

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

**Information, understanding, and
practical strategies to support
children and their families.**

— LEARNING —

**“Empowering Educators & Families
Embracing differences”**

*Special Educational Needs Consultant & Family
Support*

Leila Milhorini



Every child has unique strengths, challenges, and ways of learning and interacting with the world.

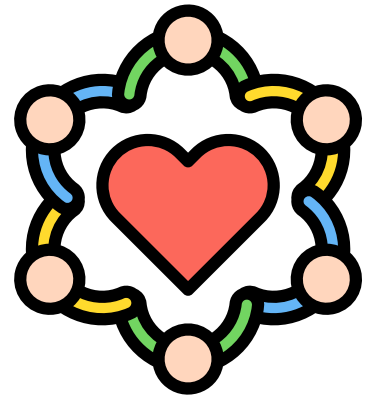
Special educational needs can affect communication, learning, behaviour, emotions, and social development. With the right information, understanding, and support, children can develop their abilities, build self-confidence, and reach their full potential.

In this guide, you will find an introduction to special educational needs, a simple explanation of emotions and emotional regulation, and practical strategies to help support your child at home and in everyday life.

Because understanding is the first step to supporting, and supporting is the first step to helping a child grow with confidence, resilience, and a sense of security.



WHAT ARE SPECIAL NEEDS (SEN/SEND)?



Children with special needs (Special Educational Needs — SEN/SEND) are those who have a learning difficulty or disability that makes it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.

Special needs mean that a child learns in a different way and needs specific support to be able to show their full potential.

This may include difficulties with:

- learning reading, writing, or maths
- understanding instructions
- communicating
- organising themselves
- making friends
- managing emotions or behaviour
- sensory or physical needs that affect learning

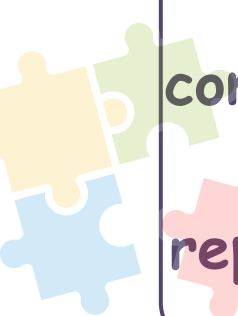


Let's understand better:



Children with special educational needs are understood as those who have sensory, physical, intellectual, or emotional difficulties that affect their learning. The concept of Special Educational Needs (SEN) includes individuals whose learning challenges are related to organic or environmental factors.

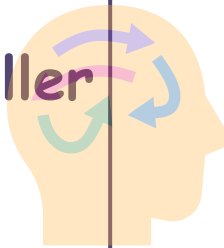
AUTISM



Difficulty with communication, social interaction and repetitive behaviour.

ADHD

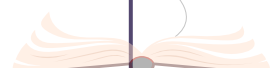
Difficulty in maintaining attention, controlling impulses and hyperactivity.



DYSLEXIA



Difficulty with reading, writing or spelling.

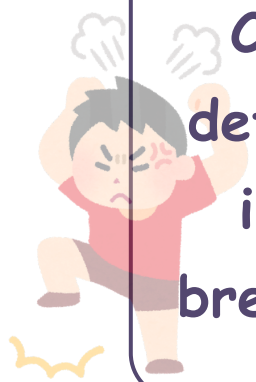


DYSGRAPHIA

Difficulty with writing, issues with handwriting and organising letters.



ODD



Challenges with defiant behaviour, irritability and breaking the rules.

PROCESSING DISORDER

Difficulty processing information and following instructions.



MY EMOTIONS



Recognising emotions is important because it helps a child understand what they are feeling, improves communication and reduces challenging behaviours. When a child learns to name emotions such as anger, sadness or worry, they develop emotional intelligence, learn to self-regulate and strengthen their relationships. It is an essential skill for life.

HAPPINESS

When I am happy, I might smile, be sociable or have lots of fun.

If I am happy, I can spread that happiness to other people.



TIREDNESS

When I am tired, I might yawn, zone out of conversations or want to sleep.

If I am tired, I can take a break and go on a walk to get some fresh air.



ANGER

When I am angry, I might clench my jaw, tighten my fists or frown.

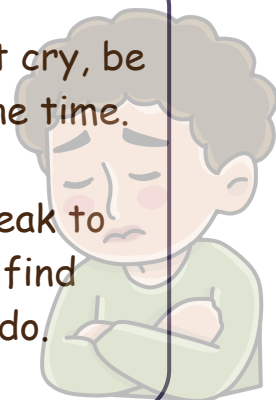
If I am angry, I can take some time to myself and take some deep breaths.



SADNESS

When I am sad, I might cry, be quiet or want some alone time.

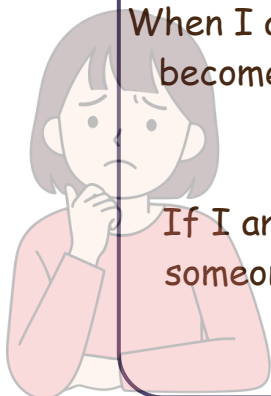
If I am sad, I can speak to someone I love and find something fun to do.



WORRY

When I am worried, I might fidget, become irritable or my stomach might hurt.

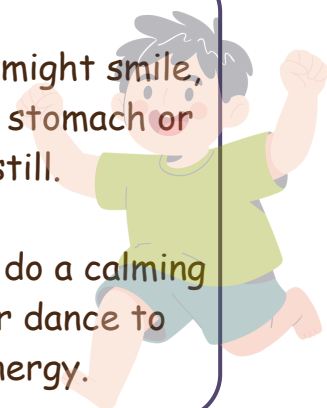
If I am worried, I can speak to someone I trust and take some deep breaths.



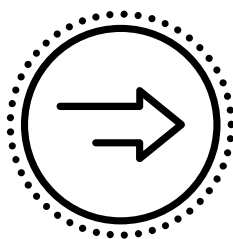
EXCITEMENT

When I am excited, I might smile, feel butterflies in my stomach or struggle to sit still.

If I am excited, I can do a calming activity and shake or dance to release some energy.



Now and Next



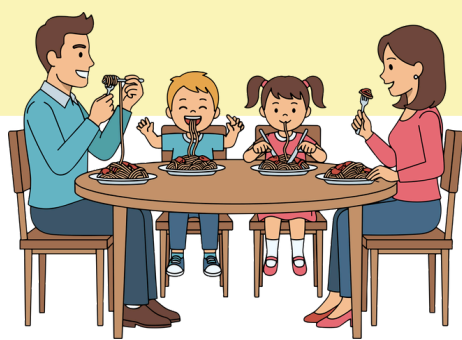
For some children, transitions between activities can feel overwhelming. A Now and Next board is a visual tool that can be used to help a child cope with changes throughout their daily routine.



You can use a Now and Next board to communicate transitions throughout the day, using visuals to represent various activities (e.g. 'dinner', 'toilet' or 'play'). The use of visuals is particularly useful for children who need additional support with language and communication to process simple instructions.



Using a Now and Next board can help to decrease feelings of anxiety around change, reducing your child's sense of uncertainty.





Five practical strategies to start using right now.



NAME THE EMOTION

When you notice a behaviour change, calmly say:

"It looks like you're feeling frustrated."

This helps the child identify and understand their feelings.

USE NOW AND THEN

Example:

"First bath time, then TV."

This supports smoother transitions and reduces resistance.

OFFER SIMPLE CHOICES

"Would you like to do your homework now or in 10 minutes?"

Small choices increase cooperation.

CALM CORNER

A simple space with a cushion, book, or sensory toy.

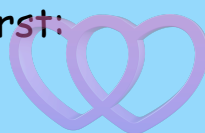
Explain that it's a place to calm down, not a punishment.

CONNECT BEFORE CORRECTING

Before correcting behaviour, connect first:
"I know this is hard for you."

Connection reduces defensiveness and increases collaboration.

✨ Small, consistent actions can make a big difference in everyday family life.



Leila Milhorini
07305919908
lmlearning2025

