

- WORKBOOK -

Anchors, Anchoring
& Positive Emotional
Tags

A Wellbeing Guide for Parents

Written by

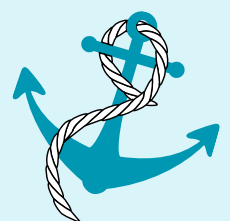
The Centre of Excellence in Child Trauma

Why Anchoring Matters

Children — especially children who have experienced early life trauma, or those who display neurodivergent characteristics— thrive when the world feels predictable, safe, and emotionally steady. Spring, Easter, and seasonal transitions can bring sensory overload, routine disruption, and emotional wobbliness.

Anchors, anchoring practices, and positive emotional tags are simple wellbeing tools that help children feel grounded, regulated, and connected. They don't require specialist training or complicated routines. They're small, repeatable moments that build emotional safety.

This booklet explores how to use them in everyday life.



What is an Anchor?

An anchor is a small, predictable part of the day that stays the same, no matter what else is happening. It's a moment your child can rely on — a steady point in their routine that helps them feel safe, calm, and grounded.

Think of an anchor like:

- a familiar stepping stone
- a pause button
- a “home base”
- a moment of certainty in a world that often feels unpredictable

Anchors tell the child's nervous system:

“You know this. You've done this before. You're safe.”

They don't need to be big or complicated. In fact, the simplest ones are often the most effective.

Examples include:

- the same breakfast each morning
- a predictable bedtime routine
- a favourite song before leaving the house
- a quiet moment after school
- a shared phrase or ritual

Anchors are the “solid ground” in your child's day.

What Is Anchoring?

Anchoring is the process of helping a child return to a regulated, calm state when they feel overwhelmed, overstimulated, or emotionally flooded.

If an anchor is the thing, anchoring is the action.

Anchoring is what you do in the moment to help your child feel safe again. It's a way of guiding them back to their emotional centre.

Anchoring can involve:

- sensory grounding (deep pressure, a weighted object, a familiar texture)
- emotional reassurance (“I’m here. You’re safe.”)
- predictable steps (“First we breathe, then we sit together.”)
- physical grounding (feet on the floor, slow movement)
- co-regulation (your calm helping their calm)

Anchoring is not about stopping feelings.

It's about helping your child feel held inside those feelings.

Over time, anchoring builds emotional resilience and self-regulation skills.

Why Anchors and Anchoring Support Wellbeing

Together, anchors and anchoring:

- reduce overwhelm
- support sensory regulation
- create predictability
- help children manage transitions
- strengthen emotional safety
- build trust and connection

They are especially powerful during spring, when routines shift and sensory input increases.

Examples of Anchor Routines

Morning Anchors

- The same breakfast each day
- A predictable “get ready” sequence
- A quiet moment before leaving the house
- A favourite song that signals “time to go”

Midday Anchors

- A familiar lunchbox layout
- A sensory break at a set time
- A grounding phrase (“Let’s take a breath together”)

Evening Anchors

- A consistent bedtime routine
- A calming activity like reading or drawing
- The same order of steps each night

Seasonal Anchors

Especially helpful during spring:

- A daily indoor “calm moment”
- A visual calendar for summer break
- A soft sensory kit for after school

Anchoring Techniques for Overwhelming Moments

These can be used anytime your child needs grounding:

Sensory Anchors

- Holding a weighted object
- Wrapping in a soft blanket
- Deep pressure hugs (if welcomed)
- A familiar scent or texture

Cognitive Anchors

- “You’re safe. I’m here.”
- “Let’s take one slow breath together.”
- “We know what happens next.”

Physical Anchors

- Feet flat on the floor
- Slow walking
- Rocking gently
- Pressing hands together

Emotional Anchors

- Naming the feeling (“This feels big”)
- Validating (“It makes sense this is hard”)
- Reassuring (“We can do this together”)

Anchoring helps children feel held, not hurried.



Positive Emotional Tags

Positive emotional tags are small moments of connection that attach a positive feeling to a routine, activity, or transition. They help children build emotional memory around safety and joy.

Think of them as emotional “stickers” you place on everyday moments.

Why They Matter

Positive emotional tags:

- strengthen resilience
- build trust
- make routines feel safe
- help children anticipate positive moments
- support long-term emotional wellbeing

Bringing It All Together

Anchor routines + anchoring techniques + positive emotional tags =
a powerful wellbeing framework for neurodivergent children.

Together, they:

- reduce overwhelm
- build predictability
- support emotional regulation
- strengthen connection
- create a sense of safety

They also help you, as a parent, feel more grounded and confident.

Your Family's Version of "Normal" Is Valid

Your anchors might look nothing like another family's — and that's okay.

Your normal might be:

- quiet mornings
- predictable evenings
- avoiding spontaneous outings
- choosing calm activities over busy ones

Your routines don't need to impress anyone.
They just need to work for your child.

And if they do, that's success.

A Simple Starting Point

If you want to begin gently, choose one anchor routine, one anchoring technique, and one positive emotional tag to introduce this week.

For example:

- Anchor routine: same bedtime sequence
- Anchoring technique: deep breaths together
- Positive tag: a special goodnight phrase

Small steps create big shifts.

Anchors, Anchoring & Positive Emotional Tags



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