

KINTOA

Strength of Family, Courage of Warriors

May/June 2024



S.E.N.D

Our Way

Because we live it

SUPPORT

EMPOWERMENT

NOURISHMENT

DISCOVERY



About KinToa

Welcome to **KinToa**, your beacon in the journey of SEND parent caregiving. At KinToa, we see the real heroes: you, the parent carers, who navigate the complexities of special educational needs and disabilities with unmatched strength and courage.

Our Philosophy: KinToa, merging 'Kin' and the Maori word 'Toa' for warrior, stands as a symbol of your inherent bravery and resilience. It's more than our name—it's our commitment to honour your journey.

Understanding Your Challenges: Forget the superficial fixes like another hand massage at carers' meetings. You deserve practical, real-world support tailored to the unique demands of your life. KinToa is designed to be that robust pillar of strength, offering hands-on advice, relatable stories, and a sense of solidarity that cuts through the isolation often felt in the world of SEND caregiving.

Why KinToa? Because true strength lies in unity and shared wisdom. Our content is curated to resonate with your experiences, enlighten your caregiving path, and inject moments of joy and discovery into your daily routine. From navigating SEND systems to celebrating personal victories, we cover the spectrum, ensuring you feel seen, understood, and most importantly, not alone.



Our Mission: To empower you, the hero, in your quest. KinToa stands as your guide, illuminating the path with insights, empathy, and encouragement. We're more than a magazine; we're a companion and a champion for the incredible work you do every day.

Join Our Family: Dive into a world where empathy meets action, where your stories and challenges light the way for others. With KinToa, embark on a journey of empowerment and connection, knowing that, together, we're invincible.

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

Editor's Letter

Dear Reader

Welcome back to KinToa, where each page is a celebration of the resilience, humour, and unwavering spirit of SEND parent carers.

The response to our launch edition surpassed our wildest expectations. Hundreds of parent carers signed up, with an average reading time of over two hours—a testament to the deep connection and need for a platform like KinToa. It has become more than a name—it's a badge of honour, symbolising the warrior spirit in each of us. It's a reminder that, in the world of SEND, being a parent carer means navigating daily battles with grace and love.

This edition is packed with more of what you loved the first time around—real stories, practical advice, and moments of joy that light up the everyday.

Your enthusiastic engagement and feedback have been the lifeblood of KinToa's growth. This magazine is a space where our collective wisdom shines, supporting and uplifting every member of our extended KinToa family.

So here's to our continued adventure, to the stories yet to be told, and to the laughter waiting to echo through our lives. Together, we're not just navigating the SEND journey; we're redefining it, one page at a time.

Thank you for embracing KinToa, for sharing your journey with us, and for proving, edition after edition, that together, we're unstoppable.

**WARM
REGARDS,**

*Debs
Aspland*



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Delivering Impactful Presentations & workshops

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2. Daily Notes and Transfers:

There are two options for notes. One is to add them to your BuJo as you attend meetings, take calls, etc. Or you can maintain a no-frills notebook for daily scribbles—notes from calls, observations, reminders. At the end of the day, filter through these notes and transfer only what's necessary into your BuJo. This method keeps your bullet journal clean, organised, and focused on action and reference.

3. Rapid Logging

Rapid logging is the unique method at the core of Bullet Journalling, enabling you to capture information quickly and clearly using a simple and organised system. It's built on the idea that instead of writing full sentences, you use signifiers (bullets, tasks, events, and notes) to log your thoughts, tasks, and observations efficiently.

- Tasks are marked with a simple dot (•). These are actionable items that need to be completed.
- Events are noted with an open circle (○). These can be appointments or significant occurrences.
- Notes are denoted by a dash (-). These are bits of information you want to remember but aren't necessarily actionable.

Signifiers then add an extra layer of meaning to these entries. Placed before your notes, they help to prioritise or to find a relevant note at a glance.



Rapid logging enables you to capture information quickly and clearly

Common signifiers include an asterisk (*) for priority, an exclamation mark (!) for inspiration or ideas, and a question mark (?) for items requiring further research or information.

Rapid logging, combined with the use of signifiers, creates a streamlined system that makes your Bullet Journal an efficient, easy-to-use tool. It ensures that important information stands out and that your journal remains clutter-free, allowing you to focus on what truly matters.

Collections

Collections are a cornerstone feature of the bullet journal system, allowing you to group related information, ideas, and tasks in a structured way. They serve as dedicated spaces for everything from tracking specific projects to logging personal achievements or important contacts. Essentially, collections help you organize your thoughts and tasks in a manner that's easily accessible and visually coherent.

... Continued

Group related information, ideas, and tasks in a structured way



Each collection revolves around a specific theme or purpose. The idea is to gather related entries in one place for easy reference and management. They can be as simple or detailed as you need. They might consist of lists, logs, trackers, or even mind maps. This flexibility allows you to tailor your bullet journal precisely to your life's needs, making it a truly personal tool.

To start a collection, simply dedicate a new page to a topic of your choice, title it at the top, and begin adding relevant entries. Don't forget to log the page number and collection title in your bullet journal's index for quick access.

Collection Ideas

Medication and Therapy Logs: Keep track of medications, dosages, and therapy sessions. This can be vital for managing health care effectively.

Appointment Outcomes: Create a section for key points from each appointment, future steps, and questions for next time.

EHC Plan Goals and Updates: Monitor progress towards educational goals, important dates, and meetings related to your child's plan.

Self-Care Tracker: Remember, taking care of yourself is as important as caring for your child. Track activities that replenish your energy and well-being.

Fun and Joy Log: Amidst the hustle, keep a collection of fun moments, achievements, and quotes from your family. It's important to celebrate the joy along the journey. You could do a weekly "things that made me smile this week" or "Days out to try".

Resource List: Compile contacts, helpful websites, and community resources in one place for easy access.

Gift lists: Gift ideas for those common "what can we buy them" conversations at Christmas and birthday, and a list of what you have bought, and more importantly, where you have hidden it.

Term Dates: always useful to have these in one place, especially if you have children at different schools with different holidays.

Your bullet journal is a personal tool, a companion on your journey as a SEND parent carer. It doesn't need to be perfect or fit any aesthetic ideal.

What it should do is make your life a bit easier, a bit more organised, and hopefully, a bit brighter with each page. Embrace the flexibility and simplicity of bullet journaling, and let it evolve with you, reflecting the uniqueness of your family's journey.

Make your life a bit easier, a bit more organised and hopefully a bit brighter

Not sure where to start with a BuJo?

As a mum to three incredible young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Debs, our editor in chief knows that sometimes, love isn't the only thing you need. You also need a solid plan. That's why she created Life AsPland - a comprehensive range of organisers and template downloads designed from the ground up for SEND families.

- Tailored to SEND Families
- Save Time and Reduce Stress
- Empowerment Through Organisation

Life AsPland was born out of necessity, love, and the gritty reality of SEND parenting. Take the first step towards a more organized, less stressful life. Discover how Life AsPland can transform your SEND parenting experience today.



*Debs
Aspland*



FIND OUT MORE AT: [LIFEASPLAND](https://lifeaspland.com)

What “Label” have you been given?

This quiz is a light-hearted nod to the labels often given to parent carers by professionals. Find out which one you’ve been pegged as, and remember, each of these comes from a place of dedication and love for your child.



1. When you disagree with a professional’s recommendation, you:

- Stand your ground and argue your point fiercely.
- Insist on exploring every alternative until you’re satisfied.
- Tend to withdraw and reconsider your options in private.
- Cite specific legislation or guidelines that support your view.

2. Your preparation for meetings involves:

- Practicing your arguments and preparing for pushback.
- Compiling a list of needs and wants for your child that you refuse to compromise on.
- Sometimes feeling overwhelmed and choosing to take a step back.
- Packing a folder full of research, reports, and legal documents.

3. When it comes to your child’s rights, you are:

- Fiercely protective and ready to battle it out if necessary.
- Unwavering in your pursuit of what’s best for your child, no matter what.
- Often feeling left out of the conversation and disheartened by the system.
- Extremely knowledgeable and always ready to share that knowledge.

4. If someone suggests your expectations are too high, you:

- Argue that there’s no such thing as too high when it comes to your child.
- Persistently advocate for the best, refusing to lower your standards.
- Feel frustrated and sometimes question your involvement.
- Explain, with evidence, why your expectations are justified.

5. In discussions about your child’s needs, you:

- Are vocal and assertive, ensuring your child’s voice is heard.
- Do not back down and are known for your tenacity.
- Find it hard to keep engaging when you feel ignored.
- Provide detailed explanations of why certain supports are necessary.

6. Your reputation among the professionals you deal with is as someone who:

- Will fight tooth and nail for their child.
- Is demanding but passionate about their child’s welfare.
- Is difficult to involve in the decision-making process.
- Knows almost as much, if not more, about the policies as they do.

A

B

C

D

WHILE THE WORLD MAY ASSIGN LABELS, REMEMBER, IT'S THESE VERY QUALITIES THAT MAKE YOU AN IRREPLACEABLE ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD.

7. When new policies or changes are introduced, you:

- a. Immediately assess how to challenge them if they don't serve your child.
- b. Are skeptical and scrutinise their impact on your child's support.
- c. Feel further alienated by the constant changes.
- d. Dive into the details to understand every implication.

8. Your approach to building a case for your child involves:

- a. Gathering evidence to make an irrefutable argument.
- b. Constant vigilance and a refusal to accept "no" for an answer.
- c. Struggling to maintain hope when faced with bureaucratic barriers.
- d. Creating a comprehensive presentation of facts and precedents.

9. At support group meetings, you're known for:

- a. Sharing strategies for standing up to authority.
- b. Encouraging others to never settle for less.
- c. Listening more than speaking, feeling a bit disconnected.
- d. Offering advice on legislation and rights.

Mostly A's: The Rottweiler

Seen as tenacious and sometimes aggressive, but it's all in service of advocating for your child's needs.

Tip: Your fierce advocacy is invaluable, but remember the power of strategic pauses. Sometimes, taking a moment to breathe and plan can amplify your impact even more.

Mostly B's: One of Those

You're known for your unwavering standards and determination. You never settle for less than what your child deserves.

Tip: Your determination moves mountains. Balancing it with moments of celebration for small victories can provide you and your child with valuable boosts of motivation.

Mostly C's: Hard to Reach

Often viewed as disengaged, but it's the system that's failed to engage you properly and offer the support your child needs.

Tip: Feeling sidelined can be disheartening. Consider seeking out new allies or resources that can help reinvigorate your advocacy efforts. Your perspective is crucial, and your voice deserves to be heard.

Mostly D's: The Know It All

You have a deep understanding of your child's rights and legislation.

Tip: Sharing your knowledge can empower others, but coupling it with empathy ensures your wisdom is both heard and felt. Remember, collaboration often leads to the greatest changes.

Now tally your answers 

A	B	C	D
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Soulful SEND

Meet Lisa Gillespie, our new columnist

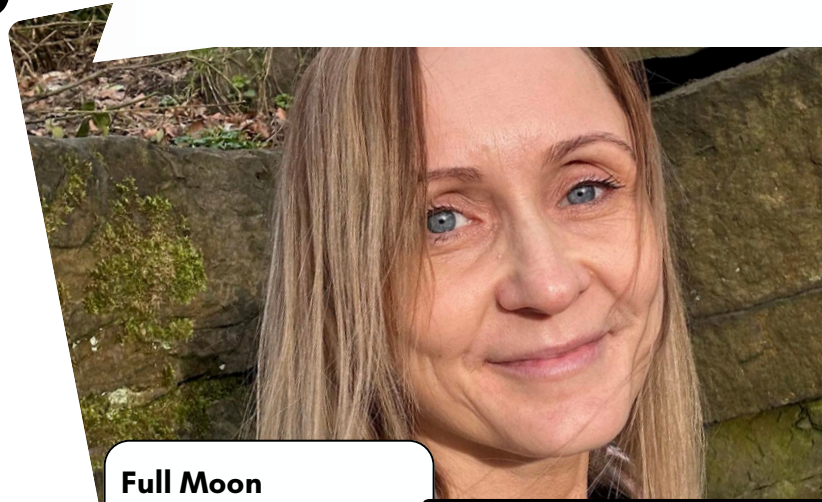
I'd like to share a different perspective with you as a spiritually awakened woman practising what I call conscious parenting. But first let me introduce you to my son Jack.

Jack is 10 years old, he was diagnosed with autism at a young age of 2 years 8 months old. This early diagnosis was because he clearly displayed signs before he was 2 and I had asked for him to be assessed before his 2 year developmental check. This was agreed once he had been seen displaying certain behaviours.

When Jack was 3 I started sharing his journey on a blog page called understanding Jack. I made so many connections with other parents I found it very therapeutic and supportive.

As we endured so many challenges, ups and downs with Jack and in our family we hit an all time crisis situation with the pandemic and having to stay at home without routine. Jacks was 6 years old when his behaviours were escalating to an unmanageable level. I was crying out for help. At the same time as we awaited an assessment Jack fell from the top of the banister upstairs that he had been climbing up, he fell down to the bottom of the stairs. An ambulance came and took us to hospital to have him checked over. Thankfully he wasn't injured.

After the social care assessment we were given some direct payment hours to employ a PA to take him out for a few hours a couple of days a week. He also received a diagnosis of ADHD and Learning Disability while under CAMHS.



Full Moon

UK time

- 23rd May - 13.53
- 23rd June - 02.08



We also suffered a family breakdown marriage breakdown ending in a separation.

During the time I lived alone with Jack I trained to become a reiki healer, crystal healer and aromatherapist specifically to help him. I also studied moonology as one of my life long passions is with about moon and astrology.

Jack still went through another crisis situation shortly after he had some dental work which he had to be put under anaesthetic for. At this stage his dad and I realised how much he needed us both, after a year of separation we were spending time together as his parents and became close again. Jacks little sister Sophie arrived in 2022 , which threw up another challenging time for Jack and us all. We moved back in together as a family in 2023.

That's the short version of our journey so far.

YOU CAN FOLLOW LISA ON FACEBOOK

"RISE AND SHINE AWAKENED SOUL"

Soulful SEND

Now for the magical part - essential oils , energy work and the moon.



I've been moon sensitive since I was little , my parents said I would always 'act up' when it was a full moon. Similarly with Jack since he was little I began noticing a pattern of certain behaviours especially during a full moon.

I've always felt a strong connection to the moon. As a child I would sleep with the curtains open when the moon shone brightly thorough my window I would feel close like I was sleeping with the moon, I still do this now. I feel charged up by the moon light.

Our special ones are super sensitive beings, with this in mind it's highly likely they are much more sensitive to energies that we cannot see or might not even be aware of.

The reason we notice a difference in behaviours when the moon is full is because this is when our emotions are pulled to the surface.

The moon's gravitational pull controls the tides creates our seasons on earth , and we are a part of nature as all living beings are , so when the tides are high we feel the pull too in our body, the human body is up to 60% water after all.

This awareness alone can help us understand why our special ones might be acting differently at certain phases of the moon cycle.

This energy sensitivity means they are most likely going to be receptive to healing modalities such as reiki. This is one of the tools I use to help Jack feel calmer. I'm attuned to angel reiki and so I often call on the angels for their loving and healing assistance with Jack.



I also use essential oils. I add lavender known for its calming and healing properties into a carrier oil to massage his feet , legs , arms and hands. Lavender can increase relaxation, and assist with reducing depression, stress and anxiety.

I also always have clary sage to hand as a drop can be applied straight to the scalp if things are getting intense , it can also be rubbed onto the back of the neck. Clary sage health benefits include anti depressant and anti stress effects. It's also connecting to the hormone dopamine meaning its effects can make it a wonderful natural remedy for lifting the mood.

Soulful SEND

Crystals



The crystals I use are clear quartz and rose quartz on top of his bedroom door frame and Amethyst I keep under his bed.

Clear quartz helps regulate energy it draws off and neutralises negative energy. It balances and revitalises our whole being physical mental emotional and spiritual.

Rose quartz has a calming soothing energy which can help soothe feelings of stress anxiety and anger. It helps release unexpressed emotions. It's the stone of unconditional love and infinite peace encouraging self acceptance and self worth.

Amethyst promotes good health physically mentally and spiritually. It gives the immune system a boost reduces tension , headaches, alleviates worries and fears and promotes a restful sleep.

The Unsung Heroes: A Nod to Parent Carers

Being a parent carer is like being a superhero without the cape. It's a role that involves boundless love, tireless dedication, and the kind of resilience that would make even the sturdiest oak tree take notes. But beyond the daily grind, what really keeps a parent carer going?

1. Community Connection: Whether it's joining local support groups, engaging in online forums, or just having a natter over coffee with friends who get it, connecting with others in similar boats can be a lifeline.

2. Practical Tools: From schedules that stick to simple, adaptive technologies, equipping yourself with the right tools can turn a day from chaotic to manageable. Sometimes, something as simple as a well-organised calendar or an app for managing medication can make all the difference.



3. Time for Yourself: It's often said, but still often neglected. Taking time out isn't a luxury; it's essential. A short walk, a good book, or just a quiet cup of tea can recharge your batteries.

Parent carers are the backbone of many families, and while the role is often challenging, it is immeasurably important.

Here's to celebrating the quiet moments of victory and the loud moments of joy, for they are what make the journey worthwhile.

Give the world the best of you

In the hustle of everyday life, from juggling responsibilities at home to meeting deadlines at work, it's alarmingly easy to overlook the person most in need of your attention: yourself. Self-care often slips down our list of priorities, overshadowed by the needs of others—children, partners, parents, friends, or colleagues. But have you stopped to consider what dedicating a little time to yourself could do not just for you, but for all those you care for?

Understanding Self-Care

Self-care isn't merely an indulgent spa day or an occasional treat. It's the deliberate practice of activities aimed at enhancing your mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing. Whether it's finding solace in a book, the rhythmic peace of a morning run, or the simple act of sketching, self-care is diverse and personal. It's about refilling your own cup so that you're not pouring from an empty one. It's about finding joy and rejuvenation in activities that resonate with you, not because they're trendy or prescribed by someone else.

The Joy in Self-Care

The essence of self-care lies in enjoyment. If the thought of lacing up for a run fills you with dread, then perhaps that's not your path to relaxation. Self-care should never feel like an obligation. It's a personal retreat; a way to honour your body and mind. Find what delights you, be it through music, cooking, or perhaps quiet moments of reflection, and let that be your sanctuary.



Self-Care is Selfless, Not Selfish

There's a common misconception that taking time for oneself is an act of selfishness. This couldn't be further from the truth. In caring for yourself, you are indirectly nurturing those around you. By being in your best mental, emotional, and physical state, you enhance your capacity to support others. It's about ensuring you're offering the best of yourself, not just the remnants of your energy and spirit.

A Gentle Challenge

I encourage you to set aside just 15/10 minutes each day for an activity that bolsters your wellbeing. Whether it's planning nutritious meals, embracing the rhythm of dance, or delving into meditation, let this time be solely for you. And remember, it's not about overhauling your life overnight. Like Rome, the foundation of self-care is built gradually, one block at a time.

“ Give the world the best of you and not what's left of you ”

The Art of Mindfulness: How Doodling Can Offer Respite for Parent Carers

Life as a parent carer is like being a superhero who's on call 24/7, minus the cape and the theme music. In the whirlwind of responsibilities, finding a moment for yourself can seem as likely as spotting a unicorn.

Enter doodling: your no-fuss, easy-access sidekick in the quest for calm and mindfulness.

The Science of Doodling:

- Improves Concentration: Keeps your brain on its toes when it might otherwise wander off.
- Enhances Creativity: Lets your mind break free and dance around ideas without worrying about the final performance.
- Reduces Stress: Acts like a mini-vacation for your brain, lowering those pesky stress hormones.
- Boosts Memory & Problem-Solving: Helps you remember and figure stuff out by engaging your brain's superpowers in a chill way.



It's like anchoring yourself in the "now" shooing away anxiety

Doodling for Mindfulness and Relaxation:

It's like anchoring yourself in the "now," helping to shoo away anxiety and stress. Ever found yourself doodling during a phone call and felt oddly refreshed? That's your brain thanking you for the mini-break.

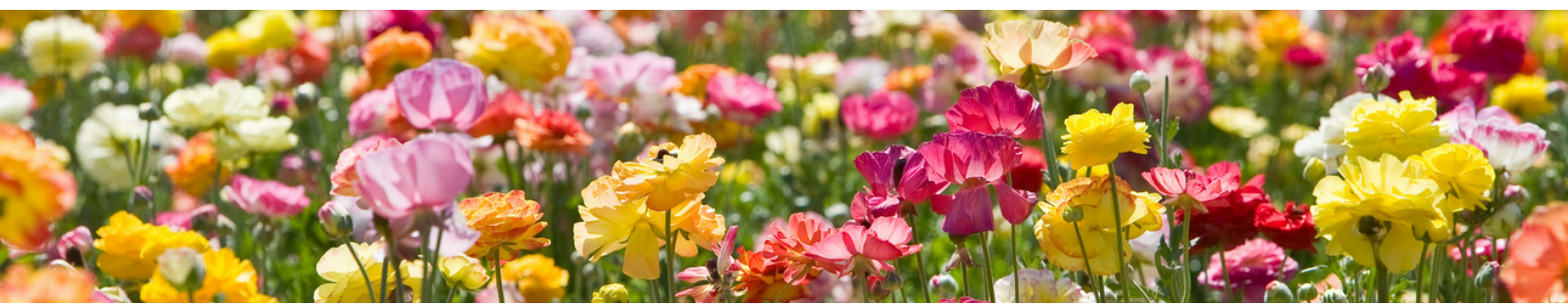
Incorporating Doodling into Your Routine:

- Keep it simple: A pen and any scrap of paper will do.
- Make it a habit: Doodle during those rare quiet moments, like during a TV ad break or when you're sat in the car waiting for your child to come out of school, or an activity.

Examples of Mindful Doodling:

- Nature Vibes: Draw leaves, clouds, or whatever feels breezy.
- Patterns & Shapes: Let your pen wander and create patterns or abstract shapes. Think of it as letting your hand take your brain for a walk.
- Doodle What You Feel: No rules. If you're feeling it, doodle it.

Doodling is more than just scribbles; it's a gateway to mindfulness, a badge of creativity, and a pocket-sized piece of peace. So, grab a pen and let your mind doodle its way to calm.



Garden Activities for May & June

Not sure what needs doing in the garden each month? Not sure what to plant when? We've got you covered.

G Gardening Jobs for May

Planting Summer Bedding Plants: After the last frost, it's safe to plant out summer bedding. Kids can help with planting in pots, hanging baskets, or garden beds, choosing colors and learning about plant spacing.

Sowing Seeds: Directly sow seeds of flowers and vegetables like sunflowers, beans, and pumpkins. It's a magical process for children to cover the seeds with soil and water them, anticipating the sprouts.

Supporting Climbing Plants: Installing supports for peas, beans, and climbing flowers can be a fun construction project. Children can help by holding stakes and gently tying plants.

Watering: With warmer weather, regular watering becomes crucial. Children can take responsibility for watering certain plants or garden sections with guidance on not over-watering.

Potting On: Transplant seedlings that have outgrown their pots into larger ones. It's a hands-on activity that teaches kids about root systems and plant care.

G Gardening Jobs for June

Harvesting Early Vegetables and Herbs: Radishes, lettuce, and early potatoes might be ready for harvesting. Children will enjoy the treasure hunt of digging for potatoes or snipping herbs.

Deadheading: Removing spent flowers from plants like roses and geraniums encourages more blooms. It's a simple task that children can do, teaching them about plant energy and reblooming.

Pest Patrol: Inspect plants for pests like aphids and slugs. Kids can help by gently removing pests or applying organic pest control methods under supervision.

Mulching: Applying a layer of mulch around plants helps retain moisture and suppress weeds. Children can help spread mulch, learning about its benefits.

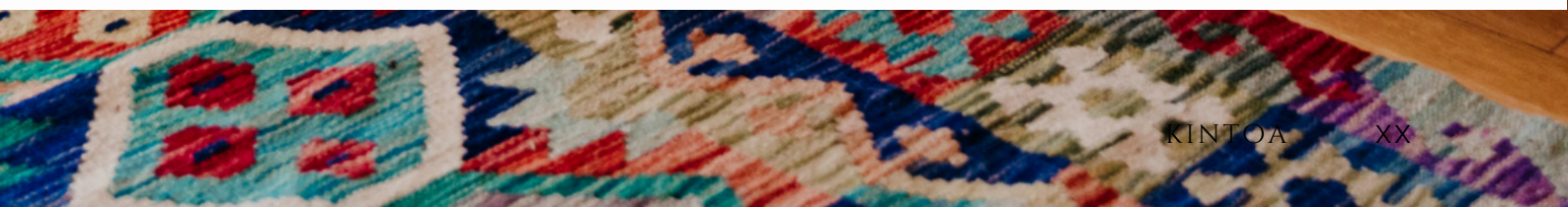
Creating a Wildlife Corner: Dedicate a corner of the garden to attract wildlife. Children can help by setting up bird feeders, planting pollinator-friendly flowers, or building a small bug hotel.





Reflect

on your current achievements and imagine how much more you could accomplish if you approached each task with a recharged spirit and mind.



Meet Nadine

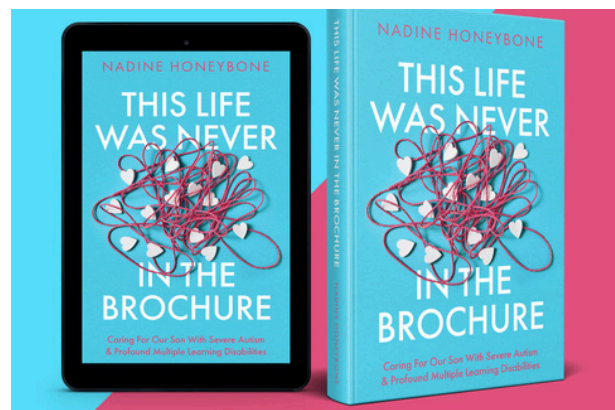
Nadine Honeybone, our new regular columnist



This Life Was Never In The Brochure is my story of the 18+ years of raising my son who has severe autism and profound multiple learning disabilities. I don't use the words 'severe' and 'trauma' lightly, and I am very well aware of the use of these words and the controversy around them. My decision to describe his autism as severe is because it is, and his presentation is nothing like the autism that is depicted in the media, whether in TV soaps or dramas or by celebrities who share his diagnosis. Awareness of how disabling autism can be seems to be frowned upon and yet it is a life that so many are living. Without more awareness of the issues and challenges faced by children and adults like my son, the health and social care systems will just continue to fail them as not enough focus is put on finding a way to address these failings.

Like most of you reading this fabulous magazine, I was a parent carer, and now after 20 years I have the one role of 'mum' to my amazing son. The role is still a big one and still involves advocacy and pushing for things that he needs, however with a decent amount of sleep each night I am in a much better position, with enough energy now to handle the stuff I have to deal with.

It wasn't always this way. It has been a really tough time and I know most can relate. I was utterly broken by the system that we and our children depend on so much, and when Tommy went into residential care I knew I had to write about the experience when I was still in that raw state of trauma. For me writing the book was part of my healing, which is still very much an ongoing process, and for others, I wanted to share my story and make some difference in raising awareness of a life that many could not even imagine.



I am so very grateful too for Tommy and what his life has done to enhance mine in many ways. I've never experienced unconditional love like it before. Being his mum has given me so many opportunities to learn about myself and what I am capable of. When you have a reason that's so much bigger than yourself to get up in the morning for, life takes on a whole new purpose.

Meet Nadine

Nadine Honeybone, our new regular columnist

Over these past years, we have all been through so much. Getting his diagnosis was the easy part when he was 2 years old. Since then dealing with social services for respite and proper 2:1 support when he was older seemed to be a battle of wills. Only when he had a significant meltdown in a public place and hurt the carer he was with did they take notice and agree he needed the support we had been consistently asking for. He had a great school provision but the local authority refused to put his therapies in his statement of educational needs (we are in Wales so these still existed here).

Due to his lack of verbal communication and complex sensory diet needs, he needed to access SLT and OT therapies. Only by taking the LA to a tribunal did they agree to cooperate. The system fails so many parents this way, as legal action seems to be the only option available to them to stop local authorities from bullying parents into a not-fit-for-purpose SEN/EHCP.



However, it was the health service that failed him the most. I have the utmost respect for those working in the NHS, but they do not have the knowledge of how to effectively deal with a completely non-verbal teenager who cannot and does not express pain other than through aggressive behaviour.

“ It was the health service that failed him the most ”

Tommy cannot communicate where he is in pain in any way, and he refuses all medication as he does not have the mental capacity to understand that it would help him. I had been insisting on multi-disciplinary team meetings (MDTs) over and over again and each time nothing was done for him. I broke down so many times trying to get across that he was in severe pain but without being able to say where only that he was biting hard on anything he could get his teeth around while escalating into more and more frequent meltdowns and severe behaviours. They said that the behaviour was down to his autism and not indicative of any other issues. Eventually, and after many months of this, they agreed to a dental investigation under general anaesthetic, as he wouldn't open his mouth or let anyone near him see. Three exposed nerve endings gave us the reason for his pain.

Meet Nadine

Nadine Honeybone, our new regular columnist

Along the way we have educated a lot of people. Reframing it as 'education' was my way of dealing with the numerous incidents when out and about - showing the public another type of life that others live. From him stealing food off people's plates while they were eating in restaurants, to wanting to smell the hair of everyone that walked past. The most memorable though was when he was about 8 years old and still in nappies I took him to a large department store and at the checkout I noticed everyone staring at him. He is a huge sensory seeker and the handfuls of poo from his nappy smeared all over his face and hair was a great way to satisfy his sensory needs. I'm sure many people had stories to tell when they got home that day.

As a blond, extremely cute small boy he got away with a lot, even the poo. However, as he grew into a tall, broad and bearded man the same behaviours were not getting tolerated as well. Meltdowns and aggressive behaviour in public put him at risk of other people misinterpreting his actions and becoming the target of their behaviours.

“ At the checkout, I noticed everyone staring at him ”

As he was nearing 18 and soon to become an adult, I had to accept the fact that I was no longer able to look after him, keep him safe and provide the care and support he needed. I resisted him leaving our home for so long believing that I was the only one that loved him enough to make sure he was cared for properly

It was impacting my own mental health and wellbeing and I couldn't accept that living in a care home was the right thing for him. It took me hitting a brick wall (literally) in my car one morning to get me to realise I couldn't go on.

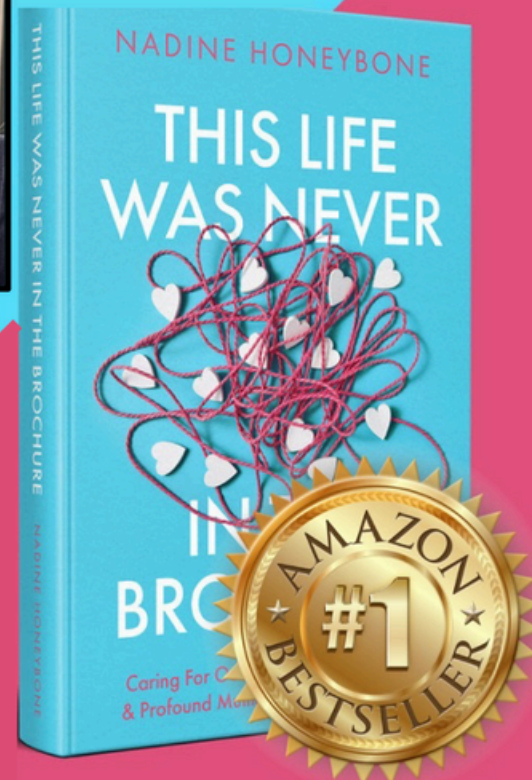
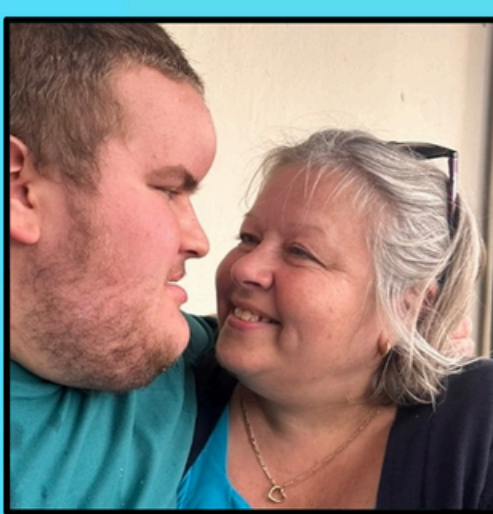
Tommy moved into a small residential care home a few months after he was 18 where he now lives with a team of carers who get enough sleep each night to be able to see to all his needs. He seems happy and that makes me happy.

I have learnt a lot about how to look after myself as a parent carer, and I would strongly recommend not getting to the point of hitting a brick wall, whether literally or metaphorically. I hope to share more insights into this over the forthcoming issues of KinToa.



Over the past 14 years I have also grown a charity in South Wales called **Autistic Minds**, that supports the neurodiverse community. I now want to help others who have the passion to create something that's needed, whether a charity, social enterprise or organisation, for the benefit of others. I hope to share more about how to go about doing that too.

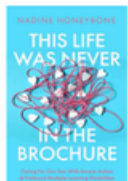
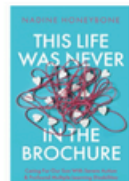
In the meantime, you can find me on FB. **Just search for my name or my page 'This Life Was Never In The Brochure'**. The book, which went Bestseller on Amazon last September, is also available on Amazon as a paperback or Kindle edition.



Amazon Best Sellers

Our most popular products based on sales. Updated frequently.

Best Sellers in Autism Spectrum Disorder

<p>#1</p>  <p>This Life Was Never In The Brochure: Caring For... Nadine Honeybone ★★★★★ 2 Kindle Edition</p>	<p>#2</p>  <p>This Life Was Never In The Brochure: Carin... Nadine Honeybone ★★★★★ 2 Paperback</p>
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Managing Information Overload for New SEND Parents

Becoming a parent to a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) introduces you to a world brimming with information. Here's how to navigate this new terrain without feeling overwhelmed.

Step 1: Gather Your Essentials

Start by collecting all critical information related to your child's care, including medical records, educational reports, and contact information for healthcare providers and educators.

- Medical records and reports
- Educational assessments, EHC Plans, SEND Plans
- Key contact list (doctors, therapists, teachers)

Step 2: Create a Digital Hub

Choose a digital platform like Google Drive or Dropbox to store scanned copies of all essential documents. Ensure it's accessible from your devices for easy retrieval.

- Scan and upload documents
- Organise files into clearly labeled folders
- Share access with family members or caregivers as needed

“ Share access to digital folders with family members or caregivers (as needed) ”



Step 3: Break Down Information

When researching SEND topics, focus on one area at a time to avoid overwhelm. Create a priority list based on your child's immediate needs.

- List topics to research (e.g., therapies, rights, educational support)
- Allocate time each week for research
- Take notes and store them in your digital hub

Step 4: Join Support Networks

Connect with local or online SEND parent groups. These communities can offer practical advice, emotional support, and resource sharing.

- Find and join SEND parent groups
- Attend meetings or online forums
- Bookmark resources shared by the community

“ Focus on one thing at a time to avoid overwhelm. Create a priority list for your child's immediate needs ”



Step 5: Schedule Regular Reviews

Set aside time each month to review the information you've gathered, update documents, and reassess your child's needs and progress.

- Update contact list and documents
- Review and adjust your child's care and education plan
- Check in with therapists and other practitioners for updates

Step 6: Embrace Flexibility

Understand that your approach may need to change as your child grows and their needs evolve. Stay adaptable and open to revising your system.

- Reflect on what is and isn't working
- Make adjustments to your organisation system as needed
- Stay informed about new resources and developments in SEND care

Managing the deluge of information as a new SEND parent can seem daunting, but with a structured approach and the right tools, you can create a manageable system. Remember, you're not alone in this journey, and there's a community ready to support you every step of the way.

Emergency Preparedness

The flood of information can sometimes feel like navigating a ship through stormy seas. Among the waves of medical records, educational reports, and therapy schedules, there's an essential harbor that often goes unnoticed until the storm hits: emergency preparedness.

Strategies for Managing Information Overload with Emergency Preparedness in Mind

1. **Prioritise Critical Information:** Within your digital hub, create a dedicated emergency folder. This should include medical information, a medication list, and any specific care instructions that would be crucial in an emergency.
2. **Emergency Contacts List:** Beyond your key contact list, have a specific list for emergencies that includes local emergency services, out of hours numbers for essential practitioners, and family members/care team members.
3. **Accessible Emergency Plans:** Ensure that your emergency plans are not just stored digitally but also have physical copies in strategic locations, such as your home, car, and child's backpack.
4. **Regular Updates:** Just as you schedule regular reviews of your child's care and education, incorporate a review of your emergency preparedness plan. Updating this plan as your child's needs evolve ensures that you're always prepared for the unexpected.

Remember

In emergencies, clarity saves time, and time saves lives.

AWARENESS DAYS & MONTHS COMING UP

Awareness or Acceptance or whatever day you want to call it, here are the ones coming up in May and June. These can be useful to plan your social media content, but they can also help you to find fellow parent carers who are on the same ride as you. Your experiences may be different but it always helps to know you are not the only one going through this.

Monthly Themes

May

- Tourettes Awareness Month
- Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS)
- Hypermobility Spectrum Disorders (HSD) Awareness Month
- Lupus Awareness Month

June

- Cataract Awareness Month
- Pride Month

Awareness days and months originated as a means to educate the public on health issues, disabilities, and social challenges, often spearheaded by advocacy groups or governmental health organisations.

Local days often address issues specific to a community or country and may evolve into international observances as global awareness and solidarity around the issue grow.

Conversely, international days are typically established by global organisations like the United Nations to promote awareness and action on issues affecting humanity worldwide. Regardless of their scope, each observance plays a crucial role in fostering understanding, support, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and special needs.



May 2024

- 01 Maternal Mental Health Awareness **Week**
- 01: Deaf Awareness **Week**
- 05: World Ankylosing Spondylitis Day
- 06: Viral Meningitis Awareness **Week**
- 07: World Asthma Day
- 08: Equality, Diversity & Human Rights **Week**
- 10: World Lupus Day
- 12: International ME Awareness Day
- 12: World Fibromyalgia Awareness Day
- 15: Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day
- 13: Mental Health Awareness **Week**
- 13: Learning at Work **Week** **
- 18 World AIDS Vaccine Day
- 15: Dementia Action **Week**
- 16: Global Accessibility Awareness Day
- 26: Epilepsy Awareness **Week**
- 30: World MS Day

** Learning at Work Week is a prime opportunity to educate colleagues and management about the unique challenges parent carers face in the workplace, advocating for supportive policies like flexible hours and mental health resources. This initiative fosters a more inclusive culture, ensuring parent carers feel valued and supported, balancing their professional and caregiving roles effectively.

June

- 01: Volunteers Week
- 07: Tourette Awareness Day
- 09: Diabetes Awareness Week
- 10 - National Carers Week
- 10: Global Wellness Day
- 12: Men's Health Week
- 12: Loneliness Awareness Week
- 17: Learning Disability Week
- 18: Autistic Pride Day
- 20: #GladtoCare Awareness Week
- 21: World Humanist Day
- 24: Deafblind Awareness Week
- 26: World Wellbeing Week



Instagram

Instagram's visual platform is a powerful tool for connecting and engaging with your audience. Here's how to make the most of it:

Do's

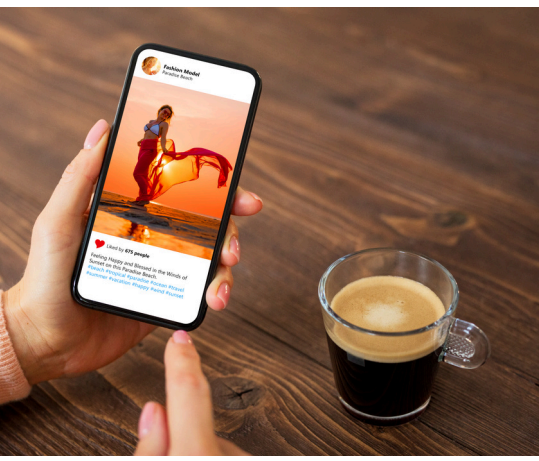
- **Be Authentic:** Share real stories and photos that reflect your brand's personality. Authenticity resonates with audiences and builds trust.
- **Use High-Quality Visuals:** Instagram is all about the visuals. Use high-resolution images and videos to grab attention.
- **Engage Regularly:** Respond to comments, like posts from your community, and engage with your followers' content. Interaction encourages more interaction.
- **Use Hashtags Wisely:** Hashtags increase your visibility. Use a mix of trending, niche, and branded hashtags to reach different audiences.
- **Post Consistently:** Consistency is key. Use a content calendar to plan your posts and maintain a steady presence.

Don'ts

- **Don't Over-Promote:** Constant sales pitches can turn followers off. Aim for a balance between promotional content and value-added posts.
- **Avoid Ignoring Analytics:** Instagram provides insights for a reason. Track your performance and adjust your strategy accordingly.
- **Don't Neglect Stories and Reels:** These features are highly engaging and favored by the Instagram algorithm. Use them to show behind-the-scenes content, quick tips, or fun updates.

Promote Awareness Days in Advance:

- Use countdown stickers in Stories and posts to build anticipation for upcoming awareness days.



Growing your Instagram following as a parent carer involves a combination of authenticity, strategic engagement, and community building. By following this checklist, you can increase your visibility, connect with a broader audience, and create a supportive network for sharing experiences and information related to parenting and caregiving in the disability community.

Remember, growth takes time and persistence, so keep experimenting and refining your approach based on what works best for you and your audience

Instagram Growth Checklist

Optimise Your Profile:

- Use a clear, relevant profile picture (e.g., a logo or a personal photo).
- Ensure your bio is concise, informative, and includes a call-to-action (CTA).
- Add a link to a relevant website or a Linktree to share more resources.

Content is King:

- Post high-quality, authentic content regularly.
- Use a mix of post types: images, videos, Reels, and IGTV.
- Share personal stories and experiences that resonate with your audience.

Engage, Engage, Engage:

- Respond to comments on your posts to foster a community.
- Engage with other accounts by liking, commenting, and sharing their content.
- Use polls, questions, and quizzes in your Stories to encourage interaction.

Hashtags and Keywords:

- Use relevant hashtags (#ParentCarer, #DisabilityAwareness, etc.) to increase discoverability.
- Research and use niche hashtags related to specific conditions or interests.
- Include keywords in your post captions for better searchability.

Leverage Instagram Stories and Highlights:

- Share daily updates, behind-the-scenes looks, or quick tips in your Stories.
- Use Highlights to categorise and archive your Stories for new followers to explore.

Collaborate and Network:

- Partner with influencers or other parent carers for takeovers or shoutouts.
- Join Instagram Lives or host your own to discuss relevant topics.
- Participate in or initiate challenges and campaigns related to your niche.

Utilise Instagram Features:

- Experiment with Reels for creative, engaging content.
- Use IGTV for longer-form videos, such as interviews or detailed guides.
- Try out new features promptly; Instagram often rewards early adopters with greater visibility.

Analyse and Adapt:

- Use Instagram Insights to track what content performs best.
- Adjust your content strategy based on analytics and feedback.
- Set specific, measurable goals for your growth and engagement.

Promote Your Instagram Elsewhere:

- Link to your Instagram account from other social media platforms, your website, or email signature.
- Encourage followers to share your content or tag friends in comments.

Post at the Right Time:

- Identify when your audience is most active using Instagram Insights.
- Schedule your posts for these peak times to maximise engagement.

Use Instagram Ads:

- Consider using Instagram ads to promote your profile or specific posts to a targeted audience.

Stay Updated with Instagram Trends:

- Keep an eye on Instagram trends and adapt your content to stay relevant.



Find Out More: ↘

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Rebecca Huseyin
A Boy Less Ordinary

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Fitness - A Path to Well-being

For parent carers, finding time for fitness can seem like an insurmountable challenge. The demands of caring for a child with special needs can leave little room for self-care routines. However, incorporating physical activity into your life is not just beneficial for your health; it's a vital part of maintaining the strength, stamina, and mental resilience needed for caregiving.

Here's how fitness can transform your well-being and practical ways to weave it into your busy life.

Enhanced Physical Health: Regular physical activity strengthens the heart, muscles, and bones, reducing the risk of chronic diseases. For parent carers, this means being in better shape to handle the physical demands of caregiving.

Improved Mental Health: Exercise is a powerful stress reliever. It releases endorphins, the body's natural mood lifters, helping to combat stress, anxiety, and depression.

Increased Energy Levels: Regular exercise can boost your energy levels, helping you feel more awake and alert throughout the day. This is crucial for parent carers who need to stay energised and focused.

Better Sleep: Physical activity can help improve the quality of sleep, making it easier to fall asleep and contributing to more restful nights.

Enhanced Bonding with Your Child: Engaging in physical activities together can strengthen the bond between you and your child, creating joyful memories and shared experiences



Start Small: Begin with short, manageable activities that fit easily into your schedule. Even 10-15 minutes of physical activity a day can make a difference.

Involve Your Child: Choose activities that you can do together with your child, adapting them to suit their abilities and interests. Whether it's a walk around the neighbourhood or a dance party in your living room, shared activities can make fitness fun for both of you.

Set Realistic Goals: Set achievable fitness goals that reflect your current fitness level and lifestyle. Celebrate every milestone, no matter how small, to stay motivated.

Make It a Routine: Consistency is key. Try to schedule your physical activities at the same time each day to establish a routine. This predictability can also make it easier for your child to adapt and look forward to these shared moments.

Listen to Your Body: Be mindful of your physical limits and adjust your activities as needed. The goal is to enhance your well-being, not to add to your stress.

Just One Thing

When we think about our goals, we think about the big picture. “I want to lose 2 stone”, “I want to be able to run 5k”, “I want to be able to speak Spanish”. For many of us the goal seems so far from the reality we have today.

However, stop and think. What one thing could you do today to help you reach your goal?

FOCUS ON THAT ONE STEP, NOT THE DISTANCE. EACH SMALL MOVE YOU MAKE IS A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE, FITTING TOGETHER TO BUILD THE PATH TOWARDS YOUR GOAL

For example, if the goal is weight loss, what one thing could you do today to help? It may be making healthier choices, eating smaller portions, planning your meals for the week or even preparing your meals for the week.

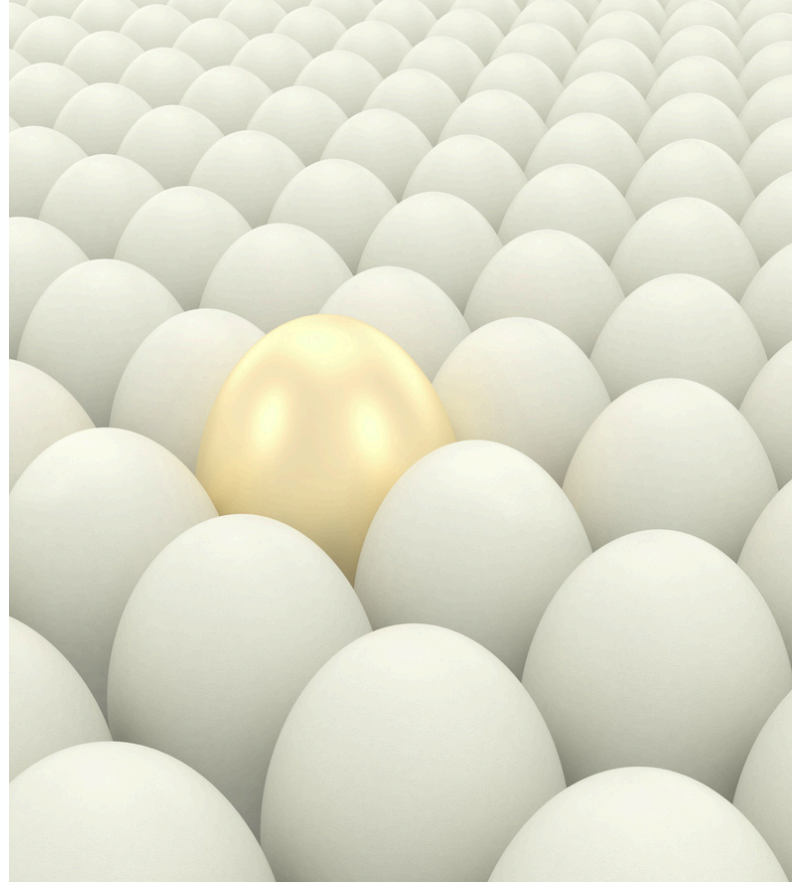
If your goal is to run 5k, then download the Couch to 5K and get day one under your belt. As you only run three days a week on that, then another day you can schedule when you can fit the sessions in, and another day you can put together a playlist to get you through the next run. All little things but each one will help you to get to your final goal.

If you want to learn a language, practice a new phrase today. Repeat it throughout the day until it feels so natural. Say it as you run the Hoover over, as you fill the dishwasher, take the dog for a walk or even get the kids involved and say it on the school run.

Every goal we have can only be reached by taking small steps; by changing our current habits. As the saying goes, if you do what you have always done, you’ll get what you have always got”. You need to make changes but they can be small.

Imagine doing one small thing each day? One small step feels like something you can achieve. It’s so much easier to do one small step than to try to do everything all at once. Each of these small steps though, move you forward to that final goal.

As you sit down today, ask yourself. “What one thing can I do today?”



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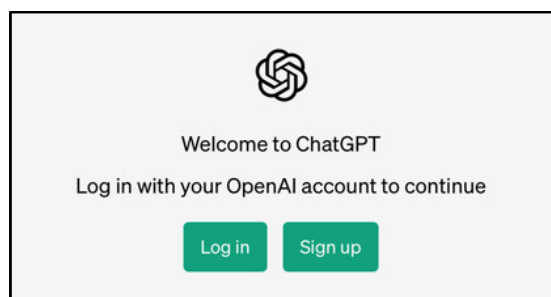
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ChatGPT - A Powerful Tool for Parent Carers

This month, we delve deeper into the realms of possibility with our ChatGPT column, written by ChatGPT, an ever-evolving resource designed to answer your calls for advice, share wisdom, and spark creativity. Whether it's crafting strategies to navigate complex challenges, discovering joy in learning, or finding moments of tranquility amidst the chaos, ChatGPT is here to assist.

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.



This column is about empowering you to harness technology for the betterment of your family's life. Each piece of advice, every suggestion, and all creative ideas are shared with the intention of supporting your incredible role as a parent carer.

A few prompts to try

We 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 write a letter about an issue with the school, it will write a letter but, I can then go back and give more detail and it will rewrite it to include that information. You can do this numerous times until you are satisfied with the result..

SUPPORT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, can you share strategies for maintaining effective communication with the people working with my child?"
- **Why:** Strong communication channels between parents and professionals are crucial for ensuring that children with SEND receive the support they need.

EMPOWERMENT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, how can I highlight my child's strengths to professionals to ensure they get the support they need?"
- **Why:** This approach empowers parents to advocate for services that build upon the child's abilities.

NOURISHMENT

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, suggest ways I can ensure my family's emotional well-being while navigating the challenges of SEND parenting."
- **Why:** This prompt seeks to provide parents with ideas for creating a nurturing environment that supports everyone's mental health.

DISCOVERY

- **Prompt:** "ChatGPT, can you recommend accessible activities that will help my SEND child discover their strengths and passions?"
- **Why:** Encouraging children to explore and engage with the world around them can lead to meaningful discoveries but accessibility is key.

ChatGPT - Ideas to try

ChatGPT has huge potential to help parent carers. Here are some suggestions on diverse ways to utilise ChatGPT. Each example demonstrates how ChatGPT can adapt its responses for various purposes, from simplifying explanations to writing personalised stories or poems.

“ SOME TIPS ON USING CHATGPT TO HELP MAKE LIFE A BIT EASIER ”

1. Simplifying Complex Information:

"Explain it to me like I'm 11 years old."

Example Prompt: "ChatGPT, can you explain what an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is like I'm an 11-year-old?"

Why It Helps: This approach makes complex information more accessible and easier to understand, especially useful when explaining SEND topics to siblings or young family members.

2. Creating Checklists:

"Can you create a checklist?"

Example Prompt: "ChatGPT, can you create a checklist for preparing for my child's annual EHCP review meeting?"

Why It Helps: A checklist can organise tasks into manageable steps, ensuring parents feel prepared and nothing gets overlooked during important meetings or processes.

3. Generating Ideas for Activities:

"Recommend accessible activities."

Example Prompt: "ChatGPT, can you recommend accessible and educational activities that I can do at home with my SEND child?"

Why It Helps: Finding new and suitable activities can be challenging. ChatGPT can offer creative, tailored suggestions that cater to a child's specific needs and interests, aiding in their development and enjoyment.

4. Providing Summaries and Explanations:

"Summarise this article for me."

Example Prompt: "ChatGPT, I've found an article about sensory processing disorder. Can you summarise the key points for me?"

Why It Helps: Busy parents may not have time to read through lengthy articles. ChatGPT can distill essential information, making it quicker and easier to stay informed on topics of interest.

5. Creating Personalised Stories:

"Write a story/poem."

Example Prompt: "ChatGPT, can you write a short story for my child about a superhero who has the same condition as they do?"

Why It Helps: Personalised stories or poems can be a source of comfort, inspiration, and empowerment for children, helping them see their unique qualities reflected positively.

SUMMARISE, EXPLAIN,
SIMPLIFY AND MORE



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**

Educational Equality

Helping Families
Through the MAZE
of Special Educational Needs

What we do

With our extensive professional and personal experience in all aspects of gaining special educational needs provision; we can advise on SEN Legislation, processes & strategy and suggest suitable assessments from professional therapists and/or educational psychologists. They should have expert witness experience and their reports need to be correctly quantified and qualified to provide recommendations for the Education Health Care Plan. This will help to ensure that your child receives an appropriate education.

A to Z of Fundraising Ideas

As parent carers, we're often knee-deep in responsibilities that extend beyond our already packed daily routines. Fundraising for our local schools, necessary equipment, or community services adds another layer to our to-do lists. However, the challenge of conjuring fresh and feasible fundraising ideas can sometimes leave us scratching our heads. Whether you're a seasoned fundraiser or a first-timer looking to make a splash in your community, here's a handy A to Z guide to spark your creativity and get those funds flowing!

Fundraising Ideas from A to Z:

A for Afternoon Tea: Host a classic British tea with all the fixings. Charge an entry fee and consider adding a raffle or silent auction to the mix.

B for Bad Tie Day: Rally your office to sport their most horrendous ties for a day, with participants donating to join in the "fun."

C for Cake Sale: Who can resist a sweet treat? A bake sale is easy to organize and always a crowd-pleaser.

D for Dog Walking: Offer your services for a furry-friendly fundraiser. Great for getting exercise and cuddles while raising money!

E for Easter Egg Hunt: A festive event that's perfect for spring. Charge for entry and hide some surprise prizes.

F for Fancy Dress Day: Encourage everyone to dress up and donate. You could even make it a contest with a prize for the best costume.



G for Garage Sale: Clear out clutter and raise funds. Ask friends and family to donate items they no longer need.

H for Head Shave: Brave participants can solicit donations in exchange for shaving their heads—an eye-catching way to raise funds and awareness.

I for International Food Festival: Celebrate diversity with a food fair. Have participants create dishes from around the world and charge an entrance fee.

J for Jazz Night: Host an evening of smooth jazz. Charge for tickets and maybe pair it with a wine tasting.

K for Karaoke Party: Let your community stars shine with a karaoke night. Charge per song or entry.

L for Line Dancing: Organise a community line dancing night. It's a fun way to get people moving and grooving for a good cause.

M for Movie Marathon: Screen back-to-back films. Offer snacks and charge for a full day pass or per movie.

Fundraising

... Continued



N for Nature Walk: Guide a scenic walk through local trails. Charge participants and provide some nature education along the way.

O for Obstacle Course: Set up a challenge course and charge for entry. Great for families and fitness buffs.

P for Pancake Breakfast: Everyone loves breakfast for dinner. Serve up pancakes and toppings for a cozy community gathering.

Q for Quiz Night: Test your trivia knowledge. Teams can pay to enter, and you can offer a prize for the winning team.

R for Raffle: Collect donations for prizes and sell raffle tickets. This can be added to any event for extra fundraising.

S for Swap Shop: A chance to swap clothes, books, or toys. Charge a small fee for setup or entry.

T for Talent Show: Showcase the hidden talents in your community. Charge performers and attendees.

U for Ugly Sweater Contest: Perfect for the holidays, have everyone show off their gaudiest garb.

V for Vintage Car Show: Draw in motor enthusiasts with a classic car show. Charge for entry and offer food and drinks.

W for Wine Tasting: Partner with a local vineyard for a classy evening. Charge for entry and include some light snacks.

X for X-Factor Evening: Host a talent contest inspired by the popular show. Charge entry for both participants and audience.

Y for Yoga Marathon: A day of zen and fundraising. Participants can seek sponsorship per hour of yoga completed.

Z for Zoo Day: Organise a day trip to the zoo. A portion of each ticket can go towards your cause.

With these A to Z fundraising ideas, you're all set to energise your community and support your cause. Remember, the most successful fundraisers are not only about raising money but also about having fun and bringing people together. So, pick an idea that excites you, rally your troops, and start making a difference one laugh, slice, or step at a time!

With thanks to the very wonderful

Kerry Banks, BEM

Fundraising & Events Officer

Martha Trust - Marthatrust.org.uk

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](#)

SEND SHENANIGANS

THE PODCAST FOR PARENT CARERS
BY PARENT CARERS



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The Chronicles of Ellie, the Parent Carer

In the mosaic of experiences that coloured Ellie's quest, a particularly challenging figure emerged: the SENCO, Mrs. Penrose, who prided herself on knowing what was best for all her students, including Johnny. Her approach, however, often bypassed the most crucial voices in the conversation—those of the families themselves.

"One mustn't get too bogged down in parental anxieties," Mrs. Penrose would say, her voice laced with a certainty that left little room for dissent. "After all, we're the professionals here." This stance created a rift, especially with parents like Ellie, who lived and breathed the nuances of their children's needs every day.

It was on a brisk morning, after yet another meeting where Mrs. Penrose had outlined plans for Johnny without once asking Ellie's input, that they met Kai. Unlike Mrs. Penrose, Kai saw Ellie and Johnny not as cases to be managed but as individuals with dreams, challenges, and the innate right to shape their own journey.

Kai's approach was a breath of fresh air, contrasting sharply with the stifling atmosphere Ellie often felt with Mrs. Penrose. Where the SENCO saw limitations and protocols, Kai saw potential and paths yet to be explored. He understood that the key to truly supporting Johnny lay in partnership, not in directives issued from an office.



“ IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE UNICORN AKA THE PERFECT PRACTITIONER ”

This partnership approach opened new doors for Johnny. Kai's sessions were marked by collaboration and innovation, guided by Ellie's insights and Johnny's responses. The progress was undeniable, lighting up not just Johnny's world but also Ellie's, showing her that her voice mattered, that she was an expert in her son's care.

The contrast between Kai and Mrs. Penrose underscored a crucial lesson for Ellie: the perfect practitioner wasn't someone who claimed to have all the answers but someone who was willing to listen, learn, and adapt. Someone who recognized that the expertise of loving parents was invaluable, that together, they could forge a path that was truly in Johnny's best interest.

... Continued

In time, even Mrs. Penrose began to notice the change in Johnny, a testament to the effectiveness of Kai's collaborative approach. It was a small victory, but for Ellie, it was a sign of hope—a hope that perhaps, one day, all professionals might see the wisdom in joining hands with families, acknowledging that the heart of any child's care lay in the power of partnership.

As Johnny continued to thrive, Ellie's journey from seeking the mythical perfect practitioner to finding Kai taught her the true meaning of support.

It wasn't about finding someone who knew all the answers but finding someone who dared to listen to the questions. In Kai, Ellie found more than a practitioner; she found an ally, a friend, and the very essence of what she had been searching for.



“IT WASN'T ABOUT FINDING SOMEONE WHO KNEW ALL THE ANSWERS BUT FINDING SOMEONE WHO DARED TO LISTEN TO THE QUESTIONS.”

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.

Ellie's Employment Odyssey

Join Ellie as she embarks on a quest to re-enter the workforce, a journey fraught with challenges yet illuminated by hope. Navigating the world of job hunting Ellie seeks a role that values her unique blend of resilience, creativity, and adaptability honed through years of SEND parenting. Watch as Ellie proves that the skills gained on her parenting journey make her an invaluable asset to the right employer, ready to embrace diversity and inclusivity.

Delivering Impactful Presentations & Workshops

Have you ever turned down an opportunity to speak at a conference or lead a workshop because you felt unprepared or overwhelmed? You're not alone. Many parent carers shy away from public speaking, especially when it involves sharing personal experiences and expert insights about caregiving. This article is designed to change that. Whether you're new to public speaking or looking to polish your skills, we'll guide you through crafting a powerful presentation that resonates with your audience and empowers you to step confidently onto the stage.

The Art of Structuring your Presentation

With a clear understanding of your voice and the topics that resonate with you and your audience, the next step is to craft your message into a structured, engaging presentation. A well-structured presentation not only helps convey your message clearly but also keeps your audience engaged from start to finish. In this chapter, we'll explore how to organise your thoughts and insights into a compelling narrative.



Beginning with a Strong Opening

The opening of your presentation is crucial. It sets the tone for what's to come and has the power to capture your audience's attention from the very first moment. Start with something that resonates on a personal level—be it a story, a surprising fact, or a question that prompts reflection.

WRITE DOWN THREE OPENING IDEAS FOR YOUR PRESENTATION. THESE COULD BE ANECDOTES FROM YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, RELEVANT STATISTICS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR TOPIC, OR THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS. PRACTICE DELIVERING THESE OPENINGS TO A FRIEND OR IN FRONT OF A MIRROR AND OBSERVE WHICH ONE FEELS MOST NATURAL AND ENGAGING

Building the Body with Key Points

The body of your presentation is where you delve into the meat of your message. It's important to structure this section in a way that's logical and easy to follow. Break down your main message into three to five key points. This structure makes it easier for your audience to follow along and retain the information you're sharing.

FOR YOUR CHOSEN TOPIC, OUTLINE THREE TO FIVE KEY POINTS YOU WANT TO COVER. FOR EACH POINT, NOTE DOWN A PIECE OF EVIDENCE, A STORY, OR AN EXAMPLE THAT SUPPORTS IT.

Ending with a Memorable Conclusion

Your conclusion is your chance to leave a lasting impression on your audience. It should reinforce your key message and, if applicable, call your audience to action. Reflect on what you want your audience to remember or do after your presentation ends.

Impactful Presentations

... Continued

Creating a PowerPoint presentation that complements and enhances your message is crucial for a successful conference talk or workshop. Visual aids, when used effectively, can make your presentation more engaging, help convey complex information, and reinforce your key points.

Understanding the Basics of Effective Design

Before diving into the specifics of PowerPoint design, it's important to grasp some fundamental principles that apply to all types of visual presentations:

- **Simplicity is Key:** Avoid cluttering your slides with too much text or too many images. Each slide should convey a single idea or concept.
- **Consistency Matters:** Use a consistent colour scheme, font style, and layout throughout your presentation to create a cohesive look and feel.
- **Visual Hierarchy:** Arrange elements on your slides in a way that guides the viewer's eye to the most important information first.

Choosing the Right Template

PowerPoint offers a wide range of templates, but choosing one that suits your presentation style and subject matter is important. Look for templates with clean, uncluttered designs that provide a good balance of text and visuals.

EXPLORE POWERPOINT'S TEMPLATE GALLERY AND SELECT THREE TEMPLATES YOU FEEL COULD MATCH THE TONE AND CONTENT OF YOUR PRESENTATION. CONSIDER THE COLOUR SCHEME, FONT CHOICES, AND LAYOUT. TEST EACH TEMPLATE BY ADDING A FEW SLIDES TO SEE WHICH ONE BEST SUPPORTS YOUR MESSAGE.



Incorporating Visuals

Visuals, including images, charts, graphs, and videos, can significantly enhance your presentation by illustrating your points and breaking up text-heavy slides.

- **Images:** Use high-quality, relevant images that support your content. Avoid generic stock photos in favor of images that add real value to your presentation.
- **Charts and Graphs:** When presenting data, use charts and graphs to make your information more digestible and visually appealing. Ensure they are simple, clear, and labeled correctly.
- **Videos:** Short, relevant videos can be a powerful tool for illustrating points or adding a dynamic element to your presentation. Make sure they are integrated smoothly into your presentation and tested beforehand to avoid technical issues.

CREATE A FOLDER ON YOUR PHONE OR PC TO SAVE IMAGES YOU THINK YOU COULD USE IN FUTURE PRESENTATIONS. THINK ABOUT THE IMAGES YOU SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA, WHICH COULD BE USED TO TELL A STORY?

Impactful Presentations

... Continued



Using Text Effectively

While visuals play a key role in your presentation, text is often necessary to convey specific points or details. Here's how to use text effectively:

- **Bullet Points:** Use bullet points to break down information into easy-to-digest pieces. Keep them short and to the point, with no more than six bullet points per slide.
- **Fonts:** Choose clear, readable fonts. Generally, sans-serif fonts like Arial or Helvetica are easier to read on screens. Use font sizes that are large enough to be seen from the back of the room.
- **Colour:** Use colour contrast to make your text stand out against the background. Dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background works best.

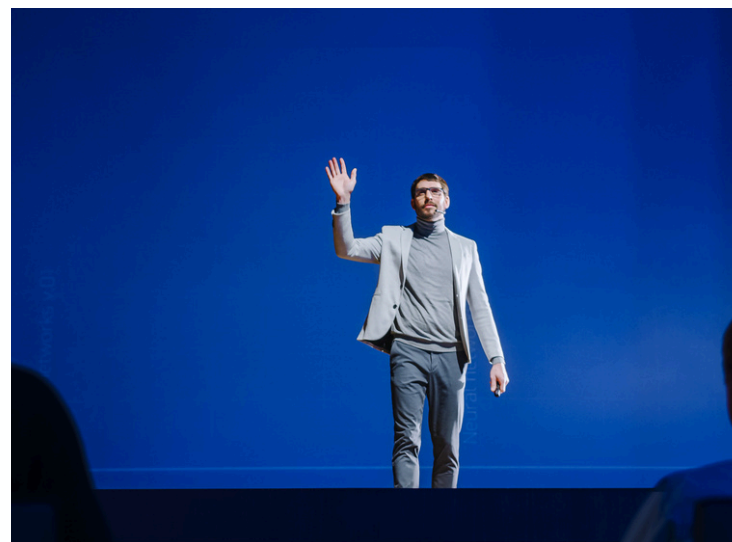
Engaging Your Audience with Interactivity

Interactive elements can transform your presentation from a monologue into a dialogue, making your audience active participants in the learning process.

- **Polls and Surveys:** Use tools that allow you to incorporate live polls or surveys into your presentation. This can be a great way to gather instant feedback or engage your audience.
- **Q&A Sessions:** Allocate time for questions and encourage your audience to ask them throughout your presentation. This keeps your audience engaged and allows you to address their interests and concerns directly.

Designing an effective PowerPoint presentation is about more than just aesthetics; it's about enhancing your message and engaging your audience. By applying the principles of effective design, choosing the right visuals, and incorporating interactive elements, you can create a presentation that not only looks professional but also deeply resonates with your audience.

Remember, your PowerPoint slides are there to support you, not to take centre stage. Let them amplify your message, but ensure that your voice, as the presenter, remains the focus.



Presentation Checklist

Before you step onto the stage or start your workshop, run through this handy checklist to ensure you're fully prepared:

- Have You Defined Your Key Message?
- Have You Structured Your Presentation Effectively?
- Have You Chosen the Right Visual Aids?
- Have You Practiced Your Delivery?
- Have You Prepared for Audience Engagement?
- Have You Checked Your Technology?
- Have You Prepared Handouts or Additional Resources?
- Have You Scheduled Time for Relaxation and Mindfulness?
- Have You Connected with Your Audience on a Personal Level?
- Have You Arranged for Feedback?
- Have You Considered Accessibility?
- Have You Prepared for Contingencies?
- Have You Planned Your Attire?
- Have You Checked the Venue?
- Have You Set Clear Objectives for the Audience?
- Have You Prepared Questions to Encourage Audience Interaction?
- Have You Considered Timing?
- Have You Considered Follow-Up?
- Have You Joined a Supportive Community Like [SPACE](#)?



What can I talk about?

Are you sat wondering what on earth you could talk about at a workshop? Here are just a few ideas to consider:

- Navigating the Diagnosis Process: Sharing personal stories and strategies for dealing with the initial stages of diagnosis.
- Advocacy Tips for Parent Carers: How to advocate for your child in different settings, including schools and medical appointments.
- Understanding Family Dynamics: Insights into how having a child with special needs affects family relationships and dynamics.
- Effective Communication Techniques: Sharing how practitioners can improve their communication with families to ensure clarity and compassion in discussions about a child's needs.
- The Emotional Journey of Parent Carers: Highlighting the emotional highs and lows, and how practitioners can provide emotional and psychological support.
- Insights into Daily Routines: Offering a look into the daily challenges and routines of families with SEND children, providing practitioners with a better understanding of practical support needs.





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 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.



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



Soup is the ultimate comfort food: it's warming, filling, and can usually be made with whatever ingredients you have on hand. For parent carers, having a batch of soup ready in the fridge or freezer means a wholesome meal is just a quick heat-up away. Soup is also something you can have in a cup, so one hand is free for those other tasks you need to complete. Here are a few easy recipes to get you through the week.

Chicken Noodle Soup

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 carrots, sliced
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
- 2 cups egg noodles
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme

Instructions:

1. In a large pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic, cooking until the onion is translucent.
2. Add carrots and celery, sautéing until vegetables are tender.
3. Pour in the chicken broth and bring to a boil.
4. Add the shredded chicken and noodles, cooking until the noodles are tender.
5. Season with salt, pepper, and thyme. Serve or store as needed.

Creamy Tomato Basil Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can (400 g) crushed tomatoes
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup cream or coconut milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh basil, chopped

Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic, cooking until onion is soft.
2. Stir in crushed tomatoes and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.
3. Blend the soup until smooth.
4. Stir in cream or coconut milk, warming through. Add salt and pepper to taste.
5. Garnish with fresh basil before serving.



5 Minute Tasks for an Easier Tomorrow

In the rush of daily life, especially as a busy parent carer, finding moments to pause and prepare for what's next can seem impossible. However, investing just five minutes today can dramatically ease your load tomorrow and beyond. Whether it's laying out clothes, prepping meals, or jotting down a to-do list, these quick tasks can transform chaos into calm. This article offers simple, actionable tips that take no more than five minutes each but pay off in peace of mind and productivity. Let's explore how to be your own best friend by being your future friend!



Plan Your Outfit - Spend a few minutes the night before deciding what you will wear the next day. This simple step can save you precious time and decision-making energy in the morning.

Prep Your Meals - Whether it's chopping vegetables for dinner, packing your lunch, or setting up the coffee maker, a little preparation goes a long way. Even just laying out breakfast items can streamline your morning routine.

Make a To-Do List - Jot down your tasks for the next day. Organising your priorities can help you start the day with a clear focus, making you more productive and less stressed.

Sort Your Bag - Spend a few minutes tidying up your work or daily bag. Discard any trash, organize your essentials, and ensure everything you need for the next day is packed and ready.

Check Your Calendar - Quickly review your calendar for the next day or week. This can help you mentally prepare for upcoming appointments or deadlines and avoid any last-minute surprises.

Set Reminders - Set reminders on your phone or write notes for important tasks or events. This can prevent last-minute scrambles and ensure nothing important is forgotten.

Quick Clean-Up - Do a five-minute cleanup blitz—whether it's clearing off your desk, washing a few dishes, or putting clothes away. A tidier space can improve your mood and productivity.

Prepare Ingredients for Slow Cooker - If you're planning a slow cooker meal, measure out and prepare the ingredients so that you can simply turn on the cooker in the morning. This can save you a lot of time and energy during a busy morning.

Refill Supplies - Take a quick inventory of everyday essentials like toilet paper, coffee, or snacks. Adding these items to a shopping list now can prevent you from running out unexpectedly.

5 minute tasks

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Wind Down - Spend five minutes meditating, practicing deep breathing, or just sitting quietly without distractions. This can help you relax and ensure a better night's sleep.

Lay Out Gym Clothes - If you plan to exercise the next day, set out your gym clothes the night before. This makes it easier to commit to your fitness goals.

Charge Electronic Devices - Plug in your phone, laptop, tablet, or any other devices you'll need. This ensures they're ready to use when you need them, without interruption.

Fill Up Your Water Bottle - Hydration is key! Fill your water bottle and place it in the fridge or your bag so it's ready to grab and go.

Brief Journaling - Take a moment to jot down a few thoughts about the day, what went well, and what you're grateful for. This can provide closure for the day and improve your mental health.

Review Finances - Quickly check your bank transactions or log expenses. Keeping on top of your finances regularly can prevent surprises and help you stay on budget.

Delete Unneeded Photos or Emails - Clear out any unneeded photos from your phone or tidy up your email inbox. This can free up space and reduce digital clutter.

Lay Out Tomorrow's Snacks - Prepare healthy snacks and place them in an accessible spot. This helps you avoid unhealthy choices when you need a quick bite.



Do a Quick Stretch - Spend five minutes doing some light stretching. This can reduce physical tension and help your body relax after a long day.

Water Indoor Plants - Give your indoor plants a quick drink if they need it. Keeping your green friends happy can also brighten your environment.

Prep for Meetings or Appointments - If you have a meeting or appointment the next day, take five minutes to review relevant documents or notes, and prepare any questions or talking points.

Clear Digital Clutter - Spend five minutes deleting unnecessary files from your computer or unsubscribing from unwanted email newsletters.

Prepare a Playlist - Create a playlist for the next day, whether it's for a workout, morning motivation, or something to help you relax after work.

Set a Goal for Tomorrow - Identify one main goal to accomplish the next day. Having a clear objective can keep you motivated and focused.

Each of these tasks takes just a few minutes but can significantly ease your daily routines and reduce stress, making each day more manageable and enjoyable.

Transition

Questions to ask

When preparing for transition for a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), it's crucial for families to ask the right questions to both their loved ones and the professionals involved. These questions can help ensure that the transition is as smooth and effective as possible, catering to the child's needs and future aspirations. Here are some key questions families might consider:

Questions for Loved Ones

- What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Understanding the child's own aspirations helps tailor the transition plan to their personal goals.
- What do you enjoy most at school and in your free time? This can help identify areas of strength and interest that could inform future educational or vocational paths.
- What worries you about changing schools or leaving school? Addressing anxieties can help in providing appropriate support during transitions.
- What kind of support do you find most helpful? Insights into the types of support that work can guide the setup of similar supports in new environments.

Questions for Current Professionals (Teachers, Therapists, Social Workers)

- What are the key strengths and needs of the child? Understanding these from a professional perspective can guide the setting of realistic goals.
- How does the current educational plan address these needs, and what might need to change? This question helps assess the continuity of care and education.



- Can you provide documentation of assessments, therapies, and interventions that have been effective? Documentation is crucial for continuity between different providers and settings.
- What recommendations do you have for the type of educational setting or support services needed in the future? Professional recommendations can help in choosing the right path forward.

Questions for Future Professionals

- What experience do you have with similar transitions, and what outcomes have you seen? This helps gauge the effectiveness of potential programs or schools.
- How can you support the specific needs of my child during this transition? Specific strategies can be discussed to ensure they meet the child's unique needs.
- What are the steps in the transition process, and how are families involved? Knowing the process helps families prepare for and actively participate in the transition.
- How do you handle communication and updates with families? Effective communication is key to managing transitions and ensuring all parties are informed.

Parent Carer Recipe

Ingredients:

- Heaps of **Unfiltered Reality**
- Endless pinches of **Patience**
- Finely diced **Expectations** (discard any excess)
- Overflowing splashes of **Optimism**
- Reserves of Steel-strong **Resilience**
- **Laughter**, liberally applied
- Scoops of **Solidarity** and **Support**
- A rich layer of **Hope**
- Unlimited servings of **Love** and **Pride**

Method

- **Prepare the Foundation:** Begin by mixing Unfiltered Reality with finely diced Expectations, letting go of what doesn't serve you.
- **Stir in Stamina:** Gradually blend in endless pinches of Patience with overflowing splashes of Optimism to keep the spirits high.
- **Build Resilience:** Fold in steel-strong Resilience and liberal amounts of Laughter to fortify the mix and lighten the mood.
- **Energise:** Add scoops of Solidarity and Support to the pot, knowing you're not stirring alone.
- **Infuse Hope:** Sprinkle a rich layer of Hope over the mix and drizzle with an unlimited serving of Love and Pride.
- **Reduce Stress:** Lower the heat, dial back the pressure, and cover. Let the mixture simmer gently, enriching it with experiences and fine-tuned to your family's taste.
- **Serve with Care:** Once it's bubbling with positivity and seasoned just right, it's ready to share with a smile.

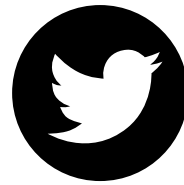
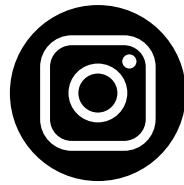


YES PLEASE

1. Yes to Me-Time:
2. Yes to Help
3. Yes to New Hobbies
4. Yes to Education and Learning
5. Yes to Therapy or Counselling
6. Yes to Health Checks
7. Yes to Laughter
8. Yes to Community
9. Yes to Boundaries
10. Yes to Adventure
11. Yes to Saying No
12. Yes to Forgiveness
13. Yes to Love
14. Yes to Mindfulness
15. Yes to Flexibility
16. Yes to Your Passions:
17. Yes to Rest
18. Yes to Joy
19. Yes to Your Journey
20. Yes to Today



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

July/August 2024

