



A Parent's Guide to Calmer Routines With Autism

An e-book of practical ABA strategies

Introduction

Why Routines Can Be Hard

For many families, daily routines such as getting ready in the morning, sitting down for meals, or winding down at night often bring the most stress. If you have felt that these small moments take more energy than they should, you are not alone.

The encouraging news is that routines do not have to feel like battles. With simple supports and small adjustments, these everyday moments can become calmer, more predictable, and even enjoyable for both you and your child.

This guide offers practical, gentle strategies to bring more peace to your family's daily flow.



The Routine Toolkit

Every child and every family is unique. There is no single routine that works for everyone, but there are simple tools that can make any routine feel calmer and easier to manage. Think of these supports as building blocks. You can start with one, try it out, and add others as you and your child feel ready.

Tool	How You Can Use It	Why It Helps
Visual support	Picture schedule or First-Then card placed where the routine happens	Reduces anxiety by showing what comes next
Calm preview	"In two minutes, we brush teeth"	Prepares your child for transitions and avoids surprises
Choice within structure	"Red shirt or blue shirt?"	Provides a sense of control while keeping the plan on track
Gentle timing	Use a visual or sand timer, or your phone	Makes time predictable and easier to understand
Immediate praise and rewards	"You started brushing right away, thank you"	Builds confidence and encourages effort



Morning Routines: Starting the Day Gently

Why mornings feel tough:

Everyone is on the clock, and your child may struggle with multiple transitions.

Practical steps:

Step 1

Create a simple visual checklist: bathroom → brush teeth → clothes → shoes → backpack.

Step 2

Offer small choices: "Do you want to brush teeth before or after washing your face?"

Step 3

Pair harder steps with motivation: "First shoes, then we choose the car song."

Encouragement:

Even if the whole morning does not go smoothly, one calmer step is already progress that matters.



Mealtime Routines:

Less Pressure, More Connection

Why meals are tricky:

New foods, sitting still, and family expectations can feel overwhelming.

Practical steps:

Step 1

Keep the table setup consistent, such as the same seat and same plate.

Step 2

Start with shorter mealtimes and increase gradually.

Step 3

Use First–Then: “First two bites, then we play for two minutes.”

Encouragement:

Every small step counts. Touching or smelling a new food is progress. Praise these efforts, no matter how small they seem.



Bedtime Routines:

Ending the Day With Comfort

Why bedtime is challenging:

Fatigue, big feelings, and worries often peak at night.

Practical steps:

Step 1

Stick to three predictable steps, for example pajamas → bathroom → story.

Step 2

Add calming sensory supports such as soft music, dim lighting, or a favorite blanket.

Step 3

End with a consistent phrase each night: “Good night. I am nearby. You are safe.”

Encouragement:

Some nights will be smoother than others, and that is okay. Consistency matters more than perfection.



Sensory Supports That Help

Small sensory changes can make routines easier without needing major adjustments at home.



Sound: Soft background music, white noise, or headphones.



Light: Brighter natural light in the morning, dimmer lights in the evening.



Touch: Comfortable clothing, fidget items, or a favorite blanket.



Movement: Short stretches, wall push-ups, or marching in place.

Try one support at a time
and notice how your
child responds.





Tracking Tiny Wins

Progress often looks small but is meaningful. Examples include:

- One fewer meltdown this week.
- Faster transitions between steps.
- Your child using words or gestures instead of crying.

You can use a simple weekly tracker to notice these wins:

Day	Started routine calmly	Used First-Then support	Parent gave praise
Mon	✓	✓	✓
Tue	✗	✓	✓
Wed	✓	✗	✓

Even one checkmark most days is a sign of progress.

Final Thoughts

You do not need to change every routine at once. Start with one part of the day, add one support, and celebrate one small win. Over time, these small successes build into calmer days and greater confidence for both your child and you.

Progress is not about perfection. It is about steady steps forward, taken with patience and care. You are doing meaningful, important work every single day.

Why Choose StarRise ABA

Choosing the right ABA therapy provider for your child is an important decision. At StarRise ABA, we are committed to delivering high-quality, personalized care that meets the unique needs of each child and family. Here is what sets us apart:



Personalized Approach

Our personalized ABA therapy programs are designed to address each child's individual needs and goals, ensuring the most effective and compassionate care.



Comprehensive Care

We take a holistic yet comprehensive approach to our ABA services, including individual therapy, social skills training, parent support, and school consultation.



Convenience and Comfort

By providing in-home ABA therapy, you receive professional services in the comfort of your home to help integrate therapy into daily routines for parents and their children.

Our team of experienced therapists is dedicated to helping children with autism and other developmental needs reach their full potential. We believe in creating a nurturing environment where every child can thrive.



Monday – Friday, 7 AM – 5 PM

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