

Start here

1. Meltdown After School

URL: </start-here/meltdown-after-school>

What may be happening

Your child may be carrying stress, sensory overload, social pressure, or masking through the school day and releasing it at home where they finally feel safe. This can look intense, but it does not automatically mean your home is the problem. Sometimes home is simply the first place where the nervous system lets go.

First steps

- Create a short decompression routine before homework, questions, or correction.
- Reduce demands for the first 20 to 30 minutes after school.
- Notice patterns: time of day, hunger, transitions, homework, sibling dynamics, noise, or fatigue.
- Focus on regulation first, problem-solving later.

Helpful resources

- [After-School Reset Guide](#)
- [7-Day Family Tracker](#)
- [Caregiver Tools](#)

One next action

Need help making sense of the pattern?

[Get My Support Plan](#)

2. Refuses School

URL: </start-here/refuses-school>

What may be happening

School refusal is often a sign that something feels too overwhelming, unsafe, exhausting, or unsupported. It may be connected to anxiety, social stress, bullying, sensory overload, learning pressure, or burnout. What looks like refusal on the outside may actually be distress underneath.

First steps

- Stay curious before assuming defiance.
- Track when refusal happens and what seems to trigger it.
- Ask whether the struggle is academic, social, sensory, emotional, or a mix.
- Begin preparing for a school conversation focused on support, not blame.

Helpful resources

- School Meeting Prep
- 7-Day Family Tracker
- Therapy Questions

One next action

Need support for the next school conversation?

[Get My Support Plan](#)

3. Shuts Down and Won't Talk

URL: </start-here/shuts-down>

What may be happening

Your child may be overwhelmed, exhausted, anxious, or unsure how to communicate what they are feeling. Shutdown is often a protective response, not a sign that they do not care or are choosing distance on purpose. Some children need quiet, space, and safety before words can come back.

First steps

- Reduce pressure to explain everything in the moment.
- Use fewer words and a calmer tone.
- Offer simple choices instead of open-ended demands.
- Notice whether shutdown happens after school, during transitions, around conflict, or after social effort.

Helpful resources

- [Caregiver Tools](#)
- [Therapy Questions](#)
- [After-School Reset Guide](#)

One next action

Want practical support for communication and regulation at home? Explore [Caregiver Tools](#)

4. Anxiety or Emotional Struggles

URL: </start-here/anxiety-emotional-struggles>

What may be happening

Your child may be experiencing persistent worry, overwhelm, emotional exhaustion, or difficulty managing everyday stress. Anxiety does not always look like nervousness. It can show up as irritability, perfectionism, avoidance, shutdowns, tears, physical complaints, or a strong need to control situations.

First steps

- Notice what situations increase distress.
- Look for patterns in sleep, school demands, transitions, and social stress.
- Create calm routines and reduce unnecessary pressure where possible.
- If the struggle is becoming harder to manage, begin gathering questions for a therapist, counselor, or other provider.

Helpful resources

- Therapy Questions
- Caregiver Tools
- 7-Day Family Tracker
- Parent Support Circle

One next action

Need help sorting through what support may fit best?

Get My Support Plan

5. School Is Calling It “Behavior”

URL: </start-here/behavior-at-school>

What may be happening

Sometimes schools describe a child’s struggle as “behavior” when the real issue may be stress, dysregulation, sensory overload, learning frustration, social confusion, or unmet support needs. Families often need help shifting the conversation from punishment or blame toward understanding and accommodations.

First steps

- Ask what happens before the behavior, not just after.

- Gather specific examples from both home and school.
- Use language that focuses on overload, regulation, access, and support.
- Prepare for a meeting that explores what your child may need rather than only what the school wants stopped.

Helpful resources

- School Meeting Prep
- IEP / 504 Basics
- 7-Day Family Tracker
- Therapy Questions

One next action

Need support preparing for school advocacy?

Go to School Meeting Prep

6. Bullying or Isolation

URL: [/start-here/bullying-isolation](#)

What may be happening

Your child may be feeling excluded, misunderstood, unsafe, or disconnected from peers. Sometimes the signs are obvious, and sometimes they are quiet: not wanting to attend school, increased anxiety, changes in mood, shutting down, or saying they have no friends. Social pain can deeply affect emotional wellbeing and school engagement.

First steps

- Gently ask what school and peer interactions feel like right now.
- Notice changes in mood, energy, sleep, or interest in going places.
- Document concerns if you suspect bullying.

- Reach out to the school with specific questions about supervision, safety, and peer support.

Helpful resources

- School Meeting Prep
- Therapy Questions
- Caregiver Tools
- Parent Support Circle

One next action

Want help thinking through your next step with school or support providers?
Contact Us

7. Sleep and Screen Struggles

URL: </start-here/sleep-screen-struggles>

What may be happening

Sleep and screen challenges are often tied to regulation, anxiety, routine difficulties, sensory needs, or emotional exhaustion. Screens are not always the root problem. Sometimes they become the only predictable way a child is trying to cope, decompress, or avoid overwhelm.

First steps

- Look at the full routine, not just the screen itself.
- Notice bedtime stress, transitions, sensory needs, and fatigue.
- Add one or two calming routine anchors before trying to force big changes.
- Track whether sleep issues are affecting mood, school tolerance, or daily regulation.

Helpful resources

- Caregiver Tools
- 7-Day Family Tracker
- Therapy Questions
- Parent Support Circle

One next action

Need everyday support for routines and regulation at home?

Explore Caregiver Tools

8. I'm Not Sure What's Going On

URL: </start-here/not-sure>

What may be happening

You do not need to have the perfect words to know something feels off. Many families start here. You may be noticing stress, mood changes, school struggles, shutdowns, meltdowns, or a general sense that your child is carrying more than they can manage right now. It is okay not to have a label yet.

First steps

- Start by observing patterns for a few days.
- Notice when the struggle happens most often and what seems connected to it.
- Focus on support and understanding before trying to force a perfect explanation.
- Use the available tools to help make the picture clearer.

Helpful resources

- 7-Day Family Tracker
- Caregiver Tools
- Therapy Questions

- School Meeting Prep

One next action

Still unsure where to begin?

Contact Us

Best “one next action” by page

- Meltdown after school → Get My Support Plan
- Refuses school → Get My Support Plan
- Shuts down and won't talk → Contact us
- Anxiety or emotional struggles → Get My Support Plan
- School is calling it “behavior” → Join a Support Circle
- Bullying or isolation → Contact us
- Sleep and screen struggles → Join a Support Circle
- I'm not sure what's going on → Contact us