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When Everything Feels Like Too Much

20 small shifts
that can help reduce the load

For you, your child,
or someone you support.





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When things feel harder than they need to.

Life can feel like a lot at times.

You might be supporting a child who feels overwhelmed, managing the many demands of daily life, or noticing that you are running on empty.

This guide brings together 20 small shifts that can help reduce the load, create more calm and build a greater sense of connection.

Each idea is simple and practical. These are not quick fixes or a formula to follow. They are small changes you can try, then notice what happens.

You do not have to do everything. Start with one. A small shift is enough to begin.



Before you try all 20 ... don't.

This isn't a checklist.

It's a collection of small ideas you can draw from, when and where they fit.

You do not need to do them all.

Choose what feels relevant, try one small change, and notice what happens.

A simple way to think about each idea

As you read through the guide, you might like to use these four questions to help you decide:

KEEP

What's already working well that you want to keep?

MODIFY

What could be tweaked to make it more supportive?

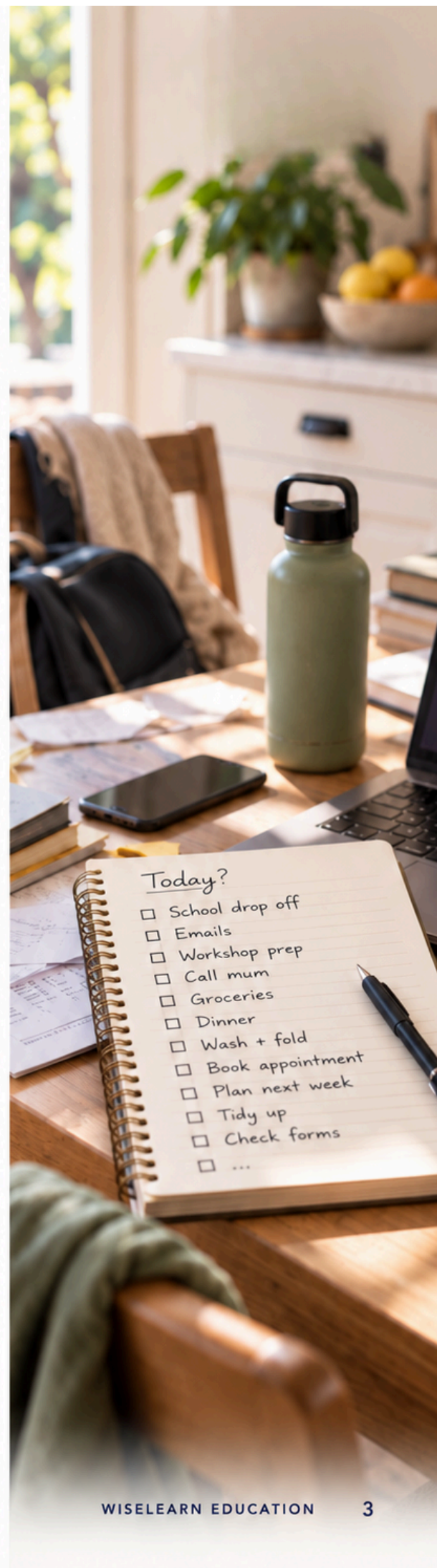
SUBTRACT

What might you let go of to reduce the load?

ADD

What could you add to create more calm, connection or creativity?

There's no perfect order. No right or wrong way. Just small, intentional steps that work for you.





Five small shifts to start with

Here are five simple ideas to try. Choose one that feels relevant, give it a go, and notice what happens.

01

Give one instruction or focus at a time.

When there is already a lot to process, too much information at once can add more load.

Try: Focus on the first thing that needs to happen. Allow time for that before adding the next.

Notice: Does it feel easier to get started?

02

Build in movement.

Movement can help the brain and body regulate, reset and prepare for what comes next.

Try: Add a short movement break — even 2–3 minutes of stretching, walking or simple movement.

Notice: Do you notice a change in energy, focus or calm afterwards?

03

Reduce visible clutter.

A calmer environment can reduce what the brain has to process.

Try: Choose one small area to clear — a desk, bench, bag or digital space.

Notice: Does it feel easier to think or focus?

04

Add a predictable rhythm.

Predictability can reduce the mental load of wondering, “What happens next?”

Try: Use a familiar routine, cue, timer or simple sequence, to make what comes next more predictable.

Notice: Do transitions feel a little easier?

05

Notice and name emotions.

Putting feelings into words can build awareness and help us make sense of what we’re experiencing.

Try: Pause and name what you notice: “I’m feeling ...” or, when supporting someone, “It looks like you might be feeling ...”

Notice: Does naming it change what happens next?





Five more small shifts

Here are five more ideas to try. Choose one that feels relevant, give it a go, and notice what happens.

06

Take a breath before you respond.

A short pause can help you respond more calmly and thoughtfully.

Try: Take one slow breath before you respond — in a conversation, an email or when you feel yourself reacting.

Notice: Do you feel more in control and less reactive?

07

Break tasks into smaller steps.

Smaller steps can make a task feel less overwhelming and easier to begin.

Try: Choose just the next small step.
For you: Open the document and write the heading.
With children: Cover part of a task or page so there's only one small part to focus on at a time.

Notice: Does a smaller step make it easier to get started?

08

Reduce background noise.

Quieter environments can support focus, regulation and clearer thinking.

Try: Lower the volume, turn off non-essential sounds or use headphones if that helps.

Notice: Do you find it easier to think or stay on task?

09

Get some natural light.

Natural light can support mood, alertness and regulation.

Try: Spend a few minutes outside or near a window in natural light.

Notice: How does your energy, mood or focus feel afterwards?

10

Create a small reset between things.

A short break can help you transition, clear your mind and show up more calmly for what's next.

Try: Build in a brief pause between one thing ending and another beginning.
For you: Step outside, stretch or take a few quiet breaths.
With children: Allow a few minutes to move, have a drink or do something that helps them reset before the next activity.

Notice: Do you feel more settled and ready for what's next?





Five more small shifts

Here are five more ideas to try. Choose one that feels relevant, give it a go, and notice what happens.

11

Reduce unnecessary choices.

Fewer options can make it easier to decide and get started.

Try: Offer two suitable options instead of many (e.g. "Would you like the blue shirt or the green one?") rather than asking them to choose from the whole wardrobe.

Notice: Does it feel easier to decide and move forward?

12

Make the starting point clear.

A clear beginning can reduce hesitation and help build momentum.

Try: Be specific about what to do first.
For you: Open your book and read the first paragraph.
With children: Say, "Let's just do the first question together."

Notice: Do you find it easier to get started?

13

Keep important information visible.

Having key information in sight can reduce the need to remember and lighten the mental load.

Try: Use a visual reminder like a checklist, timetable or sticky note.

Notice: Does it help you stay on track?

14

Give thinking time before repeating.

A short pause can give the brain time to process and come up with a response.

Try: After asking a question or giving an instruction, count to 10 quietly before repeating.

Notice: Do you get a more thoughtful response?

15

Remove what isn't needed right now.

Less on the table (physically and mentally) can make it easier to focus on what matters.

Try: Clear away items, tabs or tasks that aren't needed for what you're doing right now.

Notice: Do you feel less overwhelmed and more able to focus?





Five more small shifts

Here are five more ideas to try. Choose one that feels relevant, give it a go, and notice what happens.

16

Change the way you say it.

A calmer, simpler or more positive way of saying something can make a big difference.

Try: Turn a demand into a choice or a curiosity (e.g. "Let's get shoes on" instead of "Hurry up.").

Notice: Does it feel more calm and cooperative?

17

Connect before you correct.

A brief moment of genuine connection can open the door to more receptive listening.

Try: A smile, a warm comment or a few minutes of shared attention before addressing a behaviour or asking for something.

Notice: Does it make the next part easier?

18

Show rather than explain.

Modelling what to do can be more effective than lots of explaining.

Try: Do it alongside them, or show them once with minimal words.

Notice: Does it reduce repetition and reminders?

19

Protect something that already helps.

Small, consistent supports can make a big difference to daily wellbeing and learning.

Try: Keep one helpful routine, habit or environment in place (e.g. morning movement, quiet time, time in nature, creative play).

Notice: Do you feel more settled when it stays in place?

20

Make space for something enjoyable.

Joy and play aren't extras — they help the brain reset, process and stay resilient.

Try: Intentionally build in a small moment of something you (or your child) enjoy today.

Notice: Do you feel a little lighter afterwards?





Why understanding matters

**Trying something is useful.
Understanding helps us know what to try.**

The 20 shifts in this guide are practical starting points. Some may make an immediate difference. Others may not help in a particular moment.

That doesn't necessarily mean the idea was wrong.

Different people need different things at different times.

Deeper understanding can help us look beyond the strategy and consider three things:



WHY

Understand what may be happening.

Learning how the brain and body respond can help make sense of stress, overwhelm, behaviour and everyday reactions.



WHAT

Consider what might be needed.

Everyday needs and conditions can support regulation — or make it harder. Becoming more aware of these gives us useful information about what may be contributing.



HOW

Have a way to zoom out and choose.

This doesn't require a complicated plan. A simple process for pausing, noticing and looking at the bigger picture can help us decide what we might keep, change or try next.

**A strategy gives us something to try.
Understanding gives us more information
from which to choose.**

Children can begin building this kind of understanding too, with language and experiences designed for their age.





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Where to from here?

**You've explored 20 practical shifts.
Now, where would you like to go next?**

Understanding gives us more choice — and different contexts call for different support. WiseLearn offers programs, resources and experiences for children, parents and schools and organisations.

Explore where WiseLearn could take you next.



For you

TOOLS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Build your understanding and confidence with practical tools and simple strategies to support your own wellbeing, your relationships and the people in your care.



For children

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY AND EXPERIENCE

Engaging, age-appropriate programs that help children learn about their brain, body and emotions — and build skills for life.



For schools & organisations

PRACTICAL PD AND CONSULTING

Workshops, leadership coaching, student programs and tailored support to strengthen wellbeing, build resilience and create positive, thriving learning environments.



For you 

For children 

For schools & organisations 



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Curious to learn more?

Explore our website to discover how WiseLearn can support you, children, and schools & organisations.

Find out more about our programs, resources and tailored support — and see what might be right for your next step.

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