



PARENTING THE CHILD IN FRONT OF YOU

This resource builds on the work on Esther Fidock, Registered Psychologist, The Neuro Nature Collective, presented at the 2026 Yellow Ladybugs Conference.

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PARENTING IS DEEPLY PERSONAL AND CHALLENGING

- Parenting is one of the most intense forms of self-development.
- Equal parts joyful and exhausting.
- It forces reflection on your own upbringing and decisions about what to carry forward or change for your own children.
- There is no single "right" way to parent, and outside opinions can add pressure, but ultimately, this is your parenting journey.



UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERGENCE

- Many parents discover their own neurodivergence alongside their child's journey.
- Developing a sense of identity, whether for yourself and/or your child, is a complex but valuable process.
- Accepting both your own and your child's unique ways of being is crucial.



THE GARDEN ANALOGY

- Each child is like a unique flower, and each family is its own garden.
- Different flowers and gardens have different needs to support them to flourish, and what works for one may not work for another.
- Sometimes the garden is beautiful and manageable; other times, it feels chaotic and overwhelming. Both are normal.



RECALIBRATION IS NORMAL



- Parenting involves ongoing recalibration—pausing, reflecting, and adjusting as needed. Just like gardens in different seasons.
- When things feel out of control, it's okay to take a step back, reassess, and make changes.



THE TWO HANDS OF PARENTING: NURTURE AND STRUCTURE



WARMTH AND NURTURE

Show love, acceptance, and empathy. Use the PACE approach of Dan Hughes:



Playfulness: Connect through shared interests or activities, even if you don't fully understand them.



Acceptance: Love your child unconditionally, including their neurodivergent traits.



Curiosity: Be genuinely interested in your child's experience and perspective.



Empathy: Understand and support your child's sensory and emotional needs.



BOUNDARIES AND STRUCTURE

Provide predictability and support through:



Visual schedules, calendars, and timers.



Consistent routines, clear expectations, predictable transitions.



Modelling helpful strategies (e.g., listening to music while tidying up, using regulation tools).



Actively teaching new skills, including social nuances and expectations (e.g., when it's ok to share certain thoughts).

SUPPORTING GROWTH

Like all flowers, autistic children need:



Sensory environments that suit their needs.



A sense of control over their environment and their life.



Opportunities to engage in activities they enjoy and that energise them.



Acceptance for who they truly are.

SUMMARY



Parenting, especially of neurodivergent children, is about balancing nurture and structure, accepting uniqueness, and adapting as needed.



Your family's journey is your own, and doing your best to support your child's needs—while being kind to yourself—is what truly matters.



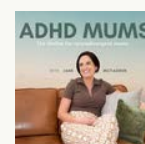
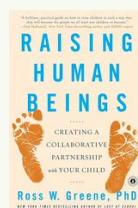
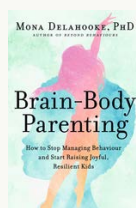
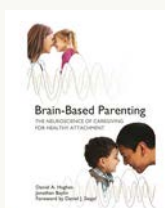
Ups and downs are part of the process – making adjustments and changing directions is healthy and necessary.



Parenting is a journey of love, learning and growth.
Your garden is unique. You know your child best. You've got this.



BOOKS TO EXPLORE



PODCASTS TO EXPLORE

Sources:

- <https://kimsgolding.co.uk/>
- <http://www.danielhughes.org/p.a.c.e..html>
- Simpson, K., Allen, C., Wheeley, E., Pellicano, E., Heyworth, M., den Houting, J., Bowen, R., & Adams, D. (2026). Supporting a 'good life' for autistic children: Autistic adults' and parents' perspectives. *Autism*, 30(4), 972-982. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613261418945>