NeuroSparkABA

FREE GUIDE | WEEK 1

Choice, assent & everyday support

A family and school conversation sheet

Support starts with the person.

A useful support plan makes room for the learner to take part, shape choices, and show when something is not working. There is no one universal signal for yes, no, or pause.

A QUICK RESEARCH NOTE

In a small experiment with three autistic children, choice increased skill-learning efficiency for two; all three preferred opportunities to choose. The experiment was also replicated with two participants.

Four gentle questions to bring to a conversation

01 Is it a real choice?

Are more than one of the options genuinely okay? Can the person pause or decline when it is safe and possible?

02 What feels clear?

Ask the learner and people who know them how choices and pause requests work best for them.

03 Does the goal matter?

Does this goal support the person's comfort, safety, access, relationships, or own priorities?

04 When will we check again?

Preferences can change. Make room to check in during support, not only at the beginning or end.

A respectful pause is information.

If you are unsure what a signal means, slow down and check with the person and their support team. Do not assume that one movement or behavior means the same thing for everyone.

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A check-in that leaves room to say no

Use these prompts in a family, school, or care-team conversation

Conversation prompts

Choose only the questions that fit. The learner's preferences belong in the conversation.

- [ ] What matters most to the person about this support or goal?
- [ ] How can they say yes, no, not now, or "please change this" in a way that works for them?
- [ ] What would make a choice genuine, accessible, and easy to understand?
- [ ] What could the team do if the person seems unsure or wants a pause?
- [ ] How will we check whether the support still feels useful and respectful?

A note, question, or preference to bring along:

WHAT THE RESEARCH CAN - AND CANNOT - SAY

The choice study included only three children in its main experiment. A separate 2026 practice-based clinic study used a multiple-baseline design with three autistic children and their service teams; it showed assent and withdrawal could be defined, recorded, and honored in that setting. These small studies are useful starting points, not proof of what every person prefers.

Sources

Toussaint, Kodak & Vladescu (2016), Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. DOI: 10.1002/jaba.263. |
Pauli, Gesick & Contreras (2026), Tizard Learning Disability Review. DOI: 10.1108/TLDR-04-2026-0031.

General education only. Not a diagnosis, individualized treatment plan, or clinical protocol.