



Episode 1: Routines and conversations

Why they matter?

Routines give children a sense of safety, predictability and calm. They reduce overwhelm, support regulation, and help children understand what's coming next. For children with additional needs, routines act as anchors therefore lowering anxiety and creating smoother transitions.

Conversations are the bridge between you and your child. They build connection, emotional literacy, trust, and problem-solving skills. When conversations are predictable, gentle and responsive, children feel understood rather than judged.

Together, they help to create a home environment where children can grow, explore and feel secure.

Activities for you to try

Developmental ages 0 to 6

- 1. The "Same start" routine** Choose one predictable action to begin each day (a song, a cuddle, a phrase). This builds safety and reduces morning wobbliness.
- 2. Picture-talk moments** Use simple pictures (emotions, toys, daily tasks) to help your child talk about what they need. "Show me how you feel" works better than "Tell me why you're upset."
- 3. The calm corner basket** Create a small basket with sensory items (soft toy, chew, book, bubbles). Use it during transitions or after overwhelm to build regulation through routine.

Developmental ages 7 to 11

- 1. The 3-step after-school routine** Snack → Quiet time → Connection chat. This reduces after-school meltdowns and supports decompression.
- 2. Conversation starters jar** Write simple prompts: "One thing that felt tricky today", "Something I'm proud of" OR "Something I need help with". Pull one each evening to build emotional vocabulary.



3. The “plan together” routine Spend 5 minutes each morning agreeing on one shared goal (e.g., kindness, patience, organisation). Builds independence and shared responsibility.

Developmental ages 13 to 19

1. The predictable check-in Choose a consistent time (after dinner, before bed) for a short, pressure-free chat. Teens open up more when they know the moment is coming and it’s not a surprise.

2. Co-create their week Sit together on a Sunday and map out school, hobbies, downtime, and support needs. Helps reduce overwhelm and teaches planning skills.

3. The “No Fixing” conversation rule For one conversation a day, listen without offering solutions. Teens feel respected when parents hold space rather than jump to fixing.

Why these activities work

- They reduce cognitive load
- They build predictability
- They strengthen connection
- They support emotional regulation
- They help children communicate needs safely
- They give parents simple, repeatable tools

External links and organisations for further support

Parenting & Child Development

- **Family Lives** – practical advice for all ages <https://www.familylives.org.uk> ([familylives.org.uk](https://www.familylives.org.uk) in Bing)
- **Young Minds** – mental health support for children & teens <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>
- **Anna Freud Centre** – resources on regulation, routines, and wellbeing <https://www.annafreud.org>

SEND-specific support

- **IPSEA** – SEND law, EHCP guidance, parent support <https://www.ipsea.org.uk>
- **Contact** – support for families with disabled children <https://contact.org.uk>



- **National Autistic Society** – routines, sensory needs, communication
<https://www.autism.org.uk>

Neurodiversity and behaviour

- **ADHD Foundation** – routines, executive functioning, behaviour
<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk> ([adhdfoundation.org.uk](https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk) in Bing)
- **Sensory Integration Education** – sensory needs and regulation
<https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk> ([sensoryintegration.org.uk](https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk) in Bing)