

A Letter of Comfort for Parents and Carers

At The Toby Henderson Trust, we know that you might sometimes feel overwhelmed, exhausted, or isolated. We wanted to create a resource that offers comfort during those difficult times, something you can return to whenever you need reassurance.

Within these pages, you'll find important reminders to help you on your journey, along with words of encouragement from parents who truly understand what it's like.

We asked our families what they would say to another parent carer going through a tough time. Here is what they would like to share with you:

- Find your tribe, speaking, or being with others in the same situation really helps with the feeling of loneliness.
- Reach out, don't suffer on your own.
- I feel for you and as parent, you try your utmost for them without a diagnosis. The doors get shut in your face. Come to The Toby Henderson Trust for support, they are excellent. Don't know where I'd go without them.
- Trust your own instincts, you know your child best. No matter if you are told your child is "fine" at school, still fight for what your child needs.



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- Find a support group like Toby Henderson, as the support and advice is invaluable so you don't feel so alone in the journey.
- That it's ok to be feeling the way you do. Don't give answers, sometimes just the listening is the important bit.
- Show yourself some compassion, it is hard, don't be so hard on yourself.
- Find those who 'get it', look to those for support. Forget about those who don't.
- Do whatever works for you, forget about what others do or what you think you should be doing.
- It's hard now but it will get better. I know it seems impossible but try to take some time for yourself.
- Be kind to yourself, listen to yourself.
- Stay strong, you are doing amazing!
- No shame in asking for help, you have not/are not failing your child, it's the system/schools. Breathe, you got this, you are not going mad, remember no-one knows/sees your child better than you. Find your tribe/support groups/parents who are in the same boat.
- Breathe, take one day at a time, pick one battle at a time, ask for help.

Alongside their words of comfort, parents also shared some of the things they do when they're struggling or need a little time for themselves. These ideas may give you a starting point or a gentle reminder that it's okay to take time for you.

- I used to watch series of programmes on repeat, it helps me to stop overthinking. Now I go for walks after dropping my son off at school, it helps me clear my head and focus.
- Gardening- fabulous stress releaser.

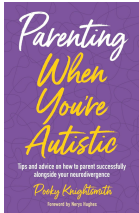
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- Blast music in the car and just lose yourself in it for 5 minutes or at home have a dance/sing- helps get stress out.
- Music, gardening, walking in nature, meditation, anything that makes you feel better.
- I've joined a running group recently-it's important to take time for yourself.
- Reading a book.
- Watching a TV show.
- Singing along to music.
- Look for things you can do together with your child, we both love lego, at the times you can't have your time, look for the calming activities.
- Communicate with your partner, know when each other need space and tag team.
- Reach out to a trusted person.
- Gentle movement in whatever way suits you.
- Hide in bed for a little bit.
- listen to music.
- Adult colour by number.
- When things get hard, try to find time to take 10 minutes alone.
- Read (occasionally).
- Listen to music, watch Netflix, when I ever get time- usually at 11pm in bed.
- Jogging.
- Listening to music when cleaning really helps.
- Noise cancelling headphones to block out the world for a short while.
- Go to the gym/ for a walk.
- Read a book.
- Look for a distraction.

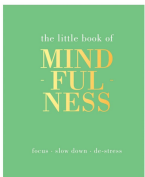
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Alongside support and reassurance, having practical tools and helpful information readily available can make a real difference. Here are some resources you may find helpful:

Book recommendations:



Parenting When You're Autistic: Tips and advice on how to parent successfully alongside your neurodivergence by Pooky Knightsmith.



The Little Book of Mindfulness: This book has 150 techniques, tips, exercises, advice, meditations. Written by Tiddy Rowan.



Affirmations:

Positive affirmations are encouraging phrases or statements which can overcome unhelpful thoughts and allow you to build your confidence. Health in Mind have some examples of affirmations you can try: <https://tinyurl.com/2t6xh7pe>.

Videos:

Autism Central have wellbeing resources for parents and carers. They have a video series called 'Finding the Balance', and each episode features a conversation with Dr Naomi Fisher and Eliza Fricker on a different wellbeing topic with entertaining and relatable illustrations and practical exercises to follow. Topics include:

- **Looking after yourself:** How to look after yourself as a parent or carer when it's difficult to find time to do so.
- **Dealing with other people:** How to deal with other people and feelings of blame and shame that many parents can experience.
- **Am I doing this all wrong?** The impact of self-critical thinking on parents and what we can do to be more compassionate with ourselves.

This resource can be found on the [Autism Central website](https://www.autismcentral.co.uk/).

SCAN ME!

