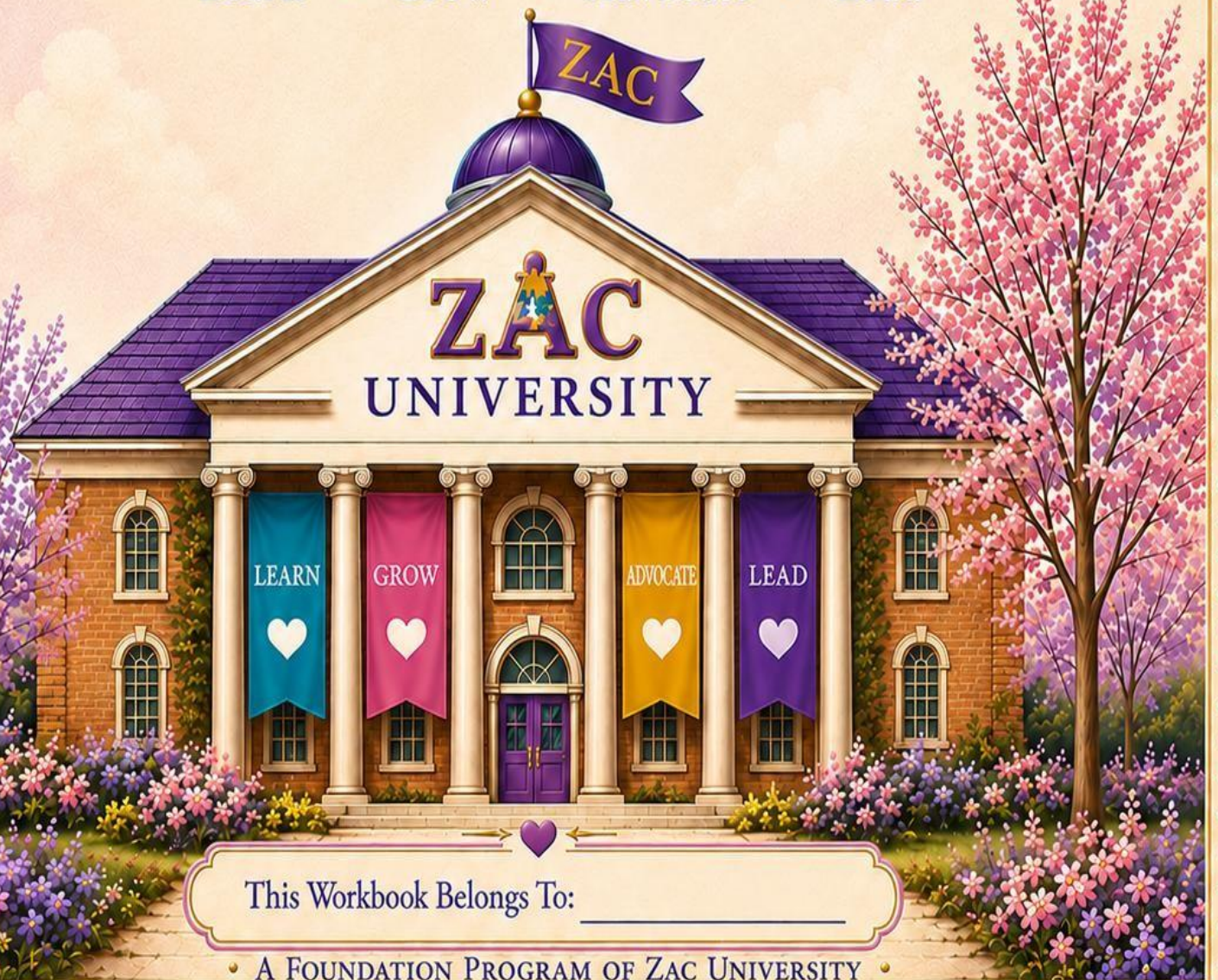


ZAC Autism Parent Quick Start Workbook

Learn • Grow • Advocate • Lead



This Workbook Belongs To: _____

• A FOUNDATION PROGRAM OF ZAC UNIVERSITY •

ZAC Autism Parent Quick Start Workbook

**Practical Tools, Encouragement & Strategies for Families Beginning or Continuing
Their Autism Journey**

By Lakredi Tu Alston

A Complimentary Resource for Attendees of the Monthly FREE ZAC Parent Masterclass

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ZAC Autism Parent Quick Start Workbook

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The information contained in this workbook reflects the knowledge, experience, and perspectives of the author and The Zokha Autism Center (ZAC). While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, no guarantees are made regarding the completeness or applicability of the information to every individual or situation.

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Special Notice

This workbook was created to educate, encourage, and empower parents and caregivers of children with autism through practical strategies, compassionate guidance, and evidence-informed resources.

Our mission is simple:

Love. Acceptance. Inclusion.

Every Child.

Every Family.

Every Time.

Welcome

Dear Parent,

If you're holding this workbook, I want you to know something before you read another word...

You are not alone.

I know the fear.

I know the questions.

I know the sleepless nights.

I also know the victories.

As the mother of two autistic sons, I've walked this journey for many years. I've celebrated milestones that others may have overlooked, advocated in countless meetings, learned through trial and error, and discovered that hope grows stronger when knowledge meets love.

This workbook is designed to help you take your next steps with confidence.

Welcome to the ZAC family.

Lakredi Tu Alston

My Autism Journey

My Story: Love Built This

I am Lakredi Tu Alston, the mother of two autistic sons, Zokha and Matino. My journey began simply as a mother trying to understand, protect, and support her children in a world that often focused more on their challenges than their gifts.

Through my sons, I learned that communication is more than spoken words, behavior tells a story, and progress should never be measured by someone else's timeline. I also learned that autistic children do not need to be fixed. They need love, patience, understanding, support, and opportunities to discover who they are.

Over the years, I became an advocate, educator, Registered Behavior Technician, author, and founder of The Zokha Autism Center. My personal experiences inspired me to create resources, programs, workshops, and supportive spaces for autistic children, their families, educators, and caregivers.

I have watched my sons grow into intelligent, creative, and determined young men. Their accomplishments remind me that a diagnosis should never determine a person's future. With encouragement and the right support, autistic individuals can learn, create, work, dream, and build meaningful lives.

I created this workbook because I understand how overwhelming the parenting journey can feel. Parents deserve practical tools, encouragement, and the reassurance that they are not alone. You do not have to have every answer today. You are allowed to learn, rest, ask for help, and celebrate every step forward.

My story is not about autism defeating our family. It is about love teaching us how to advocate courageously, live intentionally, and believe beyond limitations.

Love built my family. Love built my mission. Love built this legacy.



Autism Isn't One Size Fits All Reflection:

Autism Isn't One Size Fits All

Every autistic child is unique.

Every child learns differently.

Every child communicates differently.

Every child deserves understanding.

Reflection

What are three amazing things about your child?

1.

2.

3.

Behavior Is Communication

Instead of asking

"What's wrong with my child?"

Try asking

"What is my child trying to tell me?"

Looking Beyond the Behavior

As parents, it's natural to focus on what we see.

The crying.

The screaming.

The hitting.

The running away.

The refusal.

But what if those behaviors weren't the problem?

What if they were your child's way of saying...

"I need help."

Many autistic children communicate through their behavior long before they can explain what they're thinking or feeling with words.

Behavior is often a message waiting to be understood.

When we stop asking, **"How do**

I stop this behavior?" and

begin asking,

"What is my child trying to tell me?"

Everything changes.

Every Behavior Has a Purpose

Children engage in behaviors for many different reasons.

Sometimes they try to:

Escape something that feels too difficult

Get help

Ask for attention or connection

Communicate discomfort or pain

Avoid loud noises or bright lights

Express excitement

Meeting a sensory need

Tell us they are overwhelmed

Behavior is not random.

It is communication.

Imagine This...

Four-year-old Maya walks into the grocery store.

The lights are bright.

The music is loud.

People are talking.

Shopping carts are squeaking.

The smell of the bakery fills the air.

To most adults, it's just another shopping trip.

To Maya, it may feel like every sound, light, smell, and movement is happening all at once.

Suddenly, she drops to the floor, cries, and covers her ears.

Some people may think,

"She's throwing a tantrum."

But what Maya may really be saying is,

"Everything feels too loud. I don't know how to tell you I need a break."

When we understand the message, we can respond with compassion instead of frustration.

What Could My Child Be Communicating?

Instead of reacting immediately, pause and ask yourself:

- Is my child overwhelmed?
- Are they trying to avoid something difficult?
- Do they need help communicating?
- Are they tired?
- Are they hungry?
- Is the environment too stimulating?
- Are they frustrated because they can't express themselves?
- Could they be in pain or uncomfortable?

Sometimes the answer is simple.

Sometimes it takes a little detective work.

Both are okay.

A New Way of Thinking

Instead of seeing behaviors as "good" or "bad," begin seeing them as information.

Every behavior gives us a clue about what our child is experiencing.

The more curious we become, the more confident we become in helping our children succeed.

Parent Reflection

Think about the behavior your child displayed recently.

What behavior did you observe?

What do you think your child may have been trying to communicate?

If the same situation happened again, how might you respond differently?

ZAC Parent Encouragement

Behind every behavior is a child who is trying to communicate a need.

When we choose curiosity over judgment and connection over correction, we create opportunities for trust, learning, and growth.

This message aligns beautifully with ZAC's mission of love, acceptance, and inclusion, and it sets the stage perfectly for the next page where you'll teach parents how to use the **ABC Model** to uncover what those behaviors are communicating.

Behavior Is Communication

Explain the ABC model and include examples.

Understanding the ABCs of Behavior

Behavior Is Communication

One of the biggest mindsets shifts you can make as an autism parent is this:

Every behavior has a reason.

Your child isn't trying to make your day harder. They're trying to communicate even if they don't have the words to say it.

When we understand *why* behavior happens, we can respond in a way that teaches and supports instead of simply reacting.

One of the easiest tools to help us understand behavior is called the **ABC Model**.

A = Antecedent

What happened BEFORE the behavior?

The **Antecedent** is what happened immediately before your child's behavior.

Ask yourself:

- Where were we?
- Who was there?
- What was happening?
- Did something change?
- Was it too loud, too bright, or too crowded?
- Was a demand placed on my child?
- Was my child tired, hungry, or overwhelmed?

Sometimes the smallest event can trigger a big response.

Example

Mom tells eight-year-old Jayden,

"It's time to turn off the tablet and take a bath."

Two seconds later, Jayden screams and throws the tablet on the couch.

The request to stop playing the tablet was the **Antecedent**.

B = Behavior

What did your child DO?

This is where we simply describe what happened.

Avoid words like:

Bad

Disrespectful

Mean

Instead, describe only what you observed.

Examples:

- Cried
- Covered ears
- Ran away
- Screamed
- Hit
- Dropped to the floor
- Asked for help
- Walked away

Think of yourself as a reporter describing exactly what happened.

Example

Jayden:

- Screamed
- Threw the tablet
- Fell onto the floor crying

Those are the behaviors.

C = Consequence

What happened AFTER the behavior?

The **Consequence** is simply what happened next.

Ask yourself:

- How did I respond?
- Did the activity stop?
- Did my child get help?
- Did my child receive attention?
- Was the demand removed?
- Did my child calm down?

A consequence is not always a punishment.

It is simply what happened immediately after the behavior.

Example

Mom calmly sat beside Jayden and said,

"I know it's hard to stop when you're having fun. Let's take three deep breaths together."

After calming down, Jayden walked to the bathroom.

That was the consequence.

Putting It All Together

ABC

What Happened?

Antecedent Mom asked Jayden to turn off the tablet and get ready for a bath.

Behavior, Jayden screamed, threw the tablet, and cried.

Consequence Mom stayed calm, helped him regulate, and then he completed the routine.

Remember

The goal of using the ABC Model isn't to blame yourself or your child.

My goal is to become a detective.

Every time you observe the ABCs, you're collecting clues that help you better understand your child.

The more you understand your child's behaviors, the more confident you'll become in responding with patience, compassion, and effective strategies.

Parent Reflection

Think about the behavior your child displayed recently.

What happened right before the behavior? (Antecedent)

What did your child do? (Behavior)

What happened immediately after? (Consequence)

ZAC Parent Tip

Don't ask, "How do I stop this behavior?"

Instead ask, "What is my child trying to communicate to me?"

That one question can completely change the way you understand and support your child. It reflects one of the core philosophies of ZAC: behavior is communication, and every child deserves to be understood.

Connection Before Correction

Your Relationship Is Your Greatest Teaching Tool

When our children are struggling, our first instinct is often to stop behavior.

But before we teach...

Before we correct...

Before we redirect...

We must first **connect**.

A child who feels safe is more likely to listen.

A child who feels understood is more likely to learn.

A child who feels connected is more likely to trust.

Connection isn't rewarding difficult behavior.

It's helping your child feel secure enough to learn a better way.

What Does Connection Look Like?

Connection can be as simple as:

Getting down to your child's eye level

Speaking with a calm, gentle voice

Offering a reassuring smile

Giving your child time to process

A comforting hug (if they enjoy touch)

Sitting quietly beside them

Saying,

"I'm here with you."

Sometimes the greatest support isn't saying anything at all.

It's simply being present.

Remember...

Children learn best when they feel emotionally safe.

When emotions are high...

Learning is low.

Your calm can become your child's calm.

Real-Life Example

Six-year-old Ava becomes upset when it's time to leave the playground.

Instead of saying,

"Stop crying! We're leaving!"

Her dad kneels beside her and says,

"I know you're disappointed. You were having so much fun. Let's take three deep breaths together, and then we'll walk to the car."

Ava still feels disappointed, but she also feels understood.

That connection makes the transition easier.

Parent Reflection

Think about a recent challenging moment.

How did your child know you were there for them?

What is one way you can create more connection before correcting next time?

ZAC Parent Promise

At ZAC, we believe that children don't need perfect parents.

They need parents who are willing to learn, grow, and connect.

Every moment of connection strengthens your relationship and helps your child feel safe, valued, and understood.

Connection builds trust. Trust builds learning. Learning builds confidence.

Things You Can Do Today

Small Steps Can Lead to Big Changes

You don't have to change everything overnight.

Choose one or two ideas to focus on this week. Small, consistent actions often make the biggest difference.

1. Celebrating the Small Victories

Did your child make eye contact? Try new food? Use a new word? Every step forward is worth celebrating.

☐ I celebrated something positive today.

2. Follow Your Child's Lead

Spend at least 10 minutes doing something your child enjoys. Let them choose the activity and simply join them.

☐ I spent uninterrupted time connecting with my child today.

3. Creating Predictable Routines

Children often feel more secure when they know what to expect. Simple routines can reduce stress and make transitions easier.

☐ We followed a consistent routine today.

4. Notice the Good

Try to notice and praise positive behaviors more often than correcting unwanted ones.

Instead of: *"Stop running."*

Try:

"I love how you're walking with me." ☐

I praised my child today.

5. Pause Before Reacting

When your child becomes upset, take one deep breath before responding.

Your calm can help your child find theirs.

☐ I paused before reacting today.

6. Support Communication

Whether your child uses words, gestures, pictures, or a communication device, every attempt to communicate matters.

☐ I encouraged my child's communication today.

7. Prepare for Transitions

Give gentle reminders before changing activities.

For example:

- "Five more minutes."
- "Two more minutes."
- "One more minute."

This can make transitions less stressful.

☐ I gave transition warnings today.

8. Take Care of Yourself

Your well-being matters too.

Even 10 minutes to breathe, pray, read, or enjoy a quiet cup of tea can help refill your cup.

☐ I did something kind for myself today.

9. Ask for Help

You were never meant to do this alone.

Reach out to family, friends, professionals, or another autism parent when you need support.

☐ I reached out for support when I needed it.

10. End the Day with Gratitude

Before bed, think of one thing your child did that made you smile today.

Write it down.

Today's Parent Promise

Today I will choose:

☐ Patience over frustration

☐ Curiosity over judgment

☐ Connection over correction

☐ Progress over perfection

☐ Hope over fear

Remember

You don't have to be a perfect parent.

Your child doesn't need perfection.

Your child needs your love, your presence, and your willingness to keep learning.

Every small step you take today is helping build a brighter tomorrow.

IEP Confidence Checklist

You Are an Equal Member of the IEP Team

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting is a time for educators and families to work together to support your child's success. Your voice matters because no one knows your child better than you do.

Remember:

You are your child's first and most important advocate.

Before the Meeting

- ☐ Review your child's current IEP.
 - ☐ Read the most recent progress reports.
 - ☐ Write down your questions and concerns.
 - ☐ Make a list of your child's strengths.
 - ☐ Identify areas where your child needs additional support.
 - ☐ Gather any outside evaluations or therapy reports.
 - ☐ Bring a notebook or device to take notes.
 - ☐ Invite a support person or advocate if you would like one.
 - ☐ Review your child's current goals and think about whether they are still appropriate.
-

During the Meeting

- ☐ Introduce yourself and ask everyone else to introduce themselves.
- ☐ Ask questions if something isn't clear.

- ☐ Request examples of your child's progress.
 - ☐ Ask how goals will be measured.
 - ☐ Share what works well at home.
 - ☐ Discuss your child's sensory, communication, and behavioral needs.
 - ☐ Ask about accommodation that can help your child succeed.
 - ☐ Don't feel rushed into deciding.
 - ☐ Request a copy of any changes before leaving.
-

After the Meeting

- ☐ Review your copy of the updated IEP.
 - ☐ Keep all IEP paperwork in one folder or binder.
 - ☐ Communicate regularly with your child's teacher.
 - ☐ Monitor progress toward goals.
 - ☐ Celebrate every achievement, big or small.
-

Questions Every Parent Should Feel Comfortable Asking

- How is this goal helping my child become more independent?
 - How will progress be measured?
 - What happens if my child isn't making progress?
 - What support is available in the classroom?
 - How can I reinforce these skills at home?
 - Who should I contact if I have concerns before the next meeting?
-

Know Your Rights

As a parent, you have the right to:

- ✓ Ask questions
 - ✓ Request explanations
 - ✓ Review records
 - ✓ Participate in decisions
 - ✓ Request changes when appropriate
 - ✓ Bring an advocate or support person to meetings
 - ✓ Take time to review documents before signing if needed
-

ZAC Parent Tip

Walk into every IEP meeting remembering this:

You are not asking for favors.

You are advocating for your child's educational needs.

Your perspective is valuable, and when families and schools work together with mutual respect, children have the best opportunity to succeed.

Parent Reflection

One thing I want my child's IEP team to understand is:

Three goals I hope my child achieves this year:

1.

2. _____
 3. _____
-

I also have one suggestion that I think would make this workbook even more valuable. At the end of this page—or as a bonus page—you could include an **"IEP Meeting Notes"** template with spaces for:

- Date of the meeting
- Team members present
- Decisions made
- Questions to follow up on
- Next steps

Meltdown vs. Tantrum

Understanding the Difference

Meltdown

Caused by being overwhelmed, overstimulated, or unable to cope.

Not intentional.

The child may not be able to control their actions.

Continue even if no one is watching.

Often triggered by sensory overload, anxiety, frustration, or unexpected changes.

The child needs support, patience, and help boundaries and guidance.

Recovery may take several minutes or longer after the event ends.

The goal is **to help the child feel safe and regulated.**

Tantrum

Usually happens because a child wants something or wants to avoid something.

Often goal directed.

The child usually has some control over their actions.

May stop if the child gets what they want or realize no one is paying attention.

Often triggered by limits, denied requests, or transitions.

The child needs calm, consistent regulating.

The child often recovers quickly once the situation changes.

The goal is **to teach appropriate ways to communicate wants and needs.**

During a Meltdown

- ✓ Stay calm.
- ✓ Reduce noise, lights, or other sensory input if possible.
- ✓ Speak softly and use simple language.
- ✓ Give your child space if they need it.
- ✓ Focus on helping your child feel safe.

During a Tantrum

- ✓ Stay calm and consistent.
- ✓ Acknowledge your child's feelings.

- ✓ Keep expectations clear.
- ✓ Avoid arguing or giving in simply to stop the behavior.
- ✓ Praise calm behavior and appropriate communication.

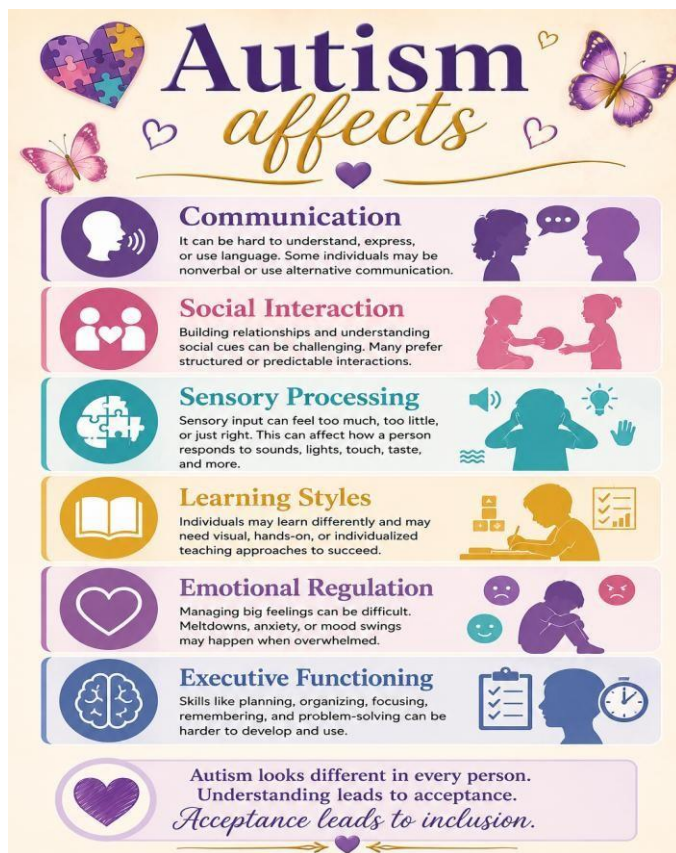
ZAC Parent Reminder

Not every meltdown is a tantrum, and not every tantrum is a meltdown.

The most important question isn't:

"What should I call this?"

It is, "What does my child need from me right now?"



Sensory Checklist

"If you've met one person with autism...

**You've met one person with autism."

No two autistic individuals are exactly alike.

Every child has their own unique strengths, challenges, interests, personality, and way of experiencing the world.

One child may love talking with others.

Another may communicate using pictures or a device.

One child may seek hugs and cuddles.

Another may prefer personal space.

One child may excel in math.

Another may have an incredible memory, artistic talent, or musical ability.

There is no "typical" autistic child.

Autism is a spectrum, which means it looks different in every individual.

Celebrating Your Child's Unique Journey

Instead of comparing your child to others, celebrate the progress they're making on **their own path**.

Progress isn't measured by how quickly your child learns compared to someone else.

Progress is measured by how far **your child** has come.

Every new word...

Every new skill...

Every new friendship...

Every small victory deserves to be celebrated.

Every Child Has Strengths

Your child's strengths may include:

Creativity

Honesty

Attention to detail

Strong memory

Kindness

Problem-solving

Curiosity

Determination

A unique way of seeing the world

Those strengths are worth recognizing and nurturing.

Parent Reflection

Three things I love most about my child:

1.

 2.

 3.

-

One strength I want to encourage is:

ZAC Parent Encouragement

Your child was never meant to be exactly like anyone else.

They don't need to fit into someone else's mold.

They need opportunities to learn, grow, communicate, and thrive in ways that honor who they are.

At ZAC, we believe every child deserves to be understood, supported, and celebrated for the unique person they are.

Different is not less. Differences are simply different—and every child has something extraordinary to offer the world.

Parent Self-Care

You Matter Too

When you're raising a child with autism, it's easy to put everyone else's needs before your own.

Appointments.

Therapy.

School meetings.

Medications.

Schedules.

Advocating.

The list never seems to end.

Somewhere along the way, many parents begin to believe that taking care of themselves is selfish.

It isn't.

Taking care of yourself is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child.

A healthy, rested, and emotionally supported parent is better able to provide the love, patience, and guidance their child needs.

Remember...

You cannot pour from an empty cup.

Simple Ways to Refill Your Cup

You don't need hours of free time to care for yourself.

Even a few intentional minutes each day can make a difference.

☐ Take five deep breaths before your day begins.

- ☐ Drink enough water throughout the day.
 - ☐ Step outside for a few minutes of fresh air.
 - ☐ Listen to your favorite song.
 - ☐ Read a devotional, inspirational quote, or a few pages of a good book.
 - ☐ Call or text someone who encourages you.
 - ☐ Celebrate one thing you did well today.
 - ☐ Ask for help when you need it.
 - ☐ Give yourself permission to rest.
 - ☐ Remember that progress is better than perfection.
-

Give Yourself Grace

Some days will be harder than others.

Some days you will feel strong.

Other days you may feel exhausted.

Both are okay.

You are learning.

You are growing.

You are doing the best you can with the information and resources you have today.

Give yourself the same compassion you so freely give your child.

Parent Reflection

Today I Will...

- ☐ Choose patience with me.

- ☐ Celebrate one small victory.
 - ☐ Accept help if I need it.
 - ☐ Speak kindly to me.
 - ☐ Make time for one thing that brings me peace.
-

My Self-Care Plan

One thing I will do for myself this week:

One person I can reach out to for support:

ZAC Parent Encouragement

Your child needs a healthy parent, not a perfect one.

Every time you choose to care for yourself, you strengthen your ability to care for your family.

At ZAC, we believe that supporting the parent is just as important as supporting the child. When parents thrive, children are given the opportunity to thrive alongside them.

Take care of yourself with the same love, patience, and compassion that you give your child every single day.

Building Your Village

You Were Never Meant to Walk This Journey Alone

Raising a child with autism can sometimes feel overwhelming.

There may be days when you're tired, discouraged, or unsure of what to do next.

During those moments, remember this:

You don't have to have all the answers. You just need people who are willing to walk the journey with you.

Your village is made up of people who encourage you, support your family, celebrate your child's successes, and stand beside you during the difficult days.

A strong support system doesn't happen overnight. It builds one relationship at a time.

Who Is in Your Village?

Every family's village looks different.

Your village may include:

Family members

Close friends

Teachers and school staff

Behavior Technicians (RBTs)

BCBAs

Speech Therapists

Occupational Therapists

Pediatricians and Specialists

Church or Faith Community

Parent Support Groups

Trusted Neighbors

The ZAC Community

Remember, your village isn't measured by how many people you know—it's measured by the people you can count on.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

Sometimes asking for help can be difficult.

You may worry about being a burden or think you should be able to do everything yourself.

The truth is...

Everyone needs support sometimes.

Allow others the opportunity to encourage you.

Receiving help doesn't make you weak.

It reminds us that we were created to support one another.

My Village

Family I Can Count On

Friends Who Encourage Me

Professionals Supporting My Child

School Contacts

Community & Faith Support

Parent Support Groups

My Support Plan

When I begin feeling overwhelmed, I will:

- ☐ Call someone I trust.
- ☐ Take a short break if possible.
- ☐ Reach out to another autism parent.
- ☐ Ask questions instead of struggling alone.
- ☐ Remember that asking for help is a sign of strength.

ZAC Parent Encouragement

Behind every thriving child is a community of people who care.

You don't have to carry every responsibility by yourself.

Lean on your village.

Build new relationships.

Accept support with gratitude.

And remember...

At ZAC, you're already part of a village that believes in you, supports your family, and celebrates your child's unique journey.

Remember

Strong families aren't built by doing everything alone.

They're built by supporting one another—one conversation, one act of kindness, and one step at a time.

Resources

You Don't Have to Find Every Answer on Your Own

One of the most important things you can do as an autism parent is learn about the resources available to your family.

The right support can make a tremendous difference in your child's development and in your confidence as a parent.

Remember, every child has unique needs. Some families may benefit from one service, while others may need a combination of support.

Explore what works best for your child and don't be afraid to ask questions along the way.

Common Autism Resources

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy

ABA focuses on teaching meaningful skills that help children become more independent while reducing barriers to learning through positive, individualized strategies.

☐ My child is currently receiving ABA.

☐ I'd like to learn more about ABA.

Speech & Language Therapy

Supports children in developing communication skills, whether through spoken language, sign language, picture communication, or assistive technology.

☐ My child is currently receiving Speech Therapy.

☐ I'd like more information.

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Help children develop fine motor skills, sensory regulation, self-care skills, and independence with daily activities.

☐ My child currently receives OT.

☐ I'd like more information.

School Support Services

Schools can provide specialized instruction, accommodations, therapies, and services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, depending on your child's needs.

☐ I understand my child's educational support.

☐ I'd like to learn more about advocacy.

Parent Support

Connecting with other parents who understand your journey can provide encouragement, practical advice, and reassurance that you're not alone.

☐ I have a support system.

☐ I'd like to connect with other autism parents.

Financial & Community Resources

Many communities offer programs that may help families with therapy services, respite care, recreational activities, transportation, or other support. Ask your healthcare providers, school team, or local organizations about resources available in your area.

☐ I know where to look for community resources.

☐ I'd like assistance finding support.

My Resource Plan

The next resource I want to learn more about is:

One question I still have is:

One phone call or email I will make this week is:

Continue Learning with ZAC

Your journey doesn't end here.

The ZAC community is here to walk alongside you with:

Monthly FREE ZAC Parent Masterclasses

Parent Workshops

Practical Toolkits

Parent Coaching & Advocacy

Downloadable Resources

Supportive Community

ZAC University

ZAC Parent Encouragement

The greatest resource your child has is a parent who never stops learning.

Every question you ask, every meeting you attend, every skill you learn, and every advocate you become helps create a brighter future for your child.

Knowledge gives you confidence.

Confidence helps you advocate.

Advocacy helps your child thrive.

At ZAC, our mission is to equip, encourage, and empower families every step of the way. We believe that when parents have the right tools and support, they can confidently navigate the autism journey with hope.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

ABA therapy focuses on teaching meaningful skills that improve communication, independence, social interaction, daily living skills, and behavior through individualized, evidence-based strategies.

Ask About:

- ABA evaluations
 - Insurance coverage
 - In-home services
 - Center-based services
 - Parent training
-

Speech & Language Therapy

Speech therapy helps children improve communication through spoken language, sign language, picture communication systems, or assistive technology.

Speech therapy may help with:

- Expressive language
 - Receptive language
 - Social communication
 - Articulation
 - Feeding and oral motor skills (when appropriate)
-

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Occupational therapy helps children develop the skills needed for everyday life while addressing sensory processing, motor development, and independence.

OT may help with:

- Fine Motor Skills
- Handwriting
- Dressing and self-care
- Sensory regulation
- Feeding skills
- Play skills

Financial Resources

Many families qualify for financial assistance or support services.

Some resources to explore include:

- Medicaid waivers (where available)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- State disability services
- Children's health insurance programs
- Local nonprofit organizations
- Community grants
- Respite care funding
- School-based services

Contact your state's developmental disability agency or local autism organizations to learn what programs may be available in your area.

Recommended Books

For Parents

- *Uniquely Human* by Barry M. Prizant
- *The Reason I Jump* by Naoki Higashida
- *Ten Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew* by Ellen Notbohm
- *An Early Start for Your Child with Autism* by Sally J. Rogers, Geraldine Dawson, and Laurie A. Vismara

For Children

- *All My Stripes* by Shaina Rudolph & Danielle Royer
 - *My Brother Charlie* by Holly Robinson Peete & Ryan Elizabeth Peete
 - *A Friend for Henry* by Jenn Bailey
-

Helpful Websites

- **Autism Speaks** – Information, toolkits, and family resources
<https://www.autismspeaks.org>

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** – Autism information, developmental milestones, and early identification <https://www.cdc.gov/autism>
 - **Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)** – Resources created by autistic individuals
<https://autisticadvocacy.org>
 - **The Autism Society** – Education, advocacy, and community support
<https://autismsociety.org>
 - **The Arc** – Disability advocacy, education, and family support <https://thearc.org>
-

ZAC Resource Reminder

Knowledge is one of the most powerful tools you can have as a parent.

The more you learn, the more confident you'll become in making informed decisions, advocating for your child, and celebrating their unique strengths.

Remember: You don't have to know everything today. Take one step at a time, ask questions, and continue learning. Every step forward is progress.

Goals

My Family Goals

Every Small Step Counts

Progress doesn't happen all at once.

It happens one goal, one choice, and one small victory at a time.

As you continue your autism journey, remember that success isn't about perfection. It's about moving forward with purpose, celebrating progress, and growing together as a family.

The goals you set today can become the milestones you celebrate tomorrow.

My Goals for My Child

This month, I want to help my child:

- ☐ Improve communication
 - ☐ Build social skills
 - ☐ Increase independence
 - ☐ Develop daily living skills
 - ☐ Strengthen emotional regulation
 - ☐ Improve play skills
 - ☐ Practice following routines
 - ☐ Build confidence
 - ☐ Other: _____
-

My Child's Goal

My Goals as a Parent

This month, I will:

- ☐ Learn something new about autism.
- ☐ Practice patience with myself and my child.
- ☐ Attend a parent workshop or support group.
- ☐ Advocate confidently for my child.
- ☐ Ask for help when I need it.
- ☐ Celebrate progress instead of perfection.
- ☐ Practice self-care each week.
- ☐ Strengthen my support network.
- ☐ Other: _____

My Personal Goal

Three Small Actions I Will Take This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Biggest Win This Month Will Be...

A Note from ZAC

Every family begins this journey from a different place.

There will be days that feel challenging and days that fill you with joy. Through it all, remember that every small step forward matters.

Celebrate progress, no matter how small.

Keep learning.

Keep asking questions.

Keep believing in your child—and in yourself.

You are your child's greatest advocate, greatest teacher, and greatest source of love.

Remember

Progress over perfection.

Connection before correction.

One step at a time.

Thank you for allowing ZAC to be part of your family's journey. We are honored to walk beside you as you learn, grow, and celebrate every milestone together.

Keep Growing with ZAC

This Is Just the Beginning

Congratulations on completing your **ZAC Autism Parent Quick Start Workbook!**

By investing your time in learning, reflecting, and planning, you've already taken an important step toward supporting your child and strengthening your family.

Remember, parenting a child with autism is a journey—not a destination. There will always be new milestones to celebrate, new questions to explore, and new opportunities to grow.

You don't have to navigate that journey alone.

At **The Zokha Autism Center (ZAC)**, we're committed to equipping, encouraging, and empowering families every step of the way.

Continue Learning with ZAC

Monthly FREE ZAC Parent Masterclasses

Join us each month for practical, encouraging sessions designed to help parents better understand autism, build confidence, and learn strategies they can use right away.

Parent Workshops

Gain hands-on tools and real-world strategies on topics like communication, behavior, sensory needs, school success, self-care, and advocacy.

Parent Coaching & Advocacy

Receive personalized guidance to help you navigate IEP meetings, therapy options, school services, and everyday challenges with confidence.

ZAC University

Continue your learning through self-paced courses, downloadable resources, certificates, and a supportive community dedicated to helping families thrive.

Autism Resources & Toolkits

Access printable guides, checklists, planners, and practical tools created to support your family's daily life.

Community Support

Connect with other parents who understand your journey, celebrate your victories, and encourage you through every stage.

Stay Connected

The Zokha Autism Center (ZAC)

Website: www.zac-llc.org

Email: info@zac-llc.org

Follow us on social media for parenting tips, workshops, resources, and upcoming events.

Our Promise to You

At ZAC, we believe:

Every child deserves to be understood.

Every parent deserves support.

Every family deserves hope.

Every milestone is worth celebrating.

Every journey matters.

A Final Word of Encouragement

You are stronger than you know.

Your love, patience, and commitment make a difference every single day.

There will be challenges, but there will also be breakthroughs.

There will be difficult moments, but there will also be moments that fill your heart with pride and joy.

Keep asking questions.

Keep learning.

Keep advocating.

Keep believing.

Most importantly, keep celebrating the incredible child in front of you.

Welcome to the ZAC Family

Together, we're building a future where every child is accepted, every parent is empowered, and every family can thrive.

Because when families are supported, children flourish.

Thank You

You are not failing.
You are learning.
You are growing.
You are enough.

Thank you for trusting ZAC.



Thank you for allowing The Zokha Autism Center (ZAC) to be part of your family's journey.

Whether your child was recently diagnosed or you've been navigating autism for years, we want you to know one important truth:

You are not alone.

Every question you ask... every therapy appointment you attend... every late night researching... every milestone you celebrate... every challenge you overcome... is an expression of your love for your child.

That love matters.



Keep Showing Up

There will be difficult days.
There will be victories.
There will be setbacks.
There will also be breakthroughs you never imagined possible.

*Celebrate every step.
Keep believing.
Keep learning.
Keep growing.*



Our Promise

At The Zokha Autism Center, we promise to continue creating resources, workshops, classes, and a supportive community that helps families thrive.

Because when parents are equipped... children flourish.
Families grow stronger.
Communities become more inclusive. And hope continues to grow.



Love. Acceptance. Inclusion.

Every Child.
Every Family.
Every Time.

Thank you for allowing us to walk beside your family.



“ *Your child's diagnosis does not define their future. Your love, your advocacy, and your belief in them help shape it.* ”

Stay Connected

 www.zac-llc.org
 info@zac-llc.org
 470-620-1522



With gratitude,

Lakredi Tu Alston 

Founder & CEO
The Zokha Autism Center (ZAC)