



## **The Parent Toolkit**



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**A companion for parents, carers, and  
anyone trying to love a child through a  
noisy world.**

**Inspired by Editing Eliza by Chloe Fox**



# A Beginning

If you've found your way here, it's probably because you care. Maybe you're tired. Maybe you're scared. Maybe you've been watching your child pull further away and you're not sure how to reach them anymore.

This isn't a manual. There are no quick fixes hiding in these pages.

This is a collection of reminders, about love, listening, and what it means to stay.

Editing Eliza is a story about a girl who retreats into quiet, about parents trying to find their way back to her, and about the spaces in between, the ones filled with fear, tenderness, and hope.

This toolkit is for every parent who has ever asked: How do I hold a child who is hurting, without losing myself in the process?

You don't need to have the answers.  
You just need to keep showing up.



# What's Really Going On

Neurodivergence.

Some children move through the world differently.  
They see details others miss.

They hear the hum in the silence, feel the weight in a glance,  
carry emotions like colours.

There's nothing broken about that.

It's not something to fix, it's something to understand, to honour,  
to hold with care.

When you notice your child overwhelmed, try gentleness instead  
of guidance.

"You notice things other people miss; that's part of what makes  
you you."



# Isolation and Loneliness

For many young people, the world outside feels sharp. School corridors hum with energy that can sting.

Sometimes, withdrawing isn't rejection, it's self-protection.

Ask what safety looks like for them, not what's wrong with them.

"Sometimes being with people takes a lot of energy. What helps you recharge afterwards?"





# Digital Companionship & AI

Eliza found comfort in Iris, a digital listener who never judged, never interrupted, never sighed.

Many children are finding the same refuge online. It isn't always about avoidance. Sometimes it's about needing a space where they can breathe without fear of being misunderstood.

Ask with curiosity.

“What do you like about talking to Iris? What makes it feel safe?”

Then ask the quieter question:

“How could we make conversations between us feel more like that?”

# Holding Conversations That Heal

When words feel hard, listening becomes the bridge.  
Here's what Iris teaches us:

1. Be curious, not corrective.
2. "Tell me more" invites, where "That's not true" shuts down.
3. Validate before fixing.
4. "That sounds heavy." Let them see you feel it too.
5. Leave space.
6. Silence can be the safest kind of care.
7. Reflect, don't rescue.
8. "It sounds like today drained you" lands better than a lecture.
9. End with warmth.
10. "I'm glad you told me. I love you."

Listening like Iris means showing up without needing to be right,  
only real.



# Listen Like Iris

Theme	What might be happening	How to meet it with love	Words that open, not close
<b>Online vs Offline</b>	The digital world offers predictability and belonging.	Explore what feels safe there. Don't shame it – understand it.	“What do you find online that you wish existed offline?”
<b>Sensory Overload</b>	The world can be too loud, bright, or crowded.	Offer decompression time. Don't rush their recovery.	“Would you like quiet before we talk?”
<b>Food &amp; Control</b>	Eating can become a language of overwhelm.	Keep mealtimes gentle and consistent. Sit beside, don't	“It's okay if you can't eat much right now. Let's just sit together.”
<b>School Avoidance</b>	Sometimes staying home feels like survival.	Work with, not against, the school. Ask what safety looks like there.	“What feels hardest about walking through those gates?”
<b>Creativity &amp; Coping</b>	Art, writing, or music might be their language.	Protect those outlets; they're more than hobbies – they're lifelines.	“Would you like me to listen, or just leave you to create?”
<b>Reconnection</b>	Trust rebuilds slowly.	Choose quiet presence over big talks.	“I love being near you. We don't have to say anything.”



# When You Pause

Some days, it won't go well.  
You'll say the wrong thing. They'll roll their eyes. You'll close the door and cry.

That doesn't mean you've failed.  
It means you care enough to try again.  
When it feels too heavy, pause. Breathe. Ask yourself:

- What am I most afraid of right now?
- What does my child need from me, not about me?
- What part of me also needs gentleness today?

You can't pour from an empty cup, but you can refill it slowly, through rest, honesty, and small moments of beauty.

# If You Need Help

What's happening	Where to reach out	Contact
<b>Crisis or suicidal thoughts</b>	Samaritans	116 123 / <a href="https://www.samaritans.org">samaritans.org</a>
<b>Urgent mental-health support</b>	NHS 111 → option 2	111
<b>Child or teen needs help</b>	Childline (under 19)	0800 1111 / <a href="https://www.childline.org.uk">childline.org.uk</a>
<b>Parent needs to talk</b>	Mind Infoline	0300 123 3393 / <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk">mind.org.uk</a>
<b>Neurodiversity / SEND support</b>	National Autistic Society / Young Minds / SENDIASS	<a href="https://www.autism.org.uk">autism.org.uk</a> / <a href="https://www.youngminds.org.uk">youngminds.org.uk</a>
<b>Working with school</b>	Ask for the SENCO or Designated Safeguarding Lead	—

You deserve support as much as your child does.

# Bridging Conversations with School

It can feel daunting to reach out to teachers, especially when you've been met with misunderstanding before.

But the people on the other side of that email? Most of them care too. They're human, tired, hopeful, just like you.

Before you write or meet, take a breath. Write down what you hope will change, not just what's gone wrong.



When you speak, lead with shared purpose:

<b>Instead of ...</b>	<b>Try saying ...</b>
“You’re not listening.”	“She struggles to share in meetings. Could we find another way for her voice to be heard?”
“You’re punishing her for being different.”	“Can we look together at how to support her differences more gently?”
“No one’s helping us.”	“Who else in school might help us think this through together?”
“She hates school.”	“There are parts of school that overwhelm her – can we start by naming which?”

Follow up with a short thank-you note. Keep the bridge open. You’re both trying to build the same thing: safety and belonging for a child you love.

Kindness is the most radical form of advocacy there is.

# Family Practices for Connection

## The Garden at the Gate

Plant something together, a window box, a pot, a patch. Water it when words run out. Growth takes time, but it still happens quietly.

## Sounds That Save You

Everyone chooses one sound that brings calm: rain, the kettle, a song. Make a family “soundtrack for safety.”

## Colour Conversations

Ask, “What colour was your day?” and listen to what they tell you or what they don’t. Sometimes grey is all they can manage. That’s okay.





## When to Seek More Help

If school attendance drops, or you notice changes in sleep, appetite, or self-expression, trust your instinct.

You don't have to wait for crisis to ask for help.

Keep notes. Keep asking. Keep believing that early support matters.

You are not overreacting. You are parenting bravely in a world that doesn't always understand bravery that looks like softness.

## A Closing Note

Maybe healing isn't about fixing what's broken, but learning how to stay connected while it mends.

Editing Eliza doesn't end with resolution. It ends with relationship, imperfect, still learning, still reaching.

"You don't need to bloom for anyone else.  
The growing is enough."

Hold on to that.

You're not meant to get this right, just to keep loving, listening, and trying again tomorrow.