency

"The week the whole household gets some of its evenings back."

Week 3 is entirely about sleep (Document 5) — not because it's more important than everything else, but because a tired child and a tired parent make every other part of this system harder. We waited until Week 3 on purpose: your wind-down sequence has already been running quietly since Day 6, so this week is about troubleshooting, not starting from zero.

You'll tackle one specific stall point at a time — screens, then room environment, then the visual bedtime card — instead of trying to overhaul bedtime in a single night. Real sleep change is rarely a single dramatic fix; it's several small, boring, repeated adjustments.

A WEDNESDAY IN WEEK 3

"Turning the screens off earlier felt like it would cause a bigger fight than it did. Bedtime was still hard that first night. By night three, he was already walking toward his room when the lights dimmed. I hadn't asked him to."

By the end of Week 3, expect this: a wind-down sequence that needs fewer reminders than it did on Day 6, at least one concrete fix in place for your household's specific stall point, and three nights of real sleep-log data (Document 5) worth showing your pediatrician if sleep is still a struggle.

Next week: we shift from building new habits to reviewing what's actually stuck — and stretching gently toward more independence.

● WEEK 4 OF 4

Independence & Review

"The week you see how far you've actually come."

Week 4 asks less of you again — on purpose, mirroring Week 1. You'll add the after-school visual card, let your child take a slightly more active role (choosing today's movement activity, helping prep a meal), and then spend the last two days actually looking back at the month, not adding anything new.

This is the week most home programs skip, and it's the reason they don't stick. A month with no review just quietly ends. A month that closes with a real look back — using Document 7's tracker and one-page family plan — turns into a system you keep using, adapt, or hand to a professional as real evidence of what's working.

DAY 30, WHEREVER YOU ARE

"I filled in the one-page plan expecting it to look thin. It didn't. Reading back through four weeks of small notes, I realized we'd actually changed more than any single day had felt like."

By Day 30, expect this: a completed one-page family plan, a genuinely useful set of notes for your child's next appointment, and a clear-eyed view of which single thing from this month is worth protecting going forward — which is exactly where the 90-Day Family Support Program picks up, if and when you want to go further.

● BEFORE DAY 1

Your quick-start checklist

Four small things, before you begin — then you're genuinely ready.

- ☐ **Skim Documents 1 and 7** so you know what a normal week and a normal tracker page look like before you're relying on them in the moment.
- ☐ **Print or set up your Day 1 tracker page** from Document 7 — even a blank notebook page copying its six categories works fine.
- ☐ **Pick one consistent time each day** — even 10 minutes, even while coffee brews — to check Document 1.
- ☐ **Tell one other person in the household** what you're doing. Consistency is dramatically easier with two adults on the same page than one.



THAT'S GENUINELY IT

You are now ready for Day 1. Open Document 1 and begin whenever you're ready — today, tomorrow, or next Monday. There's no wrong day to start.

● SETTING EXPECTATIONS

What this hopes to achieve — and what it won't

Realistic goals for 30 days

- A repeatable daily and weekly rhythm across feeding, communication, movement, sensory regulation and sleep.
- A handful of new communication opportunities that have become automatic, not effortful.
- At least one measurable shift in sleep, mealtime, or transition difficulty — tracked, not guessed at.
- A clear, organized record to bring to your child's next professional appointment.

What 30 days is realistically not enough time for

- Resolving a diagnosed speech, sensory or feeding disorder — that's what your child's SLP, OT or dietitian is for.
- A dramatic, one-month transformation. Real change in this area is typically gradual and non-linear.
- Replacing any therapy, medication, or professional service your child is already receiving.



A LAY-PERSON'S SYSTEM, ON PURPOSE

Nothing in this system requires clinical training to run. Where something genuinely does need a professional (a suspected hearing issue, a feeding disorder, a sleep-apnea sign), that's flagged clearly and directly rather than left for you to guess at.

Gentle Progress Family provides educational, nutrition, routine and caregiving resources. We are not a medical provider and don't diagnose, treat, or claim to cure autism, ADHD, or related conditions. Please involve your child's pediatrician or care team in any health decision.

● SOURCES

Full reference list

Nineteen sources, spanning 2020–2025, drawn from peer-reviewed journals and major public-health institutions (CDC, NICE, NIH/NCCIH). Every document in this system cites from this same list — each one also ends with a short "sources for this guide" line naming which of these 19 it drew on.

- [1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Behavior Therapy First for Young Children with ADHD*. cdc.gov/adhd/treatment/behavior-therapy-first-young-children.html
- [2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Developmental Monitoring and Screening*. Learn the Signs. Act Early. cdc.gov/act-early
- [3] National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, NIH. *Autism Spectrum Disorder and Complementary Health Approaches* (2022). nccih.nih.gov/health/autism
- [4] National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. *Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management*. CG170, updated 2021. nice.org.uk/guidance/cg170
- [5] Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Melatonin for sleep disorders in people with autism*. Sleep Medicine Reviews (2022).
- [6] *Efficacy of Melatonin for Insomnia in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Meta-analysis*. (2023). PMC10166641.
- [7] *A systematic search and appraisal of intervention characteristics used to develop varied communication functions in children with autism who use aided AAC*. Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders (2021).
- [8] *Occupational Therapy Using Sensory Integration for Enhancing Occupational Performance in Children with Autism: A Randomized Controlled Trial*. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders (2025).
- [9] *Global prevalence of autism spectrum disorder and its gastrointestinal symptoms: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. (2022). PMC9445193.
- [10] *Effects of physical exercise on attention deficit and other major symptoms in children with ADHD: A meta-analysis*. (2022). PubMed 35305344.
- [11] Steinbrenner, J. R., Hume, K., Odom, S. L., et al. *Evidence-Based Practices for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism*. National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Team (2020).
- [12] *Associations between media use at bedtime and sleep: a cross-sectional analysis on differences between girls and boys*. (2022). PMC11272457.
- [13] *Optimising Repeated Exposure: Determining Optimal Exposure Frequency for Introducing a Novel Vegetable among Children*. Foods, MDPI (2021).
- [14] *Feeding Behaviours in Families With Children or Young People With Autism: A Systematic Review*. (2025). PubMed.
- [15] *Caregiver-Implemented Feeding Interventions for Autistic Children with Food Selectivity: A Systematic Review*. Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders (2023).
- [16] Lee, J. & Schertz, H. *Association of turn-taking functions with joint attention in toddlers with autism*. Autism (2022).
- [17] *Effectiveness of vestibular and proprioceptive exercises in reducing hyperactivity in children with autism spectrum disorder: A randomized controlled trial*. (2025).
- [18] *Clinical Handbook of Behavioral Sleep Treatment in Children on the Autism Spectrum*. Springer (2022).
- [19] *Evaluating the Effects of Self-Monitoring of Performance with a Peer Component on Disruptive Behavior and Task Completion of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*. PMC11274114.