

Connection Cards



Simple ways to support big feelings
through connection not control



Brian's Reminder:

Connection comes
first

Connection Cards



Connection Cards are simple, real-life prompts to support you through big feelings.

Use them in the moment when things feel wobbly, or explore them together when you're calm. They work because emotions need connection before correction. When a child feels safe and understood, their body settles, their brain re-engages, and everything becomes easier to navigate.



Brian's Reminder:
Connection comes
first

Stay Close

When we feel sad, low or shut down, connection helps us feel safe again.



What to do:

- Sit near them
- Keep your body calm and soft
- Don't rush them to talk



Why this helps:

When someone feels low, connection comes from presence, not pressure.

Your calm closeness helps their body feel safe again.



Brian's Reminder:
It's okay to feel blue.
You are not alone.



Name It Gently

When feelings feel heavy, naming them helps make sense of what's going on inside.



What to do:

- Use a soft voice
- Say what you notice
- Keep it simple - "This feels like a sad moment"



Why this helps:

Naming feelings helps the brain make sense of them.

It shows your child they are seen and understood.



Brian's Reminder:
It's okay to feel blue.
You are not alone.



Offer Comfort

When someone feels low, their body needs comfort before anything else.



What to do:

- Offer a cuddle, blanket, or quiet space
- Let them choose
- Stay nearby - "Cuddle or quiet?"



Why this helps:

Comfort supports the nervous system. When the body feels safe, emotions can begin to settle



Brian's Reminder:
It's okay to feel blue.
You are not alone.



Offer Comfort

When things feel calm, connection helps build trust and cooperation.



What to do:

- Get to their level
- Make eye contact
- Use their name "Hey... I'm here"



Why this helps:

Connection builds cooperation. When a child feels connected, they are more able to listen and engage.



Brian's Reminder:
This is a calm moment.
We can learn and grow here.



Build the Skill

Calm moments are the best time to learn and practise new skills.



What to do:

- Practice calm tools together
- Keep it playful
- Do it when things feel good
- Breathing, chatting, playing



Why this helps:

Skills are best learned when calm. This builds pathways they can use in harder moments.



Brian's Reminder:
This is a calm moment.
We can learn and grow here.



Notice the Good

What we notice and name grows stronger in the brain.



What to do:

- Point out effort, not perfection
- Be specific
- Keep it genuine
- "I saw you try there"



Why this helps:

The brain grows what we notice. This builds confidence and strengthens positive pathways.



Brian's Reminder:
This is a calm moment.
We can learn and grow here.



Pause Together

When emotions start to rise, a pause can stop things from escalating.



What to do:

- Stop what you're doing
- Stay physically close
- Take a slow breath
- Breathe in for 4, out for 6



Why this helps:

Pausing interrupts the stress response. Your calm helps their system begin to settle.



Brian's Reminder:
Something feels wobbly.
We can slow this down.



Lower + Slow

As emotions rise, the brain can process less and needs calm input.

Let's use a calm voice...



Lower your voice



Slow your words



Say less, not more



What to do:

- Lower your voice
- Slow your words
- Reduce instructions
- say less, not more



Why this helps:

When emotions rise, the brain processes less. A calm tone signals safety and prevents escalation.



Brian's Reminder:

Something feels wobbly.
We can slow this down.



Offer a Simple Choice

Feeling overwhelmed often comes from a lack of control.



What to do:

- Give 2 clear options
- Keep it manageable
- Stay calm either way
- "Shoes here or by the door?"



Why this helps:

Choice brings back a sense of control. This reduces overwhelm and supports cooperation.



Brian's Reminder:

Something feels wobbly.
We can slow this down.



Check Safety First

When emotions are big,
the brain is in survival
mode, not thinking mode.



What to do:

- Make the space safe
- Move objects if needed
- Stay in the room



Why this helps:

In this moment, safety is the priority. The brain is focused on protection, not problem-solving.



Brian's Reminder:

This feels big. We are safe.
We will get through this.



Be the Calm

I'm here ♥
You're safe ♥

When a child feels out of control, they need you to be their calm.



What to do:

- Keep your body steady
- Use very few words
- "I'm here"
- "You're safe"



Why this helps:

Your calm nervous system helps regulate theirs. They borrow your calm until they can find their own.



Brian's Reminder:

This feels big. We are safe.
We will get through this.



Hug or Help

In big moments,
connection matters
more than
correction.



What to do:

- Offer support, don't demand
- Keep it simple
- "Hug or help?"
- Accept their response



Why this helps:

Connection reduces intensity. Support, not control, helps the brain come back online.



Brian's Reminder:

This feels big. We are safe.
We will get through this.

