

Quarter 1 Roadmap: Reading the Signal, Regulating Together, Following Their Lead

Ninety days, Months 1 through 3. This is the flagship's own, original Quarter 1 — a completely different starting point from anything in the \$7 System or the \$47 Program: understanding WHY behavior happens, HOW your own regulation actually helps, and HOW your child's real interests can carry new learning.

Document 2 of 12

Read Start Here first if you haven't

Long-term, structured support delivered in small, consistent steps is what the strongest available guidance for autism and ADHD support actually recommends^{[4][11]}. Every day in this document gives you one small, clear step.

☀ HOW TO READ A DAY'S PAGE

1. **Today's idea, in plain words** — the concept explained simply.
2. **What to actually do today** — concrete, numbered, almost always under 15 minutes.
3. **An example from a real kind of family** — on many days, a short story from a Nigerian, African, or American household.
4. **A short question for before bed** — a moment to notice what actually happened.

● MONTH 1

Reading the Signal

Reading the Signal is not about a new technique to build – it's about learning to see WHY your child's hardest behavior happens at all: what comes right before it, what happens right after it, and which of four common functions it's most likely serving. Nothing here asks you to fix anything yet. It asks you to genuinely understand first.

[Week 1](#), [Week 2](#), [Week 3](#), [Week 4](#)

Week 1: Behavior Is a Message, Not a Character Flaw

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

Everything in this quarter starts from one reframe: your child's hardest behavior is not defiance, manipulation, or a character trait. It is the only way available to them, in that exact moment, to communicate something they cannot yet say in words. This week doesn't ask you to change anything you do yet. It only asks you to start watching differently – with curiosity instead of judgment.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 1. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Understand what this quarter is actually teaching you



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

This isn't a quarter of new tools to build. It's a quarter that teaches you to understand WHY your child does what they do, so that whatever you already have — or add later — actually fits the real reason behind the behavior, instead of guessing.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page slowly, twice if you need to.
2. Think of one behavior that has puzzled or worn you out the most lately.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's one behavior you've never really understood the reason for?

Meet the idea: all behavior is communication



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Even without a single word, behavior carries a message — a cry, a stim, a meltdown, a refusal, a sudden silence. None of it is random. Each one is your child's way of saying something they don't yet have the words, or the calm, to say directly.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Today, when you notice any behavior — big or small — pause before reacting.
2. Silently ask yourself: "What might this be saying?" Don't answer yet, just ask.

LAGOS, NIGERIA

A father used to see his son's hand-flapping before dinner as "just a habit." Today, for the first time, he simply wondered what it might mean instead of ignoring it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What behavior did you notice today, and what question did you ask about it?

The myth of "being difficult"



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Words like "difficult," "manipulative," or "attention-seeking" (said as an insult) quietly shut down curiosity before it starts — they turn a puzzle into a verdict. Swapping the verdict for a question is the single biggest shift this month asks of you.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Catch yourself using a judgment word about your child's behavior today.
2. Silently swap it for: "I wonder what's going on here."

CHICAGO, USA

A mother catches herself thinking, "He's just trying to get attention," during a grocery store meltdown, and gently corrects it to, "I wonder what he needs right now."



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which judgment word do you reach for most often — and what would curiosity sound like instead?

Behavior always happens in context



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

No behavior happens in a vacuum. It happens in a specific place, at a specific time, right after something specific occurred. This week you're only noticing the context — not yet deciding what it means.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Pick one behavior you'll pay attention to for the rest of this month.
2. Today, just jot down WHERE and WHEN it happened — nothing else yet.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Where and when did your chosen behavior happen today?

You are not looking for blame — you are looking for pattern



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

This whole practice can feel uncomfortably close to blaming yourself or your child. It isn't. You're doing detective work: curious, patient, without a verdict attached — the same way a detective examines a scene without deciding who's guilty before looking at the evidence.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Practice one detective phrase today: "I wonder what's happening here," instead of "Why does he always do this."
2. Notice how the different phrasing changes how you actually feel in the moment.

NAIROBI, KENYA

A mother notices that swapping "why does she always scream at bath time" for "I wonder what's happening at bath time" makes her feel curious instead of exhausted.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did the detective phrase change how the moment felt for you, even slightly?

One behavior, many possible messages



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The exact same behavior — say, a meltdown — can mean something different on a Tuesday than it did on a Monday. That's not confusing, it's normal. It just means you have to look freshly each time, instead of assuming you already know.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Today, simply count how many times your chosen behavior happens.
2. Don't do anything else yet — just count.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How many times did you count your chosen behavior today?

Introducing your Behavior Journal



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Starting this week, you'll keep a simple running log with three columns: Before, What Happened, and After. It sounds clinical, but it's really just a place to write down what you're already starting to notice, so the pattern becomes visible on paper instead of staying a fuzzy feeling in your head.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Turn to the Behavior Journal pages in your Parent Workbook.
2. Write today's date at the top of a fresh page — that's the whole task today.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did it feel to give this behavior an actual page, instead of just carrying it in your head?

Week 1 check-in: noticing without fixing



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The hardest and most valuable skill this month builds isn't a fix — it's the discipline of noticing first, without rushing to solve anything yet. Everything useful that comes later depends on getting this part right.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Look back over everything you noticed this week.
2. Write one full sentence about what surprised you the most.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's one thing about your child's behavior that looks different to you now than it did a week ago?

Week 2: Spotting the Antecedent

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

An antecedent is simply whatever happens right before a behavior — the spark before the fire. It's usually invisible until you deliberately train your eye to look for it, because most of us naturally focus on the behavior itself, not the small thing that came just before it. This week is entirely about training that eye.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 9. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

What is an antecedent, really?



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

An antecedent is whatever happened in the moments right before a behavior started. It's often tiny and easy to miss — like the spark before a fire, gone in an instant, but always there if you look for it in time.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Keep the same behavior you've been watching all week as your focus.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Before today, had you ever thought about what happens right before your chosen behavior?

The 5-minutes-before rule



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Train yourself to mentally rewind to the five minutes before the behavior started, every time it happens. What changed? What were you asking for? What had just ended?



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. The moment your chosen behavior happens today, pause before reacting.
2. Mentally rewind five minutes and write down one thing that happened right before it.

KANO, NIGERIA

A mother realizes that five minutes before her son's meltdown, she had turned off the television without any warning.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did rewinding five minutes reveal today?

Common invisible antecedent: transitions



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Moving from one task, place, or activity to another is one of the single most common invisible sparks — even a transition that looks small to you, like moving from the table to the couch.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Notice one transition today (a change of activity, room, or task).
2. Check whether your chosen behavior follows shortly after it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did today's transition line up with your chosen behavior at all?

Common invisible antecedent: a demand or instruction



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Even a gentle request — "put your shoes on," "time to eat" — can be the invisible spark, especially if it interrupts something your child was fully absorbed in.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Notice one instruction you give your child today.
2. Check whether your chosen behavior follows shortly after it.

HOUSTON, USA

A father notices his daughter's shutdown almost always follows within a minute of him saying "okay, put that away now."



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did an instruction show up right before your chosen behavior today?

Common invisible antecedent: sensory changes



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A sudden noise, a bright light flicking on, a room getting more crowded — these register as real, immediate changes to your child, even when they barely register to you.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Notice one sensory change in the environment today (sound, light, crowd, smell).
2. Check whether your chosen behavior follows shortly after it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What sensory change, if any, showed up right before your chosen behavior today?

Write your first full antecedent line



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Now put it together: write one full, specific sentence describing exactly what happened right before the behavior — not a guess about why, just a plain description of what occurred.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. The next time your chosen behavior happens, write one complete sentence describing what happened right before it.
2. Keep it factual — no "because" yet, just what happened.

ACCRA, GHANA

A mother writes: "I asked him to stop his tablet game to come eat, and he did not respond the first two times I said it."



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Read your sentence back. Does it feel more specific than what you would have said a week ago?

Week 2 check-in: your antecedent is becoming visible



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

By now, the moments right before your chosen behavior should start to feel a little less random than they did a week ago — even if you don't have a full answer yet.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review your antecedent notes from this week.
2. Circle any antecedent that shows up more than once.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the one antecedent that keeps repeating, if any?

Week 3: Naming the Consequence

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

A consequence is simply what happens right after a behavior — and, often without anyone meaning it to, that's exactly what can make the behavior more likely to happen again. This week completes the full picture — antecedent, behavior, consequence — and introduces your Function Detective Method card set, the complete repeatable process for turning what you've noticed into a real, usable hypothesis.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[1] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 16. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

What is a consequence, really?



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A consequence is whatever happens immediately after a behavior — not a punishment, just whatever follows. And whatever reliably follows a behavior tends to shape whether that behavior happens again.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Keep watching your chosen behavior, now paying attention to what happens right after it too.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Before today, had you ever noticed what reliably happens right after your chosen behavior?

The consequence that accidentally rewards



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Sometimes the most natural, caring response — comforting, giving in, removing the demand — is also, unintentionally, the exact thing that makes a behavior more likely next time. This isn't about blame; almost every parent does this without realizing it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. The next time your chosen behavior happens, notice what you did right after, without judging yourself for it.
2. Write it down plainly.

PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

A mother notices that every time her son throws his plate, she quietly stops offering that food — without ever meaning to teach him that throwing works.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you notice yourself doing right after the behavior today?

Common consequence: the task or demand goes away (escape)



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

If a behavior reliably ends a demand — the request stops, the chore is dropped — the behavior may be working, for your child, as a way to escape something hard or unwanted.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check: did your chosen behavior make a demand or task go away today?



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did the task or demand disappear after the behavior today?

Common consequence: attention arrives (attention)



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

If a behavior reliably brings a parent, sibling, or teacher rushing over — even to say "stop that" — the behavior may be working as a way to get attention, since any attention can feel better than none.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check: did your chosen behavior bring someone's attention rushing over today?

KIGALI, RWANDA

A father realizes his daughter's loud humming always brings him into the room within seconds, even when he only comes in to ask her to stop.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did attention arrive quickly after the behavior today?

Common consequence: something is gained (access)



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

If a behavior reliably ends with your child getting an item, food, or activity they wanted, the behavior may be working as a way to get access to something.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check: did your chosen behavior end with your child getting something they wanted today?



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did your child gain access to something right after the behavior today?

Common consequence: the behavior itself feels good (sensory)



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Sometimes a behavior isn't about escape, attention, or access at all — it simply feels good to the body doing it, regardless of who's watching or what happens next. This is just as real and just as valid a function as the other three.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check: does your chosen behavior seem to happen the same way even when nobody is around to react to it?

DAKAR, SENEGAL

A mother notices her son rocks the exact same way whether she's in the room or not — a strong clue that it feels good to his body, independent of her reaction.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Does your chosen behavior happen the same way even without an audience?

Read your Function Detective Method card set



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Your Illustrated Card Sets document has a full, repeatable step-by-step version of everything you've practiced this month – a card sequence you can prop up and reuse for any behavior, any time, for the rest of this program and beyond.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Find the Function Detective Method in your Illustrated Card Sets – Quarter 1 document.
2. Read through the full explainer once, all the way through.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which single card in the sequence feels most useful to you right now?

Week 3 check-in: your first full ABC line



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You now have every piece: antecedent, behavior, consequence. Today, for the first time, write all three for one real moment from this week, in one place.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write one full ABC line: what happened before, the behavior itself, and what happened right after.
2. Read it back as a single, connected story.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Reading your ABC line as a whole story, does anything stand out that you hadn't noticed before?

Week 4: The Four Functions — Putting It Together

☆ WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

Escape, attention, access, and sensory feedback are the four functions behavior most commonly serves — and they're not mutually exclusive; a single behavior can sometimes serve more than one. Naming even a probable function, even an imperfect guess, changes what you try next far more than reacting blindly ever could.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[1] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 24. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Form your first hypothesis



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A hypothesis is just an honest, best guess — not a certainty. Based on everything you've noticed this month, guess which of the four functions your chosen behavior most likely serves.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write down your best guess: escape, attention, access, or sensory.
2. Write one sentence explaining why you think so.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How confident do you feel in this first guess, on a scale of 1 to 10?

Test gently: change the antecedent



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

One way to test a hypothesis is to change something about what happens before the behavior, and see whether the behavior changes too — gently, as an experiment, not a demand.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Based on your hypothesis, change one small thing about the antecedent today (a warning before a transition, a choice instead of a demand).
2. Notice what happens.

DOUALA, CAMEROON

Suspecting escape from an abrupt transition, a mother gives her son a two-minute warning before turning off the tablet for the first time — and the meltdown that usually followed doesn't happen.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What happened when you changed the antecedent today?

Test gently: change the consequence



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Another way to test a hypothesis is to change what happens right after the behavior — again, gently, as a genuine experiment.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Based on your hypothesis, change one small thing about your response after the behavior today.
2. Notice what happens, without expecting an instant transformation.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What happened when you changed your response today?

When your hypothesis was wrong — and that's fine



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A wrong guess isn't a failure; it's information. It simply means the real function is something else, and now you know one more thing it probably isn't.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. If this week's test didn't confirm your hypothesis, write down what you'd guess instead now.
2. If it did seem to confirm it, write down what makes you more sure.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you learn either way, right or wrong?

Two functions at once



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Sometimes a single behavior serves two functions together — a meltdown might both escape a hard task AND bring comforting attention afterward. Both can be true at the same time.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think about whether your chosen behavior might be serving more than one function.
2. Write down both, if that fits what you've seen.

KAMPALA, UGANDA

A father realizes his daughter's crying both ends the homework demand AND brings him to sit close beside her — two real functions in the same behavior.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Could your chosen behavior be serving more than one function?

What this means for the rest of your year



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

From here on, every tool, technique, or activity you ever try — in this program or anywhere else — works better once you first ask which function it's actually addressing. This one habit of mind is the real takeaway of this entire month.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think of one strategy you've tried before that didn't work.
2. Guess which function it may have missed.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Looking back, which function do you think that old strategy missed?

Month 1 close: from confusion to curiosity



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A month ago, hard behavior may have felt random or personal. Today, you have a real, repeatable way of asking why – antecedent, behavior, consequence, function – that you now own for good.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read back your very first Day 1 note.
2. Write one sentence about how your own thinking has changed since then.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the biggest shift in how you see your child's behavior after this month?

● MONTH 2

Regulating Together

Regulating Together turns the lens onto you, the parent, for the first time in this program. You'll learn to spot your own warning signs, offer real co-regulation instead of just words, build a personal pause before reacting, and repair honestly after a hard moment — because your own regulation is the actual lever every other strategy depends on.

Week 5, Week 6, Week 7, Week 8

Week 5: Your Own Warning Signs

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

This month turns the lens onto you. Your own body gives you warning signs before you react — a tight chest, a raised voice, a clenched jaw — and learning to spot them in yourself is the actual first skill behind every regulation strategy that follows this week.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 31. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Why this month is about you, not your child



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Every strategy for helping a child regulate depends, first, on the adult nearby being regulated enough to help — which is why this month starts with your own body and your own signals, not another tool for your child.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of the last time you felt yourself about to react strongly.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What do you remember feeling in your own body right before you reacted that time?

Your body always warns you first



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Before any strong reaction, your body usually gives a physical signal — seconds or minutes ahead of the reaction itself, like a kettle starting to rumble well before it whistles.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Today, the next time you feel yourself getting tense, pause and notice: where in your body do you feel it first?

ENUGU, NIGERIA

A mother notices her shoulders creep up toward her ears every single time, well before she ever raises her voice.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Where in your body did you notice tension first today?

Naming your own physical signal



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Giving your own warning sign a name – "my shoulders," "my jaw," "my breathing" – makes it something you can actually catch in the moment, instead of only recognizing it after the fact.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write down the name of your own personal warning sign from yesterday.
2. Watch for it once today, on purpose.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did you catch your named warning sign at all today?

The 1-10 heat scale, for yourself



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Picture your own calm as a scale from 1 (completely calm) to 10 (completely overwhelmed). Most people can catch themselves easily at a 9 — the real skill is noticing yourself at a 3 or 4, while there's still room to choose your next move.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check in with your own number on the 1-10 scale three times today, at random moments.
2. Just notice the number — no need to do anything about it yet.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What was your highest number today, and what was happening at that moment?

Catch yourself at a 4, not a 9



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The entire value of the heat scale is catching yourself early, while you still have real choices, rather than only noticing once you're already at your limit.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Today, the moment you notice yourself at a 4 or higher, pause and name it silently: "I'm at a 4 right now."

BALTIMORE, USA

A father notices himself at a 4 while waiting for his son to put on shoes for the third time, and simply names it silently instead of letting it climb further.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did naming your number early change anything about what happened next?

What usually triggers YOUR escalation



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Just like your child has patterns, so do you — a specific time of day, a specific kind of request, a specific sound, that reliably pushes your own number up faster than anything else.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think back over this week.
2. Write down one thing that reliably raises your own number.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the one thing that most reliably raises your own number?

One honest look at your own patterns



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

This isn't about guilt. Every parent has a pattern. Seeing yours clearly, without judging it, is what makes it possible to actually work with it instead of being surprised by it every time.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write one honest sentence about your own pattern from this week, without adding any self-criticism to it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What would it feel like to see this pattern as information instead of a flaw?

Week 5 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You now have a name for your own warning sign and a rough sense of your own triggers – the exact groundwork the rest of this month builds on.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review your notes from this week.
2. Write down your own personal warning sign, clearly, in one place you'll remember.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What surprised you most about paying attention to your own body this week?

Week 6: What Co-Regulation Actually Means

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

Co-regulation means a child genuinely borrows calm from a calm adult nearby — not mainly through words, but through your actual physical state: your voice, your posture, your breathing. Research on children with autism specifically shows that the quality of this parent co-regulation is closely tied to how well a child's own regulation develops over time.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[24] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 39. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

The idea of "borrowed calm"



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A dysregulated nervous system nearby tends to escalate a child further; a genuinely calm one nearby tends to help a child settle, almost like a tuning fork settling a second tuning fork placed close beside it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of a moment where your own calm — or lack of it — seemed to affect your child directly.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Can you recall a moment where your own state seemed to shift your child's state too?

Your voice is a regulation tool



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A slower, lower, quieter voice tends to signal safety to a dysregulated nervous system far more than the actual words being said.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. During one calm moment today, practice speaking slightly slower and lower than usual, just to notice how it feels.

DETROIT, USA

A mother practices a slower, lower voice while reading a bedtime story, just to feel what it's like before she ever needs it in a hard moment.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did it feel like to deliberately slow and lower your voice?

Your body posture is a regulation tool



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A tense, hovering posture can communicate alarm to a child even when your words are calm; a lower, looser posture — kneeling, sitting, relaxed shoulders — tends to communicate the opposite.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. During one moment today, notice your own posture and try lowering your body or relaxing your shoulders on purpose.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you notice about your own posture today?

Narrate your own calm, out loud



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Saying your own calm out loud — "I'm taking a slow breath right now" — teaches your child what regulation actually looks like, from watching you do it in real time, far more than any explanation could.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Today, narrate one moment of your own calm out loud, even if it feels a little strange at first.

PHOENIX, USA

A father says out loud, "I'm going to take a slow breath before I answer," the first time he's ever narrated his own regulation instead of just doing it silently.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did it feel to narrate your own calm out loud, and did your child react at all?

The mismatch problem: calm words, tense body



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Children, especially those who read tone and body language closely, often notice a mismatch between calm words and a tense body faster than adults expect – and the body usually wins that mismatch.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Before speaking to your child today, do a quick body check: does your body match the calm you're about to say?



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did you catch any mismatch between your words and your body today?

Practicing co-regulation on a small moment



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Start with a genuinely small, low-stakes moment — not the hardest moment of your week — to practice slowing your voice, lowering your posture, and narrating your calm together, all at once.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Choose one small, low-stakes moment today to practice all three: slower voice, lower posture, narrated calm.
2. Notice what happens, without expecting it to look perfect.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did the small moment go, compared to how you usually would have responded?

Week 6 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Co-regulation isn't a script you say once — it's a physical state you practice offering, over and over, in small moments, until it becomes more natural to reach for.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review this week's practice moments.
2. Write down which of the three (voice, posture, narration) felt most natural to you so far.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which part of co-regulation do you want to keep practicing next week?

Week 7: The Pause Before the Response

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

This week isn't about teaching your child anything new — it's about building your own habit of a pause, just a few real seconds, before you respond to any hard moment. That pause alone changes almost everything that follows it.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 46. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

The cost of an instant reaction



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

An instant reaction comes from whatever state you're already in — which, in a hard moment, is often not the state you'd choose on purpose. A pause simply buys you back the choice.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of one instant reaction this week you wish you could take back.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What would you have done differently with just three extra seconds?

The 3-second pause practice



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Before responding to anything hard today, silently count to three in your head first — not to suppress your response, just to create a small gap before it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Practice the 3-second pause at least once today, on any moment, even a small one.

SEATTLE, USA

A mother silently counts "one, two, three" before answering her son's fifth request to repeat a video, and notices her answer comes out steadier than usual.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you notice in the three seconds before you responded?

What to do inside the pause: breathe



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The simplest thing to do inside a pause is one slow breath — in through the nose, out slowly — which genuinely does begin to lower your own heat number, not just distract you from it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Practice one slow breath inside your pause today.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Did one slow breath change anything about how you felt in that moment?

What to do inside the pause: one silent question



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Alongside the breath, ask yourself one silent question inside the pause: "What does my child actually need right now?" – pulling directly from everything you practiced in Month 1.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Practice the breath plus the silent question together, at least once today.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What answer came up when you asked yourself that question today?

Practice the pause on a low-stakes moment



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Build the habit somewhere easy first — a small annoyance, not your hardest moment of the day — the same way any new habit is easier to build on solid ground before testing it somewhere harder.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Choose one low-stakes moment today on purpose to practice the full pause.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did the low-stakes practice go?

Practice the pause on a harder moment



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Once the habit feels a little more familiar, try it once on a genuinely harder moment — expecting it to feel less smooth than the easy practice, and that's completely normal.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Choose one harder moment today to try the full pause.
2. Don't expect perfection — just notice what happens.

KIGALI, RWANDA

A father tries the pause during a full public meltdown for the first time, and notices it's harder to remember than it was during quiet practice — but he still manages one breath.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did the pause feel different on a harder moment, compared to an easy one?

When you miss the pause (and you will)



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You will forget the pause sometimes, react instantly, and feel disappointed in yourself. That's not a failure of the method — it's simply part of how any new habit gets built, missed attempts included.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. If you missed the pause at any point today, write it down without adding self-criticism.
2. Just note it as information for next time.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What would it feel like to treat a missed pause as information instead of a failure?

Week 7 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A few real seconds of pause, practiced repeatedly, becomes far more powerful over months than any single perfect response ever could.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review this week's pause attempts, missed and successful.
2. Write one sentence about what's gotten easier, even slightly.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's one moment this week where the pause genuinely helped?

Week 8: Repair After a Hard Moment

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

Every family has hard moments where regulation slips — a child's, a parent's, or both. This week isn't about avoiding that; it's about a genuine, repeatable way to reconnect afterward, introduced fully in your Repair Ritual Sequence card set.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[24] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 54. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Rupture happens in every family — repair is the actual skill



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A hard moment where things fall apart — a meltdown, a parent raising their voice, both at once — is called a rupture. No family avoids rupture completely. What actually matters most is what happens afterward: repair.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of your family's most recent rupture, without judging it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What happened, or didn't happen, after your most recent rupture?

What repair is not: it's not about blame or punishment



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Repair is not a lecture, a consequence, or a chance to explain what your child did wrong. It's purely about reconnecting – the relationship coming back together after it briefly came apart.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think of a repair attempt you've made before that accidentally turned into a lecture.
2. Notice, without judgment, how that likely felt to your child.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Has a repair attempt of yours ever accidentally turned into a lecture?

Step 1 of repair: let the moment fully end first



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Repair only works once the hard moment has genuinely finished – trying to reconnect while either of you is still escalated usually restarts the rupture instead of closing it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. After your next hard moment, wait until both of you feel fully calm before attempting any repair.

JINJA, UGANDA

A mother waits a full twenty minutes after a meltdown, instead of her usual habit of trying to talk it through immediately, and notices her son is far more open once he's truly calm.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How long did you wait before attempting repair, and did that timing matter?

Step 2 of repair: a short, honest reconnection



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A genuine repair can be as short as a hug, a simple "that was a hard moment for both of us," or sitting close together again — brief, honest, and without an agenda attached.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Try one short, honest reconnection after your next hard moment.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did your short reconnection look like, and how did it feel?

Step 3 of repair: no lecture attached



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The single most common way repair gets undone is attaching a lecture right after it — "I'm glad we're okay now, but you really shouldn't have ..." — which quietly reopens the very rupture you just closed.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Practice ending your next reconnection there, with no "but" attached afterward.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Was it hard to resist adding a "but" to your reconnection?

Read your Repair Ritual Sequence card set



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Your Illustrated Card Sets document has the full repair sequence laid out step by step, as a card set you can prop up and reuse after any hard moment, for the rest of this program and beyond.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Find the Repair Ritual Sequence in your Illustrated Card Sets — Quarter 1 document.
2. Read through the full explainer once, all the way through.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which single step in the sequence feels hardest for you personally?

Month 2 close: regulation is a practice, not a fix



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You haven't learned to prevent every hard moment — nobody can. You've built a real, repeatable way to notice your own state early, offer genuine co-regulation, pause before reacting, and repair afterward when things still go hard. That's the actual, lasting skill.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read back your Day 31 note.
2. Write one sentence about how you see your own role differently now.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the biggest shift in how you see your own regulation after this month?

● MONTH 3

Following Their Lead

Following Their Lead uses your child's own genuine interests — mapped through real observation, not assumption — as the engine for teaching anything new. You'll learn the real difference between an authentic interest-based connection and a plain bribe, and build a repeatable method for turning any interest into a bridge toward a new skill.

[Week 9](#), [Week 10](#), [Week 11](#), [Week 12](#)

Week 9: Real Interest vs. Passing Preference

☆ WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

This month turns to your child's own genuine interests as the engine for everything that follows — but first you need to actually map what deeply motivates them, through real observation, rather than assuming you already know. This week is entirely about that honest observation.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[25] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 61. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Why this month starts with your child, not a technique



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Every skill teaches faster and sticks longer when it's genuinely connected to something your child already cares about — which means the real first step isn't a technique at all, it's truly knowing what your child cares about.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Write down your first guess at your child's biggest current interest.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's your first guess at your child's deepest current interest?

Interest vs. preference: what's the difference



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A preference is something your child likes well enough in the moment; a genuine interest is something they return to again and again, unprompted, even when nothing is asking them to.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think of one thing your child seems to prefer, and one thing they return to again and again.
2. Write down both, separately.

NAIROBI, KENYA

A father realizes his son merely prefers a certain snack, but genuinely, repeatedly returns to lining up his toy cars by color, unprompted, day after day.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the difference between your two examples?

Observe without offering, for one day



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Today, don't suggest, redirect, or offer anything new — just watch what your child chooses entirely on their own, when nothing is being offered to them.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. For one hour today, simply observe what your child gravitates toward without any suggestion from you.
2. Write down what you saw.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did your child choose, entirely unprompted, during your hour of observation?

What does your child return to, unprompted?



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

The clearest sign of a genuine interest isn't intensity in a single moment – it's returning to the same thing, again and again, across different days, without anyone asking them to.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Over the next two days, note anything your child returns to more than once, unprompted.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What has your child returned to more than once so far?

Interview yourself: when is your child most alive?



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Think back over recent weeks and ask yourself honestly: in which moments does your child seem the most genuinely engaged, focused, or lit up — not calm because nothing is demanded of them, but truly alive?



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write down two or three moments from recent memory where your child seemed most genuinely engaged.

ATLANTA, USA

A mother realizes her son seems most alive not during screen time, which merely occupies him, but during the ten minutes each evening he spends sorting his rock collection by size.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Looking at your list, what do those moments have in common?

The overlooked interest



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Sometimes a genuine interest gets dismissed as "just lining things up" or "just repeating the same thing" — worth a second, more open-minded look, since the form an interest takes doesn't determine how real or usable it is.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Think of one thing your child does repeatedly that you've previously dismissed as "just a habit."
2. Look at it again today with fresh curiosity.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you notice looking at that overlooked interest with fresh eyes?

Write your child's Interest Map



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Bring everything from this week together into one page: your child's two or three genuine, repeated interests, in your own plain words.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. In your Parent Workbook, write your child's Interest Map: their top two or three genuine interests.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Does anything on your finished Interest Map surprise you?

Week 9 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You now have a real, observed answer to what genuinely motivates your child — not a guess, but something you watched carefully over an entire week.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review your Interest Map.
2. Choose which one interest you'll work with first next week.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which interest did you choose to work with first, and why that one?

Week 10: Building a Bridge From Interest to New Skill

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

Once you genuinely know what your child cares about, the next step is building a small, deliberate bridge from that interest to a new skill you'd like them to learn — instead of fighting the interest, or ignoring it, you use it as the actual vehicle for new learning.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[25] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 69. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10–15 minutes.

The bridge idea: don't fight the interest, use it



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Rather than treating a strong interest as something competing with learning, this approach treats it as the vehicle carrying the learning — the way a real bridge carries traffic across a gap, instead of the gap being fought directly.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of one new skill you'd like your child to build.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What new skill would you most like to build a bridge toward?

Choose one new skill and one real interest to pair



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Pick one specific, small skill and one specific, genuine interest from your Interest Map, and hold them side by side, looking for any natural connection between them.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write down the one skill and the one interest you'll pair together this week.

DAKAR, SENEGAL

A mother pairs her daughter's genuine interest in counting bottle caps with the new skill of taking turns, since counting naturally involves alternating who counts next.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the one skill and one interest you're pairing this week?

Build the smallest possible bridge



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Start with the smallest imaginable version of the connection — one small addition to the existing interest, not a whole new activity built around it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Design the smallest possible version of your bridge activity — something that takes less than five minutes.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the smallest version of your bridge you could design?

Try the bridge for the first time



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Today is the first real try. Keep it brief, keep it low-pressure, and treat it as an experiment rather than a lesson that has to succeed.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Try your small bridge activity today, for just a few minutes.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What happened during your first try?

Adjust based on what actually happened



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Almost no first try works exactly as planned — the useful step is adjusting based on what you actually saw, not what you expected to see.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Based on yesterday's try, adjust one small thing about the bridge activity.
2. Try the adjusted version today.

KAMPALA, UGANDA

A father notices his son loses interest when the counting turns come too slowly, so he shortens each turn to just two counts before switching.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What did you adjust, and did it change how the activity went?

When the interest itself needs a boundary



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Even a genuine interest sometimes needs a gentle boundary — a time limit, a specific place — which doesn't dismiss the interest, it simply keeps it sustainable for the whole family.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. If your child's interest needs any boundary right now, name it plainly today, without removing the interest itself.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Does your chosen interest currently need any gentle boundary?

Week 10 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You've now built and tested a real bridge from a genuine interest to a new skill — a method you can reuse for any future skill, with any future interest, for the rest of your child's life.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review this week's bridge attempts.
2. Write one sentence about what you'd do differently next time.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the biggest thing you learned about building a bridge this week?

Week 11: Motivation as the Engine, Not the Bribe

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

There's an important difference between using a genuine interest as an authentic engine for learning, and using it as a bribe dangled to extract compliance — this week draws that line clearly, since confusing the two can quietly undo everything you've built this month.



WHY THIS WEEK'S APPROACH IS BACKED BY EVIDENCE

This week's approach draws on published research^[25] — not just tradition or guesswork.



HOW THE NEXT 8 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 76. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10–15 minutes.

The difference between motivation and bribery



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Genuine motivation connects a real interest to the activity itself — counting bottle caps IS the turn-taking practice. A bribe dangles the interest as a separate reward for finishing something unrelated — "do your homework, THEN you can count bottle caps."



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read this page.
2. Think of one example of each from your own week: a genuine connection, and a bribe.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Can you spot a real example of each in your own recent week?

Spot a bribe you're currently using



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Almost every parent uses a bribe sometimes, often without noticing — spotting one honestly is the first step, not something to feel guilty about.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Notice one bribe you use with your child today, without judging yourself for it.
2. Write it down plainly.

IBADAN, NIGERIA

A father notices he regularly says, "finish your vegetables and THEN you can watch your train videos," a clear bribe rather than a genuine connection.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What bribe did you spot yourself using today?

Replace one bribe with a genuine interest-based choice



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Instead of dangling the interest as a separate reward, try weaving it directly into the activity itself, the way you practiced in Week 10.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Take the bribe you spotted yesterday and try replacing it with a genuine, woven-in connection instead.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How did replacing the bribe with a genuine connection feel, for both of you?

What real choice actually looks like



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

A genuine choice offers your child real say over how or when they engage with their interest during an activity — not a fake choice between two options you've already decided don't matter.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Offer your child one genuine choice today related to their interest — not a fake one.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What genuine choice did you offer today, and how did your child respond?

When motivation fades — and what that tells you



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

If a previously strong interest suddenly stops working as a bridge, that's useful information too — interests can shift over time, and forcing an old one rarely works as well as noticing the shift and following it.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. If any part of this month's bridge has started to feel less effective, write down what you've noticed.

DENVER, USA

A mother notices her daughter's enthusiasm for counting bottle caps has quietly faded, and instead of pushing it further, she starts watching for what's replacing it.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Has any part of your bridge started to fade, and what might be replacing it?

Interest is not indulgence



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Following a genuine interest as a teaching engine is not the same as letting your child do only what they want all day — it's a deliberate method for teaching new things faster, with real structure still in place.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write one sentence distinguishing your use of interest-led teaching from simply indulging your child.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How would you explain the difference to someone who thought this approach was just indulgence?

Two mistakes: over-relying on one interest, and withholding it as punishment



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Two opposite mistakes are worth watching for: leaning on a single interest for absolutely everything, and taking an interest away as a punishment – both can quietly damage what has otherwise been working well.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Check whether either mistake has crept into your own week.
2. Write down which one, if either, feels closer to true for you.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which of the two mistakes, if either, do you need to watch for most?

Week 11 check-in



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

You now have a clear, working sense of the line between genuine interest-led motivation and simple bribery – a distinction that will keep paying off for as long as you keep teaching your child anything new.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Review this week's notes.
2. Write one sentence about how you'll keep this distinction in mind going forward.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's your biggest takeaway from this week's distinction?

Week 12: Closing the Quarter — Your New Understanding

WHAT THIS WEEK IS ABOUT, IN PLAIN WORDS

This closing week isn't a review of tools you've built — it's a review of how you now understand your child differently: the function behind their behavior, your own regulation as the actual lever, and their real interests as a genuine engine for learning. That new understanding is what carries forward into everything else this program still has for you.



HOW THE NEXT 7 DAYS WORK

Turn the page for Day 84. Each day that follows gets its own page: one small idea to understand, one concrete thing to do, and one short question to think about before bed. Some days include a real family's example. Nothing asks for more than about 10-15 minutes.

Score yourself on your Three Lenses, for the first time



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Across three months, you built no single tool – you built three genuine lenses for seeing your child differently: understanding function, offering regulation, and following interest. Today you'll score yourself on all three for the very first time, giving you a real baseline to measure against for the rest of this program.

✓ WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Score yourself 1 to 5 on each of your Three Lenses: how clearly you can read the function behind a hard behavior, how well you catch your own warning signs, and how naturally you weave in your child's real interests.
2. Write today's date next to your three scores, and keep this page easy to find – you'll return to it throughout the rest of the program.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

Which of the Three Lenses feels most solid for you right now, and which needs the most work?

Revisit your very first Day 1 note



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Reading your very first note from ninety days ago, next to where you are now, is often the clearest way to see real change — more honest than memory alone.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Find and reread your Day 1 note.
2. Write one sentence comparing it to how you think now.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the clearest difference between your Day 1 thinking and now?

The behavior you understand differently now



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Choose the one behavior you tracked most closely this quarter, and write out its full story – antecedent, behavior, consequence, likely function – as one complete, connected understanding.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write your chosen behavior's full ABC-plus-function story in one place.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

How does having the full story change how you feel about that behavior?

Your regulation, six weeks later



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Look honestly at how your own warning-sign awareness, pause practice, and repair attempts have shifted since Month 2 began — progress here is rarely a straight line, and that's completely normal.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Write one honest sentence about your own regulation, six weeks on.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's one specific moment where your own regulation practice genuinely helped?

Your child's interest map, in full



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Look back at your child's Interest Map from Week 9, and add anything new you've learned about it since — interest maps are living documents, not one-time forms.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Update your child's Interest Map with anything new from the past few weeks.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's new on your child's Interest Map since Week 9?

What carries forward into Quarter 2



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Quarter 2 builds directly on all three of this quarter's shifts — understanding function, offering regulation, and following genuine interest — as you move into deepening communication and widening independence.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Read the Quarter 2 overview in your Start Here document.
2. Write down one thing from this quarter you specifically want to keep carrying forward.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What's the one thing from Quarter 1 you most want to carry into Quarter 2?

Quarter 1 close: understanding before action



TODAY'S IDEA, IN PLAIN WORDS

Every quarter that follows will ask you to act — teach, practice, build. This quarter asked you to understand first, so that everything you do from here forward actually fits your child, instead of being borrowed from someone else's family entirely.



WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO TODAY

1. Take a moment to genuinely acknowledge the three months of work behind you.
2. Write one sentence of encouragement to yourself before Quarter 2 begins.



BEFORE BED TONIGHT, THINK ABOUT THIS

What would you tell another parent just starting this exact quarter?

Sources for this guide: [4] NICE CG170 · [11] Steinbrenner et al. (2020) · [24] Ting & Weiss, Emotion Regulation and Parent Co-Regulation in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2017) · [25] White et al., Creating Inclusive Schools for Autistic Students: A Scoping Review on Elements Contributing to Strengths-Based Approaches (2023). Full list of references in the Start Here document.