

KINTOA

Strength of Family, Courage of Warriors

March/April 2024



About KinToa

A pair of hands, one from the top and one from the bottom, are shown holding a bright red heart. The hands are positioned as if they are gently cradling the heart. The background is plain white.

Welcome to “**KinToa**”, a magazine where the essence of family meets the heart of bravery. Our name, a blend of ‘Kin’ and the Maori word ‘Toa’, symbolises the unyielding strength and courage that defines the journey of SEND parent carers. It’s more than just a title; it’s our philosophy.

At KinToa, we understand the unique challenges you face as a parent carer. We know that sometimes, what you need isn’t another hand massage - the go-to at every carers meeting - but real, tangible support that addresses the realities of your everyday life. That’s why our magazine is dedicated to empowering you, reducing feelings of isolation, and bringing a spark of joy and inspiration to your routine.

Why KinToa? Because we believe in the power of shared experiences and collective wisdom. Our magazine is a safe space where laughter and learning go hand in hand. We strive to provide content that not only supports and educates but also uplifts and entertains. From practical tips on navigating the complexities of SEND caregiving to uplifting stories of resilience and triumph, we cover it all.

Thanks to **Jodie** from
The Nurture
Programme for her
amazing design work

Our mission is to make you feel seen, heard, and understood. We’re here to remind you that you’re not alone on this journey. Through KinToa, we bring together a community of individuals who share your struggles, victories, and hopes.

Each page of KinToa is infused with a spirit of camaraderie and empathy. Whether it’s a story that makes you smile, an article that sparks an “aha” moment, or a tip that makes your day a little easier, we’re here to provide that. We’re not just a magazine; we’re a companion on your path, a cheerleader for your efforts, and a witness to your incredible strength.

Join us in creating a world where every parent carer feels empowered, connected, and a little less isolated. Welcome to the KinToa family - where we’re stronger together.

Editor's Letter

Dear Reader

Welcome to the inaugural edition of KinToa, a magazine that's much more than just a collection of articles. It's a testament to the strength, courage, and humour inherent in the SEND parent carer community.

The journey to bring KinToa to life has been driven by a simple, yet powerful belief: SEND parent carers deserve a platform that speaks directly to them, about them, and for them.

Our name, KinToa, is a blend of 'Kin' and the Maori word 'Toa', meaning warrior. This encapsulates our ethos, recognising the warrior spirit in each one of you, the unsung heroes in the SEND community. You navigate a path that's often uncharted and challenging, yet do so with incredible strength and love.

In these pages, you'll find stories that resonate, advice that empowers, and moments of light-heartedness that we hope will bring a smile to your face. Each article, story, and tip comes from a place of understanding and shared experience.

As we embark on this journey together, I invite you to share your thoughts, stories, and insights with us. Your contributions will shape KinToa into a magazine that truly reflects our diverse, vibrant, and courageous community.

Here's to the start of something special; a journey we take together, supporting and inspiring each other along the way.

Thank you for being a part of the KinToa family.

**WARM
REGARDS,**

*Debs
Aspland*



S.E.N.D

Our Way

Because we live it

SUPPORT

EMPOWERMENT

NOURISHMENT

DISCOVERY

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EMPOWERMENT
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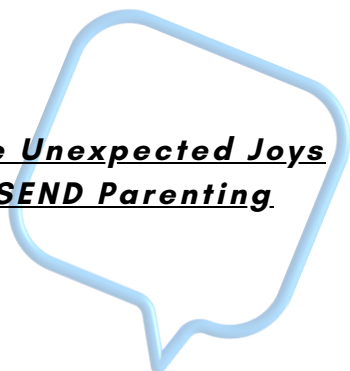
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5 Lists Every Parent Carer Needs



I love a list and I even have a list of my lists, but some lists are more important than others.

As a parent carer, we keep a lot of information in our head, or on our phone and we believe it will be okay because we are not going anywhere.

For SEND parent carers, the stakes are often high and the demands are relentless. A missed medication, an overlooked therapy session, or a mis-communicated dietary need can have significant consequences.

In situations where you might not be available, be it because of illness, work commitments, or well-deserved personal time, these lists become the guiding star for anyone stepping into your shoes.

They are not just about keeping track; they're about providing continuity of

care, maintaining routine, and ensuring peace of mind in a life that rarely pauses for breath.

In the following paragraphs, we delve into the five most crucial lists every SEND parent carer should have, explaining how each one can transform challenges into manageable tasks and bring a sense of order to the beautiful chaos of SEND parenting.

CONTACT LISTS

This is the list we often forget. Gone are the days when we all had a physical address book with all the names and numbers stored. We now collate everything on our phone or tablet.

Having been in the position of losing my phone and needing to ring someone urgently, I know how much of a pain it is when you have to locate a number for someone. As you will know, sometimes the contact details for some practitioners or departments can be difficult to come by.

Your list should include contact information for all the people involved in your child's life; education, health, and social care. Also, list trusted family members, friends, and neighbours who understand the child's needs

Lists

... Continued

As well as the contact details of the people involved, it is worth adding a section about what they actually do (or should do) and perhaps a note of when you last saw them and when you are next due to see them.

Medication / Supplement Details

Who is the person who organises the prescriptions, the collections, the dispensing and more for your child's medication? Would anyone else know exactly what your child has to take, how much, when they take it, anything they can't take with it?

Having the details of your child's medication (or supplements) is essential. I recommend three different lists. One is for a quick overview; what they take, why they take it, dosage and when they take it. The second should be about the review, who prescribed it, when was it last reviewed and is it working or not, along with questions you want to ask at the next appt. The third should be one sheet per medication. This includes every bit of information you know, who prescribed, when, side effects, is weight check needed, are vitamin D or blood checks needed, when reviewed.



These lists become the guiding star for anyone stepping into your shoes

It may seem like an effort to write it all out more than once, but imagine you take ill suddenly. A quick overview of what your child's medication is on a day-to-day basis is really beneficial. The review list is another quick glance so the stand in carer can see at a glance what dates are coming up. The detailed list gives them all the information they need to digest when they have time.

Detailed Medical History

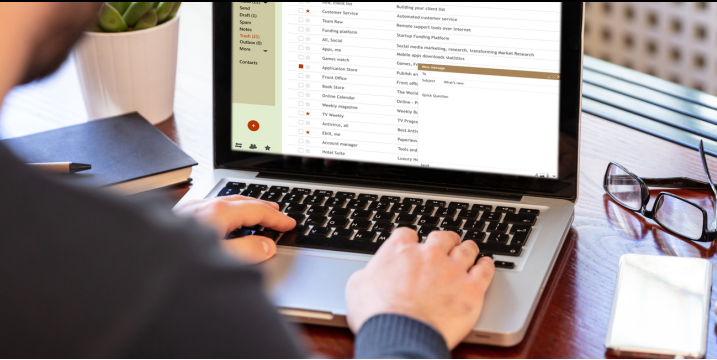
This should be a comprehensive record of your child's medical history, including diagnoses, surgeries, hospital visits, and allergies. If they have a diagnosis, when were they diagnosed? How does a problem present itself? Who do you need to contact if there are problems? Are there specific things that any emergency services would need to know (for example, some children with a magnetic VP Shunt need specific MRI scan programmes)? Everything you can think of, usually information stored in your head, needs to go in here.

The contact details for some practitioners can be difficult to come by, as we all know!

Lists

... Continued

Lists: The unsung heroes that turn our chaos into order, one tick at a time.



This should be a breakdown of your child's daily schedule, including therapy sessions, school, meals, and other activities. This will help to maintain consistency and ensures that your child's day-to-day needs are met.

Daily Routine & Schedules

I remember being away on business overnight and had left my husband with details of when school transport arrived, what they had for breakfast, etc. However, I forgot to mention that socks and shoes only went on at 7.20. I rang at 7.10am to check everything was ok (as I sat enjoying a cooked breakfast and a hot coffee at the hotel) and as my husband answered, I could hear what sounded like the starts of the next World War in the background. My husband had asked them to put socks and shoes on at 7.00am because they were all dressed and ready except for socks and shoes. I had forgotten to mention our 7.20 timeline.

Specific Care Instructions

These should be detailed instructions about your child's care, including

behavioural management strategies, communication preferences, dietary needs, and sensory sensitivities. It should include their likes and dislikes, any known triggers, and calming techniques. These are all crucial for someone who might need to step in and provide care.

Where Do You Keep These Lists

It's good to have a digital copy (in a notes app on your phone), or a folder stored in the cloud (e.g. a folder on Dropbox or iCloud), or perhaps a google doc or google sheet. Something which is easy to share with others.

Or perhaps you like pen and paper, in which case these lists could be in a notebook. I would highly recommend taking a scan or photo of each page, so you can send it to someone easily from your phone or tablet.

Perhaps you like templates so you could download a digital template and either print and complete or use Goodnotes or something similar to complete on your tablet.

Whatever you chose, **make sure you share before any emergency happens.** Start a WhatsApp group chat or a Messenger chat and share it in there. No one needs to do anything with it, but they know where it is.

We've Done The Hard Work For You

Do you have dreams of being organised?

Do you often hear yourself saying "I will get that all written down somewhere, one day"?

Debs, our Editor in Chief, is a parent carer to three young adults. After years of trying to get organised, she decided to create her own organiser so she had one place for everything.

Like all planners though, this organiser worked for Debs but not necessarily for a friend who had a room full of equipment, or 1001 different meds.

Debs now offers templates for everything, you pick and choose the ones you need. Think of it like filofax inserts. Simply download then print.

Debs Aspland



FIND OUT MORE AT: LIFEASPLAND

What Type of Parent Carer Are You?

Answer these questions to find out your parenting style in the SEND world. Tally your answers and read what your predominant letter says about you!

1. When facing a new challenge with your child, you:

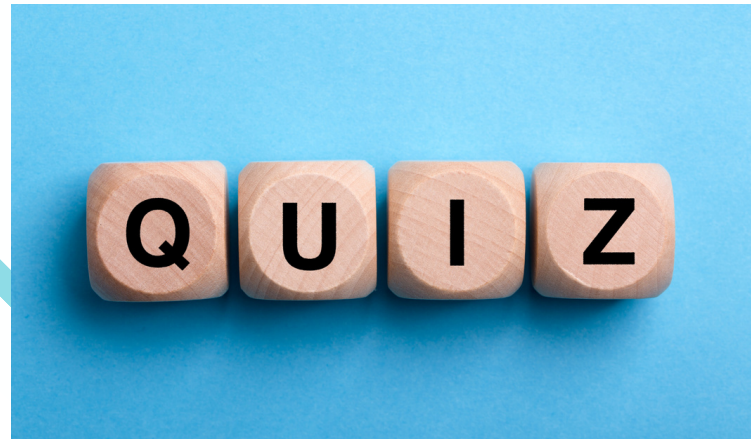
- Research extensively and prepare a detailed plan.
- Reach out to other parent carers for advice and support.
- Take a moment to relax and approach the issue with a calm mind.
- Look for innovative or creative solutions.

2. Your approach to meetings is:

- Armed with notes, reports, and a list of questions.
- Ready to listen and share experiences with other parents there.
- Focused on maintaining a positive and peaceful mindset.
- Open to new ideas and flexible in your approach.

3. If you have some free time, you prefer to:

- Organise your week or read educational material.
- Catch up with friends or attend a support group.
- Indulge in some self-care or a relaxing hobby.
- Explore a new hobby or take a spontaneous trip.



4. Facing a parenting dilemma, you first:

- Research and look up proven strategies.
- Ask for opinions in your support network.
- Listen to your intuition for guidance.
- Think outside the box for unique approaches.

5. At a support group, you're more likely to:

- Share useful resources and tips.
- Offer a listening ear and empathy.
- Suggest wellness and mindfulness techniques.
- Discuss alternative therapies or novel ideas.

6. Your approach to self-care includes:

- Organising your space or life.
- Socialising or attending group activities.
- Pursuing personal interests or quiet time.
- Trying new activities or hobbies.

Now tally your answers



A	B	C	D	
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EVERY PARENT CARER HAS A UNIQUE STYLE, LIKE A SPECIAL FINGERPRINT ON THE HEART OF THEIR FAMILY. EMBRACE YOUR INDIVIDUALITY, FOR IT'S YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH IN THIS JOURNEY.

7. When planning family activities, you prefer:

- a. Structured and educational outings.
- b. Community events or group playdates.
- c. Peaceful, low-key activities at home.
- d. Explorative and spontaneous adventures.

8. Your go-to stress reliever is:

- a. Making lists and organising.
- b. Talking with friends or fellow carers.
- c. Engaging in a relaxing activity.
- d. Engaging in a fun, new challenge.

9. In terms of education, you value:

- a. Structured learning and traditional methods.
- b. Collaborative learning and community projects.
- c. A balanced approach that includes wellness.
- d. Innovative methods and tech-based solutions.

10. When reading parenting advice, you:

- a. Look for expert opinions and research.
- b. Prefer stories and experiences from other parents.
- c. Trust in what aligns with your family's values.
- d. Are drawn to unconventional and new ideas.

Mostly A's: The Strategist

You're all about planning and preparation. You tackle challenges with a detailed plan and are always well-informed.

Tip: Remember, it's okay to step back and breathe when things don't go according to plan.

Mostly B's: The Community Builder

You find strength in community and sharing experiences. Your empathy and understanding make you a pillar in your support network.

Tip: While supporting others, don't forget to take time for your own needs.

Mostly C's: The Mindful Carer

You prioritise balance and well-being, approaching challenges with calmness and positivity.

Tip: Your tranquility is a strength, but don't shy away from seeking support when needed.

Mostly D's: The Innovator

Creative and flexible, you're open to new ideas and enjoy exploring different ways to enhance your child's and your own growth.

Tip: Your adaptability is a great asset, but sometimes a little structure can also be beneficial.

Now tally your answers 

A	B	C	D	
---	---	---	---	--



Are you a Parent Carer dreaming of launching your own business? Or do you have a business you are trying to grow?

Do you work from home and feel isolated but find it hard to find other parent carers who are trying to do the same thing?

DO YOU WANT TO TURN YOUR PASSION INTO PROFIT, WHILST JUGGLING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF PARENT CARER LIFE?

SPACE (Society of Parent And Carer Entrepreneurs) can help you achieve your entrepreneurial goals, with a supportive community of fellow parent carer entrepreneurs, resources, and training.

Debs Aspland

Find out about the membership [HERE: @lifeaspland](#)

If you are overwhelmed with everything you need to know as a parent carer, or you are not sure where to go to ask a question, or perhaps you just want to have a chat with someone who gets it.

There is a new discord server called SendVille. Within SendVille, you will find Chill Out Club, Education Estate, Social Street, Health Hut, Resource Ranch, Finance Quarter and more. Think of each area as a house within a village.

In each house are rooms to visit, helping you to find the right place to ask your question or share your wisdom. It's new, so joining now means you also help it grow into what you need.

*Send
Ville*



Navigating Life
with SEND

T O G E T H E R

Join SENDVille now!
Discord is super easy to use and it's FREE

Moon & Stones

Crystals: Anchors of Strength and Serenity for Parent Carers

Throughout history, crystals have served as beacons of healing, comfort, and connection. Even if the full embrace of crystal healing feels a step too far, crystals, with their ancient allure and natural beauty, can become a symbol of solace, especially in the hands of those navigating the demanding path of parent caregiving.

Amethyst:

Among the myriad of crystals, Amethyst emerges as a steadfast ally for parent carers. This mesmerising stone, cloaked in shades of deep violet and soft lavender, is revered not just for its beauty but for its profound connection to calmness, clarity, and emotional support.

Why Amethyst for Parent Carers?

Amethyst's palette of benefits reads like a love letter to those in the caregiving community:

- **Stress Alleviation:** Known for its tranquil energy, Amethyst offers a serene escape from the whirlwind of daily responsibilities.
- **Emotional Balance:** It's said to harmonise emotions, helping to navigate the highs and lows with grace and resilience.
- **Enhanced Sleep:** Its calming influence extends to the realm of sleep, promoting restful nights—a precious commodity for any carer.
- **Clarity and Decision-Making:** Amethyst is believed to clear the mind, fostering clarity and aiding in making thoughtful decisions amidst the complexities of caregiving.

Full Moon

UK time

- 25th March - 18:57
- 24th April - 21:33

Eastern time

- 25th March – 03.00
- 23rd April – 19.49

Incorporating Amethyst into Your Life:

- **A Tranquil Corner:** Placing Amethyst in your home can create a serene space, ideal for moments of reflection or just to catch a breath.
- **Meditative Companion:** Holding or being near Amethyst during meditation can amplify feelings of peace, making it easier to find a moment of tranquility.
- **Pocket Peacekeeper:** Carrying a piece of Amethyst with you serves as a constant reminder of your inner strength and the calm you can call upon even in the midst of chaos.

In the journey of parent caregiving, where every day brings new challenges and joys, Amethyst can be a grounding force, reminding us of our resilience, wisdom, and the quiet strength that lies within. While the healing power of crystals like Amethyst may primarily reside in the realm of personal belief, their capacity to symbolise and evoke our deepest hopes and strengths is universally powerful.

Me Too, Not Me First

Self care isn't about making you the number one priority and ignoring the needs of everyone around you. Self care means "me too".

Self care is about appreciating that you, in whatever role you have, need to be included in the list of things you care for.

If you don't spend some time looking after yourself, be that mentally, physically, emotionally or through social connection, you will crash and burn. What use will you be to the people depending on you then?

Self Care Challenge

Think of all the care you give and think of one thing you could do to include yourself. It doesn't need to be a whole day pamper, or a whole day doing everything just for you. In real life, we don't always have the time for that.

It could be:

- a chat with a friend
- a ten-minute walk
- 20 mins with your favourite book
- listening to music
- a word search puzzle
- drinking a cup of tea or coffee while it's still hot,



“I haven't got time to think about me, self care is something other people do”

One small thing that takes very little time can make a huge difference.

When the kids have left for the day, before I put a load of washing in, before I open up my Mac, before I look at my to do list, before I drag the Hoover out, before I do anything for anyone else, I sit in the garden with a cup of tea that's still hot. Sometimes I even connect with a friend by WhatsApp, Messenger or in a Facebook group. Sometimes I just enjoy the silence for a short time.

Try it and see how it makes you feel.



Remember:

Taking time for yourself isn't selfish, it's essential.

Self-care is the fuel that keeps your parenting journey sustainable.




Understanding The Value of a Support Network

In the world of caregiving, your resilience and capacity to care for others is often how you measure your strength. Yet, there's an untold strength in recognising the need for support. This chapter delves into the multifaceted value of building a support network, an indispensable asset for any caregiver.

The Emotional Value of a Support Network

A support network is much more than a group of people helping; it's a source of emotional sustenance. When you're feeling overwhelmed, members of your network can offer a listening ear, words of encouragement, and much-needed empathy. They understand the highs and lows of caregiving, providing a safe space for you to express your feelings without judgment. Regular interactions with your network can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, reinforcing the fact that you're not alone in your caregiving journey.



“Caregiving can sometimes feel like juggling several balls at once”

Sharing the Load

Caregiving can sometimes feel like juggling several balls at once. Your support network can step in to help carry some of these balls. For instance, a neighbour might take over the grocery shopping, or a family member could handle some household chores. Even small acts of help can provide significant relief, allowing you to focus more on quality care and less on the endless to-do list. Importantly, sharing the load helps in preventing caregiver burnout, ensuring you stay physically and mentally healthy to care for your loved one.

A Diverse Perspective

The beauty of a support network lies in the diversity of its members. Each person brings their own experiences, knowledge, and problem-solving skills. This diversity is invaluable in caregiving, where challenges can be complex and multifaceted. For example, a fellow caregiver might suggest a new way to manage medication schedules, or a friend with a background in finance could offer advice on budgeting for healthcare expenses. These varied perspectives can open your eyes to new possibilities and solutions.



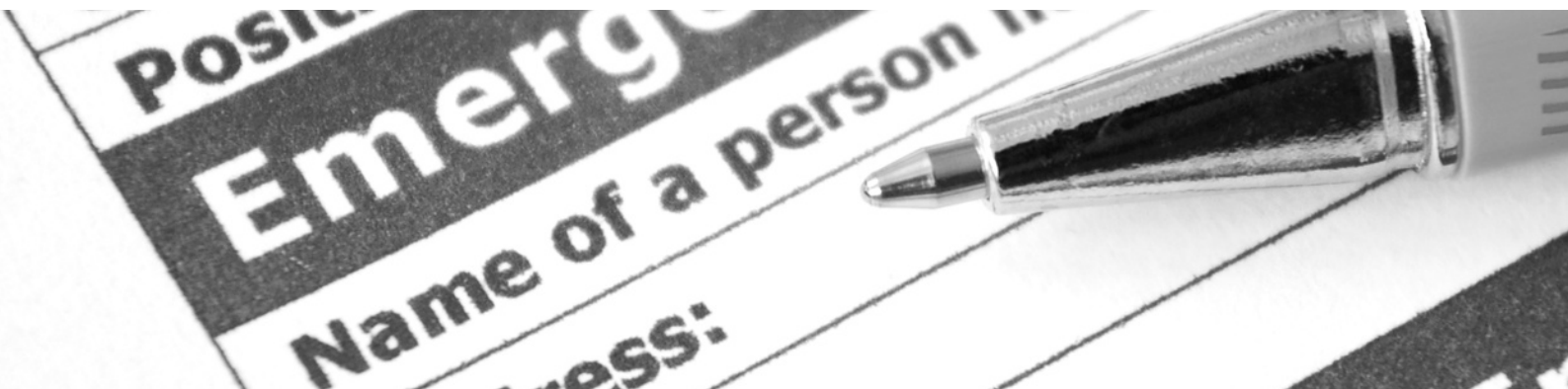
Learning and Growth

Being surrounded by a network of supportive individuals is an educational experience. It exposes you to different caregiving strategies and resources that you might not have discovered on your own. For instance, through your network, you might learn about a local support group for caregivers or a new online resource for managing healthcare documents. This continuous exposure to new information can enhance your caregiving skills and knowledge, making you more adept at handling the responsibilities that come with caregiving.

Emergency Backup

One of the most practical aspects of having a support network is the assurance that you have back-up in case of emergencies. Should you fall ill or need to tend to other urgent matters, members of your network can step in to provide care. This safety net is essential, as it ensures continuity of care for your loved one. Knowing that there are reliable people who can take over, even temporarily, provides immense peace of mind.

“ It's not uncommon for caregivers to neglect their own health and needs. ”



Enhancing Your Well-being

The ultimate value of a support network is its positive impact on your overall well-being. It's not uncommon for caregivers to neglect their own health and needs. A support network can remind you to take time for self-care and can even help facilitate it.

Whether it's encouraging you to take a break or offering to cover your responsibilities while you rejuvenate, your network plays a crucial role in maintaining your health and happiness.

The journey of caregiving, while fulfilling, can also be demanding. A robust support network is not a luxury but a necessity. It enhances your ability to provide care and, just as importantly, ensures that you take care of yourself. As we move forward, remember that each strand of support weaves into a stronger safety net, enabling you to provide the best care possible while preserving your own well-being.

“ Knowing that there are reliable people who can take over, even temporarily, provides immense peace of mind ”



Explaining Your Needs & How Others Can Help

- **Be Specific:** Clearly articulate the specific areas where you need support. Whether it's help with transportation, respite care, or emotional support, being specific helps others understand exactly what you need.
- **Use "I" Statements:** Frame your needs from your perspective to avoid sounding demanding. For example, "I find it challenging to manage the weekly grocery shopping while caring for my child."
- **Offer Suggestions, Not Demands:** Present ways they could help as suggestions rather than obligations. For example, "Would you be able to help with grocery shopping? It would be really helpful."
- **Discuss Availability and Limits:** Be open about how often you might need their support and understand their availability. This clarity will help in setting realistic expectations.

Building and Nurturing Relationships

- **Regular Check-ins:** Once someone agrees to be part of your network, maintain the relationship with regular check-ins. This keeps the lines of communication open and shows your appreciation for their help.
- **Show Gratitude:** A simple thank you goes a long way. Acknowledge their support and the difference it makes in your life.
- **Reciprocate When Possible:** While your primary role is as a carer, try to be there for your network members too. This could be as simple as listening to them or offering help within your means.
- **Build Trust Through Consistency:** Be consistent in your interactions and follow through on any arrangements. Trust is foundational in any relationship.

Building relationships requires courage, clarity, and a willingness to be open. By approaching network members with honesty, respecting their decisions, and maintaining a two-way relationship, you can create a network that not only supports your caregiving role but also enriches your life.

Remember, every conversation is a step towards a stronger support system.

Top Tips

Offer Suggestions, Not Demands

Reciprocate When Possible

Find Out More: 

The Radical Parenting Programme

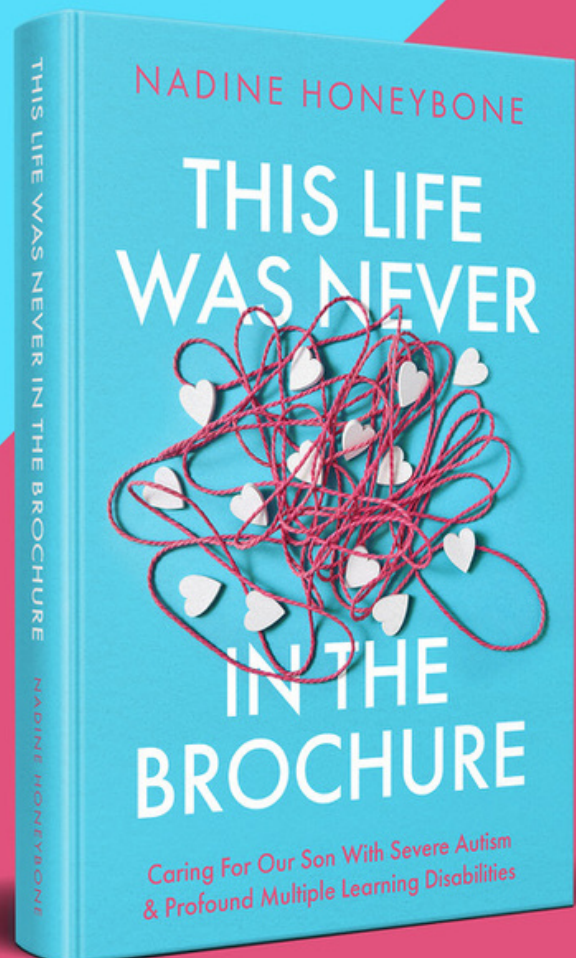
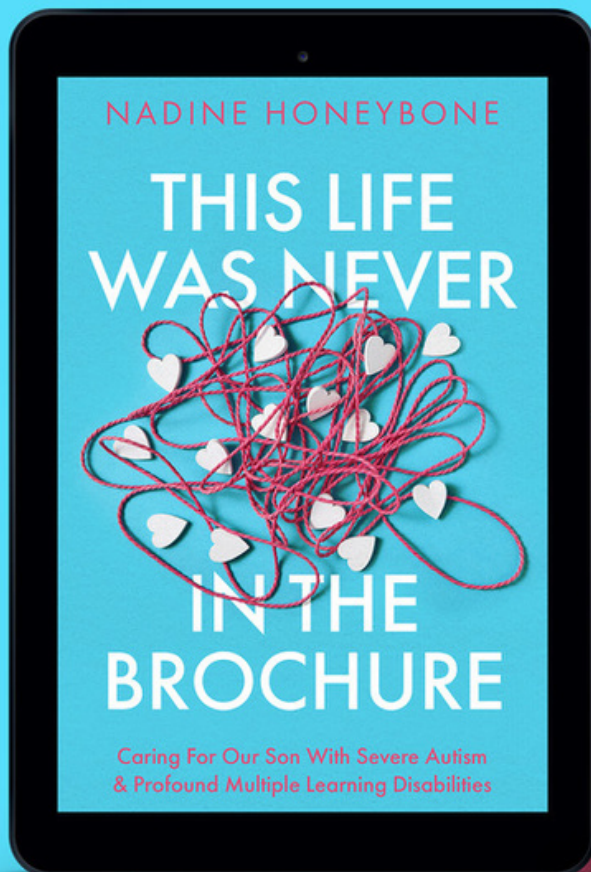


The One Where We Don't Teach You How To Parent!

Because the simple fact is that you KNOW how to parent. That instinct is a given. It is running through your veins like the blood you were born with

With Jodie

- FOUR 1+hour(s) of professionally illustrated presentations
- Downloadable and printable workbooks
- Access to a dedicated online Facebook connection group
- An online portal to store recordings with LIFETIME access.
- Two bonus workshops with special guests! Dr Judy Eaton and Kelly Mahler
- A CPD Certificate upon completion of the programme and surveys.
- This programme is trauma informed. and interoceptive aware.



AVAILABLE NOW

AWARENESS DAYS & MONTHS COMING UP

As a parent carer, we often take to social media to raise awareness of our reality. One way we can help to grow our own profile is to get involved in a variety of awareness days. Trying to find the right ones, though, can be a challenge. There are so many.

To help, we are introducing this helpful column. Awareness Days & Months coming up!

Monthly Themes

March

- Brain Tumour Awareness Month
- Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
- Endometriosis Awareness Month
- Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
- Brain Injury Awareness Month
- Women's History Month
- Ramadan: March 10-April 9

April

- Stress Awareness Month
- National Pet Month
- Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) Awareness Month
- Parkinson's Awareness Month
- IBS Awareness Month
- Bowel Cancer Awareness Month
- National Poetry Month

International days are not just dates on the calendar; they're opportunities for us to unite, raise our voices, and extend our reach. Let's harness these moments to illuminate the path together.



March 2024

- 01: National Day of Unplugging
- 01: Zero Discrimination Day
- 01: International Wheelchair Day
- 01: Self Harm Awareness Day
- 03: World Hearing Day
- 03: Dyscalculia Awareness Day
- 08: International Women's Day
- 09: World Kidney Day
- 10: Mother's Day (U.K.)
- 10: The Academy Awards
- 10-16 World Glaucoma Week
- 11: National Napping Day
- 12: World Glaucoma Day
- 14: University Mental Health Day
- 15: World Sleep Day
- 16: Disabled Access Day
- 17: St. Patrick's Day
- 19: National Let's Laugh Day
- 20: International Day of Happiness
- 21: World Down Syndrome Day
- 21: World Poetry Day
- 22: World Water Day
- 23: Earth Hour
- 25: FND (Functional Neurological Disorder) Awareness Day
- 25: International Waffle Day
- 26: Epilepsy Awareness Day
- 27: World Theatre Day
- 29: Good Friday
- 30: World Bipolar Day
- 31: Easter Sunday

Facebook remains one of the most powerful platforms for community building and awareness-raising. Here are some tips on how to use both personal profiles and pages effectively to grow your reach and impact.



April 2024

- 01: April Fools' Day
- 02-08: World Autism Acceptance Week
- 02: World Autism Awareness Day
- 02: International Fact-Checking Day
- 07: World Health Day
- 11: World Parkinson's Day
- 11: National Pet Day
- 13: International Plant Appreciation Day
- 14-20: Parkinson's Awareness Week
- 15: International Micro-volunteering Day (Volunteer for AbilityNet)
- 16: World Voice Day (Recognition of mutism and stutter)
- 21: World Creativity and Innovation Day
- 22: Earth Day
- 22-28: MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Awareness Week
- 23: World Book Day
- 24: International Guide Dog Day
- 27: On your feet Britain (Workplace Adjustments)
- 28: World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Using Personal Profiles:

1. **Share Your Journey:** Regularly post updates, stories, and experiences related to your life as a SEND parent carer. Authenticity fosters connection.
2. **Engage Actively:** Comment on, like, and share relevant content from other users and pages. Engagement boosts your visibility.
3. **Join Groups:** Participate in SEND-related or parenting groups. These can be valuable spaces for support, information exchange, and networking.
4. **Privacy Settings:** Be mindful of your privacy settings to control who sees your posts, especially when sharing personal information.

FaceBook

Creating/Growing a Facebook Page:

- **Define Your Focus:** Your page should have a clear focus, whether it's sharing experiences, advising, or raising awareness about specific aspects of SEND.
- **Consistent Content:** Post regularly to keep your audience engaged. Plan a content calendar with a mix of posts, stories, information, questions, and interactive content.
- **Engage Your Audience:** Respond to comments and messages. Creating a two-way conversation helps build a community.



Growing Your Page:

- Facebook Ads: Consider using Facebook Ads to reach a wider audience.
- Collaborations: Partner with other pages or influencers in the SEND community to cross-promote content.
- Live Sessions: Host Facebook Live sessions on topics of interest to increase engagement and interact with your audience.
- Shareable Content: Create content that people are likely to share, such as inspirational stories, tips, or informative posts.

Growing your presence on Facebook, whether through a personal profile or a dedicated page, requires consistency, authenticity, and engagement.

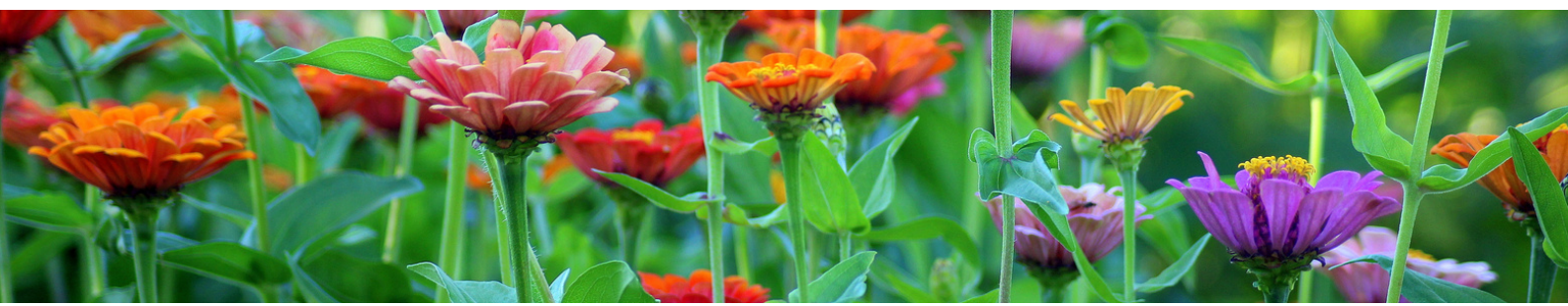
GET READY TO TICK OFF THESE FACEBOOK GROWTH STRATEGIES YOU'VE TRIED OR PLAN TO.

Facebook Growth Hacks

- Create a content calendar
- Host a Facebook Live session
- Join Facebook groups in your niche
- Use Insights to analyse post performance
- Collaborate with another page or influencer.
- Share a behind-the-scenes post
- Run a Facebook ad, even with a small budget
- Host a giveaway or contest
- Implement user-generated content
- Use eye-catching visuals
- Ask questions on your posts
- Share a post from another page to your story
- Create a poll in your story or page
- Use hashtags in your posts
- Reply to comments and messages promptly
- Create a themed series of posts
- Schedule posts for optimal times
- Take a social media break for self-care

Facebook Don'ts

- Don't Ignore Your Audience: Engagement is a two-way street.
- Don't Post Without a Purpose: Every post should add value, whether it's educational, inspirational, or entertaining.
- Don't Over-Promote: Constant self-promotion or sales pitches can be off-putting.
- Don't Share Unverified Information: Always fact-check before sharing information.
- Don't Engage in Online Arguments: Engaging in hostile debates can reflect poorly on you.
- Don't Use Inconsistent Branding: Consistency in your visual and written content helps build brand recognition.
- Don't Forget to Cite Sources: If you're sharing someone else's content or information, always give credit where it's due.
- Don't Lose Your Authentic Voice: It's easy to get caught up in trends, but losing your unique voice and perspective in the process can make your content feel generic.



Embracing Spring Gardening

Gardening is not just about growing plants; it's about cultivating moments of peace, growth, and joy within our families.

Spring in the UK is a time of awakening and growth, making it perfect for gardening. For SEND parent carers, gardening offers an opportunity to engage with nature, promote well-being, and enjoy the satisfaction of growing your own food.

Benefits of Gardening:

- **Health and Well-being:** Gardening can reduce stress and promote a sense of calmness, ideal for both carers and children.
- **Sensory Experience:** For children with sensory processing issues, the textures and smells of plants offer a therapeutic experience.
- **Physical Activity:** Gardening tasks like digging and watering provide gentle physical activity.
-

Inclusive Gardening Activities:

- **Potting Plants:** A simple and safe activity, great for children who prefer seated tasks.
- **Watering:** Using a small watering can, children can help in watering plants, enhancing their sense of responsibility
- **Sensory Exploration:** Encourage children to touch, smell, and even taste safe herbs and vegetables..

Gardening Jobs for March and April:

- **Soil Preparation:** Clearing and preparing beds can be a joint activity, with tasks adjusted according to each child's ability.
- **Pruning:** For older or more capable children, simple pruning under supervision can be engaging.
- **Weeding and Pest Control:** Identifying and gently removing weeds is a calm, focused activity.

Eating What You Grow:

There's immense joy in eating something you've grown. Even simple herbs added to a meal can be gratifying.

Gardening this spring can be a delightful experience for SEND families. It's not just about the result, but the journey of growing together. Whether it's the joy of planting a seed or the pride in harvesting your vegetables, gardening offers a world of simple pleasures and therapeutic benefits.



Spring gardening Ideas

Hardy Vegetables to Sow Outside

- Peas: Early varieties can be sown directly into the ground.
- Broad beans: If not sown in autumn, they can be sown now.
- Onions and Shallots: Plant onion sets and shallot sets.
- Radishes: Easy and quick to grow, perfect for March sowing.
- Carrots: Early varieties can be sown directly into well-prepared soil.
- Beetroot: Sow directly into the ground for an early summer harvest.
- Lettuce and other salad leaves: Sow directly outside or in containers for a continuous harvest.
- Spinach: Direct sow for an early summer crop.

Other Considerations

- **Potatoes:** March is a good time to start chitting (sprouting) seed potatoes indoors to plant out in April.
- **Herbs:** Many herbs like parsley, chives, and coriander can be started indoors in March

Vegetables to Start Indoors in March

Tomatoes: Start these indoors or in a heated greenhouse to transplant later.

Peppers and Chillies: These need a long growing season, so start them early indoors.

Leeks: Sow indoors and transplant outdoors when they are big enough.

Cabbage: Start early varieties indoors for transplanting later.

Cauliflower: Sow in a greenhouse or indoors for transplanting later.

Brussels Sprouts: Start indoors for transplanting in late spring for a winter harvest.



Tips for March Planting

- Frost Protection: Be ready to protect young plants from late frosts. Use fleece or cloches as needed.
- Soil Preparation: Ensure the soil is well-prepared, with plenty of organic matter added to retain moisture and nutrients.
- Watering: Seedlings will need regular watering, but be careful not to overwater.
- Hardening Off: Plants started indoors will need to be gradually acclimatised to outdoor conditions before planting out. This process is known as hardening off.

March is an exciting time for gardeners in the UK, offering a wide range of planting opportunities.



It's okay to say no...



1. If you need to rest and recharge.
2. When you're prioritising your child's needs.
3. To additional responsibilities that overwhelm you.
4. If it means better mental health for you.
5. To events that conflict with your family time.
6. When you're already managing a lot.
7. To preserve your own wellbeing.
8. If it's not in the best interest of your family.
9. To unrealistic expectations from others.
10. When you need to focus on self-care.
11. When you're ensuring your child's routine isn't disrupted.
12. To additional volunteer roles at school or community.
13. If you're preserving energy for your caregiving duties.
14. To social gatherings that are too taxing.
15. If it helps maintain your family's peace and harmony.
16. To demands that clash with your parenting values.
17. When you need to support your child's special needs.
18. To extra work commitments that take away family time.
19. To maintain a healthy work-life balance.
20. When it's about safeguarding your mental and physical health.

BOUNDARIES

Breaking Down Barriers

Addressing Stigma and Fostering Understanding of SEND



Families navigating Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) often face societal stigma and a lack of understanding. These challenges can lead to isolation and frustration. However, there are strategies to address these issues and foster a more inclusive environment, while also acknowledging the need for personal boundaries.

Understanding the Stigma:

Stigma often arises from misconceptions about SEND. This can lead to prejudice, that affects the treatment of individuals with SEND and their families in various social settings.



Strategies to Address Stigma:

- 1. Education and awareness:** Sharing accurate information about SEND helps dispel myths. Consider giving talks or sharing resources in local schools or community centres.
- 2. Storytelling and Experiences:** Personal stories can be impactful. Sharing your journey can help others understand the realities of living with SEND.
- 3. Inclusive Activities:** Participate in or organise events that welcome individuals with SEND. These interactions can foster understanding and acceptance.
- 4. School Collaboration:** Work with schools to promote inclusive education through training for teachers and inclusive events.
- 5. Seeking Allies:** Build relationships with organisations and advocacy groups that can support and amplify your efforts.

Quick Wins for Immediate Impact:

- 1. Awareness Days:** Organise or take part in awareness days to educate the community.
- 2. Inclusive Play Date:** Arrange play dates that include children with and without SEND.
- 3. Social Media Campaigns:** Use platforms to share messages about SEND, reaching a wider audience.

Myths & Facts



Acknowledging Personal Limits:

It's important to recognise that there will be days when you might not have the energy or desire to educate others or raise awareness. And that's perfectly okay. Self-care is crucial, and it's important to give yourself permission to take a step back when needed. Advocacy is important, but so is your mental and emotional well-being.

Addressing societal stigma against SEND requires education, storytelling, and community involvement. While these steps are vital to us creating a more understanding society, it's equally important to recognise and respect your limits as a parent carer.

By balancing advocacy with personal well-being, we can work towards a society that is more inclusive and empathetic towards all its members.

Top Tip

Understanding and spreading the truth about SEND is a powerful tool in combating stigma. As we continue to learn and share, we contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic community for everyone.

SEND Myths and Facts: Dispelling Common Misconceptions

In the journey to foster understanding and acceptance of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), it's crucial to tackle common myths that contribute to stigma. Here's a quick rundown of some widespread misconceptions and the truths that counter them.

Myth: SEND children don't want to socialise.

- Many SEND children enjoy social interaction but may communicate or socialise differently. Understanding and accommodating their unique social needs can foster meaningful connections.

Myth: SEND is always visible.

- Not all SEND conditions are visible. Conditions like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia might not be immediately apparent but still impact a child's learning and social experiences.

Myth: SEND affects only learning.

- SEND can influence various aspects of life, not just academic learning. It can impact social skills, emotional regulation, and daily functioning.

Myth: Parents are to blame for a child's SEND.

- Parenting styles do not cause SEND. It's often related to neurological development, genetic factors, or other influences beyond a parent's control.

Myth: Children with SEND can't achieve success.

- With the right support and opportunities, children with SEND can, and do, achieve remarkable success in various fields.

Eat The Ugliest Frog First

Have you heard of the concept “Eat that frog”? For those not familiar with it, let me introduce you. Eat the Frog came from the very productive Brian Tracy’s book of the same name.

The idea is you tackle the task you least want to do first.



“ We keep putting it off because the very idea of it makes us feel depressed, worried, anxious ”

Often this task is the one that has been on your list for a while, the one you keep putting off; either because it is a job you hate (accounts, anyone?), a job that brings a whole whirlwind of emotions (PIPs form, anyone?), or one you are putting off due to imposter syndrome (writing that book, anyone?). We keep putting it off because the very idea of it makes us feel depressed, worried, anxious or just because it’s your accounts and let’s be honest, even accountants hate accounts.

The theory is if we eat the frog, get that awful job done out of the way, then the rest of the day has got to be a breeze, or at least we’ll feel the relief of getting the task out of the way. What about if you have more than one “frog” item on your list though? The best advice is to get the ugliest one done first.

What’s the Ugliest Frog to eat?

There will be a few things on your list you keep putting off. One of the easiest ways to decide on the ugliest one is to look which one has been put off the most, maybe it’s been on many different new task lists you have started. Or maybe acknowledge which of the tasks makes your stomach drop at the idea of doing it?

It may be a PIPs form or something similar. They bring reality checks which can be hard to face so give yourself a reward for getting it off your list though. Maybe choose a box set you really want to do but commit to not pressing play until the form is completed.

I challenge you to look at that list of things you want/need to do and choose the ugliest frog on there. Get it done and then share how it feels!



ChatGPT - A Powerful Tool for Parent Carers

If you're new to ChatGPT, you're about to discover a handy tool that can make your life as a parent carer a bit easier. ChatGPT is an AI-powered chatbot that can provide advice, suggestions, and information on a wide range of topics. Here's how to get started:

Finding ChatGPT:

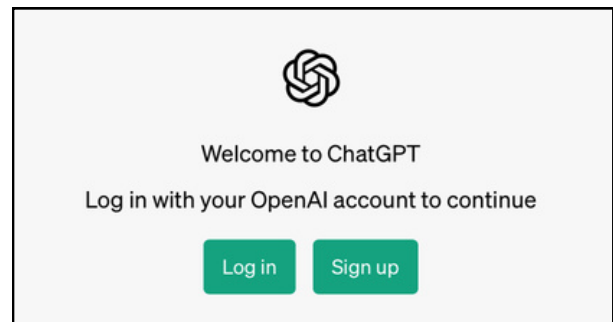
Online Access: ChatGPT is primarily accessible online. You can use it through a **website** or there is also a free App. Once you access ChatGPT, you'll find a simple chat interface, similar to a messaging app.

Using ChatGPT:

1. Type in Your Query: Just like chatting with a friend, type in what you need help with. This could be anything from "I need tips for a gluten-free diet for my child" to "How do I manage stress as a parent carer?"
2. Send Your Message: After typing your question or request, hit send. ChatGPT will process your input and generate a response.
3. Interactive Conversation: ChatGPT is interactive. You can ask follow-up questions, clarify details, or explore different topics in the same conversation.

What Can ChatGPT Help With?

- **Parenting Advice:** From managing daily routines to handling complex SEND challenges.
- **Educational Resources:** Find suggestions for educational activities and resources.
- **Self-Care Tips:** Get ideas for self-care and managing your own well-being.
- **General Inquiries:** Ask about recipes, gardening tips, or even tech advice!



A Few Tips:

- **Be Specific:** The more specific your question, the more tailored the response will be.
- **Feedback Loop:** Don't hesitate to ask follow-up questions for clarification or more information.
- **Experiment:** Feel free to experiment with different types of questions to see how ChatGPT can best assist you.

Empowering Through Technology

In line with our magazine's ethos, ChatGPT embodies each aspect of our SEND theme:

- **Support:** Offering solutions and strategies to ease your daily routines.
- **Empowerment:** Equipping you with information and tips to advocate effectively for your child.
- **Nourishment:** Sharing ideas that contribute to the physical and emotional well-being of your family.
- **Discovery:** Encouraging learning and exploration through creative and accessible activities.

ChatGPT - Your Questions Answered

The beauty of the ChatGPT column lies in its responsiveness to your needs. I encourage you to send in your questions, concerns, or topics you'd like to explore.

Each issue, we'll feature a selection of these queries with ChatGPT's insightful responses.

“ STAY TUNED FOR OUR MONTHLY CHATGPT COLUMN ”

A few prompts to try

Be asked ChatGPT to provide us with some prompts, within our SEND theme, which may be of benefit to parent carers.

The joy of ChatGPT is once you get your first response, you can ask it to change things to suit you. For example, if I asked it to help me with a weekly plan for my business, it may initially come back with something very generic. However, I can then give it information, such as appointments or other commitments, along with a list of tasks I need doing and it will change it accordingly.

Unlike a search engine, where you have to retype the whole thing with a few amendments, ChatGPT acts like a chat with a friend.

SUPPORT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, can you provide a weekly plan to help me balance my time between caring for my SEND child and my other responsibilities?"
- **Why:** This prompt helps parent carers organise their often hectic and unpredictable schedules.

EMPOWERMENT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, give me tips on how to effectively communicate my child's needs at an upcoming meeting."
- **Why:** Empowering parent carers with effective communication strategies is crucial, especially in formal settings.

NOURISHMENT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, suggest simple and nutritious meal plans that cater to specific dietary needs common in SEND children."
- **Why:** Providing ideas for healthy, easy-to-prepare meals can be a huge help, especially with the specific dietary needs that some SEND children have.

DISCOVERY

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, can you recommend accessible and educational activities that I can do at home with my SEND child?"
- **Why:** Offering ideas for engaging and accessible home activities supports learning and development.



Welcome to SAA Clothing, a place where style meets purpose.

James, a parent carer, is passionate about the power of stories and the positive impact they make on people's lives, and SAA Clothing does just that. They have also just opened their first shop in Burnham on Crouch, Essex.

He started SAA Clothing with a few goals in mind.

- To give our families cool, comfortable clothing that tells our story when we wear it.
- To help educate the world a little about autism and neurodiversity.
- To help people feel less alone



Find out more over on their **website**

Holly Tree Camp is an annual inclusive camping event for families with disabled children and young people.



**Holly Tree
Camp**

Holly Tree Camp is organised by Jenny, a parent carer, along with her family. Set in an enclosed 5 acre site overlooking the North Yorkshire countryside: There is plenty of space to camp and enjoy the outdoors as well as indoor facilities in the barn with the freedom to join in as you please or relax with your own family

Expect Yoga for all, boccia, outdoor crafts, indoor crafts, disco, talent show, karaoke, sensory singing, sensory play, outdoor games, trampolining, access to the sensory tent and more.

Find out more over on their [website](#).

Transforming Trials into Triumph:



The Inspirational Journey of Yvonne Newbold, MBE

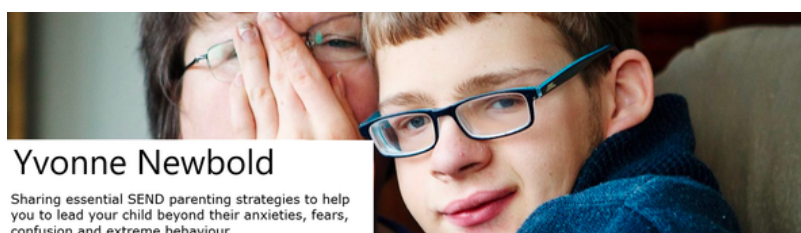
We were delighted to get time with Yvonne to chat about how she went from Parent Carer to Parent Carer, Author, Keynote speaker, Ted Talk star and company director.

Being a parent carer, especially to a child with challenging behaviour, is a role that comes with blame, judgement and disapproval and I don't think you ever recover from it. However, I now do a lot of work to help parents get through that because it damages families. If someone makes you feel crap as a mother, you're not going to be the best mother you can be.

Even though my self-esteem is soaring now, and I have more self-belief than I thought possible, I still have that hangover of imposter syndrome and self-doubt, because of the damage of those years of blame, judgement, and disapproval. I still don't always feel good enough due to years of people putting me down, belittling me and telling me I was doing it wrong.

When Toby was younger, life was tougher than I can put into words. But I was at the "Universe's college." Everything I learned then I have turned round and am now using to help other parent carers and families.

One of the things I always say to parents, on the days when it all goes wrong, on your worst ever days, those are the days when you are going to learn the most and grow. On good days, we sail through, we don't notice or smell the coffee, but the bad days will stick in your head. As a result, you will do everything you possibly can to learn from it and make sure you never have another day like that. You may need 20, 30 or 40 bad days but each one will teach you something new.



Yvonne Newbold

Sharing essential SEND parenting strategies to help you to lead your child beyond their anxieties, fears, confusion and extreme behaviour

Yvonne Newbold

. . . **Continued**

What sparked the change?

If I had never been diagnosed with terminal cancer, I don't think anything would have changed. However, this gave me a sense of urgency to write the book I had talked about writing for some time. The Special Parent's Handbook was published in June 2014.

I had opened a Facebook page, purely to promote the book, and the same with a Twitter account. However, everything changed when a lady from NHS England, Kath, found my book, read it and took to Twitter to recommend it to all the paediatric nurses in the country. She had a large audience and was much respected within her field so within 3 days of being published, my little book had suddenly become an Amazon number one best seller.

Kath then asked me to speak at a conference. I had no idea what to do because it wasn't something I had planned. Up to that point, I had only chatted about Toby and our life on the phone to friends and family. But off I went and just spoke from the heart. They loved it, thankfully, and I was then invited to speak at other conferences in Leeds, Birmingham, and London. Then other people started to hear of me and asked me to speak at their conferences and I was also invited to provide training workshops to nurses, based on my book.

Supporting Parents

The next stage was parents started to private message me via my Facebook page about the problems they were having. When I saw a theme to many of the issues, I created a workshop so that I could address this for lots of families and not just those who messaged me.

I only had one workshop to begin with, around dealing with professionals and feeling good about yourself, whilst juggling everything.

During these three or four years, I was becoming, by accident, an established speaker. I went from speaking at six or seven conferences a year to speaking at a minimum of two a month plus delivering my workshop around the country.

Then I was invited to Radio 4's Woman Hour with Jane Garvey to talk about parenting children with profound and complex needs. Up until then, I had never really talked about Toby's behaviour. I had learned not to because when you do, people judge you, blame you and shame you. I didn't want to go back there, I felt we were through it and I had moved on.

However, Jane Garvey is very good at helping you to relax. She gives you a big mug of tea, gets you to kick off your shoes and dims the lights. You forget you are recording live and feel as if you are chatting with your oldest friend. Suddenly she asked me about behaviour, and I was put on the spot. I had always been led to believe that his behaviour was so incredibly rare that we were the only ones. I had never met or heard of people dealing with the same. However, I suddenly had a vision of someone sat listening, in tears, worrying about their child returning home from school so I replied honestly. I didn't say too much but I was honest.

Yvonne Newbold

... **Continued**

As we left the building, Malcolm gave me my phone and it started to go wild with notifications. I thought it was my dad and that I was going to get an earful for speaking about Toby's behaviour on air. They adored each other and I thought he was going to be unhappy that I had shared. But it was complete strangers thanking me for being honest, by the end of the day I had 100 messages, by the end of the week we were in shock at the quantity of messages, all saying "I thought I was the only one", all speaking about "blame, shame and judgement". Some had had children removed because there was no awareness or training, some had knocked on hundreds of doors for help but had no response.

I couldn't sleep because I had read so many awful stories and I decided that I had to do something. I decided to have a conference. I had no idea what to do or how to run a conference but I knew we could learn. We went to look at venues, booked one for four week's time and within a short time had over 100 parents and 15 speakers attending. We had people queueing up to speak there.

This was how the Violent and Challenging Behaviour work started. I started with workshops about Violent and Challenging Behaviour in SEND children and a friend, Mark Brown, ran a session on puberty in Autistic children at the same event. It was a great mix.



Bit by bit, people wanted more. We listened to what they wanted and created workshops.

Then the Pandemic happened. I was terrified. I felt it was irresponsible to do these online because the families were so vulnerable. I wrote to everyone and said, "I want to make sure this works for you" and after chatting, we decided it could be done but we would put in some additional support. Initially we ran a live session in the morning and then I would follow it up with an evening drop-in session for those who were perhaps not coping after the morning's session. But no one needed them, no one came. Bit by bit, from my dining table, I was able to better meet the needs of our families and developed over 20 different workshops.

When we ran workshops around the country, we could get 20-30 families show up, but we were getting hundreds of families signing up for those we offered online. We ran one on PDA and had over 800 people attended the one session. We did the sums and worked out that if we wanted to reach the number of people we saw online in 6 months, on a face to face basis, it would take us sixty four years. Now when people say it must be face to face, I reply that it doesn't, and I have the numbers and testimonials to back that up.

Yvonne Newbold

... **Continued**

We asked Yvonne to share her tips and thoughts on public speaking, payment, charging and more for those parent carers sat reading this and thinking they would like to but have no idea where to begin.

Charging families for workshops

We do charge but we keep it realistic. During lockdown we charged a nominal sum, but we also gave away lots of spaces so that everyone could attend, irrelevant of their income. Interestingly, people who paid have invested their money, so they are more determined to make it work. Often, the free spaces were no shows or "it wasn't for us" and there wasn't the same commitment to make changes.

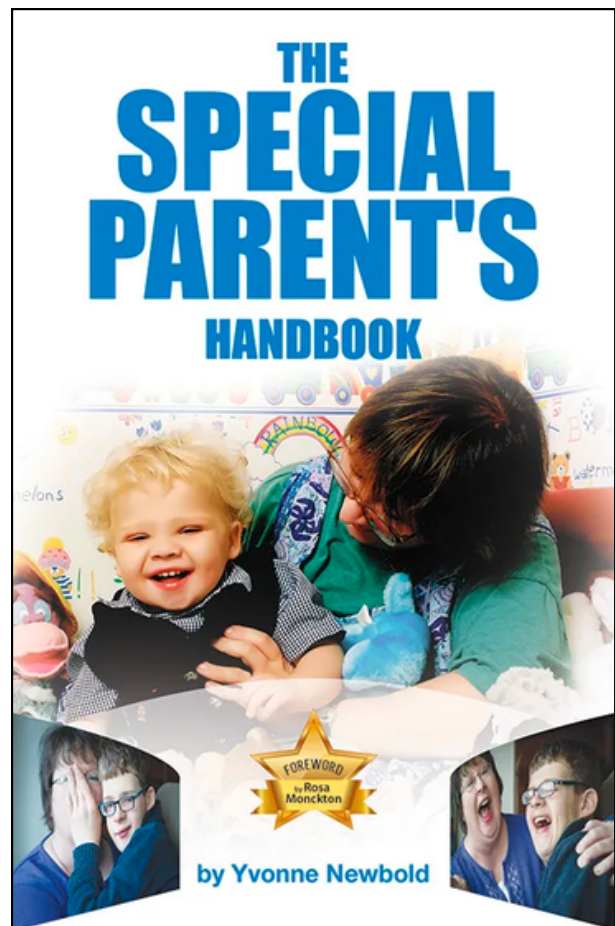
Advice to someone invited to speak at an event but has no experience

Say yes and panic afterwards.

I soon realised I was able to talk from a lived experience perspective and how invaluable this was to the people in the room. I started to realise that having no "relatable" qualification didn't make me less valuable, because the qualification genuinely didn't mean they knew more than me. Our words are more authentic and are the words people needed to hear. We can also answer questions on the spot, without having to refer back to a book to see what the answer should be.

Think about it this way. Imagine if I had read every book and article I could find about Tenerife but you hadn't. However, you had been to Tenerife and stayed on the island, drank the wine, had the food and listened to their music but I hadn't. Who would understand the day to day reality of life in Tenerife? It would be you, the person with lived experience.

One of the biggest lessons Toby taught me is 'it's not about me', I had to lose myself. However, this really helps when I walk on stage, I don't worry about what people think about me, my appearance or anything like that. I remember this isn't about me. I think about what they need to hear from me, not about me.



... Continued

Getting Paid

At the very least, if you do it for free, get something back in return. Something like half an hour of their time afterwards to tell you how it went, or ask that they get evaluations from people there and then give you their time to go through the results. Make sure you get something.

It's also about location. If the event is in your local area, you can eat at home or take a sandwich, and walk to the venue. If you do something in an area away from home, it involves the costs of hotels, travel and food (and even childcare).

I always have a red line - don't be out of pocket.

Make sure though, that if you do one for free, you get testimonials, reviews on your page, LinkedIn recommendations etc. Or maybe if it's a bigger conference, you could get 20 mins with an expert about your child's condition - someone you may have never got to see otherwise. It's about you getting something out of it too.

If your normal fee is too high, get them to pay something. They need to value you. Say you can do it cheaper but still require paying.

Final Tips

Keep an open mind even when life is going badly and not what you thought your life plan was. You are still learning, developing, and growing skills, just not the ones you expected. You also can't take shortcuts when you have a child with SEND, sometimes you will in the workplace. Taking longer for lunch is not an option when you are a parent carer.

The skills we learn as parent carers are not something you can learn in any college.

Patience is something our children teach us and it's a life skill that is invaluable.

Learn to accept it is what it is. 'What if' and 'If only' are not your friends.

My final tip would be to wake up and think "what can I learn today". If you look for the lessons, you will find them.



Newbold Hope

Yvonne Newbold

A huge thanks to Yvonne. Our final thoughts on this amazing story is to write down those lessons you learn, they are the basis of your book. And remember, it was a book that launched Yvonne's roles within the SEND world.

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Affirmations for Parent Carers

MANIFESTING

What Are Affirmations?

Affirmations are positive statements that can help challenge and overcome self-sabotaging and negative thoughts. When repeated often and believed in, they can change your mindset and life in a positive way.

How to Use Affirmations

To effectively use affirmations, repeat them regularly and consistently. You can say them out loud, write them down, or even meditate on them. The key is to consciously engage with the affirmation and feel its positive energy.

Benefits of Affirmations for Parent Carers

- Reduces Stress: Regularly affirming positive statements can help lower stress levels and promote a sense of inner peace.
- Boosts Self-Esteem: Affirmations can reinforce self-worth and confidence, crucial for parent carers often putting their needs last.

- Improves Mood: Positive affirmations can shift negative thought patterns and promote a more optimistic outlook.
- Enhances Resilience: By fostering a positive mindset, affirmations help build resilience against challenges and setbacks.
- Promotes Mindfulness: Affirmations encourage present-moment awareness and can deepen mindfulness practices.
- Encourages Self-Care: Repeating affirmations can be a form of self-care, reminding parent carers to prioritise their well-being.

GOOD ENERGY

How to Create and Use Affirmations

- Keep It Positive: Focus on positive wording that reflects what you want to feel or achieve, not what you want to avoid.
- Present Tense: Phrase your affirmations as if they are already true to help create the reality you desire.
- Be Specific: Tailor your affirmations to your specific needs and goals for more impactful results.
- Emotional Connection: Choose affirmations that resonate emotionally and feel true to your aspirations and core values.
- Routine Integration: Incorporate affirmations into your daily routine—during morning rituals, on breaks, or before bed.



Affirmations

... Continued

Examples of Affirmations for Parent Carers

- "I am doing my best every day, and my best is enough."
- "I allow myself to take breaks and rest without feeling guilty."
- "I am strong, capable, and resilient, even in challenging times."
- "I embrace the joy of small moments with my family."
- "I give myself permission to ask for help because I am not alone."
- "I am proud of the love and care I provide to my family."
- "I deserve time for myself, and I take it without hesitation."
- "My challenges do not define me; my strength and resilience do."
- "I am a source of calm and peace for myself and my loved ones."
- "I am a bridge between my child and the world, built strong by love and understanding."
- "I am a warrior, equipped with compassion and resilience."
- "I find moments of peace in my child's laughter."
- "I am a master of multitasking, juggling life with grace (and a bit of humour)."
- "Today, I choose to let go of what I can't control and focus on what I can."
- "I am the heart and soul of my family, keeping us connected and strong."
- "Every hurdle crossed, adds to my invisible cape of strength."

If you're new to the idea of affirmations, think of them as **little notes of encouragement** you give yourself throughout the day. They're reminders that you're doing an incredible job, even on the days it doesn't feel like it. With a bit of patience and persistence, these affirmations can become a source of strength and comfort.

YOU CAN
DO IT!

Mindful Moments:

In the whirlwind of caregiving, taking "Mindful Moments" can be a game-changer for SEND parent carers. Just a few minutes of mindfulness each day can decrease stress and increase presence, allowing us to meet our challenges with a clearer head and a calmer heart.

1. **Find a Quiet Spot:** Even if it's just a corner of a room, find a space where you can pause for a few minutes without interruptions.
2. **Focus on Your Breath:** Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose, feeling your lungs expand. Slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat this a few times.
3. **Notice Your Body:** Pay attention to any areas of tension or discomfort in your body. Imagine your breath flowing into these areas, gently easing the tension with each exhale.

I can do anything



Are you looking for an online business tech support specialist, then you've found her!

Kelly works with small online business owners, including coaches, consultants, and wellbeing specialists to provide support for and training on how to use biz tech services such as email marketing set-up, funnel building, and course or membership set-up.

If you are

- Frustrated and confused by websites, email marketing, and other business tech?
- Short on time, skills, or the inclination to DIY your website, email marketing and other tech systems?

THEN CONTACT KELLY AT
[YOURTECHWINGWOMAN.COM](https://www.yourtechwingwoman.com)

Newbold Hope is run by parents with lived experience and their whole approach is based on what they know has already worked successfully in their own families and in thousands of others.

They have a range of pre-recorded webinars available to purchase on their site, covering behaviour, anxiety, siblings, guilt, self esteem and more

- Are you worried about a child's difficult and dangerous behaviour?
- Does your child sometimes become violent towards others?
- Do the rest of the family sometimes get hurt?



Head over to [Newboldhope.com](https://www.newboldhope.com) to find out more

Want SEN Friendly Sessions at Local Leisure Venues?

Although we are only in March, many of us will be thinking about the summer holidays looming in the distance. Those 6 or 7 weeks can be a challenge. They often make us feel isolated as many of the “family friendly” activities at your local zoo, pool, bowling alley or similar, can be anything but SEN friendly.

This month we are chatting to the fabulous Gemma Bryan, of Isla’s Voice, who knows exactly how that feels. Last year, though she decided to take matters into her own hands and as the saying goes “if you want a job doing properly, do it yourself”.

Gemma is the first one to accept that this should not be necessary but she is also realistic. Many venues actually don’t know the challenges our children face. Not through lack of wanting to help but a total lack of awareness. As Gemma and I chatted, we talked about how little we understood the needs of SEND children until we were parent carers.



We asked Gemma to share with us how she managed to organise a huge variety of SEN friendly sessions last summer in her area, often 2 to 3 events each week, but also what she would do differently if she had to do this again.

Knowing what has worked for someone else, along with what they wish they had known at the start is such a time saver, and let’s be honest, time is not something we have a lot of

Making Contact

Gemma started off writing the content for an email. Something she could cut and paste into lots of emails with just a few personalisation tweaks needed. This saved her a lot of time. She went for a mix of awareness, her own personal story and a tug of a few heart strings.

Gemma has also shared the email she used to send to venues with us to save you even more time.

“ SHARING KNOWLEDGE ISN’T JUST ABOUT SPREADING INFORMATION; IT’S ABOUT WEAVING A TAPESTRY OF INCLUSION. MAKING THE WORLD A MORE NAVIGABLE PLACE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND OFFERING A LIFELINE OF SUPPORT TO FELLOW PARENT CARERS. ”



Gemma Bryan

... Continued

Gemma then started to search the venues within a distance of her home. She allowed for driving time and also considered those who may not have access to their own transport.

Contact

Contact was made in a variety of ways. Website and Facebook pages. One thing we noticed was that some "contact us" pages have email addresses instead of contact forms. Using the email address seemed to get a better chance of a response from the venue.

Response

Gemma says there was a real mixed response. Some venues responded to say yes, let's chat. Some responded to say we would like to but no idea how. Some said thanks but no thanks and of course, some didn't respond at all.

BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY EVENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN, THERE'S OFTEN A PARENT CARER WHO SAW A GAP AND FILLED IT WITH THEIR HEART. THESE INCREDIBLE INDIVIDUALS PROVE THAT WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY



Within a month or two, several events were arranged.. We ended up with at least two events a week but on some weeks we had 5 or 6.

Were they all well attended?

Sadly not all were. However, the majority were successful and one event had over 100 families attend. I understand that some families get frustrated as the times may not always work for everyone. However, we know that for many venues it was a risk to close their doors to other customers during peak season.



This is the reality. Venues still have to make money to stay open, so they can be wary of closing them during peak times. Thankfully, the success of some events has made venues realise they can offer peak times and still have high numbers attending.

Would you do it again?

I already am. It was refreshing last summer to have a variety of events each week we could go to. After the summer before when we stayed indoors or at a local park for most of the holidays, it was great to get out and do different things with the family.

Would you do anything differently?

Yes! Absolutely! Get more people to help organise and co-ordinate everything. Don't try to do this alone. Get a group of other parent carers on board and split the load. Choose an area for each of you or just split the list of venues between you.

It's not just contacting the venues, it is also helping them to promote the events in the area. This was one of the biggest challenges.

Gemma has been kind enough to share the email she sent to the venues as we thought having a starting point would help.

YOU CAN FOLLOW GEMMA ON
SOCIAL MEDIA

INSTAGRAM - @ISLAS VOICE

FACEBOOK - @ISLAS VOICE

Copy & Paste

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is [], I am a mum of [] wonderful children, [*insert their names here*].

Being a mum is the most rewarding and the hardest job in the world, especially during the school holidays as [] is [*autistic*]. This is why I am emailing you today.

[*Give details of your involvement within the SEND community, e.g. if you write a blog, or run a local support group, or are involved with a local special school. Talk about how often you meet up with other parents and carers in the same position as you.*]

So many parents have told me they are really worried about not being able to take their children for days out during the school holidays, especially summer.

Having children with SEND means days out for us often aren't easy. Summer holidays especially can be very isolating and lonely for parents and disabled children. Places are busier, holidays are long and the adjustments our children need are often slightly out of reach.

I really want to make sure that's not the case.

To help families, I have said that I will contact different venues and attractions to put a directory together of SEND friendly sessions. I have agreed to approach different venues within travelling distance to see if they can help by putting on sessions/days specifically for children with SEND. I am more than happy to work with and advise you to help ensure this not only works for families but also for you.

In return, I will advertise the sessions in as many places as I can to help you make these sessions a huge success. [*Explain how you will promote, e.g. on Facebook, at local special schools, etc.*] If you can help at all or would like to discuss, please let me know.

Regards



Meet Gemma Bryan from "Isla's Voice, our journey with Autism". Not only is Gemma a parent carer, she works with SEND families in her local authority, is a governor at a special school and also a guest lecturer for a few universities.

Given her various roles and experience, she is able to provide many different perspectives to the world of SEND.

Are you looking for a parent carer to speak with your group, organisation or company about life as a parent carer? Not just the reality, the hurdles and the stress but the fun, the joy and the life lessons?

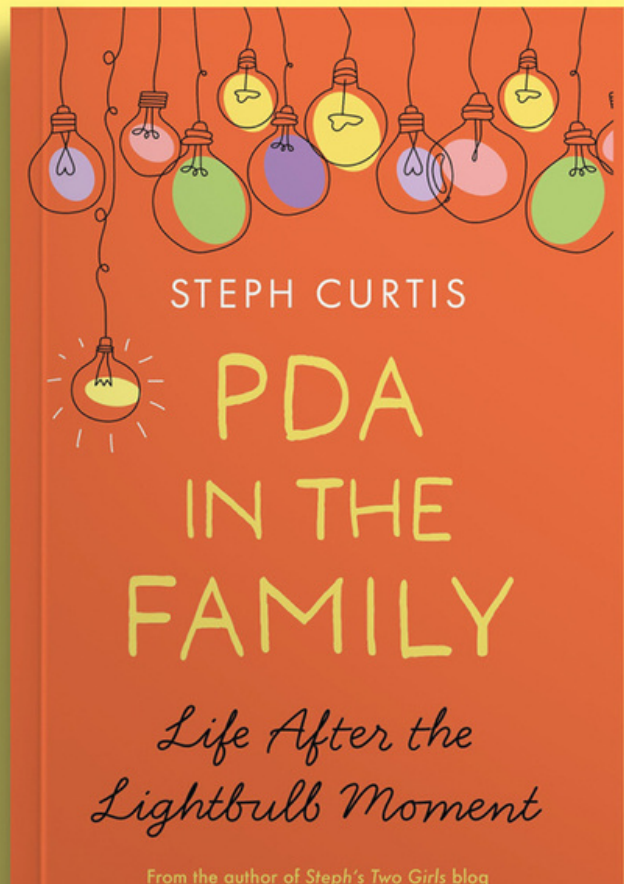
Maybe you need someone to talk about how you get up every day when the system isn't working? Stress is something many people can relate to.



Contact Gemma at Islas Voice on Instagram or Facebook

Available in paperback, ebook and audiobook

A journey through family life with an autistic child with the PDA profile



www.stephstwogirls.co.uk

Navigating the World of Influencers

In today's digital age, influencers have become a significant part of our social media landscape. They can wield considerable influence over public opinion and trends. For SEND parent carers understanding the positives and negatives of influencer culture is key to navigating this space effectively.

The Positive Side of Influencers:

- **Raising Awareness:** Influencers can play a crucial role in bringing attention to SEND issues, breaking down stigmas, and promoting understanding.
- **Community Building:** Influencers often create communities where people can share experiences, find support, and feel less isolated.
- **Resource Sharing:** Many influencers share valuable resources, advice, and tips that can be incredibly helpful for families navigating SEND challenges.
- **Advocacy:** Influential voices can effectively advocate for policy changes, funding, and support for SEND initiatives.

The Challenges of Influencer Culture:

- **Authenticity Concerns:** The pressure to present a polished image can lead to a lack of authenticity, with influencers only showing the 'highlight reel' of their lives.
- **Commercialisation:** A desire to monetise a blog or profile can sometimes overshadow the genuine support and advice aspect.
- **Comparison and Pressure:** Exposure to idealised lifestyles and experiences can create pressure or lead to unhelpful comparisons among parent carers.



- **Information Accuracy:** Not all influencers are experts, and some may share information or advice that is not accurate or scientifically sound.

The Pitfalls of Influencer Hype:

An often-overlooked downside in the world of influencers is when they start to believe their own hype. This can lead to several negative consequences:

- **Loss of Relatability:** When influencers become too absorbed in their persona, they might lose touch with the everyday realities of their audience, making their content less relatable and genuine.
- **Echo Chambers:** Influencers who believe their own hype may create echo chambers, surrounding themselves with only those who agree with them, which can lead to a narrow perspective and unchallenged misinformation.
- **Influence Overreach:** Believing in their own hype, some influencers might start to give advice or make statements outside their realm of expertise, potentially leading their followers astray.

Influencers

... Continued

Navigating the Hype:

As a follower, it's important to maintain a critical perspective. Recognise that influencers, like anyone else, are prone to biases and may not always provide the most balanced viewpoints. This awareness can help you filter their content and take away only what is truly beneficial.

Balancing the Influence:

- **Critical Engagement:** Be discerning about who you follow and the information you take on board.
- **Diverse Perspectives:** Follow a range of influencers to get a broad spectrum of experiences and views.
- **Personal Well-being:** If certain content makes you feel inadequate or stressed, it's okay to unfollow or take a break from those accounts.
- **Community Interaction:** Engage with the community aspect of influencers' platforms, where you can find support and shared experiences rather than just consuming content passively.

Influencers can be a powerful force for good, especially in niche communities like SEND. However, it's crucial for both influencers and their followers to remain grounded and remember that the most authentic and valuable insights often come from a place of humility and genuine community connection.

The Unexpected Joys of SEND Parenting

Parenting is an adventure full of surprises, laughter, and a bit of chaos, especially within the SEND community. Amid the appointments, planning, and advocating, there are countless moments of unexpected joy and hilarity that remind us of the lighter side of life.

- **Literal Interpretations:** The honesty and literal interpretations of SEND children can lead to some truly comedic situations. reminds us to appreciate the beauty of seeing the world through a different lens.
- **The Joy of Small Wins:** Celebrating when your child wears mismatched socks because they dressed independently brings a sense of achievement and joy that others might not understand - but to us, it's a parade-worthy moment.
- **Misadventures in Public:** Whether it's an impromptu dance in the supermarket aisle or a loud commentary on strangers' hairstyles, SEND children teach us to embrace life's spontaneity (and sometimes, to find the nearest exit with a grin).

These slices of life remind us to cherish the unexpected. Amid the challenges, there's an abundance of laughter, love, and lessons in embracing this wonderfully unpredictable life.

“ Embrace the chaos,
for it's where the joy hides. ”

Balancing the Scales

Supporting Your Non-SEND Child in a SEND Family



In families where a child has Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), it's crucial to also attend to the emotional and developmental needs of non-SEND siblings. These children can sometimes feel overlooked, despite the best intentions of parents. We recognise that one-on-one time might not always be feasible but here are some ideas

Understanding the Dynamics:

Non-SEND siblings often grow up faster, taking on more responsibilities and showing empathy from a young age. However, they also need to feel valued and receive individual attention.

Strategies for Support:

- **Open Communication:** Create an environment where discussing feelings is the norm. Regularly check in to understand their emotions and experiences.

- **Inclusive Family Activities:** Plan activities everyone can enjoy together. This approach ensures no child feels left out and helps build a strong family bond.
- **Small Gestures Count:** If dedicated one-on-one time is challenging, find small ways to show appreciation and love. A note in their lunchbox, a shared joke, or a special story at bedtime can make a big difference.
- **Shared Responsibilities and Rewards:** Involve siblings in caregiving tasks, but balance this with rewards and recognition of their efforts and sacrifices.
- **Encourage Their Interests:** Support their hobbies or interests. Even if you can't always be physically present, show interest in what they love doing.
- **Quality over Quantity:** Make the most of the time you do have together. Even short, meaningful interactions can reinforce their importance in the family.
- **Sibling Support Groups:** Connect them with groups or communities where they can meet other children in similar situations. It's reassuring to know they're not alone.
- **Acknowledge Their Role:** Regularly acknowledge and praise them for their understanding and patience. Reinforce that their role in the family is just as important.



Supporting Older Teenagers During Exam Periods:

For families with SEND children, supporting their siblings who are older teenagers, particularly during their exam periods, requires a nuanced approach. These adolescents are at a critical stage in their education, and the dynamics can amplify the stress of exams at home.

Understanding Their Unique Challenges:

Older teenagers juggle the pressures of exams with the complexities of living in a SEND family. They may feel a sense of divided attention or struggle with balancing their study needs with familial responsibilities.



Balancing the needs of everyone in a SEND family requires creativity, understanding, and empathy. While one-on-one time might be scarce, there are many ways to ensure your other children feel loved, appreciated, and integral to the family. It's about making each child feel valued and understood, irrespective of their needs.

Strategies

- **Creating a Study-Friendly Environment:** Ensure they have a quiet, comfortable space for studying. This might mean setting specific 'quiet hours' at home or finding alternative study areas if needed.
- **Acknowledging Their Efforts:** Regularly recognise the effort they put into balancing their studies with family life. Acknowledgement can be a powerful motivator and stress reliever.
- **Flexible Family Routines:** During exam periods, adapt family routines where possible to accommodate their study schedule. This flexibility shows your support for their academic endeavours.
- **Emotional Support and Understanding:** Be there to listen. Exam periods can be stressful, and having a parent who understands and empathises can make a significant difference.
- **Practical Help with Revision:** Offer to help with revision in ways that suit their learning style, whether it's quizzing them or just being there to bounce ideas off. Or help them create a revision schedule that helps them to not feel overwhelmed.
- **Encouraging Breaks and Self-Care:** Remind them of the importance of taking breaks and looking after their mental and physical health, especially during intense study periods.
- **Planning for Post-Exam Relaxation:** Help them look forward to a post-exam period where they can relax and enjoy activities they like, as a reward for their hard work.



IT IS NOT THE CRITIC WHO COUNTS

not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles
or where the doer of deeds could have done better.

THE CREDIT BELONGS TO THE MAN WHO IS ACTUALLY IN THE ARENA,

whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood,
who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again,

BECAUSE THERE IS NO EFFORT WITHOUT ERROR

or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms
the great devotions who spends himself in a
worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end, the
triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst,

IF HE FAILS, AT LEAST HE FAILS WHILE DARING GREATLY

so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls
who knew neither victory nor defeat.



Theodore Roosevelt

We love this quote. Parenting, especially as a parent carer, is an immensely challenging role, often filled with uncertainties and difficulties. We must remember the true worth lies in the parent who is 'in the arena,' deeply involved in the daily struggles and joys of raising a child, rather than those who stand on the sidelines offering critiques or pointing out flaws.

Parent carers might face criticism or unsolicited advice about their parenting styles, choices, or the behaviour of their children. However, the real value and credit go to those who are engaged in the demanding, yet rewarding, work of caregiving and parenting. It's about acknowledging that making mistakes and facing challenges is an inherent part of the journey and that there's honour in the effort and dedication it takes to raise a child, regardless of external judgements or opinions.

Beyond 'Mum'

My Journey as a Student, Parent, and Advocate



Jac Sinnott shares the trials and tribulations of going back to studying as a parent carer.

I'm Mum to eight, a Student Social Worker and a Specialist Play Support Worker. Most of my children are Neurodiverse and there is also a strong probability that I am also Neurodiverse. However, because of how assessments work out here, it will be a challenge to be diagnosed.

Currently, six of my children live at home. That is a challenge in itself, as most of them are Neurodiverse, with very differing needs. I can often feel like I am being pulled from pillar to post. One of my children can have very challenging behaviour resulting in me having to drop everything and race to school to support.

Being a parent to so many can be a full-time job in itself. However, I'm also a student at a local university, currently on a seventy-day placement, which is both interesting and challenging.

I often wonder how on earth I find time to study when I have so much on my plate? I won't pretend it is easy. As anyone with a family studying a degree will tell you, it's a fine art of juggling.

However, I am lucky as there are support mechanisms in place at university. While it depends on the University you go to, there will be support of some form available.

First, I have a **Carer Support Plan**. This means that allowances have to be made if I need to attend appointments, meetings, or dash out of lecture to go to school. It also supports me on placement via a **placement support plan**. I have to complete the statutory requirements, however there is flexibility to allow me to make days up at the end.

So, if I miss lectures, how do I remain up to date with lectures? I can access recorded lectures online via our learning platform and if I am still struggling with a concept, I can ask for a tutorial with the lecturer who delivered the missed lecture.

Assignment deadlines are also included in the Carer Support Plan. If I have a lot going on or if my children are ill, I can ask for an extension.. Recently I had to request this as Covid hit the home and I knew I wouldn't make the deadline. A quick email and I was granted a two-week extension.



Beyond Mum

... Continued



As we all know, our mental health can take a hit when things become more challenging, so I'm also lucky in that if this happens, the University has 24hr access to mental health support. Fortunately, I haven't needed to access that support, however; I know it is there should I need it.

I know finances can be a large concern for many mature students, however there are allowances for this. I get a **Special Support Element** in my Student Finance, this means that Universal Credit cannot take into consideration a certain amount so they can't take away a huge chunk of my award. There is also a generous **Childcare Grant** that pays up to 80% of any childcare. Again, this depends on your circumstances.

So, how do I actually manage being a parent, student and also some work? As I mentioned previously, it is all about juggling. I have as much as possible in one calendar on my phone. I also have a to do list app so I can keep a list of everything.

In my calendar, I have the dates when I'm scheduled to be in university. We are in four days a week for my course but some are more and some are less.

Also, on my course, we have the odd week or two off between modules so that we have time to study and complete our essays. This is also in the calendar.

I also work on the occasional Saturday and during school holidays when I can. This also helps me to broaden my skills and knowledge. I am also learning to drive, as if I didn't have enough to do.

If you have thought about returning to education, seriously look in to it. It might be a challenge, but it helps give you an identity other than "Mum". It also provides you with pride. That feeling when you get an essay result and you know YOU achieved that grade (despite the challenges you face in your personal life) is incomparable.



'EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.'
- NELSON MANDELA



The Chronicles of Ellie, the Parent Carer

In a world brimming with polished photos and inspirational quotes, Ellie felt out of place. As a new parent carer to her vibrant son, Johnny, who navigated life with cerebral palsy, she often wondered how other parent carers made it look so effortless. Social media was flooded with tales of triumph, pictures of perfectly organised sensory rooms, and children achieving milestone after milestone. Where, Ellie pondered, could she gain these magical superpowers?

Determined, Ellie embarked on a quest. She first searched for the Superpower Symposium, an annual gathering she'd concocted in her imagination, where you could pick the parent carers powers you needed. She wandered through stalls, each promising the ultimate solution: the Wand of Infinite Patience, the Cape of Unyielding Energy, and the Shield of Impenetrable Positivity.

Yet, each tool she tried fizzled in her hands. The Wand of Infinite Patience sparked and sputtered, overwhelmed by Johnny's nightly marathons to avoid bedtime. The Cape of Unyielding Energy barely fluttered as Ellie navigated through endless therapy sessions and appointments. And the Shield of Impenetrable Positivity? It cracked the moment another parent whispered, "I don't know how you do it."

Ellie finally stumbled upon a hidden village on the edge of the Internet, a place not marked by the flashy glow of social media perfection but by the warm light of reality.



“ IN THE WORLD OF SEND PARENTING, COFFEE IS MY MAGIC POTION AND LAUGHTER MY SECRET SPELL. ”

Here, parent carers shared not just their victories but also their defeats. They spoke of burnt dinners, unattended laundry, and the sheer chaos of balancing life, work, and caregiving.

In this village, Ellie found Fiona, a veteran parent carer with laughter lines framing her eyes and a comforting presence. Fiona shared tales of missed appointments, piles of paperwork, and the creative problem-solving that ensued.

Under Fiona's guidance, Ellie realised that the superpowers she sought weren't about perfection but about resilience, creativity, and the ability to laugh at the chaos. Forged in the moments of connection, in the shared looks of understanding between parent and child, and in the silent victories no social media post could capture.

... Continued

Armed with this new understanding, Ellie returned to the realm of social media, not as a seeker of unattainable powers, but as a beacon of authenticity. She shared her story – the unfiltered reality of her life with Johnny, from the challenges to the unexpected joys.

To her surprise, her tale resonated with many, sparking a movement of honesty and support that rippled across the community. Ellie realised that her true superpower had been with her all along: the strength to embrace her unique journey and the courage to share it, imperfections and all.



Ellie's quest for superpowers had ended, but her adventure as a SEND parent carer was just beginning. With Johnny by her side, each day brought new challenges, laughter, and love. And in the quiet moments, when the world seemed too much, Ellie would remember the hidden village and the network of parent carers who, like her, were navigating this journey one step at a time, powered by nothing more than love, determination, and a good sense of humor.

“THE REAL SUPERPOWER OF SEND PARENTING? PERFECTING THE ART OF TURNING A 5-MINUTE COFFEE INTO AN ALL-DAY ENERGY SOURCE.”

Coming Soon...

The Paperwork Labyrinth: Ellie's Next Adventure

Ellie faces the challenge of conquering the mountain of paperwork that comes with SEND parenting. Ellie decides to tackle this beast head-on, armed with colour-coded folders, an array of sticky notes, and a determination as fierce as her caffeine addiction.

The Misunderstanding Chronicles: A Family Affair

Preparing for a family gathering, Ellie braces herself for the well-meaning but often misguided comments from relatives who just don't "get" the SEND world. From "He looks fine to me" to "Have you tried this miracle cure?", Ellie navigates the minefield of misconceptions with a blend of patience, quick wit, and the occasional deep breath in the bathroom.

Quest for the Unicorn: The Perfect Practitioner

Every SEND parent's dream is to find that one practitioner who not only understands their child's unique needs but also meshes perfectly with their family dynamic. Ellie embarks on a quest to find this mythical creature, encountering a cast of characters along the way. From the Too-Busy-To-Listen Doctor to the New-Age Therapist who suggests communicating with Johnny through interpretive dance,

Mam's Fabrics

Mam's Fabrics is a small family-run fabric store in South Wales Valleys. They offer a range of fun and quality fabrics at very reasonable prices, along with a variety of wools and an extensive selection of haberdashery.

Jo of **Mam's Fabrics** is also a parent carer. She made her dream a reality a few years ago. We will feature an article about her tips and experience as a self employed parent carer in a future edition.



Follow Jo at @MamsFabrics on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

SMALL BEARS WITH BIG ATTITUDE

Swear Bears are an exclusive **Born Anxious** product created by **OneTuffMuvva & Born Anxious**. They are an adult therapy tool.

CONTENT WARNING - THIS PRODUCT IS NOT FOR CHILDREN!



Kellie, of Born Anxious, is also a parent carer. She runs an online store selling these fantastic Swear Bears, along with a range of sensory clothing. Watch this space for a chance to find out what advice she would give to fellow parent carers trying to set up a small business from home.

Follow Kellie at @BornAnxious on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

Dear Medical Professional

You will ask about his medical history,
And I will repeat the story I have told 100
times or more,

The details fine tuned to the
essentials I know you need:
He was born full term,
He has a 7 year old brother
who is fit and well,
He is allergic to penicillin.

You will ask me what happened,
And I will answer:
He is 6 years old.
He wasn't breathing for 7 minutes.
I gave him mouth to mouth.

I will hand over a careful typed
piece of A4 paper.
It will tell you his hospital number,
The things he is allergic to,
A list of medications and doses.
You will take it and smile.
You'll tell me I make your job easier.

I will stand calm,
And in control.
You see my demeanour,
my hospital bags packed and ready,
And you say,
You've done this before.
I'll nod and say many times.

But remember this;
That 6 year old is my baby.

That boy with the oxygen,
And the wires,
And the tubes,
Is my son.

I watched him turn blue.
The first time,
The fifth time,
The hundred and fifty fifth time...
He was still my baby.

My answers may be more polished,
I may appear more organised and calm.
But he is still my baby.

Sometimes I lie my head on the bed
beside him in A&E and sob huge silent
tears onto the starched, white sheets.

Sometimes my hands shake so much, I hold
them tight between my knees while I'm
answering your questions.

Sometimes I hold my breath just to stop
myself screaming, my throat burning from
the effort of holding it in, a single tear
escaping and betraying me.

So please doctor, registrar, paramedic,
nurse... don't be fooled by my tough
exterior.

The wonderful Emma Murphy won an award for this post at the BAPS. The Blog Post with the Biggest Impact. You can follow Emma and her gorgeous son, Hugh, on [Facebook](#)





Batch Cooking

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, finding time for healthy, home-cooked meals can be a challenge. Enter batch cooking: a strategic approach to meal preparation that's all about efficiency and simplicity. At its core, batch cooking involves dedicating a few hours each week to preparing large quantities of meals or meal components. The goal? To make healthy eating more manageable and less time-consuming, ensuring that even on your busiest days, a nutritious meal is just a microwave beep away.

Benefits of Batch Cooking

- **Saves Time:** A few dedicated hours of cooking can secure your meals for the week, offering precious extra minutes on those hectic evenings.
- **Reduces Stress:** The peace of mind that comes from knowing your meals are ready can dramatically lower mealtime stress and decision fatigue.
- **Saves Money:** Bulk buying and efficient use of ingredients cut costs, while homemade meals reduce the lure of expensive takeouts.
- **Promotes Healthy Eating:** With complete control over ingredients and portions, maintaining a balanced diet becomes significantly easier.

- **Variety and Creativity:** Batch cooking doesn't mean eating the same meal every day. It's an opportunity to explore new recipes and enjoy a diverse diet throughout the week.

Tips for Successful Batch Cooking

- **Plan Ahead:** Outline your meals for the week, compile a shopping list accordingly, and stick to it.
- **Choose Versatile Ingredients:** Opt for items that fit well in multiple dishes to streamline both shopping and cooking.
- **Invest in Quality Storage Containers:** Durable, safe, and reusable containers keep your food fresh and your kitchen organised. Alternatively, use freezer bags and lie them flat in your freezer.
- **Keep It Simple:** Start with recipes you're comfortable with before experimenting with new dishes.
- **Label Everything:** Mark containers with contents and dates to keep track of what you have and ensure older meals get eaten first.

Top Tips

Batch Cooking

... Continued

Batch cooking is more than just a meal prep strategy; it's a lifestyle choice that champions health and well-being, even during the busiest weeks. By starting small and gradually integrating more batch cooking into your routine, you'll discover a world where healthy eating is both simple and delicious.

Phone Photography

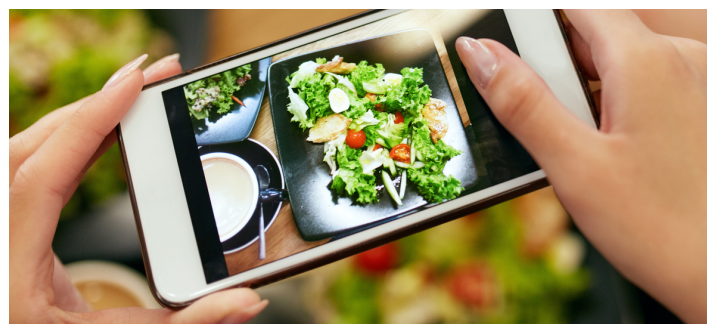
Whether you're capturing everyday moments or the special milestones in your caregiving journey, elevate your photography game with some simple tips.

- **Use Natural Light:** Whenever possible, utilise natural light. It brings warmth and depth to your photos, reducing the need for flash which can flatten your images.
- **Focus with a Tap:** Tap on the screen where you want to focus. This not only sharpens your subject but also allows you to adjust the exposure.
- **Explore Different Perspectives:** Don't just shoot from eye level. Try different angles and viewpoints to add an interesting twist to your photos.

Batch Cooking Suggestions

- **Grains and Legumes:** A base of rice, quinoa, or lentils can be the foundation for countless meals.
- **Proteins:** Cooked chicken, beef, or plant-based proteins like tofu can be mixed into salads, wraps, and more.
- **Vegetables:** A selection of roasted vegetables adds flavour and nutrition to any meal.
- **Soups, Stews, and Sauces:** Perfect for freezing and reheating, these make for hearty, comforting meals.
- **Breakfast Options:** Simplify your mornings with ready-made options like overnight oats or egg muffins.

- **Rule of Thirds:** Imagine your screen is divided into nine equal segments. Placing your subject along these lines or at their intersections makes for a more compelling composition.
- **Steady Your Shot:** To avoid blurry photos, hold your phone with both hands or rest it on a stable surface. Use the volume button to snap the shot for less shake.
- **Clean Your Lens:** A simple but often overlooked tip. Clean your phone's lens for clear, crisp images without smudges or dust spots.
- **Capture Candid Moments:** Sometimes, the most beautiful photos are the unplanned ones. Keep your phone handy to capture those spontaneous, candid moments that truly tell a story.



Decluttering: The Philosophy of Small Steps



The Philosophy of Small Steps

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, especially for parent carers, the clutter that accumulates in our homes can become more than just a physical nuisance. It can cloud our minds, increase our stress levels, and diminish our ability to focus. However, the thought of decluttering can seem daunting, a mountain too steep to climb. This is where the philosophy of small steps comes into play, transforming the overwhelming into something manageable, and even enjoyable. By adopting the approach of tackling “one drawer at a time,” we not only make progress in our physical spaces but also in our mental well-being, celebrating each small victory along the way.

The Benefits of Decluttering Gradually

Starting small has its advantages. It's less overwhelming, making the task feel more achievable and significantly reducing stress.

Each drawer organised and decluttered builds momentum, encouraging further action. This focused approach leads to more thorough decluttering and organising, as concentrating on one small area at a time allows for a more detailed and thoughtful process. Moreover, this method is adaptable to even the busiest of schedules, requiring only short bursts of effort that can be easily integrated into daily routines.

How to Get Started

Begin by identifying the areas that are most used and contribute significantly to daily frustration. This could be a junk drawer, a bedside table, or a bathroom cabinet. Setting clear goals for each area is crucial; decide whether the aim is to reduce the number of items, organise them more effectively, or both. Also, prepare for disposal by having a plan for items to be thrown away, donated, or sold.

Tips for Success

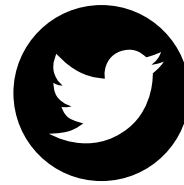
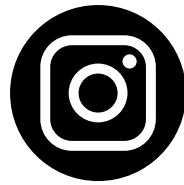
Be realistic with your goals, considering your time and energy. Stay motivated by setting small rewards for each completed drawer. Moreover, involve your household in the activity, making it a collective effort where everyone contributes.

Decluttering Challenge

We invite you to join a two-month challenge, decluttering and organising one drawer/space per week. Share your progress on social media using #kintoodeclutter so we can find you.



Because nothing is typical!



*Debs
Aspland*

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Debs is a mum to three amazing, challenging, loveable teenagers, each with a variety of special educational needs and disability labels attached.

Over the years, Debs has spent hours trying to juggle the chaos that comes from having to use a system that doesn't actually work, unless you shout loudly and constantly. Even then, there are no guarantees.

She has turned up late for meetings, a month early for some and even, on one occasion, to the wrong building.

She has set up support groups, forums, online support, accessible music festivals, award events and much more.

Her biggest passion?

Making life that bit easier for other parent carers.

Oh, and stationery. She has a real passion for stationery (and cake)! She really loves cake.

Her biggest fear?

One day, her husband will find out that some other partners enjoy cleaning and doing housework.

The Dream?

KinToa envisions a world where every SEND parent carer feels empowered, connected, and fully supported in their pivotal role

This will give them more time to do the things they want to do, rather than just doing the things they need to do. And if that involves cake, they know who to call.

KINTOA

Strength of Family, Courage of Warriors

May/June 2024

