



GUIDEBOOK FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS & CAREGIVERS:

**UNDERSTANDING  
AND SUPPORTING  
CHILDREN WITH  
AUTISM, ADHD,  
DYSLEXIA, AND  
DYSCALCULIA**



by Penawar Special  
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# PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

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Neurodiversity includes conditions like:

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**
- **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**
- **Dyslexia**
- **Dyscalculia**

The neurodiversity movement encourages educators, parents, and society to focus not just on challenges, but on the strengths, talents, and potential of neurodivergent individuals. It's about creating inclusive environments where every child can thrive.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

### **Core Traits:**

- Difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication
- Repetitive behaviors and restricted interests
- Sensory sensitivities (e.g., to sound, light, touch)
- Preference for routines and predictability

### **Challenges:**

- Struggling with change or transitions
- Difficulty interpreting emotions and facial expressions
- Limited imaginative play or abstract thinking

### **Strengths:**

- Deep focus and expertise in areas of interest
- Strong long-term memory
- Visual learning strengths
- Honest, logical, and precise thinking

## What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in how human brains function. These differences affect how individuals think, learn, communicate, and behave, and they are not inherently "wrong" or "deficient." Instead, they reflect diverse ways of experiencing the world.



“ADHD is not a failure of willpower. It’s a different rhythm of attention and regulation. These children aren’t being difficult — they’re navigating a brain that seeks stimulation, struggles with filters, and thrives with movement and kindness.”

# PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

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## Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### **Core Traits:**

- Inattention: Easily distracted, forgetful, disorganized
- Hyperactivity: Constant movement, fidgeting
- Impulsivity: Interrupting, taking risks without thinking

### **Challenges:**

- Poor time and task management
- Emotional regulation difficulties
- Trouble staying focused on long or boring tasks

### **Strengths:**

- High energy and enthusiasm
- Creative thinking and adaptability
- Strong verbal expression
- Courage to take initiative

## Dyslexia

### **Core Traits:**

- Difficulty decoding written language
- Trouble with spelling, writing, and sequencing
- Slow reading and avoidance of reading tasks

### **Challenges:**

- Embarrassment or low self-esteem at school
- Difficulty with written tests or note-taking
- Poor phonemic awareness

### **Strengths:**

- Strong oral communication skills
- Big-picture and visual thinking
- Innovation and imagination
- High emotional intelligence



# PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

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## Dyscalculia

### **Core Traits:**

- Difficulty understanding numbers, counting, and sequences
- Problems remembering math facts or formulas
- Confusion with time, directions, or money

### **Challenges:**

- High anxiety during math tasks
- Struggles with organization and spatial awareness
- Trouble estimating and comparing quantities

### **Strengths:**

- Verbal fluency and storytelling
- Lateral thinking and problem-solving
- Artistic or musical intelligence
- Empathy and perseverance

“Supporting a neurodivergent child means seeing all of them - how they think, feel, play, and grow. A holistic approach is not just about learning, but about helping them feel safe, loved, and understood in every part of their world.”

## 1 General Principles Across All Conditions

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- Build structured, predictable routines.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Visual supports (charts, icons, timers) help reinforce instructions.
- Incorporate breaks and movement into the day.
- Promote self-advocacy and emotional expression.
- Focus on strengths and interests.

## 2 Autism Support Techniques

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- Create calm environments with sensory-friendly tools.
- Use visual schedules and countdowns for transitions.
- Practice emotional naming with mood charts.

# PART TWO: SUPPORT STRATEGIES AT HOME

## 3 ADHD Support Techniques

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- Use daily planners, calendars, and task charts.
- Give brief, step-by-step instructions.
- Introduce structured routines with short work periods.

## 4 Dyslexia & Dyscalculia Support Techniques

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- Read together using audiobooks and follow along.
- Use tactile tools (letter tiles, sand trays) and math manipulatives.
- Reinforce learning through shopping, cooking, and games.



# Comprehensive Daily Routine Activities for Parents

Support your child's growth, independence, and emotional well-being by building routines that are structured, flexible, and engaging.

## 1. Morning Routine

- Use a visual checklist for hygiene, dressing, and bag-packing.
- Let your child pick clothes from two options to encourage autonomy.
- Incorporate a “calm start” corner (soft lighting, relaxing music) to ease into the day.
- Prepare and eat breakfast together; use it as a time to discuss the day ahead.

## 2. Emotional Check-ins

- Use an emotion board, “color zones,” or “how's your engine running?” visuals.
- Label feelings: “You look frustrated. Do you want a break or a squeeze ball?”

## 3. Learning & Focus Time

- Set up a distraction-free space with minimal noise and clutter.
- Use “First-Then” boards or visual task schedules.
- Break tasks into 10–15-minute blocks with clear start/end signals.
- Provide movement breaks (jumping, stretching, deep pressure hugs).

## 4. Household Involvement

- Let your child help with meal prep (stirring, measuring, setting table).
- Assign simple tasks: feeding pets, watering plants, matching socks.
- Use these moments to teach sequencing, counting, and decision-making.



# Comprehensive Daily Routine Activities for Parents

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## 5. Motor and Sensory Activities

- Include both fine motor (beads, peg boards, puzzles) and gross motor (ball games, trampoline, scooter).
- Use sensory tools: playdough, water play, tactile bins (rice, beans), swings.

## 6. Social and Communication Activities

- Use role-play with dolls or puppets to practice greetings and emotions.
- Play board games that encourage turn-taking, patience, and problem-solving.

## 7. Outdoor and Nature Time

- Go on a scavenger hunt with picture cards.
- Use sidewalk chalk, nature rubbings, or rock painting for outdoor creativity.

## 8. Wind-Down and Evening Routine

- Use a visual “bedtime steps” board: change clothes, brush teeth, pick a book, storytime, lights off.
- Offer low-stimulation activities: soft music, lavender lotion, weighted blanket.
- Reflect on the day with: “What made you smile today?” or “What was tricky?”



## 1 Vital Tips for Teachers

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- Get to know each child's learning style. What works for one student may not work for another.
- Be flexible with assessments – allow oral responses, alternative formats, or visual projects.
- Collaborate regularly with parents, therapists, and support staff.
- Keep instructions clear, concise, and paired with visuals.
- Provide regular feedback and praise effort as much as outcomes.
- Create a classroom environment that allows movement, choice, and moments of calm.
- Establish predictable routines but remain responsive to individual needs.
- Use inclusive language and foster peer understanding to reduce stigma.

# PART TWO: SUPPORT STRATEGIES AT SCHOOL

## 2 Autism Support Techniques

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- Reduce visual/auditory distractions in classrooms.
- Use visual timetables and now-next boards.
- Support social interactions through buddy systems.

## 3 ADHD Support Techniques

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- Provide movement-friendly tools (wobble cushions, standing desks).
- Alternate between seated and physical tasks.
- Set achievable goals and reward effort.



## 4 Dyslexia & Dyscalculia Support Techniques

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- Offer text-to-speech and speech-to-text technology.
- Allow oral responses and provide extra time on tests.
- Present math visually with diagrams and steps.
- Prioritize comprehension and mastery over speed or rote memorization.

# Comprehensive Daily Routine Activities for Teachers

## 1. Arrival & Settling In

- Greet students by name with a wave, fist bump, or preferred sign (e.g., “Good morning, Arif!” with eye contact and a smile).
- Use a check-in board: Students place their name under “Ready,” “Tired,” “Nervous,” or “Happy” to build emotional awareness.
- Provide calming morning trays: puzzles, pattern blocks, or tracing sheets (e.g., “Calm Start Box”).
- Play soft background music (e.g., nature sounds, instrumental lullabies) to help ease transition from home.

## 2. Visual Schedules & Daily Orientation

- Display the daily schedule with icons: 📖 Reading → 🍎 Snack → 🎨 Art → 🏃 Movement → 🌱 Free Choice.
- Example change alert: “Today we will have music class in the afternoon instead of art — let’s update our schedule together.”
- For transitions: “Now we are finishing math. Next is break time. Then we will have science.”

## 3. Morning Warm-Up Routine

- Start with a "Daily Focus Question" on the board: “What’s one thing you’re looking forward to today?”
- Use a calendar helper: one student updates the date, weather, and day of the week with magnetic cards.
- Provide choice: “Would you like to start your morning with coloring, reading, or puzzles?”

## 4. Core Instructional Periods

- Break instruction into 3 steps: Watch the example      Try it together      Do it yourself.
- Visual instruction example: Use number line posters and color-coded math steps (e.g., green for add, red for subtract).
- Seating choice: Fatima prefers sitting near the board with a wobble cushion; Amir uses a standing desk at the back.

# Comprehensive Daily Routine Activities for Teachers

## 5. Movement & Sensory Regulation

- Example movement break: “Let’s do 10 jumping jacks or 1-minute ‘Star Pose’ breathing.”
- Sensory tools: Adam chooses a weighted lap pad during reading; Sara uses a textured fidget strip stuck under her desk.
- Calm zone: Beanbag, glitter jar, feelings thermometer, and sand timer available for silent reset.

## 6. Collaborative & Social Learning

- Classroom job chart: “Line Leader,” “Class Plant Waterer,” “Emotion Checker.”
- Peer pair-up for reading: One stronger reader and one developing reader take turns reading sentences aloud.
- Use scripts: “Can I play with you?” “Let’s take turns.” – modeled in circle time and used during free play.

## 7. Academic Accommodations

- Reading test example: “You can tell me the answers instead of writing them.”\n- Math visual: Color-coded step card – blue = Read the question → yellow = Highlight key numbers → green = Solve.
- Assistive tech: Aisyah uses a tablet with a text-to-speech app for reading comprehension passages.

## 8. End-of-Lesson Closure

- Exit ticket examples: “Draw one new thing you learned in science today” or “Write one thing that was tricky for you.”
- Reflective prompt: “Show thumbs up/side/down – How did you feel during this activity?”
- Journal variation: Students draw how they felt in the lesson and one goal for tomorrow.



# Comprehensive Daily Routine Activities for Teachers

## 9. Pack-Up & Transition Out

- Checklist poster by door: ✓ Homework ✓ Pencil box ✓ Water bottle ✓ Folder
- Preview tomorrow: “Tomorrow we’ll have Library Time and bring your favorite book.”
- Choice for waiting: “Would you like to read a comic or color a calm picture while we wait for dismissal?”

## 10. Home-School Communication

- Daily report sheet: ☀ Morning mood, 📚 Best subject today, 🤝 Kind action, 🧠 Challenge today.
- Color dot note: Green = Great Day / Yellow = Needed reminders / Red = Difficult moments – with notes like: “Struggled to stay seated during writing but used a timer to stay on task.”
- Example message: “Amal helped a classmate clean up spilled crayons – a great act of kindness!”



**“AUTISM, IS PART OF MY CHILD, IT’S NOT EVERYTHING HE IS. MY CHILD IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A DIAGNOSIS.”**



Autism is not  
a tragedy. It  
is a gift.

Start with questions:



## **PART THREE: FROM STRATEGY TO INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT**

Understanding neurodiversity and applying general strategies are only the beginning. The real transformation happens when support becomes personalized. This means tuning in to each child's needs, building a consistent plan across environments, and working together as a team.

Start by observing the child closely - What motivates them? What situations cause distress? What tools help them feel safe? These insights should form the foundation of an individualized support plan.

Create simple, practical profiles that highlight strengths, challenges, and preferred supports. Plans may include:

- **Visual learning profiles**
- **Daily or weekly goal sheets**
- **Sensory and communication preferences**
- **Home-school consistency agreements**

### **COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION**

Build open, trusting communication between parents, teachers, and therapists. A child supported by a team who shares updates regularly through apps, journals or informal check-ins – is more likely to experience consistent, predictable care.

### **CHILD INVOLVEMENT**

Wherever possible, include the child in decision-making. Give them a voice in how they learn best or what strategies they prefer when upset. Even young children benefit from being included in conversations about their learning journey.

### **CONSISTENCY ACROSS SETTINGS**

Support is most effective when it's mirrored across home, school, and therapy. Use the same calming scripts, reward systems, or visual schedules in each setting. Predictability reduces stress and increases trust.

# PART FOUR: SUSTAINING SUPPORT AND MOVING FORWARD

***“As adults, our job isn’t to “fix” them...it’s to walk beside them, offering the structure, compassion, and respect they deserve”***

Supporting a neurodivergent child is not about finding the perfect strategy — it’s about embracing a mindset of growth and connection. As children grow, so do their needs, and the most powerful form of support is one that evolves alongside them.

## **For Parents and Families**

You are not just a caregiver — you are your child’s constant. Build your advocacy muscle: learn the language of your child’s diagnosis, know their rights in school, and speak up for their needs. At home, create an environment of safety, empathy, and routine. Keep a simple journal to track what works. Don’t hesitate to ask for help when needed — your emotional health is vital too.

## **For Teachers and Educators (Sustaining Progress)**

Sustainability doesn’t mean doing everything perfectly — it means staying committed. Celebrate progress, even when it’s slow. Reflect on challenges as opportunities for adjustment. Stay informed through professional development or parent workshops. Share strategies with others and build community.

### Key Habits for Long-Term Support

- Maintain regular check-ins between school and home
- Update visual tools as the child matures
- Rotate rewards or motivation systems to keep engagement high
- Teach coping and self-advocacy skills as children grow

***“Children with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or dyscalculia are not broken. They are wired differently, and with the right support, they can achieve incredible things. As adults, our job isn’t to “fix” them — it’s to walk beside them, offering the structure, compassion, and respect they deserve. Support doesn’t end — it evolves. And every step forward is worth celebrating.”***



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