



# From Chaos To Calm(er)

*A Quick Guide for Parent Carers*  
*Powered by the KinToa framework*

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# What is the KinToa Framework

KinToa started as a name I created by blending two powerful ideas: "Kin," meaning family and connection, and "Toa," a Māori word for warrior.

At first it was simply a title for the magazine - a way of capturing the strength and solidarity of parent carers. However, as ill health put the magazine on hold, and I sat on the sofa, frustrated and worrying about all the things I needed to do, I tried to find some balance in a world where "work/life balance" just didn't cut it. My life wasn't just work/life, it was family, learning, health, planning ahead, organisation and advocacy. I realised I was strong in some areas but very poor in others, and if I thought of these areas as spinning plates, there was a challenge to keep them all spinning when actually, some plates can rest for a while while you focus elsewhere.

As I chatted with friends, KinToa started to take shape.

I decided to have fun, and KinToa soon evolved into KinToa Kingdom, a Parent Carer Kingdom that understood parent carer reality with six realms designed to help me find balance. I added in the all important "survival mode" for the times when I wasn't capable of venturing far into any realm.

When I talked about it with other parent carers, the people who understood the reality of being ill when you're a parent carer, they all loved the idea of a Kingdom with realms as a way of thinking about the chaos that is our lives.

I knew I had to share it with others.

It's not about perfection - it's about surviving the chaos, reclaiming moments of calm, and reminding ourselves that we are both kin and warriors.

# KinToa Realms

## **Survival Mode**

Parent carers spend a lot of time in survival mode - firefighting, spinning plates, and dealing with whatever chaos today throws at us. It's exhausting, and it can feel like there's no space to breathe. KinToa was created to move us from that constant survival state into something calmer, by breaking life down into six realms that cover everything we juggle.

## **Kindred - Connection & Community**

This realm is about the people around us - family, friends, and the wider SEND community. Parent carers often feel isolated, but building connections reminds us we're not alone. Kindred helps us strengthen relationships, share the load, and find support that makes the journey less heavy.

## **Insight - Knowledge & Learning**

SEND life is full of acronyms, reports, and research. It's overwhelming, but knowledge is power. Insight gives us the tools to understand our child's needs, navigate the system, and keep learning - so we feel more confident and less at the mercy of jargon.

## **Nourishment - Wellbeing & Energy**

Caring takes a toll, and our own health often slips to the bottom of the list. Nourishment is about topping up our energy and wellbeing - from sleep and food to small joys and breaks. Because if we run on empty, we can't keep showing up for our children.

## **Tomorrow - Planning & Future**

Parent carers live in the here and now, but the future is always on our minds. Tomorrow is about planning ahead - whether it's next week's appointments or big transitions like adulthood. It helps us create a vision so we can move forward with more clarity and less fear.

## **Oasis - Calm & Organisation**

The paperwork piles up, the house gets chaotic, and our brains feel cluttered. Oasis is about finding little pockets of order and calm in the middle of the storm. It's not about perfection - it's about simple systems and moments that make daily life feel a bit more manageable.

## **Advocacy - Voice & Influence**

Parent carers become accidental experts in fighting for their children's rights. Advocacy is the realm of finding our voice - in meetings, in paperwork, and in campaigns. It matters because when our voices are clear and strong, our children's needs are harder to ignore.

## Sharing KinToa with families

Once I had the framework, I developed a way of gamifying my to do list. Some were simple tasks - the jobs we do on repeat, some were more of a challenge - the ones that drain us physically or emotionally, and some felt more like a Quest - the ones we put off, the ones we keep saying we will do, or the things we know require learning or planning to be able to complete.

This became a way to share what I know with other families but in a really structured way, one that allowed others to dip in and out of the different realms at a pace and level that met their needs, rather than a “start here and then follow this set path”, it became a “start here - survival mode” and then depending how you feel, lets choose a realm to work on.

Throughout all of this I was regularly using ChatGPT and other AI models to help me find some structure, to prioritise and to summarise learning.

What a game changer AI is for parent carers. The time it saves me is immense. When I was sat on the sofa, not even able to walk to the loo without needing an inhaler, it was a companion helping me brain storm ideas and make sense of all the “oh and what if we also.....” moments I had.

From there I developed a whole bundle of AI prompts, each within a realm, to show parent carers how to get the most out of AI but again, in the areas where they need the help.

I wanted to share with you examples of what I have developed, as sometimes it’s the easiest way to grasp what it means for you.

For each realm I’ll share:

- 2 AI Prompts (to copy and paste into ChatGPT or your tool of choice)
- 3 Tasks (Level 1 = easy start, Level 2 = stretch, Level 3 = deeper challenge)



## Kindred - Connection & Community

Kindred helps us strengthen relationships, share the load, and find support that makes the journey less heavy.

### AI Prompts

1. "Act as a supportive friend. Write a 3-sentence uplifting WhatsApp message I can send to another carer who's struggling."
2. "Act as a children's author. Write a 300-word bedtime story featuring a superhero who uses a wheelchair and their sibling."

### Tasks

- Level 1: Share one thing you appreciate about each family member this week.
- Level 2: Reach out to another parent carer to check in - even just a quick text.
- Level 3: Introduce two people in your network who might benefit from knowing each other.



## Insight — Knowledge & Learning

Insight gives us the tools to understand our child's needs, navigate the system, and keep learning - so we feel more confident and less at the mercy of jargon

### AI Prompts

1. "Explain an EHCP in plain English as if I'm brand new to the SEND system."
2. "Summarise the top 5 things I should know about [*diagnosis*], in parent-friendly language."

### Tasks

- Level 1: Look up and note down the meaning of one SEND acronym you've been unsure about.
- Level 2: Create a "jargon buster" list to take to your next meeting.
- Level 3: Roleplay with AI as a SENCO/teacher and practise asking questions.

## **Nourishment — Wellbeing & Energy**

Nourishment is about topping up our energy and wellbeing - from sleep and food to small joys and breaks. Because if we run on empty, we can't keep showing up for our children.

### **AI Prompts**

1. "Give me 5 quick, cheap meal ideas for nights when I have zero energy to cook."
2. "Suggest 3 five-minute mindfulness exercises I can do while waiting in the car for pickup."

### **Tasks**

- Level 1: Take a proper lunch break at least twice this week.
- Level 2: Plan one small treat just for yourself (cup of coffee, walk, music time).
- Level 3: Ask AI to create a weekly meal plan that balances budget + energy.

## **Tomorrow - Planning & Future**

Tomorrow is about planning ahead - whether it's next week's appointments or big transitions like adulthood. It helps us create a vision so we can move forward with more clarity and less fear.

### **AI Prompts**

1. "Help me draft 5 questions to ask at my child's transition review meeting."
2. "Create a one-page future vision plan for my young person that I can adapt and share with professionals."

### **Tasks**

- Level 1: Write down one thing you'd love for your child's future.
- Level 2: Share your vision with a trusted friend or family member.
- Level 3: Build a simple "future planning folder" (paper or digital).



## Oasis — Calm & Organisation

Oasis is about finding little pockets of order and calm in the middle of the storm. It's not about perfection - it's about simple systems and moments that make daily life feel a bit more manageable.

### AI Prompts

1. "Design a simple daily checklist for me: meds, appointments, and one self-care action."
2. "Give me 5 gentle affirmations I can use on stressful mornings."

### Tasks

- Level 1: Clear one surface (table, counter, desk) today.
- Level 2: Try a 10-minute timer tidy with music. Stop when the timer goes.
- Level 3: Create a "calm corner" with one item that grounds you (candle, photo, playlist).



## Advocacy — Voice & Influence

Advocacy is the realm of finding our voice - in meetings, in paperwork, and in campaigns. It matters because when our voices are clear and strong, our children's needs are harder to ignore.

### AI Prompts

1. "Draft a polite but firm email chasing the LA for an update on my child's EHCP."
2. "Write a short script I can use in a meeting to make sure my child's needs are clearly heard."

### Tasks

- Level 1: Note one thing that worked well in your last meeting.
- Level 2: Write down 3 questions for your next meeting.
- Level 3: Ask AI to roleplay the professional you'll be meeting and practise your responses.

KinToa gives us the structure. AI gives us the shortcuts.

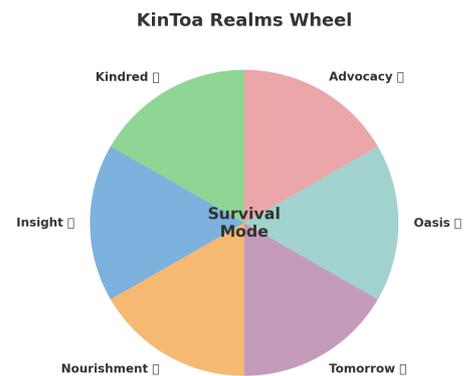
Together, they're about moving from chaos to calmer.

## Reflect & Rebalance

This free guide is a taster to give you an idea of what KinToa could mean for you.

KinToa isn't about ticking every box or being perfect across all six realms. It's a guide to help you notice where your energy is going, and where you might need more support.

- Which realms feel natural and strong for you right now?
- Which ones feel heavy, draining, or neglected?
- Is there a realm where you could step back for a while and refocus your energy elsewhere?
- What small shifts could bring more balance into your daily life?



Remember: balance for parent carers doesn't look like the usual "work/life" equation. It's about knowing when to push forward, when to pause, and when to lean on your kin.

## Coming soon:

- KinToa Mag - shorter, not flippable digital, a much simpler downloadable pdf (quarterly, Oct launch)
- Parent Carer Toolkit Bundles - AI Bundles, KinToa Kingdom and a downloadable updated version of the Parent Advocate Companion (Sept drop)
- SEND SOS Podcast - short episodes offering tips and ideas, some AI and some not (Oct launch)