



BRINGING SUPPORT HOME

A practical family guide for calmer routines, stronger connection,
and everyday skill-building

A note from Circle Creek Cares

You do not need to have it all figured out. This guide is here to give you a few practical tools you can try at home, one small step at a time.

Inside you will find:

- Simple regulation strategies for big feelings and busy bodies
- Communication supports that reduce frustration
- Routine ideas that make daily life more predictable
- Connection-first scripts for hard moments
- Printable reflection pages to help your family choose what to try next

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is meant to be practical, not perfect. You do not need to use every idea, change your whole house, or become a therapist overnight. Start with one routine, one strategy, or one sentence that feels doable for your family this week.

- **Start small.** Choose one part of the day that feels harder than it needs to be.
- **Watch for patterns.** Notice what happens before stress rises, not only what happens during the hard moment.
- **Support first, teach second.** A regulated child can learn. A dysregulated child usually needs safety, connection, and support first.
- **Celebrate tiny progress.** A smoother transition, one extra bite, one less argument, or a faster recovery is real progress.

Important

This guide is for education and general support. It is not medical advice, mental health treatment, therapy, or a replacement for individualized care. If you have concerns about safety, feeding, development, communication, behavior, or mental health, please talk with your child's provider or care team.

The Circle Creek Cares Lens

At Circle Creek Cares, we believe families need more than information. Families need community, practical tools, and support that makes everyday life feel more possible. Our hope is that this guide helps you feel less alone and more equipped as you support your child at home.

The 3-Step Reset

When things feel hard, come back to this simple pattern:

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Regulate Help the body feel safe and steady. | 2. Connect Use warmth before correction. | 3. Teach Practice the next skill once calm returns. |
|---|--|---|

1. Regulation: Helping the Body Feel Safe

Big feelings often start in the body. Before a child can listen, problem-solve, communicate, eat, transition, or learn, their nervous system may need help settling. Regulation does not mean “calm down right now.” It means helping the body move toward safety and readiness.

Signs your child may need regulation support

- Running, crashing, climbing, hiding, or shutting down
- Crying, yelling, refusing, or becoming silly and hard to redirect
- Covering ears, avoiding touch, chewing items, or seeking pressure
- Seeming “fine” one moment and overwhelmed the next

Heavy Work Helper

When this helps: Your child seems restless, impulsive, crashy, or unable to settle.

Try this: Offer 3-5 minutes of body work: wall pushes, animal walks, carrying a laundry basket, pushing a box, pulling a wagon, or squeezing a pillow.

Words you can use: *“Your body looks like it needs a job. Let’s push the wall ten times, then we’ll try again.”*

Quiet Corner Reset

When this helps: Your child is overwhelmed, overstimulated, or melting down.

Try this: Create a small cozy spot with soft lighting, a blanket, pillows, books, headphones, a fidget, or a favorite stuffed animal. This is not a punishment spot; it is a body reset spot.

Words you can use: *“You are not in trouble. Your body needs a break. I’ll stay close.”*

Name It to Tame It

When this helps: Your child is frustrated but not ready to explain what happened.

Try this: Gently describe what you see without judgment. Keep your words short and your voice steady.

Words you can use: *“That was really disappointing. You wanted the blue cup and it was dirty. I get it.”*

2. Communication: Reducing Frustration

Communication is more than words. Children communicate through facial expressions, gestures, sounds, movement, behavior, pointing, pictures, devices, and play. When we make communication easier, we often reduce frustration for the whole family.

Try fewer words first

In stressful moments, long explanations can feel like noise. Short phrases are easier to process.

| Instead of... | Try... |
|---|----------------------------------|
| “How many times have I told you to put your shoes on? We are going to be late.” | “Shoes on. Then car.” |
| “Stop screaming and use your words.” | “You can say: Help please.” |
| “Why did you do that?” | “Something went wrong. Show me.” |
| “You need to calm down.” | “I’m here. Breathe with me.” |

Communication supports you can use at home

- **First/Then language:** “First pajamas, then story.”
- **Choice of two:** “Blue cup or green cup?”
- **Visuals:** Use photos, drawings, sticky notes, or a simple checklist.
- **Wait time:** Ask, then silently count to five before repeating.
- **Modeling:** Say the words your child could use, without demanding they repeat them.

Family win

When a child uses a gesture, picture, sound, device, or word to communicate instead of melting down, that counts. Honor the communication first; refine it later.

3. Routines: Making the Day More Predictable

Routines help children know what to expect. Predictability does not mean rigidity. It means the child has enough structure to feel safe and enough flexibility to practice real life.

Build a routine in four steps

- **Pick one routine.** Morning, bedtime, getting in the car, meals, homework, or bath time.
- **Write the steps.** Keep it short. Use 3-6 steps when possible.
- **Add a visual.** Pictures, drawings, icons, or a handwritten list all count.
- **Practice when calm.** Do a pretend run-through before the routine is hard.

Sample: Morning Routine

| Step | What it might look like |
|------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Use the bathroom |
| 2 | Get dressed |
| 3 | Eat breakfast |
| 4 | Brush teeth |
| 5 | Backpack and wait for bus |

Tip

Visual schedules are not just for children who cannot read. They reduce working memory load, give children a sense of control, and make expectations easier to understand.

Transition supports

- Give a preview: “Two more minutes, then shoes.”
- Use a transition object: let the child carry a small toy, book, or job card to the next space.
- Use movement: hop to the bathroom, crab walk to pajamas, march to the car.
- Use a finish line: “When this song ends, we clean up.”

4. Everyday Skills: Meals, Play, and Independence

Daily routines are full of opportunities to build skills. The goal is not to turn home into therapy. The goal is to notice small chances for independence, connection, and practice inside the life you already have.

Mealtime support without pressure

- **Lower the pressure.** Avoid battles over bites when possible. Pressure often increases stress around food.
- **Add a learning food.** Put a tiny amount of a new or less preferred food near a safe food.
- **Let exploration count.** Looking, smelling, touching, licking, or cutting food are all forms of learning.
- **Use neutral language.** Instead of “You won’t like it,” try “This is crunchy and salty.”

Safety note

If your child coughs, chokes, gags frequently, loses weight, has pain with eating, or has a limited diet that concerns you, please talk with a medical or feeding professional.

Play that builds connection

- Follow your child’s lead for five minutes without questions or corrections.
- Copy what your child does, then add one tiny new idea.
- Use playful obstruction: hold the bubble wand closed and wait for a look, sound, gesture, or word.
- Give your child a job: snack helper, door holder, sock matcher, cart pusher, plant waterer.

Independence without overwhelm

Try “just right help.” Do the hardest part for your child, then let them do the part they can do. Over time, slowly shift more of the task to them.

The Last Step Strategy

When this helps: Your child gives up quickly or feels overwhelmed by multi-step tasks.

Try this: You do most of the task, then have your child complete the final step. Example: put on the sock almost all the way and let them pull it over the heel.

Words you can use: *“I’ll start it. You finish it.”*

5. When the Day Falls Apart

Every family has hard moments. A meltdown, shutdown, refusal, or big reaction is not proof that you failed. It is information. After safety is addressed, the question becomes: what support was missing, and what can we adjust next time?

In the moment

- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Lower your voice and reduce extra talking.
- Move demands to the side unless safety requires action.
- Offer regulation: pressure, space, quiet, movement, water, or a familiar calming item.
- Stay close enough to show support, but not so close that your child feels crowded.

After the moment

- Repair first: “That was hard. I love you. We are okay.”
- Keep the lesson short: “Next time, you can say ‘break please.’”
- Notice the pattern: hunger, fatigue, noise, change in plan, communication frustration, sensory overload, or too many demands.
- Change the setup next time instead of only expecting your child to “try harder.”

Connection is not permissiveness

You can be warm and still hold boundaries. You can validate the feeling while keeping the limit: “You are mad. I won’t let you hit. I can help your body get safe.”

Quick scripts for hard moments

- “You are safe. I’m here.”
- “This is hard. We can do hard things together.”
- “I won’t let you hurt yourself or someone else.”
- “First we calm your body. Then we solve the problem.”
- “You do not have to talk yet. Show me when you are ready.”

Family Practice Page

Use this page to choose one small change to try this week. Keep it simple enough that you can actually do it on a busy day.

| |
|--|
| The routine or moment we want to support: |
| |
| What usually happens before it gets hard? |
| |
| |
| What might my child be needing? |
| |
| |
| One strategy we will try: |
| |
| Words we can use: |
| |
| How we will know it helped: |
| |

You Are Not Alone

Support does not have to stop after one guide, one appointment, or one hard season. Circle Creek Cares exists to help families find practical education, connection, and community-based support as they navigate the beautiful and challenging work of raising children.

Ways Circle Creek Cares is building support

- Parent education nights and practical workshops
- Recurring support groups for families and caregivers
- Sibling and diagnosis-specific support opportunities
- Inclusive early learning and future academic programming
- Provider training and scholarship opportunities
- Community spaces that support dignity, participation, and belonging

A gentle next step

Choose one idea from this guide and try it for one week. Do not measure success by whether every hard moment disappears. Measure success by whether your family has one more tool, one more moment of connection, or one more way to recover together.



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