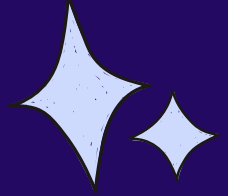


HOW TO SUPPORT MY NEURODIVERGENT TEEN



Tips for communication, emotional regulation, and school advocacy

1. Communicating with Care

- Practice “listening to understand.” Let your teen express themselves without jumping in to fix or correct.
- Validate their feelings even if you don’t fully understand them. (“That sounds really tough” goes a long way.)
- Ask open-ended questions. Try “How did that feel?” instead of “Why did you do that?”
- Respect communication preferences. Some teens prefer texting or writing to talking in person.

2. Supporting Emotional Regulation

- Stay calm during meltdowns. Your calm nervous system helps regulate theirs.
- Offer co-regulation first. Sit quietly, offer a weighted blanket, or gently model slow breathing.
- Create a sensory-friendly environment. Minimize bright lights, loud sounds, or overwhelming smells at home.
- Identify triggers and patterns. Track what tends to lead to shutdowns or overload and help them build tools around those moments.

3. Understanding Their Neurodivergence

- Every brain is different. Learn about their specific diagnosis or profile with them, not just about them.
- Celebrate their strengths. Point out problem-solving skills, creativity, or perseverance—especially when the world feels critical.
- Help them build self-advocacy. Encourage them to express what they need, when they’re ready.

4. Advocating in School Settings

- You are your teen’s best advocate. Work collaboratively with teachers, but don’t hesitate to push for needed supports.
- Know your rights. Learn about IEPs, EHCPs, and other accommodations your teen may be entitled to.
- Bring your teen into the conversation. Ask how school feels to them, and reflect their needs in meetings.
- Track what works. Keep a folder of what’s helpful (or harmful) for future reference and planning.

5. What Your Teen Needs Most

- Unconditional acceptance. Remind them often: “I love you exactly as you are.”
- A safe base. Your home doesn’t need to be perfect—just a place where they feel understood.
- Permission to rest. Let them decompress after school or social events without pressure.
- Connection over correction. Prioritize your relationship over behaviour control.

