A GENTLE GUIDE FOR EVERYDAY MOMENTS

Listening & Connection Toolkit

Small ways to help your Star feel heard, understood and connected



Connection does not depend on perfect words. A calm presence, a shared interest, a pause or a helpful choice can all say: “I’m here with you.”

Use these pages flexibly. Dip into one idea, adapt the words to sound like you, and let your child decide whether they want to talk, draw, point, move, listen or take a break.

Pause, notice, connect

When a moment feels difficult, slow the pace if you can. You do not have to solve everything straight away. These steps are gentle prompts, not a script you must follow.

1. Notice

Look for clues: a change in voice, movement, energy, expression or need for space. One clue never tells the whole story.

2. Get curious

Wonder what might be making this moment harder. Could it be noise, uncertainty, tiredness, a transition or something else?

3. Connect

Come alongside. Use a steady voice, fewer words and enough space. Let your Star know you are available.

4. Offer one small choice

Try two clear options, show them visually, or offer a break. “Would you like me nearby or a little further away?”

5. Give time

Wait without repeating the question quickly. Your Star may need time to process or may communicate in a different way.

6. Revisit later

When everyone feels ready, notice what helped. There is no need to demand an explanation in the moment.

A child can accept support without speaking. Pointing, looking, moving towards something, using AAC, drawing or choosing not to respond can all be meaningful.

Words that can open a door

Choose language that feels natural in your family. Keep it short and kind. Leave room for your child to disagree, pass or show you another way.

When your Star…	You might try…
Seems overwhelmed	“This feels like a lot. I can stay close, give you space or help make it quieter.”
Is worried	“I can see this is on your mind. Would it help to look at what happens next?”
Does not answer	“You do not have to answer now. You can show me, write it, point or come back later.”
Feels frustrated	“Something is not working yet. Shall we pause, change the plan or try it together?”
Is excited to share	“I want to hear about it. Show me the part you are most interested in.”
Needs a boundary	“I will help keep everyone safe. We can pause and find another way.”

A reminder for the grown-up

The goal is not to find the perfect phrase. It is to offer respect, safety and a chance for your child to show you what they need. If a phrase does not help, you can pause and try something simpler.

Make room for every kind of communication

Communication can be spoken, written, drawn, signed, shown with pictures or AAC, expressed through movement, or shared by spending time together. Your child does not need to use speech to take part.

Offer, do not insist “Would you like to tell me, show me, draw it, or leave it for now?”	**Keep choices manageable** Show two options at a time. Add “something else” or “not yet” where useful.
Make a quiet route A child can listen from nearby, take a sensory break, or watch before deciding whether to join.	**Respect a pass** “No” and “not now” are useful information. You can keep the door open without pushing.

A simple choice menu

- Stay with me
- Help me start
- Make it quieter
- Let me point or draw
- Give me a little space
- Show me the next step
- Take a break
- Ask me again later

If you use communication aids at home, keep them available during calm moments too. They belong in everyday life, not only when a child is distressed.

Repair, reconnect and reflect

Everyone has moments when words come out wrong or plans become difficult. Repair can be simple: take responsibility, reconnect and think together about what might help next time.

Name what happened “I spoke too quickly and you needed more time. I’m sorry.”	**Reconnect without pressure** “I’m ready when you are. We can sit quietly, draw or do something familiar.”
Notice what helped “The lights were lower and we had one step at a time. Did either of those make things easier?”	**Keep the next step small** “Next time, shall we try a picture cue or a little more time before we leave?”

One thing I noticed my Star communicating today:

A response that seemed to help:

One gentle idea to try another time:

This toolkit offers general reflection prompts. It is not a diagnostic tool or a substitute for individual professional advice. Follow your child’s communication, needs and family context.